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DIALECT VARIATION ASSESSMENT IN SPEECH LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY

by

Maliah Wilkinson

A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

Oxford, MS

April 2020

Approved by

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Reader: Dr. John Samonds

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## ABSTRACT

MALIAH WILKINSON: DIALECT VARIATION ASSESSMENT IN SPEECH  
LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY

(Under the direction of Felice Coles)

During speech and language assessment, speech language pathologists often utilize tools from sociolinguistics to differentiate between accent and dialect variation from actual speech or language impairments. Perceptual dialectology is one of these tools. This method of research seeks to investigate the linguistic perspectives of various populations in specific situations (Montgomery, 2012, p. 638). To investigate the perspectives of college students, linguists, and speech-language pathologists surveys analyzed they perceptions of dialects in various settings and their backgrounds. Results from the surveys indicate linguists who participated have educational experience with dialects but not dialect assessments. While speech-language pathologists, have certification that insists speech-language pathologists consider cultural and linguistic diversity when administering services. Results indicate non-expert participants recognize the importance of dialects and accents. However, they do not have unified definitions for dialects or accents. This study suggest that a majority of non-expert participants require additional education and linguists, and speech-language pathologist may not be the best body to study when analyzing dialect perception.

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## Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

During speech and language assessment, speech language pathologists often utilize tools from sociolinguistics to differentiate between accent and dialect variation from actual speech or language impairments. This thesis intends to investigate the perceptions of college students and language professionals regarding dialect variation to identify the significance of these differences from multiple perspectives.

### *Aims of This Study*

This study aims to explore dialect perception by comparing the views of individuals not associated with the field of linguistics and compare their perceptions of dialects to scholarship from linguists and speech-language pathologists. The goal of this study is to determine if non-expert participants, linguists, and speech-language pathologists recognize dialect variation both informally and scholastically. The following research questions form the basis of my investigation:

1. What are the views of non-expert participants as they relate to dialects? Since these participants are not experts in the fields of linguistics or speech-language pathology, are their views contrary or parallel to current literature regarding dialects?
2. How qualified do linguists and speech-language pathologists believe themselves to be to administer speech assessments, language assessments, and dialect assessments? How experienced are linguists and speech-language pathologists in administering speech

assessments, language assessments, and dialect assessments? Do these professionals recognize dialect variation?

### *Background*

Perceptual dialectology seeks to investigate the linguistic perspectives of various populations in specific situations and then evaluate those outcomes as they relate to other dialect research (Montgomery, 2012, p. 638). Dialects are tools used to identify “region of origin, language background” and nativeness (Brent et al. 2016, p. 104). This thesis will define a dialect as the native language of individuals with similar or the same cultural background, geographic residence, socioeconomic status, educational history, or societal group. Accents are “nonnative (nonpathological) pronunciations that differ from native pronunciation norms” (Levy and Crowley, 2012, p. 60). This research paper will describe accent characteristics from an individual’s native language influenced by cultural background, geographic residence, socioeconomic status, educational history, or societal group that are carried over when an individual speaks a language. Throughout this thesis, accent will refer to the pronunciation features of dialects. Dialects allow listeners to distinguish between members of a group and strangers based on the speakers’ “intelligibility, processing, and representation” of words, phrases, or actions (Bent et al. 2016, p. 105).

Perceptual dialectology stems from Dennis Preston, whom Butters (1991) identifies as the founder of perceptual dialectology. In a review of interviews and scholarship from Preston, Butters (1991) suggests that the goal of perceptual dialectology is to understand how individuals not in the field of linguistic view

dialect usage and the jobs of linguists. To fully understand the impact of dialect usage, this study will examine how non-linguist college students view dialects and how their perspectives align with current and previous scholarship.

*Identifying Dialects and Speech Impediments with Speech-language Pathologists*

Prior research in perceptual dialectology, sociolinguistics, and speech-language pathology has investigated the relationships between dialects and speech impediments. Research has found that dialects are an essential component of language, and improper identification of a dialect as a speech impediment can lead to unnecessary services (Toohill et al. 2012). In a study that analyzed certified white speech-language pathologists who had little contact with speakers of African American English to differentiate between African American English and speech impediments, researchers found that higher levels of dialect usage negatively impacted the speech-language pathologists' comprehensibility ratings for their school aged clients (Robinson & Stockman, 2009). The findings suggest that even though speech-language pathologists are tasked with identifying speech impediments, they might not be accurately trained to identify speech impediments when dialects contribute to a significant portion of their language capacity.

Levy and Crowley (2012) suggest that speech-language pathologists lack protocols to aid in determining how intelligible nonnative English speakers should be to disqualify them from speech-language pathology services, including accent modification. However, there are tools to help speech-language pathologists,

linguists, and educators to identify Nonmainstream American English dialects. Gregory and Oetting (2018) name the Diagnostic Evaluation of Language Variation Screening Test II (DELV-ST-II) and the Diagnostic Evaluation of Language Variation-Norm (DEVL-NR) as appropriate tools for speech and language assessments. The DELV-ST-II identifies speakers of African American English and Southern White English with a 73% precision measure, and the DELV-NR assesses speech and language disorders for all dialects of English with a 93% precision measure. When these tools were used to identify the accuracy of educators' ability to distinguish between Nonmainstream American English dialects, researchers found that further research should be conducted to analyze the effectiveness of speech and language tools. The Teacher Rating of Oral Language and Literacy (TROLL) is a useful tool to distinguish between language variation and speech/language impediments (Gregory & Oetting, 2018), indicating that tools to distinguish between dialects and speech/language impediments exist and produce moderately accurate results. Toohill et al. (2012), Robinson and Stockman (2009), Levy and Crowley (2012), and Gregory and Oetting (2018) have shown that dialects can hinder speech-language pathologists from accurately distinguishing between dialects and speech/language impediments. Even though instruments exist to accurately identify dialects, speech-language pathologists are still diagnosing individuals with dialect variants as having speech impediments. In this survey I intend to investigate if linguists and speech-language pathologists are using these tools.

*Dialects in Linguistics and Speech-language Pathology*

Although sociolinguists may investigate dialects, there is no specific training that they receive to distinguish between dialects and speech impediments. However, significant research about dialects is done by linguists in dialectology, sociolinguistics and anthropological linguistics (Levy and Crowley, 2012; Day-Vines et al. 2009; (Gregory & Oetting, 2018; Luk & Shirai, 2009). These researchers propose the importance of research in the field of sociolinguistics and the significance of dialect usage. Despite linguists and speech-language pathologists both analyzing dialects, little research has been conducted to interpret their unique perspectives in approaching dialect usage. This thesis will attempt to understand how these two fields approach dialects, compare their approaches to current literature and identify the opinions of non-expert participants in relation to dialects through the lens of perceptual dialectology.

*Definition of Terms Used in This Study*

Table 1 provides a list of commonly used terms in this thesis, with their glosses from a reputable source.

Table 1. Definitions of terms used in this study

| <b>Key Words</b> | <b>Definitions</b>  |
|------------------|---|
| <b>Accent</b>    | “Nonnative (nonpathological) pronunciations that differ from native pronunciation norms” (Levy and Crowley, 2012, p. 60). |

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | This research paper will define the term accent characteristics from an individual's native language influenced by cultural background, geographic residence, socioeconomic status, educational history, or societal group that are carried over when an individual speaks a language, they are not native speakers of.          |
| <b>African American English</b><br><b>/African American Vernacular English</b> | "The systematic, rule-governed linguistic patterns found among African Americans" (Day-Vines et al. 2009, p. 70).  |
| <b>Assessment</b>  | "Screeners to determine if further evaluation is warranted" (Gregory & Oetting, 2018, p. 218)  |
| <b>Code Switching</b>  | Switching between dialects (Kaushanskaya and Crespo, 2019).  |
| <b>Culture</b>   | Discussed on p. 22   |
| <b>Dialect</b>   | A tool to discern a speaker's "region of origin, language background" and naiveness (Brent et al. 2016, p. 104).<br><br>This paper will define a dialect as the native language of individuals with similar or the same cultural background, geographic residence, socioeconomic status, educational history, or societal group. |

|                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| <b>Intelligibility</b>           | “Speech understanding is a complex process depending on both stimulus-driven and knowledge-driven processes” (Zekveld et al. 2012, p. 103)  |
| <b>L1 Acquisition (L1)</b>       | A speakers first language; they are a native speaker of this language (Luk & Shirai, 2009).   |
| <b>L2 Acquisition (L2)</b>       | The second language a language learner acquires, and the speaker is not a native speaker of this language (Luk & Shirai 2009).  |
| <b>Perceptual Dialectology</b>   | Butters (1991) suggests that the goal of perceptual dialectology is to understand how individuals not in the linguistic field view dialect usage associated with the field of linguistics perceive linguistics. |
| <b>Dialect Prestige</b>          | “languages are socially stratified” (Grondelaers & Hout, 2015, p. 62)   |
| <b>Sociolinguistics</b>          | “Sociolinguistics is a well-established branch of linguistics that focuses on the study of the impact of society, including the impact of social context, on the way language is used” (Tarone, 2007, p. 837).  |
| <b>Southern American English</b> | The dialect of individuals who live in the southern region of the United States Clopper and Pisoni (2006). See Table 2 for a list of southern states.   |



|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Standard American English &amp;<br/>Mainstream American<br/>English</b> | “The medium of writing in the English Language”<br>(Snell & Andrews, 2017, p. 298) |
|--|--|

My thesis is divided in this way. An examination of previous research, in the “Literature Review” chapter, will be used to compile a list of questions that was sent out to speech-language pathologists, linguists, and non-expert participants. The responses were then collected and analyzed through various means described in the “Methods & Materials” chapter. The “Results” chapter took the data from the surveys and then analyzed and interpreted the information to establish the state of dialect perceptions and assessments. The “Conclusion” chapter details any additional exploration of dialect perceptions and assessments, noting limitations of my investigation and suggesting future research to contribute to the fields of dialectology and speech language pathology.

## Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

To fully understand the connection of perceptual dialectology and speech pathology I will provide background and contextualization related to my investigation. The outcome of my study will then indicate the need for further research on this topic.

*Dialect Varieties of American English and Salient Features*

Geographically, dialects and accents exist in various parts of the world and represent the variations of mainstream languages. Clopper and Smijanac (2014) identify speaking rate and consonant and vowel intervals and factors for distinguishing by native and nonnative dialect speakers in the same country. Furthermore, Clopper and Smijanac (2014) suggest six dialect varieties in the United States related to geographical region: Mid- Atlantic, Midland, New England, Northern, Southern, and Western states comprise these regions.

(Clopper & Pisoni 2006, p. 302)

Table 2: Lists the states associated with each regional variety of American English.

| <b>Region</b>       | <b>States Associated with this Region</b>   |
|---------------------|---|
| <b>Mid-Atlantic</b> | New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland  |
| <b>Midland</b>      | Illinois, Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, Indiana, and Ohio   |
| <b>New England</b>  | Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island   |
| <b>North</b>        | Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Indiana, and New York   |
| <b>South</b>        | Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Mississippi, Alabama, Tennessee, Georgia, Florida, Louisiana, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia. |
| <b>West</b>         | Washington, Oregon, California, Idaho, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Montana, and Wyoming,   |
| <b>Unspecified</b>  | North Dakota, South Dakota, Pennsylvania, Alaska, and Hawaii  |

In discussing different varieties of English, Brent, Atagi, Akbik, and Bonifield (2016) examined listeners from different countries' (the United States, England, New Zealand, Ireland, South Africa, Australia, and Scotland) to find that listeners are able to distinguish between native and nonnative dialects by identifying “holistic distance from the regional standard, specific acoustic-phonetic features, and speaking rate” as contributing factors (115).

Acoustic-phonetic features contribute to speech recognition and phoneme recognition. Regarding phoneme recognition, vowels exhibit significant variability in dialects of American English (Jacewich et al. 2011). Jacewich et al. (2011) identified the South, the Midland and the North as three United States regions where vowel pronunciations diverge from mainstream American English in regard to

“positional variation, systematic differences, duration and the amount of spectral change over the course of vowels” (683). As my study was conducted in the geographic South and mainly centers around Southern American English, I will now discuss characteristics of this dialect.

Speakers of Southern American English tend to exhibit the “Southern City Shift,” although varieties of this shift exist differently across states like “Virginia, North and South Carolina, southern Missouri and Kentucky” (Jacewich et al. 2011, p. 684). (“Shift” in this context means moving away from mainstream American English.) Features of the Southern City Shift include certain characteristics: pronunciation of the diphthong /aɪ/ as in “buy” or “hi” as /a/ as in “cot”, pronunciation of the front-mid vowel /e/ as in “email” as /s/ as in “bet”, and swapping pronunciation of the high-front vowels /i/ as in “beat” as /ɪ/ “bit” (Knight & Herd, 2015; Jacewich et al. 2011). Syntactic features also differ in Southern American English speakers when compared to mainstream American English speakers. Haddad (2011) and Wood and Zanuttini (2018) identify certain modalities of personal dative usage as a characteristic of Southern American English. Personal datives are defined as pronouns appearing after verbs that conflict with the preceding subject (Webelhuth & Dannenberg 2006). Examples include “He bought him a hat” and “They ate them some dinner.” This usage of datives tends to be more commonly used in Appalachian English.

Figure 2 (adapted from Kendall & Fridland, 2012) indicates the positions of American English vowels in the oral cavity (296). Front, central and back represent the tongue’s position in the oral cavity. High, mid and low represent the tongue’s

height. Vowels in bold represent tension in the tongue and un-bolded vowels represent lax or loosening of the tongue. Underlined vowels indicate lip rounding.

