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Children's Social Judgments of Others on the Basis of Dialect-Specific Vocabulary

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Abstract

Many studies suggest that young children prefer speakers who speak similarly to them. Children demonstrate social preferences for speakers of their own native language over speakers of a non-native language as well as for speakers of a familiar accent over speakers of an unfamiliar accent. Recent research suggests that young children will similarly show preference for speakers who use familiar dialect-specific vocabulary over speakers who use vocabulary specific to an unfamiliar dialect. The current study investigated potential motivations behind young children's preferences for familiar dialect-specific vocabulary. Fifty participants ages fifty-one months to ninety-five months (M_{age}=72.6 months) viewed an animated video featuring two children. One child used American dialect labels for items displayed, and the other child used British dialect labels. Participants indicated which child they would rather play a game with (social preference), which child they would rather ask if they didn't know the name of a novel object (selective trust), and rated each child on a three-point scale in domains of likability, niceness, intelligence, and helpfulness. Participants demonstrated social preference and selective trust for American dialect users over British dialect users. Participants rated American dialect users significantly more favorably in domains of likability, intelligence, and helpfulness. Interestingly, participant rating did not differ in the domain of niceness. Participants rated American dialect users more favorably than a midpoint value on all four domains; however, participants also rated British dialect users more favorably than a midpoint value in domains of likability, niceness, and intelligence, but not helpfulness. This evidence suggests that a *halo effect* may motivate preference for familiar dialects.

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Children's Perceptions of Spoken Language Differences

The acquisition of spoken language is dependent upon early exposure to language, and an early-emerging ability to distinguish between and attend to distinct languages, registers, and dialects**.** Both the ability to distinguish between spoken languages and to selectively attend to familiar speech seem to emerge quickly after birth and remain present throughout infancy (Bahrick & Pickens, 1988; Bosch, 1998; Bosch & Sebastian-Galles, 1997; Boch & Sebastian-Galles, 2001; Christophe & Morton, 1998; Dehaene-Lambertz & Houston, 1998; Jusczyk, Friederici, Wessels, Svenkerud, & Jusczyk, 1993; Liberman, Woodward, & Kinzler, 2016; Moon, Cooper, & Fifer, 1993; Nazzi, Bertoncini, & Mehler, 1998; Nazzi, Jusczyk, & Johnson, 2000; Paquette-Smith & Johnson, 2015; Ramus, 2002). Older infants and young toddlers further express preference for speakers of a familiar language through imitation (Buttelmann, Zmyj , Daum, & Carpenter, 2013; DeJesus, Hwang, Dautel, & Kinzler, 2017; Howard, Henderson, Carrazza, & Woodward, 2015; Shutts, Kinzler, McKee, & Spelke, 2009). By their second year, infants seem to have developed an understanding of language as an indicator of group membership and shared characteristics and interests, and will show preferential treatment in a variety of tasks for someone who speaks in a language that is familiar to them over someone who speaks in an unfamiliar language.

As children continue to improve their proficiency in language, they further refine their ability to distinguish between spoken languages (Anisfeld & Lambert, 1964; Dautel & Kinzler, 2018; Genesee, Nicoladis, & Paradis, 1995; Kinzler, Shutts, DeJesus, & Spelke, 2009; Wagner, Greene-Havas, & Gillespie, 2010). Specifically, three- to five-year-old children can effectively categorize speakers based on their spoken language, and they are better at categorizing speakers

based on spoken language than they are at categorizing speakers based on their speech style (formal vs. casual); interestingly, this ability also improves with age, as five-year-olds perform better at this type of task than four-year-olds, who perform better than three-year-olds (Wagner et al., 2010). Five- and six-year-olds further categorize speakers based on whether or not the speakers "sound like them" (Kinzler et al, 2009), suggesting not only an ability to identify familiar languages, but also a developing language identity and self-awareness regarding the ways in which they communicate with others. Additionally, young children demonstrate an understanding that spoken language remains stable throughout one's lifespan. Dautel and Kinzler (2018) found that five- and six-year-old children match a child speaker to an adult speaker of the same language when indicating "which adult this child will grow up to be;" however, these children also acknowledge that one's spoken language is more likely to change throughout one's life than is one's race. When given the choice to match children either to an adult of the same race but of a different spoken language or an adult of the same spoken language but a different race, children indicated that it is more likely for someone to grow up to speak a different language than it is for someone to grow up to become a different race.

