

Introduction

 <https://doi.org/10.1075/z.hpd2.05int>

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Handbook of Perceptual Dialectology: Volume 2

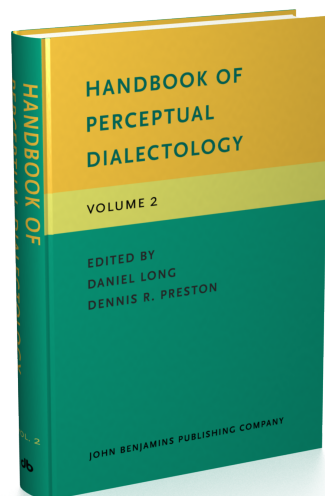
Edited by Daniel Long and Dennis R. Preston

2002. xxvi, 412 pp.

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Introduction

As our colleague and friend Ron Butters notes in his Preface, too much work in perceptual dialectology has gone on for us to justify its existence here. Readers who nevertheless seek further justification for the study of how nonlinguists conceive of and respond to dialect phenomena may consult the Introduction to the *Handbook of Perceptual Dialectology, Volume I* (Preston 1999, hereafter Handbook I) or, for a more general justification of the study of “folk linguistics” (of which perceptual dialectology is only one part), the Introduction and Chapter One of Niedzielski and Preston (1999).

In fact, Butters notes the senior editor’s work of the early 1980’s as an historical jumping-off spot, but Preston has already apologized for discovering a field which had an honorable past. Handbook I contains that apology in its Introduction and was in great part an attempt to make amends for the putative discovery of an already tilled field by making available in one place (and in one language) much seminal work, particularly the contributions by Dutch and Japanese scholars from the mid-20th Century.

It is inevitable, however, that any attempt to settle the historical record will overlook important work. Willy Diercks’ important study of dialect perception in the north of Germany (Chapter 5 in the present volume) should have been included in Handbook I; we have included it in the present volume. We are also sorry to have excluded from Handbook I and the present volume two important contributions from the point of view of dialectometry: Hans Goebel’s *Die dialektale Gliederung Ladinien aus der Sicht der Ladinier. Eine Pilotstudie zum Problem der Geolinguistischen “Mental Maps”*, *Ladinia* 17: 59–95 (1993) and *Geolinguistische “Mental Maps”, Zum Problem der subjectiven Dialektverwandtschaft (anhand eine Fallstudie aus Ladinien)*, in K. Sornig, D. Halwachs, C. Penzinger, G. Ambosch (eds), *Linguistics with a human face*. (Festschrift for Norman Denison on his 70th birthday). Graz: Grazer Linguistische Monographien 10: 97–111 (1995). We apologize to Professor Goebel for this oversight and can only suggest that it is a principal motivation for a Volume III.

In addition to gathering historically important pieces and offering samples of current work, a third aim of Handbook I was to offer a comprehensive bibliography of work in perceptual dialectology. That aim too, of course, was bound to suffer from exclusions

based quite simply on the editor's ignorance. At first, it was planned to update (and correct those oversights) in the present volume. Luckily, however, both of those tasks were carried out before this work could appear. Sabina Canobbio and Gabriele Iannàccaro have edited *Contributo per una bibliografia sulla dialettologia percettiva* (#5 in the series *Atlante Linguistico ed Etnografico del Piemonte Occidentale*), Università degli Studi di Torino, Dipartimento de Scienze del Linguaggio and Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, Turin: Edizioni dell'Orso (2000). This bibliography, which they chose to format with the same division between works "principally concerned" and "partially concerned" with perceptual dialectology (as in Handbook I), is, quite simply, the bibliography we would have offered here, and we are happy to recommend it to interested readers. It is thorough and precise. (It is also not quite the case that it is exactly the bibliography we would have offered here. In fact, Canobbio and Iannàccaro have included a number of important Romance-language offerings which we are obliged to admit we might have missed.) The reader will find, therefore, references cited at the end of each chapter in the present volume and no general bibliography.