Figure 2: International Phonetic Alphabet Vowel Chart for American English

|             | Front             | Central                             | Back                                    |
|-------------|-------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| <b>High</b> | <b>i</b><br><br>ɪ |                                     | <u><b>U</b></u><br><br>ʊ                |
| <b>Mid</b>  | <b>e</b><br><br>ɜ | <b>a</b> <b>s</b><br><br>a<br><br>n | <u><b>ɔ</b></u><br><br><br><br><b>ɚ</b> |
| <b>Low</b>  | æ                 | <br><br>a                           | <br><br><b>a</b>                        |

(adapted from Kendall & Fridland 2012, p. 296)

Kendall and Fridland (2012) identify the “Northern City Shift,” from the Mid-Midwestern dialect and the “Southern Vowel Shift” for Southern dialects. Features of the Northern City Shift include backing or shortening and lowering the pronunciation of the vowels /ɪ/ and /ɜ/, as in the words bit and text: raising /æ/ and

tensing /i/ and /e/, as in *fee* and *bed* (Kendall & Fridland, 2012, p. 780). Speakers of Southern American English exhibit the following traits of the Southern Vowel Shift: interchanging the pronunciation of /e/ and /s/ and /i/ and /l/, such as [ssl] for “sale” and [krik] for “creek”- in Appalachian English, a variety of Southern American English (Knight & Herd, 2015; Jacewich et al. 2011; Kendall & Fridland, 2012). However, Kendall and Fridland (2012) suggest that not all speakers remain in the dialect patterns associated with their region of residency. Pronunciation and dialect usage depend on the personal preference, situational differences surrounding individuals, (i.e. codeswitching) and listeners’ experience with the dialect (Kendall & Fridland, 2012 p. 780-792). Knight and Herd (2015) Jacewich et al. (2011), and Kendall and Fridland (2012) indicate that dialect usage is influenced by linguistic features, as well as social variables, cultural influences, geographic residency, and personal choices. Therefore, participants in my study may have their own perceptions of their own dialect and the dialects of others because of a myriad of contributing factors for dialect usage.

Previous research asserts that some dialects, especially African American English, can be stigmatized. A study from Billings (2005) noted that white subjects were more likely to identify other participants as African American if their quality of their speech was “abstract and/or hard to comprehend.” The use of Standard American English, as opposed to a dialect variety of English, gives listeners the impression that speakers, regardless of race or ethnicity, are “competent” (70-71). Rickford and King (2016) studied the claims of the jurors in the George Zimmerman trial in the murder of Trayvon Martin that witness Jeantel was “hard to understand”

and “not credible” because of her dialect (950). Rickford and King’s (2016) results also imply that usage of Standard American English may have improved her credibility in the eyes of the jurors. The results of Rickford and King (2016) and juror testimonials indicate that the perception of Standard American English as superior to non-standard dialects does indeed exist in the minds of non-linguist Americans.

Day-Vines et al. (2009) identifies African American English as language that receives significant stigmatization despite being a source of “ethnic pride, racial identification and social solidarity” for members of the African American community (71). Day-Vines et al. (2009) cites the 1996 resolution of the Oakland California Unified School District as a landmark move in continuing discrimination against speakers of non-mainstream dialects (71). The purpose of this resolution was to require educators to ensure that “all students obtain fluency in Standard American English”; however, Day-Vines et al. (2009) suggest that this resolution was improperly characterized in the media as way to remove non-standard dialects from the school system (71). Although the purpose of this resolution was intended towards preparing students with non-standard dialects to function in a society that glorifies Mainstream American English, the resolution contributed to stigmatizing non-standard dialects by implying they were not as prestigious as Standard American English.



*Perceptual Dialectology*

Dunstan and Jaeger (2015) investigated the idea that speakers of Appalachian English experience dialect-related difficulties, such as increased discomfort during class, a deterrent to public speaking, an influence on poor or reduced self-esteem, a hindrance when attempting professional behavior, and a need to prove intellectual intelligence (786-792). Dialect-caused emotional distress is the result of various disparities, stigmatization, and stereotypical perceptions of speakers of non-mainstream American English. Johnson et al. (2017) identified a relationship between usage of non-standard American English and performance on assessments that measure word reading as a possible cause for academic performance disparities between non-standard American English speakers and mainstream American English speakers.

*African American English and Stigmatization*

Table 3 shows the linguistic characteristics of African American English Jackson and Pearson, (2010) and Horton-Ikard et al. (2009).

Table 3: Features of African American English

| <b>CHARACTERISTICS</b>                                     | <b>EXAMPLES</b>  |
|--|--|
| Nonstandard subject and verb agreement                     | They was going to school.  |
| Removal of possessives                                     | That his cat.  |
| Deletion of BE verbs                                       | “She crazy”<br><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?V=msmmtf9ns-8">https://www.youtube.com/watch?V=msmmtf9ns-8</a>                             |
| Habitual BE  | She be sleeping.   |
| Use of done to show competition                            | She done did it.   |
| Omission of -ING and -ED on verbs                          | "I drop my Hot Pocket"<br><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?V=4fdeoxkpk70">https://www.youtube.com/watch?V=4fdeoxkpk70</a>                  |
| Use of FINNA   | I'm finna go.  |
| Nonstandard tense usage                                    | We eat this morning.   |
| Nonstandard usage of the possessive form of nouns/pronouns | "I write they name on a piece of paper"<br><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?V=zpxq7frzgyq">https://www.youtube.com/watch?V=zpxq7frzgyq</a> |

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| Double negation | “Ain’t nobody got time for that”<br><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?V=ydmph4mxt3g">https://www.youtube.com/watch?V=ydmph4mxt3g</a>                 |
| Metathesis      | “My older daughter aks me to buy her some shoes”<br><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?V=-rqz7ljh7au">https://www.youtube.com/watch?V=-rqz7ljh7au</a> |
| Use of AIN’T    | I aint do that.   |

To better understand the impact of dialect stigmatization, the testimony of Rachel Jeantel, a witness in the 2013 trial of George Zimmerman for the murder of Trayvon Martin, should be examined. Rickford and King (2016) assert that “Jeantel’s dialect was found guilty as a prelude to and contributing element in Zimmerman’s acquittal” after identifying juror statements that described Jeantel as ‘hard to understand’ and ‘not credible’. In the end, despite her centrality to the case . . . Her testimony played no role whatsoever in their decision’ (Juror Maddy, as reported in Bloom 2014:148)” (950). In the 2013 trial, Jeantel’s dialect “incomprehensibility” was a contributing factor for the jury’s decision to find her testimony unconvincing. Other examples are not rare. During a trial where the witness was a speaker of Aboriginal English in Central Australia the word “properly” was incorrectly transcribed as “probably” by a court reporter for a witness who spoke Aboriginal English (Rickford & King, 2016, p. 952). This misstep hindered the witness’s testimony and impeded correct understanding of court records. In another case an interpreter was required for a defendant who spoke a language similar to American English: however, one was not appointed until after the transcript of the defendant, incorrectly reflecting the deposition, was identified as rationale for why an interpreter should be granted (Rickford & King, 2016, p. 952-

953). Because of dialect incomprehensibility, all these individuals' testimonies were misrepresented.

In addition to dialect incomprehensibility, dialect stigmatization plays a significant role in listeners' perception of African American English. Day-Vines et al. (2009) identify the educator Robert Williams as a predominant influence for stigmatizing of African American English. Williams originally identified African American English as Ebonics, which he said meant "black sounds" and reduced the cultural complexities of various varieties of African American Englishes (Day-Vines et al. 70). Although William's characterization of African American English was lacking in logic, Billings (2005) credits him with identifying how speakers of African American English are unfairly stereotyped and judged by their teachers (68). To avoid these unfair characterizations, individuals may code-switch to the standard dialect or receive modification services provided by speech-language pathologists.

#### *Speech-language pathologists and Dialects of Non-mainstream American English*

Despite speech-language pathologists as sources from which to receive dialect and accent modification services, research has shown that speech-language pathologists themselves experience difficulties when differentiating between dialects and specific language impairments. Robinson and Norton (2019) found that 62% of African American males are under identified as requiring speech therapy, but 14% of African American males are overidentified, which means that 76% of these individuals are identified for one extreme or another.

Speech-language pathologists may use inappropriate materials to identify speech/language disorders or they are unable to distinguish between African American English (also called AAVE) and speech-language disorders. To address this problem, Gregory and Oetting (2018) catalogue multiple speech, language, and dialect assessments that accurately identify specific language impairments when the speakers exhibit characteristics of non-mainstream American English. In my research, the participants were cognizant of this problem when asked to address the factors that influence dialect usage and identification.

Educationally, dialect-influenced usage has been shown as a possible contributor to negative academic performance by Dunstan and Jaeger (2015). For example, the characteristics mentioned in Table 3 are not features of Mainstream American English. Edwards et al. (2014) suggest that speakers of African American English who exhibit strong usage of the dialect may display difficulties comprehending Mainstream American English and vice versa, which implies that these speakers may struggle when reading, writing, or speaking in Standard American English.

### *Cultural Awareness in the Field of Speech-Language Pathology*

Culture in various other American Speech and Hearing Association (ASHA) documents is used in reference to cultural competency. Cultural competency is “the routine application of culturally appropriate health care interventions and practices” (Wells, 2000, pp. 191-193). Cultural competency among speech-language pathologists, as outlined by ASHA, implies that culture may influence the

“assessment, treatment, and management” of services provided by speech-language pathologists (Cultural Competence n.d. p. 8). Regarding services, clinicians should be mindful of how a client’s values and perceived norms are shaped by cultural dimensions. In this thesis, I will indicate that cultural variability may make clients’ dialects different from that of their speech-language pathologist (Hofstede, 2011). “Knowledge Outcomes,” identified by ASHA, as specifically related to dialects, include Standard IV-B, Standard IV-C and Standard IV-D. (Make Table here) Standard IV-B, Standard IV-C and Standard IV-D require speech-language pathologists to exhibit comprehension of communication and swallowing mechanisms and to note the extent that linguistics and culture affect these processes (2020 Certification Standards in Speech-Language Pathology., 2020, n.d.). Since culture is identified in three “Knowledge Outcomes,” ASHA training must play a significant role in the workload of a speech-language pathologists. These “Knowledge Outcomes” suggest that speech-language pathologists should be qualified to identify the difference between dialects and speech-language impairments; however, research indicates that Speech-language pathologists do inaccurately identify dialects as speech/language impairments (Robinson and Norton, 2019). To fully understand how speech-language pathologists interpret dialects in a field that focuses on disorders, my study examines their perspectives by analyzing their educational experience and their work experience. Linguists, as a field that is language centered, with a perspective on description of language, will be compared to speech-language pathologists.

To better comprehend the professional perspectives, individuals without special training related to linguistics or speech-language pathology, called “non-expert participants,” will be surveyed in addition to the above-mentioned expert consultants. The intent of including these perspectives is to get a holistic view of dialects from multiple perspectives and to use these perspectives to discern the views of non-ordinary college students, compare their perspectives to that of expert linguists and speech-language pathologists in relation to theory and practice, and to describe the qualifications of linguists and speech-language pathologists to administer speech assessments, language assessments, and dialect assessments and their experience with these assessments.

### Chapter 3: QUALITATIVE METHODS AND MATERIALS

In this chapter, I will outline the research methods and materials used to conduct this study. All methods and materials mentioned in this chapter received approval from the Institutional Review Board at the University of Mississippi (<http://research.olemiss.edu/irb>). (Appendix E)

#### *Consultant Participant Selection*

Consultant speech-language pathologists and linguists employed at nine southern colleges and universities were contacted via email to participate in this study. Institutional qualifications were a R1 Research Universities rating by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education scale (United States Department of Education, 2015) and a Linguistics or Speech-language pathology/Communication Sciences and Disorders/Communicative Disorders program. The R1 designation was chosen to ensure that the universities where faculty were contacted had similar research and academic criteria. Additional criteria were chosen to ensure that consultants are knowledgeable on the subjects on which they are reporting. Specifically, the consultant speech-language pathologists and linguists must currently reside in a southern state and be over the age of 18. These criteria indicate that the consultants are somewhat familiar as adults with the Southern American English dialect on which they will be asked to report. A Master's degree in the area of Speech-Language Pathology/Communication Sciences and Disorders/Communicative Disorders or a Doctoral degree in the field of linguistics indicates the validity of their professional positions. Additionally, the



key words L1 acquisition, L2 acquisition, accent, dialects/regional dialects, dialectology, sociolinguistics, language assessments, phonological assessments, dialect assessments, regional accents, Southern American English, and African American English relating to dialects were selected to identify that the consultants were qualified in their specific areas (key words are defined in the introductory chapter). The selection criteria ensure that the consultants have education in the areas about which they will be interviewed. These professions were selected because speech-language pathologists and linguists serve as experts in their respective fields, are qualified to explain the technical aspects of administering a phonological or language assessment, establish the norms for Broadcast American English in their respective fields, or detail their experiences working with (anonymous) individuals who speak dialect variations of American English. The selected consultant speech-language pathologists and linguists were identified by reviewing their institution's websites to identify if they matched participant criteria and keywords in their biography to ensure that they were knowledgeable about dialects. These consultants were contacted via email to inform them of this study, their rights as participants and provided a questionnaire to complete.

Thirty-nine individuals met these criteria (36 linguists and 3 speech-language pathologists). These individuals were contacted via email listed on their university's websites and their responses were recorded on Google Sheets. All participants were given a minimum of three weeks to complete the survey and a four-week maximum deadline.

*Consultant Survey Design and Implementation*

The questionnaire (adapted from Pederson 1974) consists of ten questions that allow the consultants to describe their backgrounds, familiarity with the Southern American English dialect, and any professional experiences with dialects and dialect assessments. Assessment questions were chosen after a careful review of literature related to the following words: L1 acquisition, L2 acquisition, accent, dialects, perceptual dialectology, sociolinguistics, assessments, Southern American English, and African American English (definitions are provided in the introductory chapter).

*Non-Expert Participant Selection*

Non-expert participants were selected from various colleges and universities across the United States. The primary qualifications required participants to be 18 years old or older and not pursuing or have pursued a degree in Speech-language pathology/Communication Sciences and Disorders/Communicative Disorders or Linguistics. These participants were contacted through email, word of mouth, and social networking applications. After being contacted, the participants were given a link to a Google Form to fill out a brief dialect assessment (Appendix B). Questions for this assessment were chosen after reviewing prior research related to the words L1 acquisition, L2 acquisition, accent, dialects/regional dialects, dialectology, sociolinguistics, language assessments, phonological assessments, dialect assessments, regional accents, Southern American English, and African American English. Sixty-seven responses were received, and 49 were selected after reviewing qualifying criteria.