As children start to create their own social identities, they subsequently form specific preferences for native over non-native speakers. Preschool-aged children show clear preferences for speakers of their own native language over speakers of a non-native language (Byers-Heinlein, Behrend, Said, Girgis, & Poulin-Dubois, 2018; DeJesus et al., 2017; Kinzler et al, 2009; Kinzler, Shutts, & Spelke, 2012; Souza, Byers-Heinlein, & Poulin-Dubois, 2013; Stevens & Behrend, 2014): three-year-old children will selectively imitate a task demonstrated by a speaker of their native language over a task demonstrated by a speaker of a non-native language (DeJesus et al., 2017), and monolingual five- to six-year-old children indicated that they would

rather play a game with native speakers of their language over non-native language speakers (Kinzler et al., 2009). Additionally, monolingual four- to six-year-old children also show social preference for other monolingual speakers of their native language over bilingual speakers, indicating in one study that they would rather be friends with a speaker who had previously spoken only in the language the child spoke over a speaker who had previously spoken in the child's native language as well as in a non-native language (Byers-Heinlein et al., 2018). Taken together, these preferences suggest that, when children are faced with others who differ in degrees of spoken-language familiarity, monolingual children will prefer others with whom they share the most linguistic familiarity.

Children's Perceptions of Spoken Accent Differences

Spoken accent, while subtler than spoken language differences, can provide information regarding an individual's geographic and cultural background**.** Accents can vary significantly within a single spoken language among distinct geographic regions- so much so, that the Cambridge Online Survey of World Englishes (Vaux & Johndal, 2020) was developed in order to "…document the range of variation in World Englishes" (pg. 1). Various studies have evaluated adults' attitudes regarding accent variation, and the ways in which those attitudes affect social interaction (Bauman, 2013; Cheung, 2013; Davis, Ppivik, Hewitt, Hudson, Black, Senkbeil, & Warlick, 2014; Deprez-Sims & Morris, 2010; Dovidio & Gluszek, 2012; Dovidio, Gluszek, John, Ditlmann, & Lagunes, 2010; Dragojevic & Giles, 2016; Fasoli, Maass, Paladino, & Sulpizio, 2017; Frumkin, 2007; Fuertes, Gottdiener, Martin, Gilbert, & Giles, 2012; Giles & Billings, 2004; Giles & Niedzielski, 1998; Hosoda & Stone-Romero, 2010; Roessel, Schoel & Stahlberg, 2017; Ryan, 1983). The research largely demonstrates a robust preference among adults for "standard" or native accents over "non-standard" or non-native accents (see Fuertes,

Gottdiener, Martin, Gilbert, and Giles, 2012). Given these findings, it is important to ask at what age does the ability to distinguish between spoken accent emerge, and to what extent does the ability to differentiate between accents drive children's social perceptions and opinions?

Various studies have demonstrated that the ability to distinguish between spoken registers and speech styles of the same language emerges quickly after birth and remains salient throughout infancy (Butler, Floccia, & Goslin, 2011; Butler, Floccia, Goslin, & Panneton, 2011; Cooper, Abraham, Berman, & Staska, 1997; Cooper & Aslin, 1990; Fernald, 1985; Floccia et al., 2000; Kitamura, Panneton, & Best, 2013; Nazzi, Jusczyk, & Johnson, 2000). As children grow, their abilities to distinguish between spoken accents change as well. Because accent is more nuanced than spoken language and can vary in its degree of phonetic similarity from standard accents, the results of the existing research on accent are more complex and less straightforward that those of the language differentiation research. Preschool aged children are typically capable of distinguishing between their native accent and a phonetically dissimilar accent; however, the more phonetically similar an accent is to a child's own accent, the more difficult it is for the child to differentiate between the two (Creel, 2012; Girard, Floccia, & Goslin, 2008; Hazan & Barrett, 2000; Paquette-Smith, Buckler, White, Choi, & Johnson, 2019; Wagner, Clopper, & Pate, 2013; Wagner, Greene-Havas, & Gillespie, 2010). For example, when five- and six-year-old children were given a sorting task to differentiate between speakers of their native accent, a regional accent, and a foreign accent, the children were better than chance at differentiating between their native accent and a foreign accent, but not at differentiating between their native accent and a regional variant of their accent, due to an inability to distinguish phonetic differences between the accents (Girard, Floccia, & Goslin, 2008). Paquette-Smith et al. (2019) found that five- and six-year-olds were better able to distinguish between their own Canadian

English accent and a non-native Korean English accent than they were able to distinguish between their own Canadian English accent and a regional British English accent. Additionally, Wagner, Clopper, and Pate (2013) demonstrated that five- and six-year-olds were significantly better than chance at distinguishing between their own American-accented English and nonnative Indian-accented English but were not better than chance at distinguishing between American-accented English and a regional British-accented English, or at distinguishing between Indian-accented English and British-accented English. The existing research suggests that young children are able to distinguish between phonetically dissimilar speech patterns which can include spoken accent; however, the more phonetically similar accents are, the harder it is for young children to distinguish between them.

