Abstract

Accents in the United States are associated with different stereotypes, and these stereotypes can affect the way an individual perceives not only a speaker, but their message. The current study aims to analyze the effects of an individual’s accent on persuasion by examining perceptions of the personality characteristics of a Southern- and Midwestern-accented speaker, and whether those perceptions influence the persuasiveness of the speaker’s message. Participants listened to a persuasive message regarding a fictitious backpack that is spoken in either a Southern American or a Midwestern American accent. The personality characteristics that were studied include warmth and competence. In order to assess persuasion, participants were asked to rate the quality of the backpack, as well as answer questions regarding intent to purchase. I hypothesized that the Southern speaker will be rated as warmer than the Midwestern speaker, while the Midwestern speaker will be rated as more competent than the Southern speaker. Also, I hypothesized that speaker accent will ultimately impact persuasion. If competence is a more important factor in persuasion, then the Midwestern accent will be more persuasive. If warmth is a more important factor in persuasion, then the Southern accent will be more persuasive. Results indicate that the Midwestern speaker is rated higher in competence than the Southern speaker. There were no differences found regarding warmth, and accent was not found to affect persuasion.