*Participants Survey Design and Implementation*

Questions for the non-expert participant survey design was taken after reviewing other surveys (Appendix B). All participants were given a minimum of three weeks to complete the survey and two months to complete the dialect assessment survey. Responses were then reviewed for data analysis.

*Analysis of Expert Participant Data*

Data was collected from consultants via a survey (Appendix A). Responses from this survey were analyzed for specific insight from professionals in the fields of Speech-language pathology or Linguistics. The specific information related to qualifications to administer dialect assessments, dialects, specific dialect features, and experience with dialects. These responses were then compared to prior literature for converging or diverging perspectives via key words (L1 acquisition, L2 acquisition, accent, dialects/regional dialects, dialectology, sociolinguistics, language assessments, phonological assessments, dialect assessments, regional accents, Southern American English, and African American English) used in isolation or in phrases.

*Analysis of Non-Expert Participant Data*

Data was collected via a Google Form for non-expert participants. Responses for multiple choice questions were turned into percent averages for the following choices: Strongly Agree, Agree, Strongly Disagree, Disagree, and I do not know.

Percentages were calculated using the following formula

$$\frac{\text{number of responses for a particular choice}}{\text{total number of responses}} \times 100.$$
 The percentages were then converted

to pie charts using Microsoft Office: Excel.

After reviewing the results, raw percentages that show what most respondents selected were unclear. A significant number of responses showed almost equal splits between responses with approximately less than six percentage points of difference. To improve these results for more accurate data analysis, the choices were combined Agree and Strongly agree and Disagree and Strongly Disagree. Questions that required short or long responses were analyzed using key words that were mentioned in multiple answers or that exist in prior research, key words in survey responses from consultants or the key words identified when searching for consultants. Finally, I grouped the responses for discussing the most significant results.

In this chapter I have outlined the procedure for recruiting participants, collecting surveys from two populations and analyzing the resulting responses. The data collected will be detailed in the next chapter in the form of graphs used to ensure easy identification of results, followed by detailed explanations of graph interpretation.

## Chapter 4: RESULTS

*Expert Participant Data*

The following responses were gathered from Survey 2. Twenty-three Linguists and three Speech-language pathologists were contacted to participate in this assessment. Six unique participant responses were received and selected. The following responses were received.

Q1) If you were not born in the United States of America, please indicate your country of origin (Responses to this question were generalized to protect the privacy of participants).

Participants D1, D2, and D4 indicated their hometown as a state in the Mid-Western region of the United States. Participants D3 and D6 indicated their hometown as a state in the Southern region of the United States, and participant D5 indicated their hometown as a country in Southern Europe. All participants indicated that their current resident as a state in the Southern region of the United States.

Q2) What is the highest degree you obtained?

Participants D1, D2, D3, D4, and D5 responded Doctoral degree and participant D6 responded Master's degree.

Q3) Did you obtain any specializations or certifications while completing your degree?

If so, what are these specializations or certifications?

Participant D1 responded "no" and participants D2 and D3 responded none.

Participant D4 indicated specialization or certification in second language phonology (foreign accent, pronunciation pedagogy, EFL/ESL/JLF (Japanese as a Foreign

Language) pedagogy, and language contact (World Englishes from the perspective of SLA). Participant D5 indicated specialization or certification in Morphosyntax and Neurolinguistics. Participant D6 indicated certification with a Certificate of Clinical Competency.

Q4) Briefly describe any coursework you have completed while attending college related to dialects. (if applicable)

All participants identified some form of multicultural or dialect-based coursework or education. Topics covered in these courses were: language variety, history of English, special topics course on analyzing variation, language and society, sociolinguistics, seminar on phonetic transcription of dialects, syntactic variation, applied linguistics, sociolinguistic methods, linguistic anthropology, intro to linguistics, American English, dialect variation, World Englishes, Creoles and L2 perception, foreign accent courses, linguistics, phonology, historical linguistics, First Nations language (Lillooet, Salish), typical and atypical language development in a Greek language variation (Cypriot Greek), Southern English, and Southern African American English.

Q5) Briefly describe any training you have completed related to dialects (if applicable).

Participant D1 indicated experience in dialect variation as a result of their career work. Participant D2 indicated extensive training related to dialects. Participant D3 indicated specialization in American Dialects and knowledge of protocols and tools such as Praat and GIS software. Participant D4 indicated indirect knowledge of the phonology of World Englishes (e.g., Malaysian English) and L2 Englishes.

Participant D5 indicated no official training but does identify self-training “by reading books and academic articles on the language variations (dialects)”.

Participant D6 indicated no special training related to dialects.

Q6) Have you administered a standardized phonological assessment to a speaker of Southern American English? \_\_\_\_\_yes    no \_\_\_\_\_ Briefly describe this experience.

Participants D1, D2, D3, and D4 all indicated “No” they have not administered a standardized phonological assessment to a speaker of Southern American English.

Participant D5 indicated “Yes” they have administered a standardized phonological assessment to a speaker of Southern American English. Participant D5 identified studying various books and articles regarding mainstream English and the two southern dialects. The participant then used their educational background and experience “to design very thorough experimental tasks to identify and learn further about those differences, both across the two dialects”. Participant D6 indicated “Yes” they have administered a standardized phonological assessment to a speaker of Southern American English. Participant D6 described their experience administering this assessment as without any difficulty, since “most dialectal variations of southern dialect are vowels and were not a concern during testing”.

Q) 7 you administered a standardized language assessment to a speaker of Southern American English? \_\_\_\_\_yes    no \_\_\_\_\_ Briefly describe this experience.

Participants D1, D2, and D4 indicated “No” they have not administered a standardized language assessment to a speaker of Southern American English.

Participants D3 indicated no response. Participant D5 indicated “Yes” they have

administered a standardized language assessment to a speaker of Southern American English. Participant D5 described their experience by stating, “The tests I used verified the predictions, i.e. we found the grammatical and vocabulary differences between mainstream English and Southern English/ Southern African American English we expected to find, based on the standardized testing and previous research on the dialects. However, not the entire population tested (220 children so far) exhibited a strong variation to Mainstream American English”. Participant D6 identified the experience as “Good.” The further identified they “Did not have difficulty with the testing instrument. I made sure to count differences as noted in the manual as correct.”

Q8) What aspects, if any, did you take into account when you administered a standardized phonological assessment to a speaker of Southern American English? Participants D1 and D3 indicated no response. Participants D2 and D4 indicated NA. Participant D5 indicated that they “considered not only what was included in the assessment tool(s) itself, but also what was reported in previous research on the two Southern dialects . . . I took into consideration the participants age, and where they are growing up, as well as the parents educational and cultural background, i.e. where the parents were born and where they grew up” Participant D6 identified, “None as the consonants are standard”.

Q9) What aspects, if any, did you take into account when you administered a standardized language assessment to a speaker of Southern American English? Participants D1 and D3 indicated no response. Participants D2 and D4 indicated NA. Participant D5 indicated that they “considered not only what was included in the



assessment tool(s) itself, but also what was reported in previous research on the two Southern dialects . . . I took into consideration the participants age, and where they are growing up, as well as the parents educational and cultural background, i.e. where the parents were born and where they grew up” Participant D6 identified syntax differences.

Q10) While administering these assessments what aspects of Southern American English, if any, did you notice that are different from Broadcast American English? Participants D1, D3, and D6 indicated no response. Participants D2 and D4 indicated NA. Participant D5 indicated that in the research study they were conducting the noticed, “For some of the children, especially those that were between the ages of 3 – 5 years old we saw a very consistent use of the Southern pronunciation for the tested words. Additionally, we noticed differences in the vocabulary – the way some words were used in the sentence and how different their meaning was, compared to Mainstream American English) and grammar – drop of certain inflectional suffixes, use of infinitival forms instead of 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular, etc.” Participant D5 identified these aspects as “typical in many other non-mainstreaming American English dialects.”

Q11) How did you account for these differences when offering recommendations to clients or conducting research?

Participants D1 and D3 indicated no response. Participants D2 and D4 indicated NA. Participant D5 identified they background in linguistics and not Speech-Language Pathology prevented them for offering recommendations to clients; however, This participant “used experimental material (standardized and customized) that helped

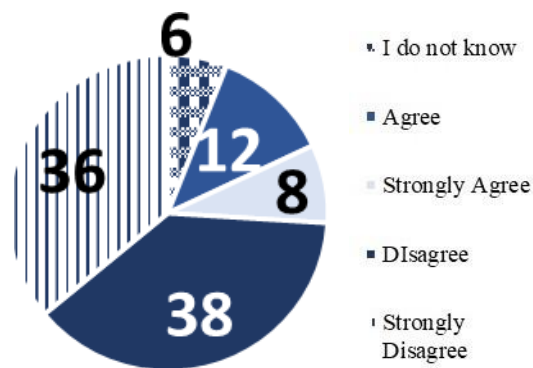
me clarify what is a grammatical disability and what is a dialectal difference. This is something that will be included in not only and publication or presentation, but also in the official summary of results that will be sent to the children's parents."

Participant D6 stated that they "did not consider the differences as a disorder, so they were not addressed as a recommendation. I have done no research".

*Non-Expert Participant Data*

The following responses were gathered from Survey 1. Sixty-seven unique participant responses were received, and 49 responses were selected. Eighteen responses were discarded due to lack of responses for all prompts. The following responses were received.

Because of my dialect, people have a hard time understanding me when I speak



Graphs A1 and A2: The statement (“Because of my dialect, people have a hard time understanding me when I speak”) received 49 responses. The responses and percentage for each response were:

I do not know - 6.0%

Agree - 12.0%

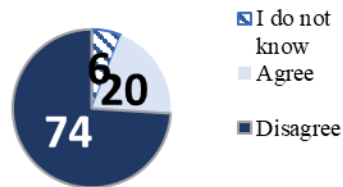
Strongly Agree - 8.0%

Disagree - 38.0%,

Strongly Disagree - 36.0%.

The choice “Disagree” received the most responses, totaling 38.0%.

Because of my dialect, people  
have a hard time  
understanding me when I  
speak



To better interpret the data for the statement “Because of my dialect, people have a hard time understanding me when I speak” the choices Agree and Strongly Agree were combined, as were the choices Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The responses and percentage for each response were:

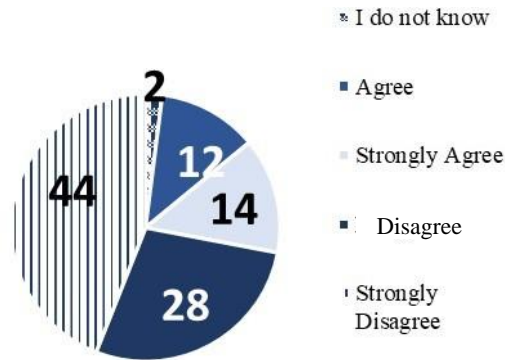
I do not know - 6.0%,

Agree - 20.0%,

Disagree - 74.0%.

The choice “Disagree” received the most responses, totaling 74.0%.

I have a Standard (or Broadcast)  
American English dialect



Graphs A3 and A4: The statement (“I have a Standard (or Broadcast) American English dialect”) received 49 responses. The responses and percentage for each response were:

I do not know - 4.0%

Agree - 50.0%,

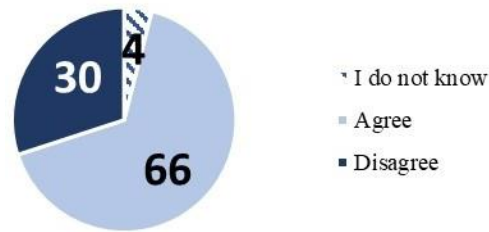
Strongly Agree - 16.0%,

Disagree - 18.0%,

Strongly Disagree - 1.0%.

The choice “Agree” received the most responses, totaling 50.0%.

I have a Standard (or Broadcast)  
American English dialect



To better interpret the data for the statement “I have a Standard (or Broadcast) American English dialect” the choices, Agree and Strongly Agree were combined, as were the choices Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The responses and percentage for each response were:

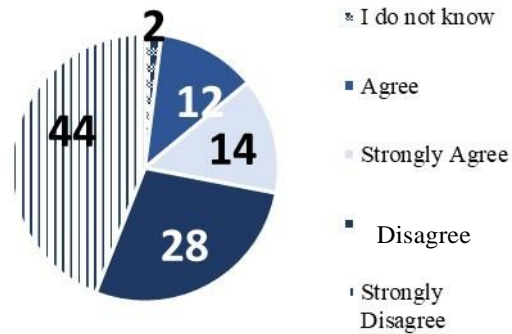
I do not know - 4.0%

Agree - 66.0%

Disagree - 30.0%.

The choice “Agree” received the most responses, totaling 66.0%.

I use code switching (the use of two languages in the same sentence)



Graphs A5 and A6: The statement ("I use code switching (the use of two languages in the same sentence)") received 49 responses. The responses and percentage for each response were:

I do not know - 2.0%

Agree - 12.0%

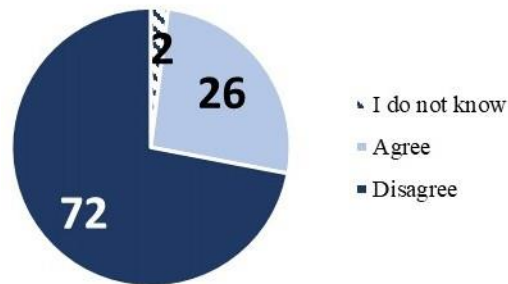
Strongly Agree - 14.0%

Disagree - 28.0%

Strongly Disagree - 44.0%.

The choice "Strongly Disagree" received the most responses, totaling 44.0%.