If there is no more historical catching-up to do (and if we have still missed a couple of items which should have been included even in Handbook I) and if there is no updated, comprehensive bibliography, the reader may, with growing unease, wonder what is here. We believe we have found, recruited, and selected a generous sample of continuing work in perceptual dialectology and that, as Butters suggests in his Preface, this work provides coverage of not only new regional and social territory but also new methodologies. These new selections illustrate, in fact, some of the difficulties (the boundaries of the field) and hopes (a focus on greater linguistic detail) expressed in the conclusion to the Introduction of Handbook I, and we review that rich diversity here. We have arranged these articles alphabetically (although Ms. L'Eplattenier-Saugy has changed names on us during the progress of this work but remains in her original "S" slot), since we could not so easily find a rubric like the historical-regional one which guided the partitioning of Handbook I.

In Chapter 1, Alfaraz provides an excellent example of an application of one of the traditional methods of perceptual dialectology (querying subjects about where the "correct" and "pleasant" varieties of a language are spoken) but applies it to a very interesting population: Miami Cubans. Based on her general ethnographic and sociolinguistic work in the speech community, Alfaraz was led to ask for such ratings of Cuban Spanish for both the pre-Castro and post-Castro period. The results are an amazing example of the overwhelming influence of essentially nonlinguistic facts on the perception of linguistic ones. Cuban Spanish, in the pre-Castro era, was as "standard" as peninsular (or "Spain") Spanish; post-Castro Cuban Spanish ranks with the lowest (Caribbean) varieties of Spanish. Chapter 1 is only the first of many of these chapters which include more ethnographic (and discursal) data to help in the interpretation of either detailed attitudinal surveys or the details of the distribution of or responses to linguistic varieties (and even features) themselves. That development was heartily encouraged in the Introduction to Handbook I.

Van Bezooijen, in Chapter 2, approaches basic issues in language attitude study (the distinction between *inherent* versus *contextually conditioned* value judgments of dialects,

varieties, and even languages). Her three-part study (focusing on Dutch dialects, historical varieties of Dutch, and a variety of European languages) shows that such factors as *intelligibility*, *similarity*, and *familiarity* are constructs which are as important as those suggested by the *inherent* and *contextual* conditions for the perception of a dialect's (or language's) aesthetic quality. Such studies attempt to tease out the underlying cognitive details of recognition and evaluation, relying on carefully selected speech samples and carefully constructed judgment tasks.

Perceptual dialectology clearly provides one the answers to the age-old question of where one language stops and another starts. (In fact, we would say it might be the only answer.) Canut shows, in Chapter 3, how linguistic facts in the Mandingo region of Mali (largely showing complex mixtures in every place where one might propose a "language boundary") are not only not recognized by local speakers but are also ignored by them in their own characterizations of language and place.

Demirci, in Chapter 4, continues the work of Demirci and Kleiner from Handbook I, again using data from respondents from western Turkey to show how sociolinguistic categories (in this case gender) may also be successfully teased out in traditional perceptual work. Men and women clearly do not have the same vision of where differences in regional Turkish are.

In Chapter 5, Diercks shows the value of a focused or more intensely regional perceptual dialectology by limiting his investigation to a small area of northern Germany. In addition to paying attention to the important "dialect recognition" question, his work is also particularly sensitive to sociolinguistic dimensions, and some of his results show an attempt to tease out the historical dimension in perception by paying special attention to the factor of age (in apparent time).

Evans returns to a much-studied territory in language attitude work in Chapter 6—the opinions of speakers of Montreal French. Her report focuses on a wide variety of perceptual and attitudinal techniques. Particularly interesting here are her comparisons of respondent hand-drawn maps with linguists' maps of regional French in Canada. Those familiar with language attitude study, however, will be interested in seeing that Evans' young Montreal respondents rank Montreal French on the same level as European French (as regards standardness), an enormous change from the evaluation of local French (on both standardness and solidarity scales) by speakers who would have been only the parents or grandparents of these respondents.

In Chapter 7, Evans approaches dialect perception from a unique perspective — imitative ability. Her study exploits, as do several others included here, our increased use of advanced and sophisticated acoustic techniques in the study of language attitudes and perception (a trend suggested in the Introduction to Handbook I and exploited fully in Milroy and Preston 1999). Evans shows that adult dialect imitation may be, in fact, acoustically quite accurate, and she substantiates her acoustic analysis by presenting her "fake" dialect speaker to authentic local judges, who find him very good. These results suggest that the "control" dimension (see Preston 1996) of perceptual dialectology ought to be more thoroughly examined, and such studies have important implications for our claims about adult abilities to acquire new varieties of the same language and about bidialectalism in general.

