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The Normative North and the Stigmatized South

Ideology and Methodology in the Perceptual Dialectology of California

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As part of a larger perceptual dialectology study of linguistic diversity within California, this article focuses on a survey of Californians regarding the evaluation of language use within the state. Quantitative and qualitative analysis of two open-ended survey questions regarding where Californians "speak the best" and "speak the worst" reveals that Southern California is stigmatized by a majority of respondents as having the worst speech within the state and Northern California is valorized as having the best speech, due to the perceived differential access of speakers to educational opportunities. A small but socially significant "political correctness effect" also emerges, whereby some respondents indicate reluctance to evaluate others' linguistic varieties. The findings demonstrate both the need for greater attentiveness to ideological issues in research design and the importance of combining different theoretical and methodological traditions in the study of language ideologies and attitudes.

Keywords: *California; language attitudes; language ideologies; methodology; perceptual dialectology*

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California in the Linguistic Landscape of the United States

Perceptual dialectology, or the investigation of how language attitudes and ide-ologies evaluate speech in particular geographic regions, provides a new set of methods for investigating the social meaning of regional linguistic variation (Preston 1989). Frequently, respondents to U.S. perceptual dialectology surveys orient to a basic linguistic division between what might be called "the stigmatized South" and "the normative North," with the notable exception of New York as a stigmatized northern region (e.g., Hartley and Preston 1999; Preston 1996, 1999). That is, in the United States, the most salient sociolinguistic boundary is that between northern and southern varieties of English, with the former being valorized as prestigious and pre-scriptively correct and the latter disparaged as nonstandard and low-prestige. Indeed, the force of this perception of a geographic division between "good" and "bad" lan-guage use is so potent that to some extent even Southern respondents may share this language ideology.

Compared to the strong orientation to a North-South linguistic boundary among respondents in perceptual dialectology studies, language ideologies concerning other parts of the United States, such as the West, are far less fully developed, with the exception of California, which due to its size and cultural influence attracts more eval-uations of its language than other Western states. Building on an earlier report on the results of a map-labeling task focused on the geography of linguistic difference within California (Bucholtz et al. 2007), the present article analyzes the results of a brief sur-vey administered to California residents on their attitudes toward linguistic diversity within the state. The analysis combines quantitative sociolinguistic methods for elicit-ing and analyzing metalinguistic data as developed in perceptual dialectology with the qualitative methods used in research on language ideologies and attitudes within lin-guistic anthropology and increasingly social psychology, in order to offer a broad sociopolitical analysis of perceived linguistic differences in the nation's most populous and ethnically diverse state. More broadly, the study contributes to the investigation of language attitudes and ideologies within sociolinguistics, social psychology, and lin-guistic anthropology, an interdisciplinary field of research that intersects with a recent theoretical move to incorporate metalinguistic phenomena more centrally into the study of language (e.g., Blommaert 1999; Jaworski et al. 2004; Kroskrity 2000; Niedzielski and Preston 1999; Woolard et al. 1998).

Given the state's visibility in American popular culture, non-Californians' assessments of Californians' language use in perceptual dialectology studies often invoke media stereotypes, such as Valley girls and surfer dudes (Lance 1999), yet language use within the state is usually positively or at least neutrally evaluated by nonresidents (e.g., Hartley and Preston 1999; Preston 1989). Strikingly, the clos-est neighbors to California may evaluate it most negatively: in her study of per-ceptual dialectology among Oregon residents, Hartley (1999) found that California speech was often judged less pleasant than that of either Washington or Oregon

itself, and Fridland and Bartlett (2006) found a similar pattern of responses from Nevada residents.

Aside from these brief mentions of nonresidents' attitudes toward California in previous studies, little research has focused on perceptions of regional language use in the state. Indeed, only one perceptual dialectology study has considered Californians' language attitudes to any extent: Fought's (2002) investigation of California college students' perceptions of other American regional dialects. In her analysis Fought provides some brief but valuable insights into how Californians view their own state, including an orientation to stereotypes that are held outside the state as well. She concludes, "Californians seem to see their own speech in a fairly positive light, as natural and relaxed, but with its positive value tempered by the idea that it is also not 'accurate' speech in some sense, and that it reflects the negative aspects of the surfers and the Valley girls" (2002, 132).

While previous research offers a suggestive starting point for further research, the present study of Californians' language attitudes toward their state offers a more detailed picture of the ideological map of California's linguistic diversity than can be obtained from a focus on the national level. In our previous analysis of maps of California labeled by residents of the state regarding where people talk differently, we found that the most salient divide within the state is between Northern California and Southern California (Bucholtz et al. 2007). This divide emerged at the level of language (English was associated with the northern part of the state, Spanish with the south) and slang (especially the slang word *hella* 'a lot, very,' which is associated with Northern California); dialect differences were of less salience in this divide. At the same time, a divide between the coastal urban areas and the rural inland areas emerged in the data, which was most salient in the distinctions respondents made between social groups (the inland "hicks" versus the coastal "surfers"). The following analysis builds on these findings by examining elicited evaluations of the "best" and "worst" speech in the state.

Methodology

The research design was based on the general methods of perceptual dialectology developed by Preston (e.g., 1989, 1993). Seventy undergraduate students collected the surveys in 2003 and 2004 as part of an assignment for an introductory sociolinguistics course at the University of California, Santa Barbara.[1] The research instrument involved a map-labeling task and a brief survey; every student fieldworker was required to collect completed maps and surveys from ten respondents. The survey included demographic questions (gender, age, ethnicity, occupation, level of education, place of birth and other places of residence, and native language) as well as two open-ended questions—"Where in California do you think people speak best? Why?" and "Where in California do you think people speak worst? Why?"—that were to be read aloud to the respondent after she or he had completed the map-labeling

task; the respondents were asked to write their answers to these two questions at the end of the survey sheet. The questions were not asked until the map-labeling task had been completed in order to avoid biasing the respondents' choice of labels on the map.[2] Overall, 703 maps and surveys were analyzed for the present study (one student collected data from 13 respondents). The map-labeling results are reported in Bucholtz et al. (2007); the present article focuses on the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the open-ended survey questions. In the quantitative analysis, the researchers identified the regions most frequently named as where Californians speak the best and the worst in the two open-ended survey questions, as well as the reasons given for these answers. The researchers then tested for correlations between the named regions and respondents' birthplace and residence. The qualitative analysis examined in greater depth the answers to the two open-ended questions. This component of the analysis focused on the discursive display of language ideologies associated with particular linguistic varieties or social groups as well as those that emerged in relation to the research task as a whole.