I use code switching (the use of two languages in the same sentence)



To better interpret the data for the statement “I use code switching (the use of two languages in the same sentence)” the choices Agree and Strongly Agree were combined, as were the choices Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The responses and percentage for each response were:

I do not know - 2.0%

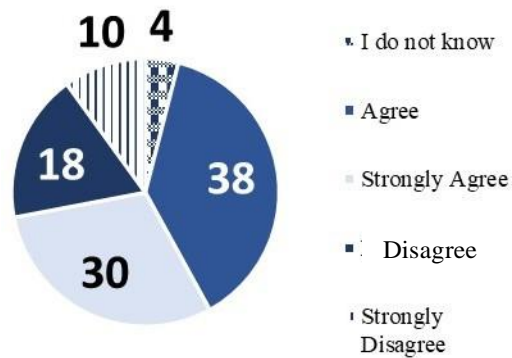
Agree - 26.0%

Disagree - 72.0%.

The choice “Disagree” received the most responses, totaling 72.0%.



Individuals are judged based on  
their dialect



Graphs A7 and A8: The statement (“Individuals are judged based on their dialect”) received 49 responses. The responses and percentage for each response were:

I do not know - 4.0%

Agree - 38.0 %

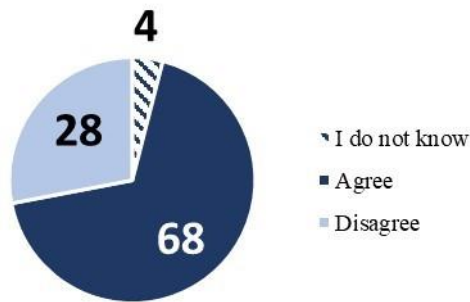
Strongly Agree - 30.0%

Disagree - 18.0%

Strongly Disagree - 10.0%

The choice “Agree” received the most responses, totaling 38.0%.

Individuals are judged based on  
their dialect



To better interpret the data for the statement “Individuals are judged based on their dialect” the choices Agree and Strongly Agree were combined, as were the choices Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The responses and percentage for each response were:

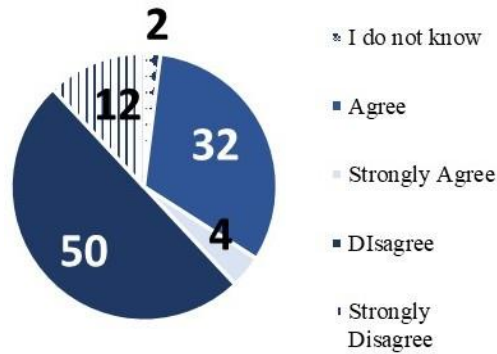
I do not know - 4.0%

Agree - 68.0%

Disagree - 28.0%

The choice “Agree” received the most responses, totaling 68.0%.

Dialects do not really matter in  
social situations



Graphs A9 and A10: The statement (“Dialects do not really matter in social situations”) received 49 responses. The responses and percentage for each response were:

I do not know - 2.0%

Agree - 32.0%

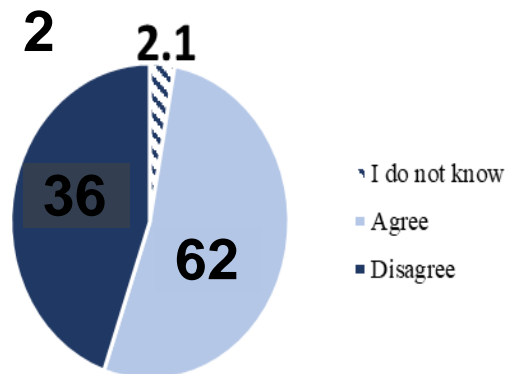
Strongly Agree - 4.0%

Disagree - 50.0%

Strongly Disagree - 12.0%

The choice “Disagree” received the most responses, totaling 50.0%.

Dialects do not really matter in social situations



To better interpret the data for the statement “Dialects do not really matter in social situations” the choices Agree and Strongly Agree were combined, as were the choices Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The responses and percentage for each response were:

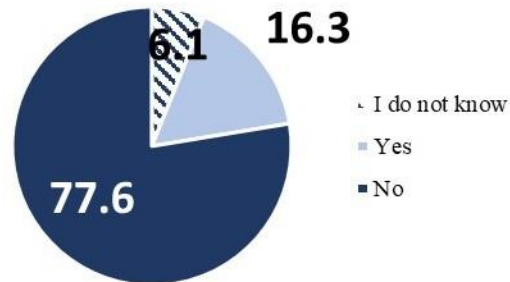
I do not know - 2.0%

Agree - 36%

Disagree - 62%

The choice “Agree” received the most responses, totaling 36.%.

Everyone who lives in the South  
has a Southern American English  
dialect



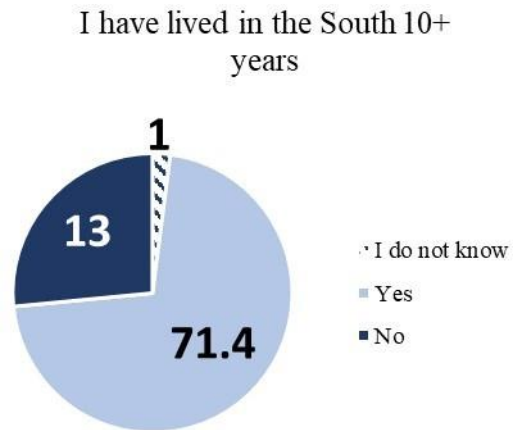
Graph A11: The statement (“Everyone who lives in the South has a Southern American English dialect”) received 49 responses. The responses and percentage for each response were:

I do not know - 6.1%

Yes - 16.3%

No - 77.6%.

The choice “No” received the most responses, totaling 77.6%.



Graph A12: The statement (“I have lived in the South 10+ years”) received 49 responses. The responses and percentage for each response were:

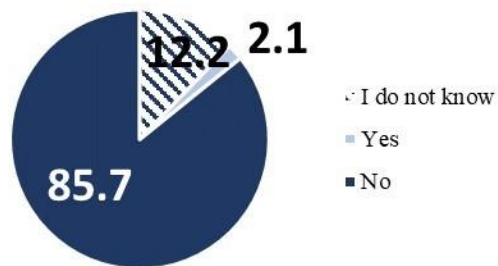
I do not know - 2.1%

Yes - 71.4%

No - 26.5.0%.

The choice “Yes” received the most responses, totaling 71.4%.

Speech language pathologists  
should work to remove dialects



Graph B1: The statement (“Speech language pathologists should work to remove dialects”) received 49 responses. The responses and percentage for each response were:

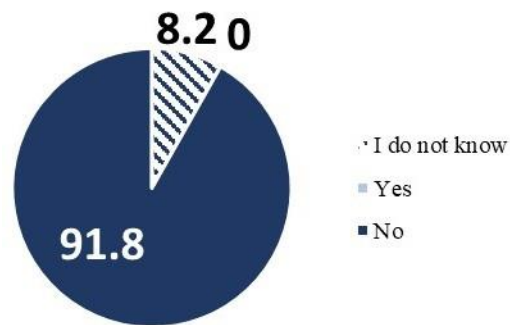
I do not know - 12.2%,

Yes - 2.1%,

No - 85.7%.

The choice “No” received the most responses, totaling 85.7%.

Speech language pathologists  
should work to remove accents



Graph B2: The statement (“Speech language pathologists should work to remove accents”) received 49 responses. The responses and percentage for each response were:

I do not know - 8.2%

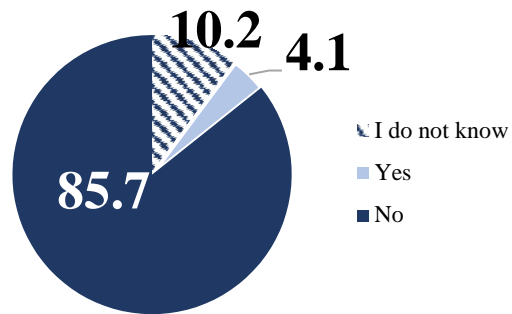
Yes - 0.0%

No - 91.8%.

The choice “No” received the most responses, totaling 91.8%.



Dialects are speech impediments  
(disorders)



Graph B3: The statement (“Dialects are speech impediments (disorders)”) received 49 responses. The responses and percentage for each response were:

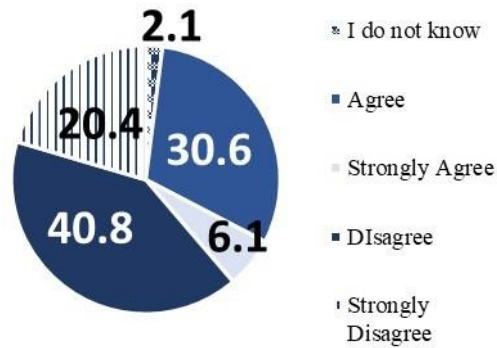
I do not know - 10.2%

Yes - 4.1%

No - 85.7%.

The choice “No” received the most responses, totaling 85.7%.

Dialects do not really matter in the  
workplace



Graphs B4 and B5: The statement (“Dialects do not really matter in the workplace”) received 49 responses. The responses and percentage for each response were:

I do not know - 2.1%

Agree - 30.6%

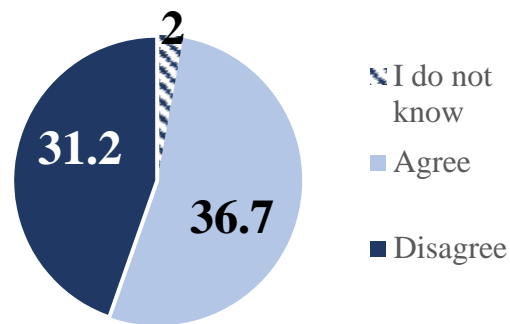
Strongly Agree - 6.1%

Disagree - 40.8%

Strongly Disagree - 20.4%.

The choice "Disagree" received the most responses, totaling 40.8%.

Dialects do not really matter in the workplace



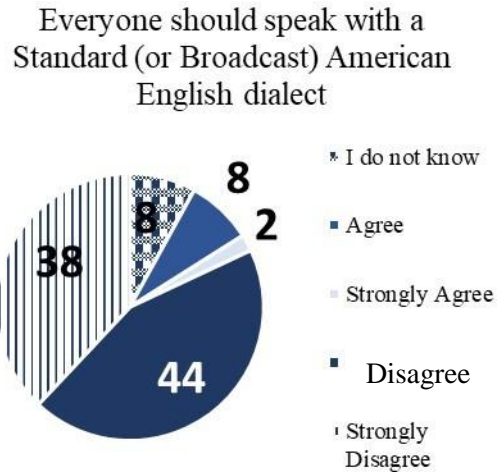
To better interpret the data for the statement “Dialects do not really matter in the workplace” the choices, Agree and Strongly Agree were combined, as were the choices Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The responses and percentage for each response were:

I do not know - 2.1%

Agree - 36.7%

Disagree - 61.2%.

The choice “Disagree” received the most responses totaling 61.2%.



Graphs B6 and B7: The statement (“Everyone should speak with a Standard (or Broadcast) American English dialect”) received 49 responses. The responses and percentage for each response were:

I do not know - 8.0%

Agree - 2.0%

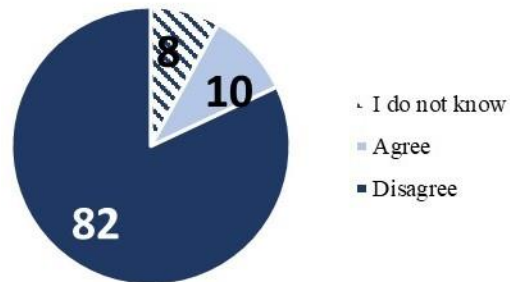
Strongly Agree - 0.0%

Disagree - 44.0%

Strongly Disagree - 38.0%.

The choice “Disagree” received the most responses, totaling 44.0%.

Everyone should speak with a  
Standard (or Broadcast) American  
English dialect



To better interpret the data for the statement “Everyone should speak with a Standard (or Broadcast) American English dialect” the choices Agree and Strongly Agree were combined, as were the choices Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The responses and percentage for each response were:

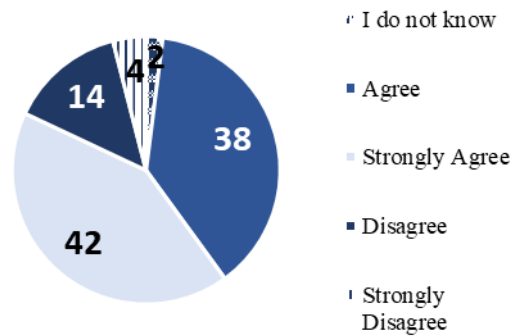
I do not know - 8.0%

Agree - 10.0%

Disagree - 82.0%.

The choice “Disagree” received the most responses, totaling 82.0%.

I speak the exact same dialect as  
my family



Graphs B8 and B9: The statement ("I speak the exact same dialect as my family") received 49 responses. The responses and percentage for each response were:

I do not know - 2.0%

Agree - 38.0%

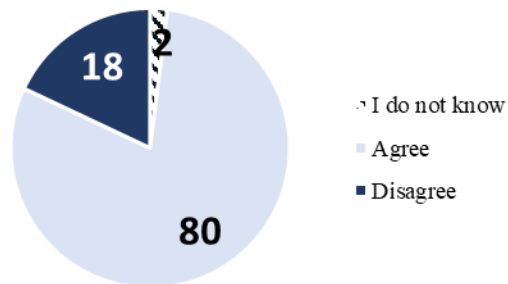
Strongly Agree - 42.0%

Disagree - 14.0%

Strongly Disagree - 4.0%.

The choice "Strongly Agree" received the most responses totaling 42.0%.

I speak the exact same dialect as  
my family



To better interpret the data for the statement "I speak the exact same dialect as my family" the choices Agree and Strongly Agree were combined, as were the choices Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The responses and percentage for each response were:

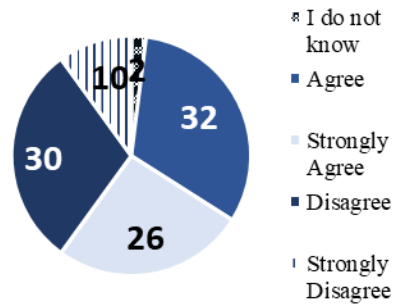
I do not know - 2.0%

Agree - 80.0%

Disagree - 18.0%.

