

## **Subjective dialect division in Indian varieties of English**

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Recent research about the Indian diaspora has addressed questions of how the internal heterogeneity of speech communities and intra-linguistic differences inform the understanding of community boundaries, attitudinal orientations, and identity development (Hundt & Sharma, 2014). However, little attention has been given to the mapping of perceptual landscapes in Indian varieties of English - a method which is almost always neglected in perceptual studies of New Englishes (NEs).

The present paper aims to shed light on the relationship between belief and use in language from a folk linguistic perspective. It sets out to investigate a transient multilingual community of Indian university students located in Heidelberg, Germany, and their direct and indirect attitudes towards Indian English (IndE) linguistic variation in their home country. The study used a mixed-method research design by combining data collection techniques from the fields of language attitudes and perceptual dialectology. Direct and indirect attitudes were investigated first by means of map-drawing tasks and then with a Verbal Guise test (VGT) for 60 respondents. In order to present a detailed description of Indian English (IndE) perceived variation, the data set of the VGT was based on the speech of educated speakers from two typologically distinct language groups, the Indo-Aryan one, which comprises languages spoken primarily in Northern India, and the Dravidian one, i.e., languages spoken in Southern India. The data collected with the aforementioned methods were analysed following the principles of quantitative approaches. While the analysis of the data gathered from the 'draw-a-map' task corresponded to the perception of accent variation, i.e., the elicitation of the speakers' overt stigmatisations and stereotypes of IndE accents, that of the VGT corresponded to its production, i.e., the correlation between indirect attitudes and accent variation.

The study provided the first perceptual map of India showing aggregated English dialect areas. Reported results showed that the community members operationalise perceptual differences on a North vs. South basis and that Northern IndE accents are perceived as more correct than Southern IndE ones for most attitude traits. Moreover, the study shed new light on the social stereotypes of the participants, emphasising their use of a similar cognitive template for area identifications. The triangulation of the 'draw-a-map' task and the VGT allowed to determine accurate folk perceptions and provided a full picture of overt and covert stigmatisations towards accent variation, which has not been accounted for in attitude studies of NEs.

**Keywords:** attitudinal cognitorium, folk awareness, folk linguistics, Indian Englishes; perceptual dialectology

## References

Hundt, M. & Sharma, D. (2014). Introduction. In M. Hundt & D. Sharma (Eds.), *English in the Indian Diaspora* (pp. 1–8). Amsterdam: Benjamins.