While adhering to the general principles of perceptual dialectology, the research design differs from many previous studies of perceptual dialectology in several details. First, rather than inquiring specifically about regional dialects of English, the approach taken in most earlier studies on U.S. perceptual dialectology, it was decided that in the California context it would be more effective not to limit the study to English, both because regional dialect differences within a state are often less salient than those between states and because, given the vast linguistic and cultural diversity of California, many of the most salient linguistic differences within the state are between languages or styles rather than dialects. Second, the questions regarding where people "speak best" and "speak worst" depart from much of the perceptual dialectology literature, which often uses a Likert scale or similar measure to elicit detailed information about status versus solidarity factors, such as "correctness" versus "pleasantness." This was motivated both by theoretical considerations—given the exploratory nature of the study, it was not clear which factors would be most meaningful in the California context—and by practical factors: the need for the survey to take no more than ten minutes to complete and to be limited to a single sheet of paper so that student fieldworkers could collect and report the data without undue difficulty. Third, the study included an extensive qualitative component alongside the quantitative analysis, which allowed respondents to elaborate on their responses in the labeling task and enabled the research team to identify additional issues that could not be arrived at through the labeling task alone. This qualitative approach is in line with a growing body of work within language attitude research more generally (e.g., Evans 2005; Garrett, Coupland, and Williams 2003; Garrett, Williams, and Evans 2005; Niedzielski and Preston 1999; Tamasi 2003).

Demographic information about the respondents is provided in Tables 1a through 1c; overwhelmingly, the respondents were undergraduates at the University of California, Santa Barbara between the ages of 18 and 20, but small numbers of non-students and older students also completed the survey. The larger number of female

Table 1a
Gender of Survey Respondents

Female	378 (53.8%)
Male	323 (45.9%)
Decline to state	2 (0.3%)
TOTAL	703 (100%)

Table 1b
Ethnicity of Survey Respondents

European American	414 (58.9%)
Latino	89 (12.7%)
Asian American	79 (11.2%)
Mixed heritage	45 (6.4%)
African American	29 (4.1%)
Native American	2 (0.3%)
Other	25 (3.6%)
Decline to state	14 (2.0%)
Not classifiable	6 (0.9%)
TOTAL	703 (100%)

Table 1c
Birthplace/Residence of Survey Respondents

Los Angeles	193 (27.5%)
Northern California	79 (11.2%)
Bay Area	48 (6.8%)
Central Coast	40 (5.7%)
San Diego	33 (4.7%)
Inland	17 (2.4%)
General California	57 (8.1%)
Out of State	144 (20.5%)
Other Country	89 (12.7%)
No response	3 (0.4%)
TOTAL	703 (100%)

than male respondents, as shown in Table 1a, reflects the larger number of female undergraduates at UC Santa Barbara.

Although California is extremely ethnoracially diverse, the respondents, like the general student population of UC Santa Barbara, are largely white. Consequently, the data do not reflect the state's ethnic and racial diversity.[3]

Information about birthplace and residence was collected through two survey items: "Place of birth (city, state, country)" and "Other places of residence."[4] The

largest group of respondents (in keeping with the UC Santa Barbara student popula-tion) was from the Los Angeles region, and the second and third largest groups were from out of state and from other countries (as note 4 above explains, these latter cat-egories are disproportionately large because they include respondents who had spent any part of their lives outside California; as public university students, most of the respondents were likely to be longtime California residents at the time of the study). The second largest group from within California came from the Northern California region, excluding the Bay Area, which was tallied separately.

In sum, the respondents were more or less representative of the UC Santa Barbara undergraduate population, but not of the entire state.

Where Californians Speak the Best (and the Worst)

As noted above, Bucholtz et al. (2007) demonstrate that, as with the United States as a whole, California's most salient linguistic boundary lies between north and south (see also Fought 2002). The following analysis indicates that like the U.S. North and South, within the state these regions are evaluated very differently by respondents, though not for the same reasons as at the national level. The quantita-tive data show that of all the regions in the state, Southern California is stigmatized by the largest number of respondents as "where people speak the worst," while Northern California is most often evaluated in the surveys as "where people speak the best." However, qualitative analysis sheds light on the nuances of these responses, as well as some striking countertrends.

Quantitative Analysis

The two open-ended survey questions asked "Where in California do you think people speak the best? Why?" and "Where in California do you think people speak the worst? Why?" Tables 2a and 2b summarize the answers to the two-part question concerning where people speak best.[5]

As Table 2a shows, Northern California is the most common answer given to the question about best speech; moreover, although Los Angeles is the city most fre-quently named, more Northern California cities are named than Southern California cities, and if individual cities are included in counts for each region, the northern part of the state still retains its status as the place where "people speak the best." The main reason given for this response is that the population is more educated (pre-sumably due to the presence of several elite universities in the Bay Area), while for those who named Southern California as best, the main reason given was that it is the respondent's own place of residence; this "local preference factor" (Preston 1989, 67) has been found by other researchers as well. Somewhat paradoxically, a

Table 2a
Answers to the Question "Where in California
do you think people speak the best?"

Northern California	137 (18.1%)
Southern California	76 (10.0%)
Los Angeles	59 (7.8%)
Bay Area	45 (5.9%)
Sacramento	39 (5.1%)
San Francisco	36 (4.7%)
I don't like the question	35 (4.6%)
Problematizing of question	37 (4.9%)
Other answers	294 (38.8%)
TOTAL	758 (100%)

Table 2b
Reasons Given for Response to the Question
"Where in California do you think people speak the best?"