At last, in Chapter 8, California is heard from. Fought exploits a number of the traditional techniques of perceptual dialectology to elicit from the much-talked-about Californians their own opinions of US linguistic diversity. Fought's work is not, however, all beach-bum and Valley Girl perspectives. She struggles with the difficulty of analyzing hand-drawn maps, and, to some extent, helps modify a political boundary-line (e.g., state, province) process (used by several contributors to Handbook I). In addition, she pays particular attention to the labels (especially labels of linguistic significance) put on maps by her respondents, modifying and enlarging on the sort of analysis given hand-drawn map labels in Hartley and Preston (1999).

Goeman, in Chapter 9, tries to carry out in great detail a study which will bolster one of the claims concerning the more general linguistic importance of perceptual dialectology — perceptual-attitudinal factors are important players in the study of on-going linguistic change. Of course, that has been known for a long time (and brought to bear on studies of on-going change in such phrases as “correction from above”), but it is rare to find a careful correlation laid out between perceptual status of areas (one's own and others') and a specific linguistic feature (or features). Goeman shows, however, through careful statistical modeling (making use of equally carefully obtained perceptual and linguistic feature measures) how perceptual status is related to such specific dialect features as t-deletion and vowel lengthening in Dutch dialects. The call for specific-feature studies in Handbook I is particularly well heeded in this contribution.

Chapter 10 (along with Chapter 20) is one the most sophisticated studies to date of local dialect recognition strategies based on specific linguistic features. Here Kerswill carefully correlates judgments of a continuum of voices (from urban Bergen, Norway to a rural site) and notes that judges' positioning of respondent voices on the scale corresponds closely to the speech samples' score on a morpho-lexical index designed to accurately represent the linguistic status of each speaker. He goes on to show that when the judges distinguish among speakers who show no difference on the morpho-lexical scale, that characteristic phonological differences come into play. Overall, the work shows considerably more sensitivity to low-level dialect features among nonlinguists than is typically felt to exist, and it reveals a methodology much more appropriate to the study of dialect contact and mixture situations than those heretofore used.

Kerswill and Williams, in Chapter 11, continue to focus on recognition of dialect differences in mixed areas (in this case in the English “new” and “old” towns of Milton Keynes versus Reading and Hull, respectively). Here, however, they tie dialect recognition to the notion of *focusing* as used by LePage to identify speech communities with little and well-patterned linguistic variation, suggesting that focused speech communities ought to be better at recognizing other speech community members' linguistic variation than residents of *diffuse* speech communities. Their results show that *dialect leveling*, even in “old” towns with strong local networks may play an important (negative) role in dialect identification, and their use of class and age as demographic factors plays an important role in their argumentation.

In Chapter 12, Kontra asks the simple perceptual question “Where do they speak ugly and beautiful Hungarian?” The answer is not so simple, and it is certainly not so simple

as a dichotomy between a stereotypical locus for the “standard” and the solidarity function of a “local” variety.

Léonard, in Chapter 13, takes an intensive look at perception, variety, and folk linguistic comment about French on the island of Noirmoutier. After carefully establishing linguistic patterns which differentiate areas on the island, he shows that there is, indeed, a three part perceptual division of the island which corresponds roughly to the dialectal subdivisions (and corresponds exactly, in fact, to the distribution of nasal vowels on the island). Léonard richly documents the perceptual data, however, with ethnographic data from both historical sources and from a careful discourse analysis of a lengthy interview with one respondent, from whom he extracts interesting examples of “folk linguistic theory”. Finally, he tests respondents’ perception of specific dialect features in an attempt to determine the degree of salience of each in areal perception.

In Chapter 14, the junior editor of this volume expands on his work in Japan by collaborating with his colleague Yim in investigating, for the first time, the perception of dialect differences in Korea, one also interesting geographically for the same political subdivision which could be found temporally in Chapter 1 in Alfaraz’s distinction between pre-Castro and post-Castro Cuba. Here again we see an interesting historical-political effect, but a very different sort. Little or no distinctiveness is attributed to the regions of North Korea; it is as if a linguistic wall of information had been dropped. In other regional characterizations, it is also clear that political boundaries (i.e., provincial ones) are important in South Korea as well, perhaps overwhelming the facts of actual dialect subdivision, lending credence to the long-standing claim in Japanese perceptual dialectology that such official boundaries are more important than actual linguistic ones.