In addition to distinguishing between spoken accent, young children form opinions of speakers and make socially motivated decisions based on the speaker's accent. Corriveau, Kinzler, and Harris (2013) found that three- to five-year-old children prefer to ask a speaker of their own accent over a speaker of a non-native accent for the name of a novel object, citing the belief that a speaker of their native accent is more likely to know the correct answer; however, when speakers had been previously presented as having either consistently correct or incorrect answers to sample questions, young children prioritized accuracy over native-accented speakers and will choose to ask the previously accurate speaker regardless of the accent they spoke in. This preference for native-accented speakers has been found among bilingual children as well. DeJesus et al. (2017) found that preschool-aged bilingual children demonstrated a social preference for speakers of an accent consistent with one of the two languages the children spoke over a speaker of an accent that the children were unfamiliar with. Interestingly, being exposed to multiple languages and/or accents does not necessarily reduce children's preferences for

familiar-accented speakers; it merely increases the number of accents perceived as familiar to the child.

Children's Perceptions of Dialect Differences

People living in different areas may differ not only in spoken language and accent, but they may also use different syntactic rules, phrases, slang words, and terminology in their speech. The vast dialectic differences within the United States has inspired online quizzes that can infer one's residential region with startling accuracy based on their dialectic choices (Katz, 2017; Katz & Wilson, 2013; Lyons, 2019; Vaux & Johndal, 2020). Dialect-specific vocabulary seems to be a reliable predictor of one's geographic background; however, the research regarding children's abilities to distinguish between and their preferences of spoken dialects is lacking. In an early study, Rosenthal (1974) examined young children's attitudes of Standard English speakers versus speakers of African American English (AAE). Young children who used Standard English on a regular basis preferred to accept a present from a speaker of Standard English over a speaker of African-American English. These children also preferred to give a present to a speaker of Standard English over a speaker of African-American English. Young children who use African-American English on a regular basis, however, were more likely to accept a gift from and to give a gift to a speaker of African-American English over a speaker of Standard English. Interestingly, children of both dialects rated the Standard English speaker as being smarter, having nicer presents, and speaking better than the African-American English speaker. This solidarity demonstrated by African-American English-speaking children toward speakers of their dialect ingroup despite their higher ratings of the outgroup speaker is interesting and suggests that preference for one's own ingroup is influenced by more than perceived social status or intelligence. Further, Cremona and Bates (1977) found that perceptions of others based

on dialect use may also be influenced by social stigma attached to specific dialect usage. Italian children who had been discouraged from using their native dialect in school for years were more resistant toward speakers of their native dialect and showed preferential treatment toward speakers of Standard Italian. The influence of social stigma on children's perceptions of dialect is interesting and suggests that children's language-based social preferences are not necessarily static and may change in response to social influences.

Aside from Rosenthal (1974) and Cremona and Bates (1977), little research has evaluated children's perceptions of others based on dialect-specific vocabulary variation. Wagner, Clopper, and Pate (2014) addressed children's perceptions of variations in dialect; however, as mentioned previously, their operationalization of dialect did not include dialect-specific vocabulary variation. Myers-Burg and Behrend (2021) found that four- to seven-year-old children were better able to distinguish between speakers when the speakers differed in the dialect-specific vocabulary they used than when the speakers differed in regional accent. Additionally, children were able to track a speaker's use of dialect-specific vocabulary and could infer a speaker's future choice of dialect-specific vocabulary based on the dialect the speaker had previously employed. Further, when children were asked to select which speaker they would rather play a game with, they exhibited a strong preference for a speaker who had previously used (native) American-specific dialect vocabulary over a speaker who had previously used (non-native) British-specific dialect vocabulary. Children also exhibited a preference to ask the speaker of American dialect vocabulary for the name of a novel object over the speaker of British dialect vocabulary. Interestingly, although young children seemed to show preference for users of native dialect words over non-native dialect words in domains of both social preference as well as trust,

individual child preference did not seem to predict selective trust, suggesting two separate cognitive strategies at work in determining social preference and selective trust.

Halo and Pitchfork Effects

Depending on the type of task, young children may employ different cognitive strategies when selectively expressing preference for speakers. According to Brosseau-Liard and Birch (2010), young children exhibit a "halo effect" when interacting with others who vary in accuracy of knowledge. Children keep track of a speaker's accuracy and infer that someone who was previously accurate in one domain is equally knowledgeable in other domains and will infer that the speaker is more friendly and prosocial than speakers who were not as accurate on previous tasks. On the flip side, Koenig and Jaswal (2011) demonstrated that young children can also show a "pitchfork effect," in which children infer that others who were previously inaccurate in one domain will similarly be incompetent in other domains, and children will show social preference for a neutral alternative over the incompetent speaker. Although the "halo" and "pitchfork" effects have largely been investigated in terms of accuracy and expertise, it is possible that young children also show these effects to some degree when encountering speakers of familiar or unfamiliar accents and/or languages. Giving children the opportunity to rate speakers on a variety of domains (e.g. attractiveness, friendliness, intelligence, helpfulness) could provide more thorough information regarding children's perceptions of speakers based on dialect vocabulary use and could help explain the discrepancy between their performance on social preference and selective trust questions.