Education/educational access	85 (17.1%)
It's where I'm from	39 (7.9%)
Fewer immigrants, minorities/less diverse	32 (6.4%)
Wealthy	29 (5.8%)
Diverse	26 (5.2%)
Familiar	25 (5.0%)
Professional population, economic center	22 (4.4%)
Other reasons	238 (48.0%)
TOTAL	496 (100%)

number of respondents who named Northern California as "best" said that this was because the region is (perceived as) less ethnically diverse than the southern part of the state, while for a slightly smaller number of those who selected Southern California, its (perceived) greater ethnic diversity was singled out as the reason for its linguistic superiority. It is also noteworthy that a small number of respondents either explicitly rejected the question or problematized it in some way.[6] In the qualitative analysis below, we discuss the details of the liberal, multicultural language ideology exhibited in such responses.

Tables 3a and 3b summarize the answers to the question "Where in California do you think people speak the worst? Why?"

Southern California (and especially Los Angeles) is overwhelmingly named in answer to this question, due to a (perceived) lack of education and access to English among its residents, but Northern California is also frequently mentioned, largely due to the use of *hella* and other slang terms unfamiliar (and hence annoying) to Southern Californian residents. Unlike the "best" category, in answer to this

Table 3a
Answers to the Question "Where in California
do you think people speak the worst?"

Southern California	122 (13.8%)
Los Angeles	87 (9.8%)
Northern California	80 (9.0%)
Central Valley	60 (6.8%)
Problematizing of question	49 (5.5%)
Poor, lower class	49 (5.5%)
Rural/agricultural	38 (4.3%)
San Diego	46 (5.2%)
Near border	45 (5.1%)
No best/worst	38 (4.3%)
Other answers	271 (30.6%)
TOTAL	885

Table 3b
Reasons Given for Response to the Question
"Where in California do you think people speak the worst?"

Less education/educational access	70 (13.1%)
Use annoying slang/too much slang	65 (12.1%)
Poor English	43 (8.0%)
Minorities/immigrants	33 (6.2%)
I don't like *hella/hecka*	32 (6.0%)
Hard to understand/unfamiliar	22 (4.1%)
Ethnically/linguistically diverse	22 (4.1%)
Speak Spanish	18 (3.4%)
Other reasons	230 (43.0%)
TOTAL	535 (100%)

question a number of respondents chose not to name a particular region, electing instead to describe settings in which "people speak the worst" (i.e., those involving poverty, rurality, and/or proximity to the border with Mexico). Inability to speak Standard English well was overwhelmingly equated with inability to speak well at all, and ethnic minority or immigrant status was frequently equated with inability to speak Standard English.

A strongly significant difference was found in responses to the open-ended questions from those respondents whose birthplace and residence were both in either Northern California or Southern California. As shown in Table 4a, Northern California respondents overwhelmingly reported that Northern Californians speak the best, while Southern Californians were evenly divided between Northern and Southern California as the place where people speak the best. Conversely, Northern Californians had a strong tendency to report that Southern Californians speak the

Table 4a
Reported Region Where People Speak Best,
by Birthplace/Residence of Respondent

Birthplace/Residence	Northern California Best	Southern California Best	TOTAL
Northern California	54	5	59
Southern California	36	37	73
TOTAL	90	42	132

$p < 0.000001$

Table 4b
Reported Region Where People Speak Worst,
by Birthplace/Residence of Respondent

Birthplace/Residence	Northern California Worst	Southern California Worst	TOTAL
Northern California	10	55	65
Southern California	43	40	83
TOTAL	53	95	148

$p < 0.00001$

worst, while Southern Californians were again evenly divided in their responses between Northern and Southern California (Table 4b). This pattern suggests that Northern Californians have a much stronger sense of linguistic security than Southern Californians, a difference that is also found between residents of the American North and the American South (Preston 1996).

In sum, the general trends regarding positive and negative evaluations of regional speech in the quantitative component of the analysis indicate that Northern Californians' speech tends to be named as "best" while Southern Californians' speech tends to be named as "worst," with some influence of the local preference factor in the respondents' answers. Respondents emphasized access to education or lack thereof as the main reason for naming a region as speaking "best" or "worst"; this type of response may be due in part to the fact that the survey was conducted in an educational setting and the vast majority of respondents were university students. The qualitative component of the analysis of these evaluations sheds further light on how Californians view linguistic variation and diversity within their state.

Qualitative Analysis

The responses to the two open-ended survey questions regarding where Californians speak best and worst are frequently more complex and nuanced than can be captured in quantitative analysis alone. Qualitative analysis helps uncover how the general

patterns noted in the quantitative analysis fit into broader discursive regimes regarding language and its users. The following examples illustrate the most common types of responses. (Respondents' self-reported ethnic affiliations are given in parentheses after each example.)

The focus on education or educational access as an explanation for where "people speak the best" is illustrated in examples (1) through (5):

(1)   The best English is probably spoken in Northern California around like Silicon Valley because most around that area are educated & rich. (White)

(2)   I think people speak the best in more affluent communities such as The Bay area, LA and other pockets throughout Ca b/c [because] of better education. (White)

(3)   I think in California people speak best if they live somewhere rich (i.e., Beverly Hills, and I'm sure there are places in the north too) cuz they can afford the best education. (hispanic)

(4)   I think it's immpossible to pinpoint any particular area (based on geography) where people speak best. Wherever there are highly educated people who care about speaking well is where people speak best. (Caucasian)

(5)   They speak the best in Northern Cali 'cause they all be educated n'shit. (White)

As the examples show, education is frequently linked to wealthy communities, such as Silicon Valley (example 1) and Beverly Hills (example 3); it is also associated with Northern California (especially the Bay Area). However, example (4) expresses some doubt about the possibility of tying "speaking well" to region; this response seems to suggest that highly educated people are distributed throughout the state. Finally, example (5), while offering an answer to the question (*Northern Cali*), couches it in a form that is at least slightly subversive in its deliberate use of non-standard and colloquial forms (*'cause they all be educated n'shit*).[7] Adding to the subversive effect of this comment is the fact that the respondent is himself from Northern California, so that the form of his response cleverly undermines its content. These remarks concerning education imply a class dimension in the language ideologies of these respondents, an issue that is often obscured in favor of ethnicity-based language ideologies in the U.S. context (Milroy 2000).