The choice "Agree" received the most responses, totaling 80.0%.

I speak the exact same dialect as  
my friends



Graphs B10 and B11: The statement (“I speak the exact same dialect as my friends”) received 49 responses. The responses and percentage for each response were:

I do not know 2.0%

Agree - 32.0%

Strongly Agree - 26.0%

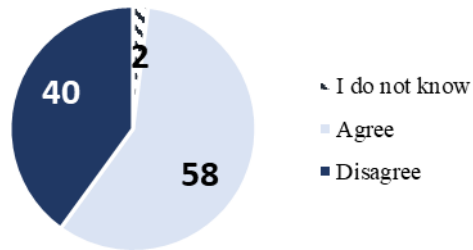
Disagree - 30.0%

Strongly Disagree - 10.0%.

The choice “Agree” received the most responses, totaling 32.0%.



I speak the exact same dialect  
as my friends



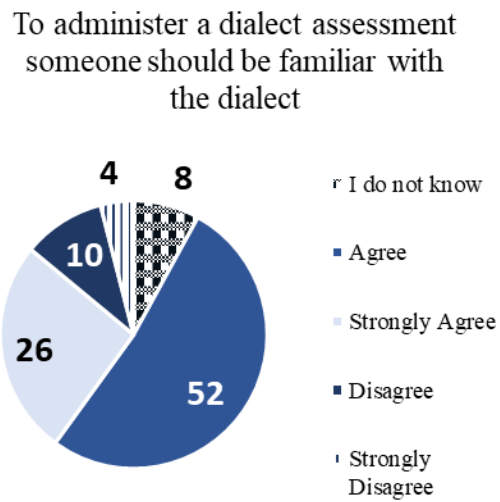
To better interpret the data for the statement “I speak the exact same dialect as my friends” the choices Agree and Strongly Agree were combined, as were the choices Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The responses and percentage for each response were:

I do not know - 2.0%

Agree - 58.0%

Disagree - 40.0%.

The choice “Agree” received the most responses, totaling 58.0%.

*Expert Consultant Survey Data*

Graphs B12 and C1: The statement (“To administer a dialect assessment someone should be familiar with the dialect”) received 49 responses. The responses and percentage for each response were:

I do not know - 8.0%

Agree - 52.0%

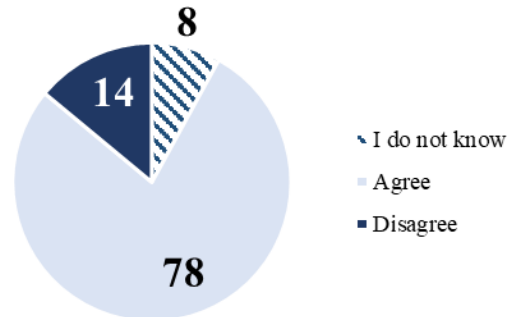
Strongly - Agree - 26.0%

Disagree - 10.0%

Strongly Disagree - 4.0%.

The choice “Agree” received the most responses, totaling 52.0%.

To administer a dialect assessment  
someone should be familiar with  
the dialect



To better interpret the data for the statement (“To administer a dialect assessment someone should be familiar with the dialect”) the choices Agree and Strongly Agree were combined, as were the choices Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The responses and percentage for each response were:

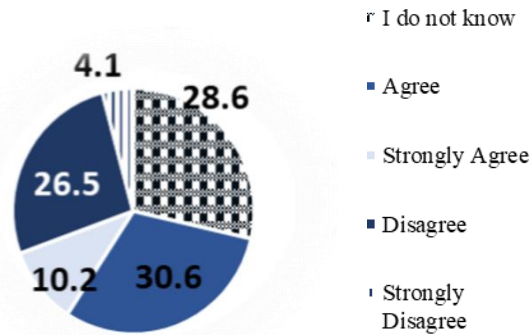
I do not know - 8.0%

Agree - 14.0%

Disagree - 78.0%.

The choice “Disagree” received the most responses, totaling 78.0%.

To administer a dialect assessment  
you must have a degree in  
Linguistics



Graphs C2 and C3: The statement (“To administer a dialect assessment you must have a degree in Linguistics”) received 49 responses. The responses and percentage for each response were:

I do not know - 28.0%

Agree - 30.6%

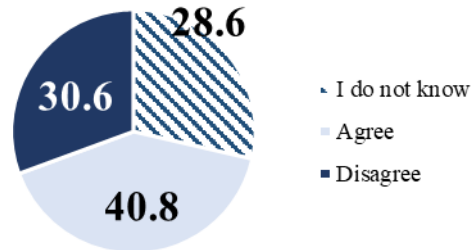
Strongly Agree - 10.2%

Disagree - 26.5%

Strongly Disagree - 4.1%.

The choice “Agree” received the most responses, totaling 30.6%.

To administer a dialect  
assessment you must have a  
degree in Linguistics



To better interpret the data for the statement (“To administer a dialect assessment someone should be familiar with the dialect”) the choices Agree and Strongly Agree were combined, as were the choices Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The responses and percentage for each response were:

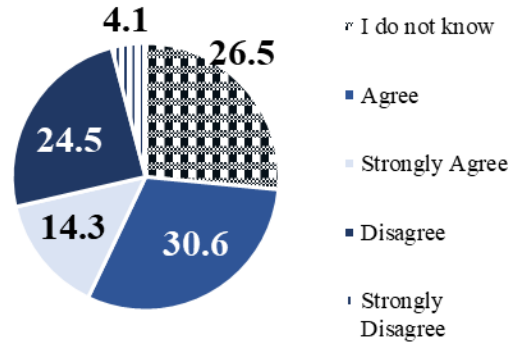
I do not know - 28.6%

Agree - 40.8%

Disagree - 30.6%.

The choice “Agree” received the most responses, totaling 40.8%.

To administer a dialect  
assessment you must have a  
degree in Speech-Language  
Pathology



Graphs C4 and C5: The statement (“To administer a dialect assessment you must have a in Speech-language pathology”) received 49 responses. The responses and percentage for each response were:

I do not know - 26.5%

Agree - 30.6%

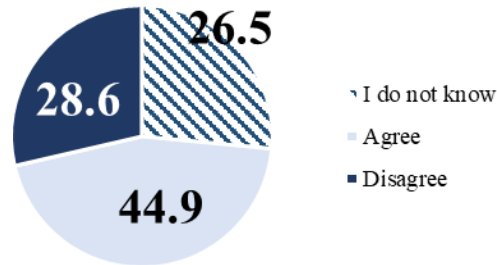
Strongly Agree - 14.3%

Disagree - 24.5%

Strongly Disagree - 4.1%.

The choice “Agree” received the most responses, totaling 30.6%.

To administer a dialect assessment you must have a degree in Speech-Language Pathology



To better interpret the data for the statement (“To administer a dialect assessment someone should be familiar with the dialect”) the choices Agree and Strongly Agree were combined, as were the choices Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The responses and percentage for each response were:

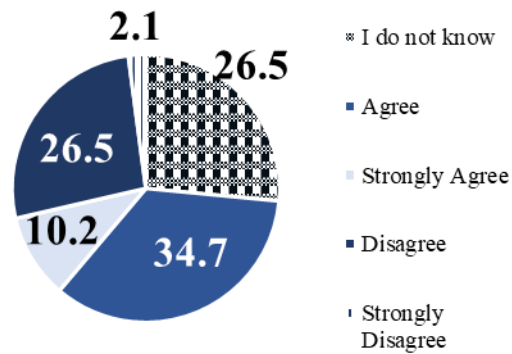
I do not know - 26.6%

Agree - 44.9%

Disagree - 28.6%

The choice “Agree” received the most responses, totaling 44.9%.

To administer a dialect  
assessment you must have at least  
a Bachelor's degree



Graphs C6 and C7: The statement (“To administer a dialect assessment you must have at least a Bachelor’s degree”) received 49 responses. The responses and percentage for each response were:

I do not know - 26.5%

Agree - 34.7%

Strongly Agree - 10.2%

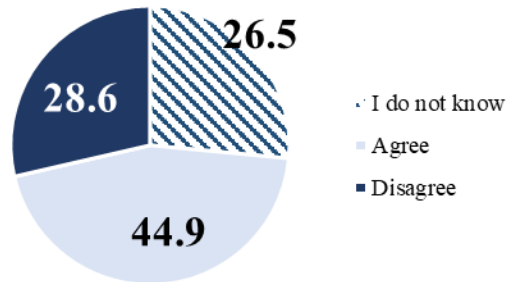
Disagree - 26.5%

Strongly Disagree - 2.1%.

The choice “Agree” received the most responses, totaling 34.7%.



To administer a dialect  
assessment you must have at least  
a Bachelor's degree



To better interpret the data for the statement (“To administer a dialect assessment you must have at least a Bachelor’s degree”) the choices Agree and Strongly Agree were combined, as were the choices Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The responses and percentage for each response were:

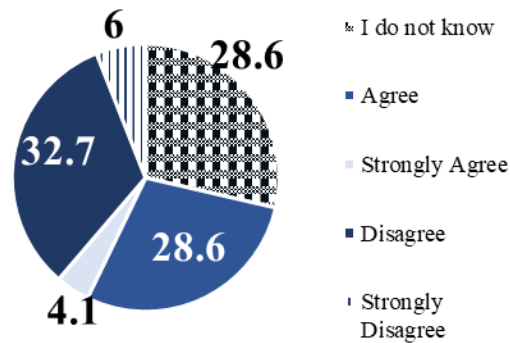
I do not know - 26.6%

Agree - 44.9%

Disagree - 28.6%.

The choice “Agree” received the most responses, totaling 44.9%.

To administer a dialect assessment  
you must have at least a Master's  
degree



Graphs C8 and C9: The statement (“To administer a dialect assessment you must have at least a Master’s degree”) received 49 responses. The responses and percentage for each response were:

I do not know - 28.6%

Agree - 28.6%

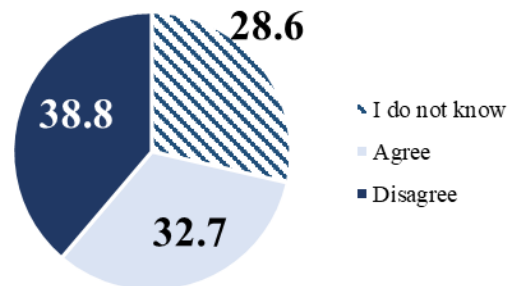
Strongly Agree - 4.1%

Disagree - 32.7%

Strongly Disagree - 6.0%

The choice “Disagree” received the most responses, totaling 32.7%.

To administer a dialect assessment  
you must have at least a Master's  
degree



To better interpret the data for the statement (“To administer a dialect assessment you must have at least a Master’s degree”) the choices Agree and Strongly Agree were combined, as were the choices Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The responses and percentage for each response were:

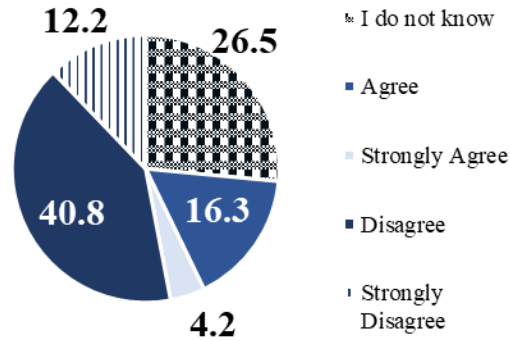
I do not know - 28.6%

Agree - 32.7%

Disagree - 38.8%.

The choice “Disagree” received the most responses, totaling 38.8%.

To administer a dialect assessment  
you must have at least a Doctoral  
degree



Graphs C10 and C11: The statement (“To administer a dialect assessment you must have at least a Doctoral degree”) received 49 responses. The responses and percentage for each response were:

I do not know - 26.5%

Agree - 16.3%

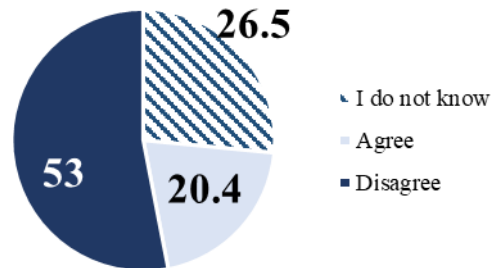
Strongly - Agree 4.2%

Disagree - 40.8%

Strongly Disagree - 12.2%

The choice “Disagree” received the most responses, totaling 40.8%.

To administer a dialect  
assessment you must have at  
least a Doctoral degree



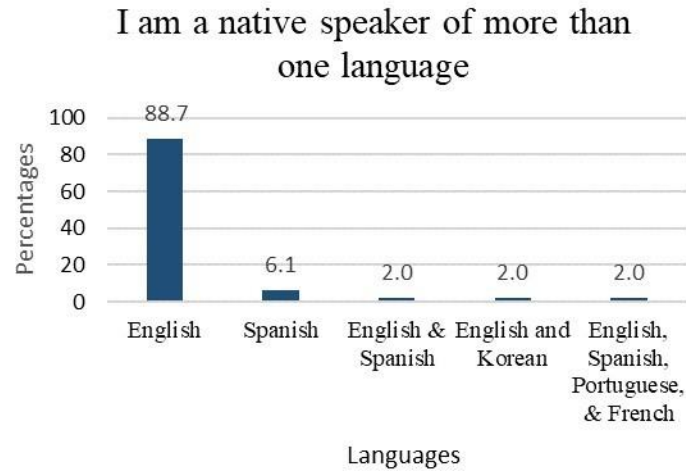
To better interpret the data for the statement (“To administer a dialect assessment you must have at least a Doctoral degree”) the choices Agree and Strongly Agree were combined, as were the choices Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The responses and percentage for each response were:

I do not know - 26.5%

Agree - 20.4%

Disagree - 53.3%

The choice “Disagree” received the most responses, totaling 53.3%.



