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Dialects Accents and Intelligence: A Study on Dialectal Perceptions

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Abstract

Speech language pathologists are given the tools to help clients with a wide range of pathologies. Issues relating to speech, hearing, swallowing, etc can all benefit from a Speech language pathologist's insight. One area that can be difficult is dialect. People across America speak with many different dialects and speech language pathologists are taught to recognize these differences but not correct them. Dialect showcases culture but does not define intelligence. Dialects like African American Vernacular English are rule governed systems of communication (Carter, 2012). The research done on AAVE is seemingly endless (Baugh, 1983; Pearson,2013; Robinson,2011; Carter 2010; Bronstein,1970.....) and many of them compare AAVE to Standard American English(SAE). Very few studies, however, look at other dialects and even fewer compare these dialects to something other than SAE. This study compares African American Vernacular English, Standard American English, and Arabic Accented(AAccented) English in the areas of perceived likability and intelligence. 30 adults listened to three different voice samples. Each sample featured a speaker of one of the tested dialects/accents. They then completed a survey rating each speaker's likeability and intelligence. I hypothesized three things: (1) The speaker of AAVE will be perceived as less intelligent and less likeable than other dialectal speakers, (2) The speakers of SAE will be perceived as more likable and more intelligent than the dialectal speakers, and (3)The speaker of AAccented speech will be perceived as more intelligent and more likeable than AAV, but less intelligent and likeable than speakers of SAE. These findings may be useful in changing the way SLP's think about dialects and accents.

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