Responses exhibiting the local preference factor are less varied. These responses are generally unapologetic about their bias in favor of familiarity and do not display the same range of complexity as the previous examples:

(6)   I think people speak the best in the Southern part since I think that we have absolutely no accent. (White)

(7)   So. Cal. because I'm from there. (White)

(8)   Where Im from, because they speak like me. (White [Israeli + Italian])

(9)   Thousand Oaks because that is what I am used to and different language is annoying. (White)

(10)   Northern California because they speak like a news reporter. With a regular accent. And that is also how I speak. (Black)

In these responses, there is a remarkable candor about this hometown advantage, and respondents do not seem to feel compelled to explain why speech that is like their own is "best"; matter-of-fact statements such as *I'm from there* (example 7), *because they speak like me* (example 8), and *different language is annoying* (example 9) are treated as sufficient explanations in themselves. Even those who focus on the issue of accent (examples 6 and 10) do not explain why certain accents (or the lack thereof) are superior. The ideological force of perceived similarity is clearly powerful in shaping these respondents' evaluations of language use.

The issue of difference is also extremely influential in respondents' views of the "best" speech—here, the difference that matters most is divergence from a racial norm of whiteness:

(11)   Wherever not many people of color live since there is not much influence of speaking different English. (Filipino)

(12)   I think people speak the best in the Sacramento area because the population is mostly white and the language is mostly English. (Filipino/Egyptian)

(13)   ABOVE THE BAY AREA BECAUSE THAT AREA SEEMS TAINTED BY MANY DIFFERENT GROUPS WHETHER ETHNIC OR SOCIAL. THEY HAVE LESS OUTSIDE INFLUENCE ON PROPER ENGLISH (HISPANIC/EAST ASIAN)

Thus according to these respondents a "mostly white," mostly English-speaking population gives rise to the "best" speech (example 12); by contrast, ethnic diversity influences (or even "taints") English, thereby lowering its quality (examples 11 and 13). This ideological connection between whiteness and prestige language forms is both widespread and of long standing (e.g., Bonfiglio 2002; Bucholtz 2001; Jones 2001). Lippi-Green (1997) points out that such linguistic racism is licensed where other forms of racism would be sanctioned because it frames racial and ethnic difference in terms of linguistic difference, an arena in which openly expressed prejudice is still widely accepted. It is therefore noteworthy that all three of the above responses come from people of color (example 11 comes from a Filipino respondent, example 12 from someone of Filipino and Egyptian heritage, and example 13 from a respondent of Latino and East Asian background), a detail that may (or may not) point up the respondents' own linguistic insecurity (Labov 1972; Trudgill 1972). In any case, it is clear that the hegemonic ideology of the "monoglot standard" (Silverstein 1996) extends well beyond the European American elites who most benefit from it.

Alongside the responses that point to linguistic and cultural homogeneity as evidence for where Californians speak "best," a slightly smaller group of respondents take the opposing position: people speak "best" in areas of the state with a high degree of linguistic diversity, particularly the major urban areas of Los Angeles and (to a lesser extent) San Francisco:

(14)   Best—So Cal Beach area!! There is a much more diverse group of ethnicities lots of languages melded as one :) (Chicana/Latina)

(15)   L.A Because there are a lot of diff. people from a lot of diff. places exiting and entering and they all can understand each other. (African-American)

(16)   Los Angeles because the best language is the diverse one and you don't get any more diverse than that (Mexican American)

(17)   San Francisco area because you have a more diverse group of people (Caucasian)

(18)   Either SF or LA b/c that has the most different types of people. So it's almost a melting pot. Its good to learn from others. (Taiwanese)

In comments of this kind, respondents express their appreciation for linguistic and cultural diversity; indeed, the term *diverse/diversity* figures centrally in these remarks, as shown in examples (14), (16), and (18). Such responses espouse a multicultural language ideology wherein linguistic diversity is viewed as inherently valuable. According to this ideology, large multilingual urban centers are where people speak "best" because of their tendency to bring different linguistic groups into juxtaposition. Some respondents also point to the sociolinguistic harmony and tolerance that they associate with this situation, stating that speakers in such areas learn to communicate with and adapt to speakers of other languages and dialects (e.g., examples 14, 15, 18). While these and other pro-diversity comments come disproportionately from respondents of color, a number of white respondents also share this perspective.

Despite the positive view of linguistic diversity offered by such comments, it is more common for respondents to evaluate minority languages and dialects negatively. Responses involving linguistic racism are especially common in answer to the question regarding where Californians speak the worst. In examples (19) through (23), respondents comment either on linguistic varieties associated with specific ethnic groups (*ebonics* in examples 19 and 20; *spanish* in example 21) or on linguistic diversity itself (examples 22 and 23):

(19)   Fresno b/c they speak ebonics and they think they know how to speak properly … but we all know the truth. (white)

(20)   They speak worse up north California. Because everyone up north speaks ebonics. (Vietnamese)

(21)   So Cal- spanish is such an ugly language. Nah I'm just kidding …. Kinda. (hella white)

(22)   The Central Valley and San Diego area because there are many bilingual speakers who know little english. (White)

(23)   L.A. and other areas where people speak languages other than English—because I don't understand them. (Caucasian)

The criteria on which these areas are deemed to be the "worst" linguistically are of dubious empirical accuracy, such as the claim in example (19) that "everyone up north speaks ebonics" despite the fact that even the Northern California counties with the largest African American populations are only 15 percent Black, or the assertion in example (22) that bilingual speakers "know little english," when in fact in the United States, nearly all bilinguals are fully fluent in English.[8] Respondents may also use humor to express racist attitudes without taking full responsibility for them, as in example (21), which makes a semi-serious joke about the low aesthetic value of Spanish (the respondent who provided this answer describes himself as "hella white").