Graph C12: The statement (“I am a native speaker of more than one language”) received 49 responses. The responses were:

English - 88.7%

Spanish - 6.1%

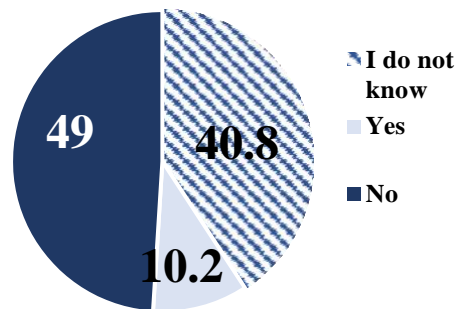
English and Spanish - 2.0%

English and Korean - 2.0%

English, Spanish, Portuguese and French - 2.0%.

The choice “English” received the most responses, totaling 88.7%.

Accents are the same as dialects



Graph D1: The statement (“Accents are the same as dialects”) received 49 responses. The responses were:

Yes -10.2%

No - 49%

I do not know – 40.8%.

The choice “No” received the most responses, totaling 49%.

The initial question for D1 was then followed by (“Please explain your response and use examples, if you can think of some”). Responses are indicated in Table 4. The any response stricken through (~~abe~~) symbolized it was not uninterpretable and not used in analyzing these responses. Brackets indicate words were added to the response to better interpret the meaning of the responses.

Table 4: Responses to the Statement (“Accents are the same as dialects”)

| <i>Identifiers</i> | <i>Response</i>  |
|--------------------|--|
| <i>Response 1</i>  | <p>An accent is how certain words are pronounced in certain regions. For example, the way I pronounce a certain word may have less of an emphasis on certain aspects of it.</p> <p>However, this very same word can be pronounced in the north with a thicker accent. An accent effects how the word will sound and there are different accents. Dialects is best thought of as language or mode of communication. I think of the of the ways the ancient people communicated through hieroglyphics. Another example is how a tribe of Indians may use a different language compared to another tribe. This difference is an example of a dialect.</p> |
| <i>Response 2</i>  | <p>From my understanding, accents are part of dialects. For example, accents are how people pronounce their words or how they “sound” when they speak whereas dialect is the bigger umbrella including accents, grammar, etc.</p>  |

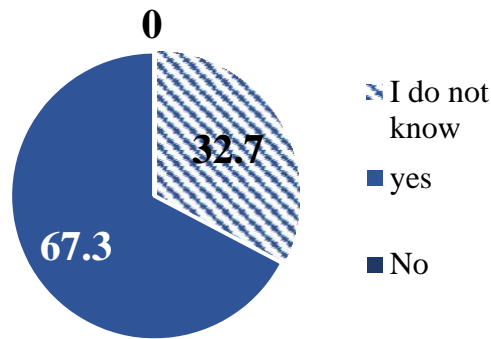


|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| <b>Response 3</b>  | I am not sure of the exact difference but I think [a] dialect is the collection of chosen words that you use in [your] vocabulary and how you use them while accents are the influx and tone of voice depending on where you are from.                          |
| <b>Response 4</b>  | They are both innate behaviors  |
| <b>Response 5</b>  | <p>A dialect is composed of certain words <del>that are person in which those words are not included in their native language.</del></p> <p>An accent is the sound of a person's voice that sounds like other people's voice that come from the same place.</p> |
| <b>Response 6</b>  | An accent is how people pronounce words depending on where someone is from or their culture. Dialect[,] how grammar or vocabulary is pronounced when someone speaks. I believe these two are similar because both are used to describe pronunciations.          |
| <b>Response 7</b>  | Accents are the twang not the specific words being said.  |
| <b>Response 8</b>  | I'm not sure dialects are [the same as accents]   |
| <b>Response 9</b>  | No they are not, my uncles have an accent when they speak English but a dialect is how people from certain region speak, so my uncles would not have a dialect  |
| <b>Response 10</b> | Dialects are your speech patterns. Accents are the certain spots in speech that are emphasized. That's how I think of them. In South Korea, there are dialects but do not refer to  |

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
|                    | them as accents. The reason why I put "yes" is because accents are dialects, but not all dialects are accents.  |
| <b>Response 11</b> | Someone can have an accent from one place but speak the dialect or "lingo" of another place   |
| <b>Response 12</b> | There are different dialects in Spanish for every country. One thing may mean something in one country but is vulgar in another. Or in the south there are so many euphemisms and phrases that are unique to this region. |
| <b>Response 13</b> | Dialect includes accents as well as grammar, word choice, etc.  |
| <b>Response 14</b> | People who speak Spanish can have different dialects and accents based on the country where they live.  |
| <b>Response 15</b> | I really don't know the difference  |
| <b>Response 16</b> | Accent is similar to [an] individuals' pronunciation. Dialects are the functions of the language itself.  |
| <b>Response 17</b> | If you have a southern accent, 9 times out of 10 you might use words like y'all <del>are</del> [or] sometimes talk in a country type of accent.   |
| <b>Response 18</b> | An accent is how your words sound based on how the people you grow up around talk and dialect is how somebody uses their words. How someone talks.  |
| <b>Response 19</b> | Dialects describe the differences in language people from different regions use.  |

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| <b>Response 20</b> | Accents are more of where you live whereas dialects are the language you speak" No, I do not believe like each accent is a dialect, but yes because I believe like Yankees and Cajuns have a different dialect but still English" |
| <b>Response 21</b> | No, I do not believe <del>like</del> each accent is a dialect, but yes because I believe like Yankees and Cajuns have a different dialect but still English   |

Society has different perceptions of dialects



Graph D2: The statement (“Society has different perceptions of dialects”) received 49 responses. The responses were:

Yes – 67.3%

No - 0%

I do not know – 32.7 %.

The choice “Yes” received the most responses totaling 67.3%.

The initial question for D2 was then followed by (“Please explain your response and use examples, if you can think of some”). Responses are indicated in Table 5.

Table 5: Responses to the Statement (“Society has different perceptions of dialects”)

| <i>Identifiers</i>       | <i>Responses</i>   |
|--------------------------|--|
| <b><i>Response 1</i></b> | Some dialects have more cache to them over others. I would say there is a hierarchy of dialects  |
| <b><i>Response 2</i></b> | Different dialects are often used to distinguish city-dwellers from rural people, which can come with a host of social perceptions. This can lead to people using these perceptions to relate dialects to social class, and even level of wealth, education, travel opportunity, or even intelligence (which is not necessarily the case). |
| <b><i>Response 3</i></b> | AAVE is a dialect that is perceived as being unintelligent when it is being used.  |
| <b><i>Response 4</i></b> | The more southern a person speaks, the less intelligent they are perceived to be.  |
| <b><i>Response 5</i></b> | Having a dialect different than those around you, people tend to ask questions or compliment it  |
| <b><i>Response 6</i></b> | Yes, society influences how we talk and what is "socially acceptable". For example, when you are working, it has   |

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
|                           | <p>come to recent attention that some people are offended when my people and I speak in our native language being Spanish. You have seen the media which "superior" people shut down this individual through insults of how inappropriate it is to talk in our native language and to go back to our country. Despite what you may believe, this is a prime example of how society influences what dialect should be used and the perception will vary per person, upbringing, region, etc.</p> |
| <b><i>Response 7</i></b>  | <p>Some people may find dialects as being a weakness for people because they think their own dialect has "superiority" or is "better."</p>  |
| <b><i>Response 8</i></b>  | <p>People often judge intelligence and socioeconomic status based on dialects.</p>  |
| <b><i>Response 9</i></b>  | <p>Many southerners believe that people with standard American accents believe themselves better than. Many northerners believe southerners with accents are dumb</p>   |
| <b><i>Response 10</i></b> | <p>Southern accents sound dumb while maybe a British one implies intelligence.</p>  |
| <b><i>Response 11</i></b> | <p>There can be many views on a particular dialect. Stereotypes do play a role in the perception of dialect as well. For instance, a southern dialect is typically associated with lower academically achieving individuals.</p>  |

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| <b><i>Response 12</i></b> | Dialects are the product of interaction between geographical variation and culture variation, and it can serve as an easy feature to label/categorize people. This can lead to oversimplifying people's characters and placing labels that's unnecessarily true to certain groups of people due to geopolitical/cultural reasons (e.g. the Southern dialect sounds unintelligent (stereotype of poor economy and lack of fancy technological advancement), whereas New England dialect sounds posh, etc.). |
| <b><i>Response 13</i></b> | I have a very southern accent since I have lived in the south all my life. Some of friends from Texas or New York speak differently than I do.   |
| <b><i>Response 14</i></b> | Everybody has different opinions. It's natural for people to think of dialects differently. For example, in South Korea, some people find dialects people's charms and other people just tease them about dialects. Many people also relate dialects to their social status. For example, if you have a Southern accent or Gangwon-do accent (Korean dialect), people think of corns and poor farming families when they are not.  |
| <b><i>Response 15</i></b> | Specifically, in the USA if you have a southern dialect or even an accent you'll probably be perceived as uneducated. Or depending on what Spanish you speak you can be  |

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
|                    | criticized for not speaking "proper Spanish" every Hispanic country including Spain believes they have proper Spanish, and even within the countries there are different dialects per region.       |
| <b>Response 16</b> | People have different perceptions of different dialects. For example, someone may not be hired at a job because they speak in African American Vernacular, which some people find "unprofessional." |
| <b>Response 17</b> | An example is the English language. It can vary from country to country or even from state to state.  |
| <b>Response 18</b> | People have difference of opinion about everything. Mostly due to the way they are brought up or who they surround themselves with.   |
| <b>Response 19</b> | Some people in society seem to think that if a certain person has a different dialect than them then they are considered lesser or demeaned.  |

## Chapter 5: DISCUSSION

*Linguists, Speech-language Pathologists and Consultants*

In this chapter I will interpret significant outcomes from my results to comprehend the connection between my research and pre-existing findings. All prompts, statements, questions and responses presented in this chapter can be found in Appendix A.

When responding to Q1, expert language consultants identified their hometowns, not their current residence. Three participants indicated one Mid-Western state and two indicated a Southern state. These responses indicate that participants may have varied outlooks regarding how they interpret dialect research and usage because dialects vary geographically. The variation in dialect usage for these three regions may influence their perceptions and identification of non-standard dialects, as linguists and speech-language pathologists use their experiences to analyze speech in context. The responses of the consultants align with the findings of Kendall and Fridland (2012), who identify distinct dialectic features of four different U.S. regions and note that these features are surprising enough to be noted. Q3 asked participants to identify any specializations or certifications that they received while obtaining their degrees. One participant identified that he/she received a Certificate of Clinical Competency from the American Speech and Hearing Association (ASHA) and he/she was contacted as a consultant speech-language pathologist. Under the “Knowledge Outcomes” of ASHA, speech-language pathologists should have some understanding of the importance of cultural and linguistic diversity as it relates to



speech and language (2018 Speech-language Pathology Certification Handbook of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2018, p. 8).

After completing requirements described by ASHA, the speech-language pathologists receive the designation Certificate of Clinical Competency-Speech-language pathology (CCC-SLP).

The expert's response is interesting because ASHA identifies eight “Knowledge Outcomes” that speech-language pathologists should receive after obtaining certification, and three of these outcomes mention cultural and linguistic diversity (2018 Speech-language pathology Certification Handbook of The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2018, p. 8). The consultant indicated that Speech-language pathologists should have some understanding of dialects, as they are cultural and linguistic diverse features of language.

For Q8, expert consultants were asked if they ever administered a standardized phonological assessment to a speaker of Southern American English, and if so, what aspects were considered when administering the assessment. Conflicting responses were noted. One participant indicated “participants’ age, and where they are growing up, as well as the parent’s educational and cultural background, i.e. where the parents were born and where they grew up” as characteristics that they considered. However, a different participant stated that since consonants were “standard” in American English, no additional aspects were considered. Responses from these professionals suggest that cultural aspects may contribute to the participants' dialect usage and performance on a standardized assessment; however, not all professionals chose to participate in this assessment.

Q8 is particularly significant because findings indicate that culture has a dynamic range of influencing aspects that largely affects dialect usage. The ASHA code of Ethics, which states, “Culture and cultural diversity can incorporate a variety of factors, including but not limited to age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity (encompasses gender expression), national origin (encompasses related aspects e.g. ancestry, culture, language, dialect, citizenship, and immigration status), race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, and veteran status. Linguistic diversity can accompany cultural diversity” (Issues in Ethics: Cultural and Linguistic Competence, 2017 paras. 3).

The responses to Q8 in my survey suggest that not everyone agrees.

When responding to Q10 “While administering these assessments what aspects of Southern American English, if any, did you notice that are different from Broadcast American English?” one participant noted a “drop of certain inflectional suffixes, use of infinitival forms instead of 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular, etc.” as divergence from Mainstream English. Another participant noted that any differences were “typical in many other non-mainstreaming American English dialects.” These responses are interesting, as they indicate that the differences between “mainstream” and Southern American English (mentioned in the research of Kendall & Fridland 2012) are noticeable to individuals in the field of linguistics or speech-language pathology, even when they have not been trained in dialectology.

### *Non-Expert Participants*

Consultants in this survey provided several interesting perspectives on dialect usage, variation, and assessments, and additional information was gathered from non-expert participants to obtain a different perspective on these topics. (All prompts, statements, questions and responses presented in the section titled “*Non-Expert Participants*” can be found in Appendix B). Clopper and Bradlow (2008) assert that the “General American dialect,” referred to in this study as “Mainstream American English,” was the very easily comprehensible (understandable) compared to the Mid-Atlantic dialect, Northern dialect and the Southern dialect (193). For Q12, 71.4% of my non-expert participants stated that they have lived in the South for over 10 years. This is significant, since on Questions A1 and A2 “Because of my dialect, people have a hard time understanding me when I speak,” the predominant response was “Disagree.” Furthermore, for the statement “I have a Standard (or Broadcast) American English dialect,” Questions A3 and A4, the majority of participants selected “Agree”; however, for Question A12, a majority of the participants indicated that they have lived in the South for over 10 years. Their responses indicate the relationship between dialect perception and association. Leach et al. (2016) suggests that proximity, either physical or prior experience with the dialect via broadcasting outlets, between listeners and speakers is necessary to accurately identify a dialect (209). Therefore, I infer that the participants who identified as living in the South for over 10 years are familiar with Southern American English, but participants in this study, who according to Leach et al. (2016) should be familiar with Southern American English, do not self-identify the dialect to which they are in closest geographic vicinity. Is this lack of identification

the result of dialect stigmatization, association with non-mainstream dialects or code switching, or simply lack of awareness? Questions A9 and A10 “Dialects do not really matter in social situations” received both “Disagree” and “Agree” as the predominant responses. When given five options from which to choose, participants selected “Disagree” 50% of the time. However, in combined analysis, “Agree” received the greatest percentage of respondents. The difference between the responses “Agree” and “Disagree” was 5.5%. The lack of consistent responses indicate that non-experts have varying opinions based on things other than official linguistics instruction.