Meghan McKinnie and Jennifer Dailey-O’Cain explore, in Chapter 15, the differences in Canadian perceptions of English between Albertans and Ontarians. They use the traditional techniques of ratings of Canadian provinces for “correctness”, “pleasantness”, and “degree of difference” (from one’s own variety). They also use a sophisticated statistical procedure (K-means clustering, also first used in perceptual studies in Hartley 1996) to present their findings.

Moreno and Moreno in Chapter 16 report on the first perceptual study of peninsular (“Spain”) Spanish. They also use the traditional perceptual dialectology task of “degree of difference” but their exploitation of it is extremely sensitive, both in demographic areas (touching on sex, age, and education) and in statistical analysis (using, for example, the multidimensional scaling techniques introduced to perceptual dialectology by Hartley (1996) and used also in the present volume by Evans in Chapter 6).

Niedzielski in Chapter 17 presents the most compelling case to date for social interference in linguistic perception. Using advanced acoustic modification techniques, she offers judges from Michigan a sample of the word “house” with the diphthong in the typical “Canadian raised” position /ʌ^U/. Three other versions of the word “house” are played, and the judges are asked to match the first with the one of these three which is most like it. When the judges believe the first voice is that of a fellow Michigander, they rate the sample as more like the most common US pronunciation with the diphthong /a^U/; when they believe the speaker is Canadian, however, they match the sample (correctly)

with the /Λ⁰/ version. She goes on to show how extreme Michigan linguistic security does not even “allow” respondents to hear a “deviant” acoustic token from a speaker they believe to be “normal”.

In Chapter 18, Romanello studies the perception of urban varieties in the south of Italy. Hers is a richly detailed ethnographic study which correlates knowledge of city and region to knowledge of language differences. Her work shows a remarkably detailed knowledge of linguistic features differentiating one area from the other by her respondents, and she notes that the vast majority of such clues mentioned by her respondents are phonetic ones.

L'Eplattenier-Saugy studies francophone Swiss respondents' perceptions of French in Chapter 19. Her work also involved the most common perceptual tasks — hand-drawn maps of respondent-determined dialect areas and ratings of degrees of “correctness”, “pleasantness”, and “degree of difference”. As in some other areas, canton (political) boundaries were seen as very salient for these respondents in indicating different speech regions. One interesting result is that these Swiss francophones felt that the French of France in general and Paris in particular was “most correct”, but, in their evaluation of “pleasantness”, they still found France French (not the local area) to be most pleasant, but found Parisian French to be least pleasant. L'Eplattenier-Saugy goes on to show important demographic (e.g., sex, education) effects in these data.

In Chapter 20 Yonezawa seeks to determine (by holding all other factors constant) the degree to which vowel devoicing plays a role in the identification of a speaker as local to Tokyo. Although she finds that it is salient in identifying a speaker as “from Tokyo”, she shows, more importantly, that the phonetic environment in which the devoiced (or nondevoiced) vowel occurred also has a salient effect on perception (just as it does on production). Like so many other of these studies, the work of perceptual dialectology here reaches down to the level of linguistic detail.

We hope our outline of these studies and our special regard for the linguistic detail of some would not indicate that we do not admire the usually more global approach taken to language attitude work by social psychologists. We believe, however, that in any interdisciplinary enterprise, the first rule is respect for (and competence in) disciplines. Since we are linguists (and dialectologists) we hope it follows that we believe we can contribute more to the study of language regard (and its relation to variation and change) by focusing on what we know best — language structure and detail. That focusing, however, takes us off into areas of ethnography, discourse, and social psychology, and we happily embrace the techniques and understandings which come from these diverse fields in our attempts to make sense of the folk perception of language varieties.

We will not be so foolhardy as to suggest what the next steps in such studies might prove to be. We hope, however, that interested readers will take from these several studies ideas for the application of methodologies to local, perhaps unique, sites and situations, and that the methodological sophistication and innovation suggested in these chapters will inspire interested readers to improve on them and report such improvement in the literature. That, of course, would make us most happy as editors.

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