Another form of humor found in the responses is the use of elements from the linguistic variety being evaluated; this practice is much more common when evaluating a variety negatively than when evaluating it positively. (The converse of this strategy is found in example (5) above, in which nonstandard elements are jokingly used to discuss the standard variety. We did not find instances of the mocking use of standard or formal English, presumably because of its unmarked status in the survey context.) In examples (24) and (25) Spanish is used in this way; in (26) and (27), negatively evaluated slang terms are embedded into the response to achieve an ironic effect:

(24)   Probably next to the border because ingles es their secondo language so they don't know no better. (White)

(25)   Chula Vista porque tenemos los mejores burritos en todos los estados unidos. ('Chula Vista because we have the best burritos in the whole United States'.) (White/Caucasian/European)

(26)   L.A.- LA is all messed up on the lingo, yo. (White)

(27)   socal, bro! dude! sick! KILLER! Those words are why they suck. (white)

In example (24), the respondent codeswitches between English and Spanish, as if performing the voice of an immigrant who does not speak English natively. Despite the apparently sympathetic tone of the response (*they don't know no better* may suggest that it is not the fault of recent immigrants that they may not be fluent English speakers), the inclusion of both nonstandard English and mock Spanish (e.g., Hill 1993)—as seen in the use of *secondo* for Spanish *segundo*—in his comments indicates that this respondent, who is white, is in fact ridiculing rather than

sympathizing with those whose speech he is evaluating. Likewise, the entirely Spanish response in example (25) also uses the language mockingly: again, the message may initially seem positive, but it is offered in response to the question regarding where people speak the worst, and the response must be interpreted in light of this fact. Chula Vista is a community south of San Diego that is approximately 50 percent Latino. The "White/Caucasian/European" respondent who makes the statement in (25) is presumably not sincerely praising the quality of the Mexican food available to residents of Chula Vista, given that food is an irrelevant criterion for evaluating language. Indeed, despite his use of the first person plural he does not appear to be a resident of the city at all (he lists his birthplace as Honolulu and his current place of residence as Santa Barbara). Taken together, these details suggest that the respondent is not answering the question in his own voice but is speaking as an imagined Chula Vista resident in order to foreground and disparage the city's large Spanish-speaking population.

The other two examples likewise perform linguistic otherness: (26), from a white Los Angeles resident, alludes to the use of African American slang (*yo*), while (27) first makes mocking use of a perceived Southern California slang term, *bro*, in naming this region as the worst and then lists other terms to which the respondent (a Northern Californian) objects.

While slang is a special target for negative evaluation, in example (28) the Northern California respondent considers (Northern California) slang preferable to language use that "goes against proper grammar." The perceived violation in this case is Southern Californians' use of the definite determiner *the* in referring to highways or freeways, a widely recognized shibboleth of Southern California speech (Geyer 2001):

(28) So Cal, as the use of "the" as in "the 405" goes beyond slang and goes against what is nationally accepted as proper grammar whereas "hella" which is attributed to NorCal is just a slang word. (WHITE)

Finally, as in the responses to the question about the "best" speech, the local preference factor also emerges in answers to the question about where Californians speak "the worst." In example (29) the respondent invokes this criterion. At the same time, however, he acknowledges that although he does not like unfamiliar speech styles, these are not necessarily worse than his own:

(29) People that don't speak like me don't speak worse necessarily, but I don't like it. (White)

As the hedged answer in example (29) indicates, several participants who responded to the questions regarding where people speak best or worst signaled a certain degree of resistance to this part of the survey, either by indicating reluctance to accept the terms in which the questions were posed or by undermining their response through

humor, as in examples (4) and (5) above, respectively.[9] In fact, a number of responses to the questions expressed an even greater degree of resistance to the framing of the task. Such responses are discussed in the final part of the analysis.

The Political Correctness Effect

Whereas the previous examples make clear that most of the study participants were willing to evaluate others' speech (often in quite negative terms) at least to some degree, Tables 2a and 3a above indicate that approximately 10 percent of the participants in our study openly resisted this task, even though they were willing to complete the map-labeling task.[10]

Several other perceptual dialectology studies report similar reactions from some participants. In her study of U.S. perceptual dialectology among Oregon residents, Hartley (1999) found that a number of respondents expressed reluctance to evaluate the correctness of speech in various regions (although they did not balk at evaluating speech on the basis of pleasantness). Fought (2002, 114) reports that two of the participants in her California-based study seemed to view the map-labeling task as a trick question, instead writing "All places speak differently" on their maps. Similarly, Preston (1997) and Tamasi (2003) note that Southern respondents hesitate to evaluate others negatively. Although responses of this type are a minority both in these previous studies and in our own, they contrast strikingly with perceptual dialectology research conducted elsewhere in the country, in which participants willingly offer evaluations of their own and others' speech. As Preston writes regarding his study participants from Indiana and Michigan:

> Few respondents complained about this task; the relativist position so often taken by linguists, however morally unreproachable, was not that taken by the respondents. They complained that they did not have information about this or that state, but the ranking was for them a reasonable task and apparently represented opinions overtly held about the sites where better and worse, pleasant and unpleasant English was spoken in the United States (1993, 345).

Whereas Southerners may be wary of evaluating others' language due to their own experiences with linguistic discrimination, it is less obvious why respondents from California and Oregon would share this hesitation. One possible explanation is that inhabitants of the West Coast of the United States are on average more politically liberal than those in many other regions of the country (particularly those regions in which most previous studies have been conducted) and hence may be more sensitized to the potentially harmful effects of language ideologies on linguistic minorities. In addition, in our own study, many of the resistant responses were provided by respondents of color. This fact may be due in part to these respondents'

personal experiences with linguistic racism. For these reasons, then, some West Coast participants in perceptual dialectology studies may be especially prone to question research tasks inviting them to take up ideological positions in an unproblematic way.[11] This is not to say that such respondents do not hold any language ideologies—quite the contrary, given their vigorous challenges to the "monoglot standard" ideology (Silverstein 1996; Lippi-Green 1997) that other respondents articulated without hesitation. In other words, the ideologies these respondents put forward challenged the hegemonic ideological perspective.