Research from Wood (2009) suggests that code switching is significant and often necessary in certain social situations. While studying patient and health care provider interactions, Wood (2009) noticed occasions in which the physician, an African American female, would code switch from Mainstream American English to African American English or Southern American English when speaking with her clients when the situation called for the physician’s opinion or experiences. During these encounters, Wood (2009) identifies “word choice, tone, and body language” as instruments that speakers utilized to effectively code switch (466). These occurrences allowed the physician to build a relationship with her client. Wood (2009) also suggests that code switching is necessary when “tailoring our explanations of complex medical states, pathophysiologic mechanisms, and pharmacologic treatment modalities to their individual level of understanding” (465). This research indicates that dialects do impact social situations, and code switching can be a tool with which to build relationships.

Questions B1 and B2 “Speech language pathologists should work to remove dialects,” and “Speech language pathologists should work to remove accents” received “No” as the predominant responses. These responses indicate that laypersons believe there is some value or need for dialects to exist or speech-language pathologists are not equipped to provide accent or dialect modification services. This response follows the trends summarized in previous studies; however, Levy and Crowley (2012) suggest that accent removal is a common practice in the field of speech-language pathology. Levy and Crowley (2012) administered a survey to identify “policies and practices” related to how speech-language pathologists administer services to students who have non-nonnative English accents (59). In this case “non-native” indicates that these individuals have an accent that is not English. For example, a native Spanish speaker’s pronunciation of words when they are speaking English. Their results indicated, “Few policies delineated criteria for determining how native like or intelligible students’ speech needed to be for them to work effectively or for determining when accent modification was required” and speech-language pathologists “were asked more often to undergo accent modification than were students with foreign accents in Spanish or other languages” (59). Despite Levy and Crowley (2012) suggesting that accent modification services are a frequent procedure, Graph B6 and Graph B7 suggest that non-expert participants believe that everyone should not speak with a Standard (or Broadcast) American English dialect.

Marlow & Giles (2010) suggest the practice of accent modification or code-switching may incur negative perceptions from society, “When people adopt a more

standard language variety for economic or social access, peers may evaluate them negatively for violating group speech norms” (238). However, Marlow & Giles (2010) also state, “those who operate within dominant political, economic or social norms are granted favor and privileges that extend beyond routine conversations (e.g. career and economic access)” (238). This suggest accent modification and code-switching can have positive and negative societal outcomes. Preston (1993) suggests linguists understand the relationship between “linguistic forms and cultural stereotypes” but may struggle to outweigh their knowledge by perceived stigmas of “linguistic forms and cultural stereotypes” (182). This may also hold true for speech-language pathologists.

Question B6 “Everyone should speak with a Standard (or Broadcast) American English dialect” received “Disagree” as the predominant response, which indicates that participants believe that dialects and accents are significant. For Question B4, “Dialects do not really matter in the workplace,” the choice “Disagree” received the majority of responses. The responses in my survey are interesting in that there is disagreement in my participants' perspectives and the previous literature. Respondents in Question B6 indicated disagreement to the statement “Everyone should speak with a Standard (or Broadcast) American English dialect,” and Question B5 indicates that participants believe “Dialects do not really matter in the workplace.” However, research from Gong et al. (2011) and Yao and van Ours (2019) provide a different assertion of how dialects affect workplace dynamics. Gong et al. (2011) found, “job embeddedness” (ex: employee replacement percentage, employment fulfillment, community assimilation, in-group individuality,

attachment and dedication to a corporation, and rapport) is highly influenced by dialect usage (230-231). Yao and van Ours (2019) found that male speakers of Dutch dialects in the Netherlands experience significant wage differences when compared to female speakers of the same/similar Dutch dialect. The responses in my survey versus previous research suggest that non-expert participants (college students) may be unfamiliar with the role that dialects play in the workplace because these individuals have not fully undergone professional employment, or that their employment opportunities do not include dialect variation.

Question C3, “To administer a dialect assessment you must have a degree in Linguistics,” received “Agree” as the predominant responses. Similarly, Question C5, “To administer a dialect assessment you must have a degree in Speech-language pathology,” received “Agree” as the predominant response. These responses support the assertion that the education of linguistics should be furthered. This question is interesting because research from Robinson and Norton (2019) shows that speech-language pathologists may be inaccurately identifying African American males as having a speech or language disorder when none is present or under-identifying the disorder as a dialect feature. The misidentification is mostly likely the result of misinterpreting patients' dialect as a speech or language disorder. Previous research suggests that speech-language pathologists should have some dialect training in order to be fully qualified to administer a dialect assessment, and that this training can build upon the dialect awareness already exhibited by non-experts.

Based on the results of Table 6 it is unclear what non-expert participants know about dialects and accents. The varying responses suggest there is no unified views

other than dialects and accents are significant, they should not be removed through accent or dialect modification services, and they are not speech or language disorders. These findings are significant because they indicate college students, as a majority, do not exhibit prejudice or prestige related to dialects or accents when surveyed. In addition, this research shows that college students are a reliable choice to survey when investigating dialects and accents because of their variable opinions. Finally, college students who study linguistics or speech-language pathology should be surveyed to ensure they have adequate training from their institution on identifying dialects and accents since Robinson and Norton (2019) found speech-language pathologists are misidentifying dialects as speech impairments. Results from my surveys are indeed interesting, in that they give insight into perspectives of expert consultants and non-experts in various ways. The analysis of the results have shown that the current perspectives are both complementary and adversarial to current research in the fields of speech-language pathology and linguistics.

In conclusion, I have shown that further research regarding dialects and dialect analysis should be conducted, in order to help both non-experts and expert language professionals develop their insights into what dialects are and how they function in American culture.

The information from Table 2 and Table 3 show that multiple dialects exist and they each have different characteristics and suggests that speech-language pathologists and linguists can identify dialects of mainstream American English. Despite Robinson and Norton (2019) and Levy and Crowley (2012) both suggesting that speech-language pathologists misidentify dialects as specific language



impairments and provide unnecessary accent modification services. The information in Table 4 implies non-expert participants identify differences between dialects and accents. Key points mentioned in this table suggest that participants believe several things. These points will be discussed in the table below with column 1 referring to Table 4.

Table 6: Participant Beliefs About Dialects and Accents with Researcher

Interpretation

| <b>RESPONSE</b> | <b>STATEMENTS</b>   | <b>INTERPRETATION</b>   |
|-----------------|---|---|
| <i>I</i>        | <p>“An accent is how certain words are pronounced in certain regions.”</p> <p>“Dialects is best thought of as language or mode of communication [hieroglyphics].”</p> | <p>This response’s interpretation of accent is like the definition of dialect presented by Levy and Crowley (2012). The responder identifies dialect as a language. This is significant since languages are intelligible, linguistically processed to convey the same meaning of “words, phrases or actions” to speakers and listeners (Bent et al. 2016, p. 105). This suggests that, based on the definitions used in this study, the participant may not have a clear understanding of the</p> |

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
|   |  | differences between accents and dialects.   |
| 2 | <p>“Accents are part of dialects. For example, accents are how people pronounce their words or how they “sound” when they speak whereas dialect is the bigger umbrella including accents, grammar, etc.”</p> | <p>No definitions in the study identify dialects and accents as being apart of one another; although, there are similarities in misidentifying as speech/language disorders by speech-language pathologists.</p>  |
| 3 | <p>“Dialect is the collection of chosen words that you use in vocabulary and how you use then while accents are the influx and tone of voice depending on where you are from.”</p>                           | <p>This response is suggesting that some words in a dialect are only unique to speakers of the dialects.</p> <p>This response aligns with the research of Jackson and Pearson (2010) and Horton-Ikard et al. (2009) who suggest words like “finna” and “ain’t” are unique to speakers of African American English. The response identifies characteristics of prosody related to accent. Clopper and Smijanac (2014) and Newmark et</p> |

|                 |  |   |
|-----------------|--|---|
|                 |  | <p>al. (2016) suggest “linguistic features, particularly prosodic features of pitch and timing” are characteristics that Native tribes use to keep a feeling of common identity amongst speakers of the same language (634). Despite those participants being speakers of different dialects of English with Native American accents. These responses suggest that the responder have a somewhat accurate definition of dialect and accent.</p> |
| <p><b>6</b></p> | <p>“An accent is how people pronounce words depending on where someone is from or their culture. Dialect how grammar or vocabulary is pronounced when someone speaks.”</p> | <p>The definition of accent is somewhat similar to the definition provided by Levy and Crowley (2012); although the responder does not identify native or non-nativeness. This response for dialect aligns with the research of Jacewich et al. (2011), This study outlines characteristics of the Southern Vowel Shift which shows how vowels in American</p>  |

|           |   |   |
|-----------|---|---|
|           |   | English differ in pronunciation depending on the dialect of the speaker, Southern American English.   |
| <b>9</b>  | “My uncles have an accent when they speak English but a dialect is how people from certain region speak”  | This response directly relates to the research of Levy and Crowley (2012) who identify nativeness (L1 and L2) in their definition of accent, and Clopper and Pisoni (2006) who suggest a person’s dialect is relate to geographic residence.  |
| <b>10</b> | “Dialects are your speech patterns. Accents are the certain spots in speech that are emphasized.” “In South Korea, there are dialects but do not refer to them as accents.” | This response incorporates research from Newmark et al. (2016) who identify prosody features as part of a dialect, Levy and Crowley (2012) who identify accents as the speech that comes from L2, and Clopper and Pisoni (2006) who suggest dialects are regional varieties of the same language. |
| <b>20</b> | “Accents are more of where you live whereas dialects are the language you speak”  | This response incorporates research from Clopper and Pisoni (2006), Levy and Crowley (2012), Jackson and Pearson, (2010), and Horton-   |

Ikard et al, and suggest accents are based on geographic location, Northeastern accent or French accent, and dialects are languages used by specific groups, African American English. Although the responder does not use the exact terminology the researchers mentioned above do, their definitions are similar to what is mentioned in the articles.

Table 6 and Table 4 suggest that holistically non-expert participants do not have definitions of dialects and accents that correspond with existing literature. Several non-expert participants provided similar definitions of dialects and accents, which indicates that there are similar views of what dialects and accents are. However, a significant number of participants replied that they are unsure if there is a difference. Different participants responded with definitions that correspond with the existing literature while others seemed to confuse dialects and accents or provide definitions not used in this study or investigated in prior research for this thesis. In total these responses suggest non-expert participants have diverging views in their understanding of dialects and accents.

## Chapter 6: CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research study is to investigate the perceptions of linguists and speech-language pathologists as they administer dialect assessments, speech assessments, and language assessments. In addition, my study focuses on the opinions of non-expert consultants, since they are easily available to participate, and they represent the opinions of the average person.

After reviewing responses from linguists, speech-language pathologists, and non-expert participants, I noticed trends in the responses related to stigmas and stereotypes of dialects. Specific examples mentioned in multiple responses were of African American English, Southern American English, and Spanish. Participants noted that these stigmas and stereotypes were related to the region where the dialect was used, socioeconomic status, dialect hierarchy or social perception. These responses lead me to conclude that overall participant responses were like pre-existing literature in some ways and dissimilar in others. Results from this study supported some of my hypothesis and disproved others. My first assumption was that there is no single unified viewpoint when it comes to dialect perception, and it was supported by my participants. Next, I conjectured that college students would display views either contrary or uninformed to the current literature. This idea was not supported by my findings. Finally, I theorized that linguists and speech-language pathologists would be reasonable choices to survey about dialects since most of the research that I found was done by either linguists or speech-language pathologists. This theory was not corroborated, since the linguists or speech-language pathologists

whom I contacted either had little to no experience with the questions that I was asking or did not respond to the questions that I asked.

Non-expert participants recognize the importance of dialects and accents. However, they do not have unified definitions for dialects or accents. This suggests that a majority of non-expert participants may not actually understand if dialects and accents are important if their definitions diverge from current literature.

Experts in linguistics and speech-language pathology also intuitively understand dialects and accents, even if they have no training. Previous literature suggests that dialectological training would be beneficial for everyone, to dispel myths and encourage clear thinking about language as it relates to American culture.

This research is significant because it analyzed the perspective of college students as they relate to dialects, with multiple linguists and speech-language pathologists as the reference point. With so much research being done on dialects, it is important to consider how linguists and speech-language pathologists view dialects as an important part of their careers. Linguists who participated in this study identified multiple dialect courses while achieving their degrees. In addition, the governing body of speech-language pathologists, ASHA, identifies the importance of language in the field and suggests that certified speech-language pathologists should be able to identify the value of different languages and the components that make it up.

*Limitations of My Study*

While gathering data, I noticed a lack of response from linguists and speech-language pathologists who fit my participant criteria. I considered that the time I was administering the survey to be the primary factor contributing to its lack of success. However, I received an email from a linguist at a Southern university who suggested why I might have received limited responses (see Appendix C). I removed some survey questions for non-expert participants since there were limited responses from expert participants for comparison. I could have identified if participants used a non-mainstream American English dialect, specifically Southern American English, and what characteristics of the dialect were exhibited (Appendix D).

Revisions to this study included using college students as the main source of perception instead of linguists and speech-language pathologists. This change allowed me to better assess the state of dialect perception among regular Americans.

