

Diaspora ecologies and dialect attitudes

Migrant groups arrive in diasporas with the social, political, and language ideologies of their home speech communities; however, many aspects of life in the new setting can influence them. Settlement patterns, particularly trends towards metropolitan areas that attract many migrant groups, can foster varying degrees of contact with other groups and influence beliefs about them and their speech (Giles, Bourhis, & Taylor 1977). At the same time, the concentration of groups in enclaves facilitates maintenance of home varieties and cultures (Hoffman & Walker 2010) and may play a role in the maintenance of ingroup language regard. The goal of this presentation is to discuss how diaspora ecologies (Haugen 2001), including types of communities and ingroup contacts, influence the attitudes of four Latin American groups residing in the United States to outgroup regional dialects.

Participants were recruited through Amazon MechanicalTurk, which facilitated access to migrants that were geographically dispersed throughout the country. We examined a subset of participants ($N = 278$) from four groups — Cubans, Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, and Mexicans — and their responses to a perceptual dialectology task on correctness (Preston 1996; 1999). For each national group, we analyzed the two dialects identified as most and least correct in the homeland (Chiquito & Quesada Pacheco 2014) and two additional dialects of groups with a high demographic presence in the United States. To study the diaspora environment in which participants resided, the proportion of Latin Americans in those communities was identified as high, mid, or low density. We also analyzed the reported proportion of ingroup members among friends, neighbors, and coworkers.

Across the four groups, type of community was not a significant factor influencing evaluations of the varieties deemed most and least correct in the homeland, nor was it a significant factor in evaluations of the other diaspora varieties examined for each group. The analysis of ingroup friends was largely insignificant, except for the Cuban group, for which it influenced attitudes of the varieties deemed most correct ($p < .05$) and least correct ($p < .001$) in the homeland. Similarly, an effect for in-group neighbors was found to be insignificant, except in Puerto Ricans' evaluation of the variety considered least correct ($p < .05$) on the island, and it was also significant among Dominicans for one of the diaspora varieties ($p < .05$). The influence of ingroup coworkers was also mostly insignificant, with exceptions among Cubans for the variety identified as most correct on the island ($p < .001$), and among the Mexican group, for whom it was significant in the evaluations of two other diaspora varieties, the Cuban ($p < .05$) and Dominican ($p < .05$) ones.

This research suggests that diaspora ecologies, at least for the factors, groups, and location examined, do not have a large influence on attitudes. We argue that migration, despite the distance it creates from the homeland, does not necessarily entail change, and discuss the rationale and mechanisms that can maintain ingroup attitudes in diaspora communities.