Within social psychology, similar phenomena have long been recognized under such labels as *acquiescence bias* or *social desirability bias*—that is, the tendency for survey and interview respondents to produce answers that conform to what they perceive as socially acceptable or normatively "correct" (Fisher 1993). But where social psychologists seek primarily to eradicate the biasing effects of acquiescent answers, our own interest is in examining such responses in their own right as sociolinguistic data (see also Rapley and Antaki 1996). Our term for this pattern in the data, *the political correctness effect*, foregrounds what we see as the social, as opposed to the psychological, function of such responses. The name is intended to be somewhat tongue-in-cheek, given the negative associations of this term in the popular mind (e.g., Cameron 1995; Suhr and Johnson 2003). The term *political correctness* (or *PC*) became widespread in U.S. public discourse during the so-called culture wars of the 1990s, a period of debate over identity politics in which political activists sought to eliminate the symbolic oppression of subordinated groups by eradicating racist, sexist, homophobic, and other discriminatory uses of language. These activities were often seen by critics as a form of censorship. Thus the term usefully captures the politically engaged and counterhegemonic spirit of many of the resistant responses we received (especially from respondents of color), as well as the reluctance among other respondents (particularly European Americans) to express their views openly for fear of giving offense.

We identify three resistant strategies in the data: sarcasm, intellectualization, and challenging the question. A fourth strategy, warding off accusations of racism, uses the discourse of political correctness but in the service of compliance with the research task rather than resistance to it. Each of these strategies is illustrated below.

Subversive Sarcasm

As seen in several of the previous examples, humor may be used to support a serious answer to the questions regarding "best" and "worst" speech. However, some resistant respondents also use humor in order to challenge the assumptions underlying these questions. In the following examples, respondents appear willing to answer the questions but do so in ways that implicitly problematize the notions of "best" and "worst":

(30) [Best:] Whoever has the most money [Worst:] Whoever actually works the hardest. (Caucasian)

(31) Best in areas that can only be inhabited by wealthy god fearing white folks, such as rich beach towns, as well as rich inland parts of cities set up by fearful white people in order to protect the genetic futures of their women and children. (American)

(32) (Best:) The Hispanics Speak the Best Spanish. (Worst:) The Chinese speak the worst Spanish. (Persian)

Examples (30) and (31) draw on the language ideology associating "best" speech with wealth, which is expressed in the compliant responses shown above in examples (1) through (3). However, here the respondents challenge this ideological association by implying that the "best" speakers are also exploitative or racist. Thus in (30) the respondent ironically contrasts those who are wealthy and hence speak "best" with those who "actually [work] the hardest," suggesting that the wealth of the "best" speakers is undeserved. In (31), "best" is explicitly and scornfully tied not only to wealth but also to religiosity, whiteness, racism, and patriarchy. In these two responses, linguistically "best" becomes symbolically revalorized (Woolard and Schieffelin 1994) as morally "worst."

Symbolic revalorization also occurs in example (32). As already noted, many of the compliant respondents interpreted the questions regarding where "people speak the best/worst" as asking where people speak *English* the best or worst (e.g., examples 12, 22, and 24 above). The response in (32) seems to recognize this ideological privileging of English over other languages and challenges it by placing Spanish rather than English in the privileged position; by this criterion, those who are frequently singled out as the "worst" speakers, Latinos, are now elevated as the "best" speakers. Such resistant responses challenge the very notion of a best and worst way of speaking by providing seemingly compliant answers that subversively reconfigure hegemonic linguistic and social hierarchies.

Intellectual Expounding

A second resistant strategy used by those who took up a "politically correct" stance toward the "best/worst" questions is to engage in extensive intellectualizing of the issue. These responses tend to be rather lengthy and are characterized by a formal, quasi-academic register and by a heavily rationalistic style of discourse:

(33) I don't think there can be a language that can be considered best or worst because language is culture specific and even presently in society person(s) may be of [one] culture and still speak another cultures language. This reveals that language cannot be judged from culture. (Hawaiian/Italian)

(34) Def[initio]n: Of 'worst'- English, in state of CA, smallest % of population can understand (i.e., Most idioms, more slang, least colloquial language). Worst fi using working def[initio]n fi Any extremely rich or poor areas. Such that the[y] speak in esoteric language—very rich areas fi in southern California. very poor areas fi Oakland (parts), berkely (parts), Long Beach (parts), Inglewood, South central, Stockton (parts). (American)

(35)   (Worst:) In areas that have lost their economic stability due to the failure to diver-
sify job markets. The job markets experiencing fluctuation in revenue invariably
fail periodically, impacting poorly diversified regions the worst. (Queens for
example, Long Beach, Watts ...) Failure of microeconomic enviroments (i.e:
Queens' shipbuilding) and the impending service vacuum leaves ill-motivated
people, poor school funding, challenging social atmospheres, and the decay of
interest in self presentation such as "well spoken" speech patterns. (American)

The lengthiness of these examples may be due to the fact that they are not fully
compliant answers and hence require some additional explanation or justification.[12]
But the noticeably greater degree of formality seen in these responses compared to
others cannot be attributed to the need for such explanations. Rather, these respon-
dents (quite reasonably, given that the study was conducted on a university campus)
seem to be treating the written context of the survey as a forum for academic dis-
cussion, or perhaps like an essay question on an exam. Some elements of an acade-
mic discourse style in these examples include the use of structures associated with
argumentation (example 33: *This reveals that*...), the proposal of a "working def[ini-
tio]n" of what *worst* means (example 34), and the use of Greco-Latinate lexis asso-
ciated with academia and especially the field of economics (example 35: *economic
stability, fluctuation in revenue, microeconomic enviro[n]ments*). In each case, the
argument put forward by the respondent does not simply invoke ideologies and treat
them as self-evident, as in many of the compliant answers, but explores a range of
issues that problematize the notion of better and worse ways of speaking, by ground-
ing language in culture (example 33) or economics (example 35), or simply redefin-
ing the notion of "worst" as any use of "esoteric language," whether by rich or poor
speakers (example 34). Again, these responses exhibit a sympathetic stance toward
the poor and criticism of the rich, which as already shown is a frequent theme in the
resistant answers. Such remarks indicate once again that language ideologies in the
U.S. context may be tied to class as much as ethnicity, despite the greater attention
to the latter in public debates over linguistic diversity, such as the Ebonics contro-
versy regarding the pedagogical use of African American Vernacular English in
schools (Rickford 1999) and the question of the role of Spanish and other minority
languages in American society (Fillmore 2004).