While conducting this study, I noticed areas that need improvement. First was the cumbersome survey data collection process. After I sent the survey out to the first 15 participants, I noticed an error that did not allow participants to answer the questions “My major/minor is speech-language pathology” and “My major/minor is linguistics” with the answers yes or no. After I noticed this error, I was forced to disregard responses from these participants, since they did not receive the full version of this survey. All participant data was analyzed after these questions were correctly included in the new version of the survey, and they were used as factors to include or remove participants from this study. In future surveys, I will test the survey myself to ensure that all questions are being presented.



Second, the survey size was a bit limiting. Although 49 participants were appreciated, more responses may have shown a clear difference between participant selection of the choices “Strongly Agree”, “Agree” and “Strongly Disagree”, “Disagree”. The number of speech-language pathologists who responded to the survey were also a limiting factor when it comes to having experts as references. Future studies should contact a larger sample population to get clear results.

Third, I noticed that a significant number of questions did not have a clearly predominant response. To better interpret the results, I needed to combine some choices to see which ones received the most responses. However, I noticed that this combination caused differences in deciphering which choice received the most responses. In future studies, I aim to make the answer choices clear to give more accurate descriptions of how the participants responded.

Fourth, participant criteria for expert consultants excluded a significant portion of the population, since most speech-language pathologists are clinicians with Master’s degrees and not researchers with doctoral degrees. Also, clinicians have the most contact with individuals who speak non-standard dialects. Any potential investigations will make sure to analyze the pros and cons of including such a large part of the population.

My primary limitation was first administering the survey (Appendix A) to expert participants. Since I administered the survey to experts first and I received few responses, I had little to go on when developing my new survey for non-expert participants (Appendix B). This also prevented me from administering the survey in Appendix D because little information from expert participants about Southern

American English and dialect assessments was received. If I administered the survey to non-expert participants first, I would have been able to use their responses to create a survey for expert participants that was more open-ended. In additional research in this area, I will make sure to consult with larger populations to get a glimpse of the current state of the topic that I am studying and use their responses to guide my work with expert participants.

### *Suggestions for Future Research*

To fully examine the meaning of this study, future research should be conducted to analyze different aspects of dialect perception. I suggest that future research be conducted to better understand the state of dialect perception among college students with linguists and speech-language pathologists as the expert reference group. The next step for this project is to improve the current methods by making the changes suggested in the “Limitations” section.

### *Conclusion*

My research is significant because some responses indicate diverging viewpoints from the current literature, which suggests that further research should be conducted to understand these diverging opinions. In addition, little research exists for the sole purpose of understand how college students perceive dialects, so any future studies will be useful in contributing to the limited body of work. My study shows how college students perceive dialects and why they have these perceptions,

and that these non-expert opinions can help linguists and speech-language pathologists use dialectological tools to examine language ever further.

## APPENDIX A: Consent Form

**Consent Form**

**Title:** Dialect Variation Assessment in Speech Language Pathology

**Investigator**

Maliah Wilkinson  
Department of Communication Sciences and  
Disorders  
The University of Mississippi  
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1200  
Oxford, MS, 38655  
(662)-915-7652

**Advisor**

Felice Coles, Ph.D  
Department of Modern Languages  
E-210A Bondurant Hall  
The University of Mississippi  
662-915-7702

*By checking this box I certify that I am 18 years of age or older.*

**Description**

This study aims to examine the need for incorporating regional varieties of dialects into standardized phonological and language assessments used by Speech Language Pathologists and Linguists. This dialect questionnaire and interview will reveal the need for standardized phonological and language assessments used by Speech Language Pathologists and Linguists to be adjusted for the dialect norms of the region in which they will be administered.

**Cost and Payments**

This voluntary questionnaire will take about 10 minutes to complete and the following interview (if necessary) will take 20-30 minutes. There are no other costs for helping in this study.

**Risks and Benefits**

You may or may not feel comfortable filling out this questionnaire. We do not think that there are any other risk associated with this questionnaire. Before completing this questionnaire I will explain the purpose of this study and the possible benefits of being informed about dialect assessments.

**Confidentiality**

We will not include your name on any material. The only information used will be your age, race, hometown, gender, educational history, disability status, parent's education, languages spoken, and history with phonological assessments.

**Right to Withdraw**

You are not obliged to take part in this study. If you decide that you do not want to finish, tell the individual administering the study in person or email Maliah Wilkinson at [mjwilkin@go.olemiss.edu](mailto:mjwilkin@go.olemiss.edu) or Dr. Felice Coles at [fcoles@olemiss.edu](mailto:fcoles@olemiss.edu). There are no penalties for withdrawing, and you will not be bothered again.

**IRB Approval**

This study has been reviewed and approved by The University of Mississippi's Institutional Review Board (IRB). If you have any questions, concerns, or reports regarding your rights as a participant of research, please contact Dr. Coles at [fcoles@olemiss.edu](mailto:fcoles@olemiss.edu) or the IRB at (662) 915-7482 or [irb@olemiss.edu](mailto:irb@olemiss.edu).

**Statement of Consent**

I have read and understand the above information. By completing the survey/interview I consent to participate in the study.

***Student Participants in Investigators' Classes***

*Special human research subject protections apply where there is any possibility of undue influence – such as for students in classes of investigators. Investigators can recruit from their classes but only by providing information on availability of studies. They can encourage you to participate, but they cannot exert any pressure for you to do so. Therefore, if you experience any undue influence from your instructor, you should contact the IRB via phone (662-915-7482) or email ([irb@olemiss.edu](mailto:irb@olemiss.edu)) and report the specific details. You will remain anonymous in an investigation.*

### **Experience with Dialects Questionnaire**

Note: This questionnaire was adapted from Pederson, L. (1974)

#### **Background**

Please indicate your hometown and current residence

If you were not born in the United States of America, please indicate your country of origin

\_\_\_\_\_  
Hometown (City, State & County)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Current residence (City, State, County)

What is the highest degree you obtained?

Did you obtain any specializations or certifications while completing your degree?

If so, what are these specializations or certifications?

Briefly describe any coursework you have completed while attending college related to dialects. (if applicable)

Briefly describe any training you have completed related to dialects (if applicable).

Have you administered a standardized phonological assessment to a speaker of Southern American English? \_\_\_\_\_yes    no \_\_\_\_\_

Briefly describe this experience

Have you administered a standardized language assessment to a speaker of Southern American English? \_\_\_\_\_yes    no \_\_\_\_\_

Briefly describe this experience

What aspects, if any, did you take into account when you administered a standardized phonological assessment to a speaker of Southern American English?

What aspects, if any, did you take into account when you administered a standardized language assessment to a speaker of Southern American English?

While administering these assessments what aspects of Southern American English, if any, did you notice that are different from Broadcast American English?

How did you account for these differences when offering recommendations to clients or conducting research?



Reference

Pederson, L. (1974). *A manual for dialect research in the Southern states*. University of Alabama Press.

## APPENDIX B: Survey for Non-expert Participants

## Dialect Variation Assessment

**Investigator**

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Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders  
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Oxford, MS, 38655

(662)-915-7652

**Advisor**

Felice Coles, Ph.D

Department of Modern

E-210A Bondurant Hall

The University of Mississippi

662-915-7702

**\* Required**

Email address \*

Cannot pre-fill email address.

**Consent Form**

Please read the following items carefully.

**Description**

This study aims to examine the need for incorporating regional varieties of dialects into standardized phonological and language assessments used by Speech Language Pathologists and Linguists. This questionnaire will reveal examine individuals perceptions of dialects.

**Cost and Payments**

This voluntary questionnaire will take about 10-15 minutes to complete. There are no other costs for helping in this study.

**Risks and Benefits**

You may or may not feel comfortable filling out this questionnaire. We do not think that there are any other risk associated with this questionnaire. Before completing this questionnaire I will explain the purpose of this study and the possible benefits of being informed about dialect assessments.

Pre-fill responses, then click "Get link"



**Confidentiality**

We will not include your name on any material. The only information used will be your responses to this questionnaire.

**Right to Withdraw**

You are not obliged to take part in this study. If you decide that you do not want to finish do not submit your responses or email Maliah Wilkinson at [mjwilkin@go.olemiss.edu](mailto:mjwilkin@go.olemiss.edu) or Dr. Felice Coles at [fcoles@olemiss.edu](mailto:fcoles@olemiss.edu). There are no penalties for withdrawing, and you will not be bothered again.

**IRB Approval**

This study has been reviewed and approved by The University of Mississippi's Institutional Review Board (IRB). If you have any questions, concerns, or reports regarding your rights as a participant of research, please contact Dr. Coles at [fcoles@olemiss.edu](mailto:fcoles@olemiss.edu) or the IRB at (662) 915-7482 or [irb@olemiss.edu](mailto:irb@olemiss.edu).

**Statement of Consent**

I have read and understand the above information. By completing the survey I consent to participate in the study.

**Student Participants in Investigators' Classes**

Special human research subject protections apply where there is any possibility of undue influence – such as for students in classes of investigators. Investigators can recruit from their classes but only by providing information on availability of studies. They can encourage you to participate, but they cannot exert any pressure for you to do so. Therefore, if you experience any undue influence from your instructor, you should contact the IRB via phone (662-915-7482) or email ([irb@olemiss.edu](mailto:irb@olemiss.edu)) and report the specific details. You will remain anonymous in an investigation.

I certify that I am 18 years of age or older. \*

- Yes, I am 18 years of age or older
- No, I am not 18 years of age or older

Is your major or minor Communication Sciences and Disorders?

Select one of the choices below. \*

Yes

No

Is your major or minor Linguistics?

Select one of the choices below. \*

Yes

No

Thank you for your participation. This is the end of this survey. Please click submit.

Use this scale to identify how true you feel about the following statements.

Please read the following items carefully. \*

Option 1

Choose the choice that most accurately reflects your opinion.

Please read the following items carefully. \*

|  | Yes                   | No                    | I do not know         |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Dialects are speech impediments (disorders)</b>                             | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| <b>Speech language pathologists should work to remove accents</b>              | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| <b>Speech language pathologists should work to remove dialects</b>             | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| <b>I have lived in the South 10+ years</b>                                     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| <b>Everyone who lives in the South has a Southern American English dialect</b> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| <b>I have participated in a dialect assessment</b>                             | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| <b>I know what a dialect assessment is</b>                                     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| <b>Dialect assessments are important</b>                                       | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

I am a native speaker of more than one language.

Select one of the choices below. \*

Yes

No

If you answered yes to the previous question, please list the languages in which you are a native speaker.

Your answer

Accents are the same as dialects

Select one of the choices below. \*

Yes

No

I do not know

Please explain your response and use examples, if you can think of some.

Your answer

Society has different perceptions of dialects.

Select one of the choices below. \*

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

Please explain your response and use examples, if you can think of some.

Your answer

Get link

Page 1 of 9

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Google Forms

Pre-fill responses, then click "Get link"



## APPENDIX C: Email from Expert Participant

Dear Ms. Wilkinson,

Good luck with your research! I just wanted to let you know that I am not returning the survey because I don't administer phonological assessments to anyone. I do research on syntax and morphology, and therefore occasionally administer standardized vocabulary assessments (e.g., MacArthur CDI, PPVT), but never as a way to indicate this on the survey, and I didn't want to misleadingly say that I'd never administered one to a speaker of Southern English, as though that made an exception.

I thought I'd mention it, so that you knew to take people like me into account as you analyze results: People who answer no to your questions about Southern English never perform these assessments at all!

Best of luck getting good responses, and have fun learning things from the data. That's my favorite part of the research process!

All the best,

## APPENDIX D: Assessment for Speakers of Southern American English

**Questionnaires**

(Adapted from: Ball, M. J., & Gibbon, F. E. (2002). *Vowel disorders*. Butterworth-Heinemann.)

**Disclaimer:** The purpose of this study is to obtain information and is not intended to cause any intentional or unintentional physical, mental, emotional harm etc. to the participants. All participants have the right to withdraw at any point in this study. If you choose to withdraw your information won't be used in compiling results. Your name will not be used in compiling research data, and any non-participant specific information (such as results and findings) will be made available to the public. This study is part of a Honors College Capstone Thesis.

**Purpose:** This study aims to examine the need for incorporating regional varieties of dialects into standardized phonological and language assessments used by Speech Language Pathologists and Linguists.



Thanks for helping me! I will ask you some questions and show you some pictures, and then ask you about a game you played. You don't have to answer any question you don't want to and you can stop the interview at any time. Are you ready to begin?

Please say the word:

1. Hoot
2. Caught
3. Tote
4. Fade
5. Bead

Please use these words in a sentence:

1. Heard
2. Hid
3. Rat
4. Thud
5. Pot

Please indicate what this is a picture of:

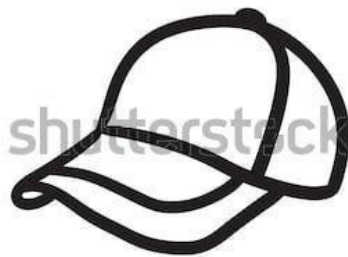
1.



2.

3.

www.shutterstock.com • 699923269



www.shutterstock.com • 586120688

4.



5.

[www.shutterstock.com](http://www.shutterstock.com) • 302622971

Tell me about a game you played as a child:

## References

Ball, M. J., & Gibbon, F. E. (2002). *Vowel disorders*. Butterworth-Heinemann

## APPENDIX E: Internal Review Board Approval Email

**IRB Exempt Approval of 19x-218** Inbox X

**irb@olemiss.edu** <irb@olemiss.edu>  
to me, ▼

PI:

This is to inform you that your application to conduct research with human participants, "Dialect Variation Assessment in Speech Pathology" (Protocol #19x-218), has been approved as Exempt t

Please remember that all of The University of Mississippi's human participant research activities, regardless of whether the research is subject to federal regulations, must be guided by the ethic: Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research.

It is especially important for you to keep these points in mind:

- You must protect the rights and welfare of human research participants.
- Any changes to your approved protocol must be reviewed and approved before initiating those changes.
- You must report promptly to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated problems involving risks to participants or others.
- If research is to be conducted during class, the PI must email the instructor and ask if they wish to see the protocol materials (surveys, interview questions, etc) prior to research beginni

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the IRB at [irb@olemiss.edu](mailto:irb@olemiss.edu).

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