Challenging the Question

Other resistant respondents are quite direct in their rejection of the questions con-
cerning "best" and "worst" speech. Some of these responses, such as (36), use humor:

(36)   I don't think anyone talks gooder. (Caucasian)

This example recalls the subversiveness of example (5) above, in which nonstan-
dard language is also used to challenge the notion of a "best" way of speaking.

However, whereas the respondent in (5) does in fact offer an answer to the question, the author of (36) does not, instead directly rejecting the possibility of ranking one way of speaking above another.

A number of other respondents "talked back" to the survey by answering the question with a skeptical question of their own, as in (37) and (38):

(37)   Speak worst? Come on. I speak very bad Chinese (in fact, none) but alright English … do I belong to "speaks-best" area or "speaks- worst?" (Whitebread)

(38)   Speak worst what? A person may not speak good english but yet they may be able to speak other home country language very well. So it doesn't necessarily mean they speak bad. (Mexican)

These responses are also noteworthy for their efforts to relativize notions of "best" and "worst," much like example (32) above. But whereas that response subversively used Spanish as the basis for evaluating linguistic ability, these comments make the same point much more directly, noting that any determination of "best" and "worst" language use necessarily depends on which language is selected. These responses imply that such assessments are therefore largely meaningless.

This perspective is made fully explicit in the following set of examples, in which the idea of a "best" and "worst" way of speaking is openly rejected:

(39)   I don't think there is an area where people speak best. Each area has its own unique slang or language or accent. It's different but I don't think any of it is wrong, as long as it's understandable. (Chinese)

(40)   I believe that there is no right or proper place … Everyone is entitled to speak however they feel! (Hispanic/Native American)

(41)   No one speaks the best or worst as all dialect is interesting & who am I to say what's the best & worst? It's all about perspective (Vietnamese! Asian goddamnit!)

(42)   No one, not even me can criticize where people speak well or not. (Latina)

(43)   That is a bull shit question because what is supposed to determine best. It should be the content of the individual, not where a group of people are from. (Black)

(44)   I'm a ling[uistics] student so I don't think in terms of best or worst! You need someone more biased! (White)

All of these responses challenge the premise underlying the "best/worst" questions, and several of them do so quite forcefully, through the use of expressive punctuation (examples 40 and 44) and profanity (example 43). The relativist ideology that emerges in examples (37) and (38) above is made fully explicit in these examples, whether by asserting that there can be no right or wrong when it comes to language (examples 39–41), by questioning the basis for such a determination (example 43),

or by disputing that any particular individual is in a position to make a judgment of this kind (examples 41 and 42). Example (44) makes clear that anyone who could make this sort of evaluation is in fact "biased" (a condition that, happily, can be overcome through the study of linguistics).

It is notable that most of these vehemently resistant responses come from people of color (at least one of whom, the author of example (41), also expresses a strong sense of ethnic pride), in sharp contrast to the large representation of white respondents in the compliant answers. Perhaps relatedly, rather than the discourse of personal opinion that predominates in many of the compliant responses, a politicized rhetoric often comes to the fore in these examples, invoking individual rights (example 40: *Everyone is entitled to speak however they feel!*) and their limits (example 42: *No one, not even me can criticize where people speak well or not*), as well as alluding to civil rights discourse, as in the echo of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s celebrated "I Have a Dream" speech seen in example (44): "It should be the content of the individual, not where a group of people are from."[13]

"I'm Not a Racist, but…"

The final type of "politically correct" strategy is used not to resist the assumptions of the "best/worst" questions but to provide a compliant answer that others may view as offensive. Respondents who use this strategy engage in the linguistic self-monitoring associated with political correctness (particularly by its critics) but do not tie this rather cosmetic monitoring practice to a broader challenge to racist viewpoints. Rather, the strategy, which has been documented in previous examinations of race talk (e.g., Bonilla-Silva and Forman 2000), is to ward off the charge of racism by explicitly denying racist intent, as seen in examples (45) and (46):

(45) (Worst:) Mexico border (not trying to be racist….) (Asian)

(46) (Worst:) So. Cal -San Diego-low employment rate close to Mexico (Im not racist, but I think it has an effect on proper english) (Caucasian)

The respondents in the above examples employ this strategy for the same reason: in order to mitigate the potential offensiveness of judging the area near Mexico as the place with the worst language use. Interestingly, both respondents add these comments parenthetically at the end of their answers. It may be that seeing their negative evaluation of speech near the Mexican border written down in stark black and white may have led these respondents to add the denial of racism as an afterthought. Certainly, most respondents who associated Mexico or Mexicans with the "worst" speech did not seem to feel this same compunction. In fact, these were the only two respondents to use this strategy, perhaps because the anonymity of the survey made it less risky to express opinions that could be viewed as racist.

In sum, the responses to the survey's two open-ended questions regarding where Californians speak best and worst include many answers that straightforwardly provide the requested opinions as well as a much smaller number of answers that undermine the questions in some way, whether through humor and sarcasm, intellectual debate, or outright challenge. But despite the important differences in their perspectives on linguistic diversity in California, both compliant and resistant respondents shared a similar orientation to the research task, in that both groups understood it, quite rightly, as an ideological event. In particular, both groups oriented in some way to the underlying assumptions of the research questions, the wording of which reinscribes the very ideologies that the research instrument was designed to document. That is, by presupposing that there is a "best" or "worst" way of speaking in California, the survey questions subtly encouraged respondents to embrace those ideologies. The majority of the study participants were quite willing and able to fulfill this research task. However, a small group of participants sought to challenge the premises of the research questions by highlighting the ideologies that informed them.

Although as sociolinguists we of course do not share the assumptions implicit in the questions regarding the "best" and "worst" uses of language, the ideological framing of the research questions was not accidental. It was originally felt that the inclusion of a question along the lines of "Do you think some people in California speak better than others?" might lead some respondents simply to answer in the negative out of expediency, for such a question calls attention to the possibility of a "politically correct" answer. In addition, giving a negative response to this question could have allowed participants to avoid answering the question regarding the location of the best and worst speakers and thus this response could have been chosen as a way to shorten the research task. Despite these methodological issues, in retrospect it would have been worthwhile to include a question of this kind, for it would have been no more leading than the questions that were ultimately used, and it might have served the useful purpose of helping some respondents to scrutinize their own ideological biases regarding linguistic diversity. In this regard it is important to keep in mind that academic research is still endowed with considerable authority, particularly on university campuses, and thus the largely undergraduate participants in this study may have been deferring to this authority in the way they chose to answer the questions. (This may also help explain the resistant strategy of intellectualization as a counterweight to the scholarly authority of the research survey.) Offering respondents a different, less evaluative way of viewing linguistic diversity might therefore have been similarly influential in shaping some participants' responses. In short, as other researchers have also noted (e.g., Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000; van den Berg et al. 2004), research instruments such as surveys and interviews do not simply extract preexisting opinions and beliefs from respondents' heads but actively work to shape and construct participants' responses through the context of the research encounter itself. This observation does not vitiate elicitation-based methods, but it should alert researchers to proceed with caution in research design and the analysis of the resulting data.

Conclusion

This study has shown that language attitudes toward California held by the state's residents reflect broader linguistic ideologies identified in earlier research on perceptual dialectology, such as the stereotypes of surfers and Valley girls that predominate in nonresidents' views of California. At the same time, it has uncovered greater awareness and at times even appreciation of sociolinguistic diversity within the state than has been previously documented, as seen both in responses that judge linguistically diverse areas as the parts of California where people speak the best and in challenges to the premises of the research task itself.

The study also points to other new methodological directions for perceptual dialectology research. The political correctness effect, for example, suggests that research methods that involve explicit elicitation of language attitudes may yield different results from those obtained via an analysis of the language ideologies articulated in metalinguistic talk among peers in daily interaction. It may well be that an individual who is wary of making pronouncements about language as part of a written survey or in a research interview may very comfortably express such views in a casual setting among friends or may express similar attitudes through different linguistic means in each context. Ethnographic and interactional studies of language ideologies are therefore an invaluable complement to such research, in order to get at what people say about language in situations in which the researcher is not guiding the discourse as well as to examine how interaction is shaped by the presence of the researcher. The purpose of methodological complementarity of this kind is not to challenge the validity of such methods, but to acknowledge that like all language use elicitation-based methods are situated within a social and interactional context and thus are a valuable site for sociolinguistic analysis. From this perspective, the researcher's goal should be not to eliminate "biased" answers but to acknowledge all metalinguistic discourse (including the researcher's own) as sociolinguistic data that merit analytic attention.

Relatedly, the question of how the design of the research instrument in the present study may have influenced participants' responses suggests another avenue for future perceptual dialectology research: a focus on how the very act of research inevitably shapes the results. Such issues raise important questions about the unintended ideological effects of research designs that involve the elicitation of attitudes: rather than merely documenting ideologies that exist independently of our research instruments, we may in fact be fostering and reproducing (or challenging and undermining) such ideologies in the way we present research tasks to study participants. By recognizing that research design is always fraught with ideological implications, we do not diminish our objectivity but rather gain a valuable opportunity to examine our own role in the research process—to understand how both "our ideologies and theirs" (Collins 1998) are part of the broader sociopolitical landscape of language that we seek to understand through sociolinguistic research.

Notes

1. The data for Fought's (2002) study were collected in the same course several years earlier.

2. However, it is evident that a few of the student fieldworkers disregarded this methodological precaution, for a small number of respondents labeled regions of the map "best" and "worst." It is unlikely that a respondent would use such labels unless she or he had already been asked the two final survey questions.

3. Although the survey question asked specifically about "ethnicity," as the responses in the examples below show, this term was variously interpreted as involving cultural and linguistic heritage, race, and nationality, in keeping with contemporary U.S. ideologies of ethnicity (see also Shenk 2007).

4. The goal in asking these questions was to determine what parts of California each respondent was familiar with. Consequently, however, it was difficult to determine the respondent's current place of residence, and so only those respondents whose birthplace and residence fell within the same region were classified as residing in that region; those who were born and had lived in different regions were classified as being from "General California." In retrospect, it would have been more effective simply to ask "Where are you from?", for regional identity is likely to be more important than mere exposure in shaping respondents' regional language attitudes.

5. The number of responses in Table 2a and 3a is larger than the total number of respondents because some respondents gave more than one answer.

6. Compared to those who answered the first question regarding where people speak the best, many fewer respondents answered the follow-up question "Why?" As yet we have no good explanation for this drop-off in response rates, except perhaps for fatigue, since the questions came at the end of the elicitation task and unlike the "Where?" question, the "Why?" question requires a certain amount of exposition. Remarkably, participants were much more willing to answer the "worst" question than the "best" one, as a comparison of the response rates for Tables 2 and 3 indicates. This difference may be related to respondents' perception that speaking "badly" is marked or noticeable, while speaking "well" is unmarked or normal.

7. This respondent appears to be employing Mock Ebonics, in which invariant *be* is heavily used as an emblematic feature of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) (Ronkin and Karn 1999). However, the grammar of AAVE does not in fact allow the use of invariant *be* in this nonhabitual context.

8. In the California context, this perspective may be due to the understanding of *bilingual* as a euphemism for *Spanish-speaking*, a perception that informs the negative attitudes toward bilingual education within the state (Fillmore 2004).

9. Of course, not all uses of humor in the responses have a subversive or resistant effect: the responses both in (21) and in (24) through (27) use humor to reinscribe familiar ideologies rather than to undermine them.

10. As example (44) indicates, a few of these respondents may have taken courses in linguistics that have made them aware of the lack of validity of such evaluations; however, most of the respondents are unlikely to have had any prior exposure to linguistics. Yet the general effects of higher education and diversity training among college students make it likely that this population is not representative of its entire age cohort.

11. Hartley (1999) suggests that the greater cultural and linguistic heterogeneity of the Western United States, as well as the time gap between previous and more recent studies, may account for the difference in receptiveness to the research task.

12. Similarly, conversation analysts have shown that responses that are structurally "dispreferred" given the preceding turn tend to be longer than preferred responses and to include some sort of account for the failure to supply a response of the expected type (e.g., Pomerantz 1984).

13. The allusion is to the following line from King's speech: "I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."

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