Current Research

An under-researched area of study, dialect vocabulary differentiation appears to serve as a salient linguistic cue that young children can use to categorize speakers, and the limited

research that has been conducted suggests that young children use dialect-specific vocabulary to drive their social preferences similarly to how they use spoken language and accent (Myers-Burg & Behrend, 2021). The current study aimed to replicate those social preference and selective trust findings while further exploring the specific decisions and reasoning that motivate children's social preference and selective trust based on dialect-specific vocabulary.

The present study provided children with choices between speakers of familiar and unfamiliar dialects as well as with measures to gauge children's perceptions of each speaker on a number of qualities, including positive (i.e. prosocial) and negative (i.e. antisocial) traits**.** The purpose of using these measures was to determine whether children's preferences are motivated by a halo effect for familiar dialect speakers, a pitchfork effect for unfamiliar dialect speakers, or a combination of the two.

I hypothesized that, consistent with previous research, participants would demonstrate both social preference for and selective trust in speakers who use familiar American dialect labels over speakers who use unfamiliar British dialect labels.

I further hypothesized that children would exhibit a *halo effect* for users of familiar American dialect labels, rating the speakers more favorably than a midpoint value in terms of friendliness, intelligence, and helpfulness. Additionally, I hypothesized that children would rate the users of American dialect labels more favorably than they rated users of British dialect labels in terms of friendliness, intelligence, and helpfulness. Based on existing research, children typically exhibit a *pitchfork effect* when an individual has previously demonstrated themselves to be ignorant, incorrect, or incompetent (Koenig & Jaswal, 2011). Considering the existing research, along with the expectation that children may see the use of British dialect words as evidence of the user's incompetence or ignorance of correct language, it was possible that

participants would exhibit a *pitchfork effect* toward users of British dialect words- rather, that children will rate users of British dialect labels negatively in terms of friendliness, intelligence, and helpfulness. If participants rated users of the unfamiliar British dialect labels unfavorably in terms of friendliness, intelligence, and/or helpfulness, the hypothesized preference for users of American dialect labels over users of British dialect labels could be partially explained by a *pitchfork effect* in addition to the hypothesized *halo effect* for American dialect users.

Method

Participants

Participants were fifty (50) children (24 female) ages fifty-one months to ninety-five months (M_{age} =72.6 months) who lived in various locations across the United States. The sample primarily consisted of white monolingual children. The sample size of 50 was based on an a priori power analysis that suggested a sample size of 45 to achieve 95% power for an effect size of d=0.5. Participants were recruited via Facebook posts to local and regional areas. Participants completed the study online via Zoom. Parent/guardian consent was obtained prior to data collection via informed consent sheets, which can be found in Appendix A. Participant assent was obtained via verbal agreement to participate. Parents were asked to indicate on consent forms whether their child received regular in-person exposure to different languages or dialects, as well as to indicate whether their child watched tv programs that included different languages or dialects (e.g. Handy Manny, Bluey, Dora the Explorer), and if so, how frequently they were exposed to them. Participants were compensated with a $10 Amazon gift card.

Materials and Procedure

Participants were told at the beginning of the study, “Sometimes people who live in different places call things by different names. It doesn’t make them wrong; they just have

different ways of speaking." Participants viewed an animated video of two children who were similar in appearance, but who were wearing different colored shirts for identification purposes. The animated video was created using Vyond animation software. The genders of the children were intentionally made ambiguous. Through the course of the video, participants viewed four familiarization trials followed by a series of questions.

Familiarization trials. Different target objects appeared between the animated children on each familiarization trial. For each familiarization trial, the experimenter explained, "The child in the blue(/red) shirt calls this object a(n) 'American(/British) label,' and the child in the red (/blue) shirt calls this object a(n) 'British/(American) label.'" Each child in the video used the same type of label across trials. For example, if the child in the red shirt used a British dialect label for the first object, they used a British label for each subsequent object. A list of object labels used in the familiarization trials can be found in Appendix B.

Social preference and selective trust. After five familiarization trials, participants were asked two forced choice questions in order to gauge preferences for the speakers. They were asked a *social preference forced choice question*, in which they were asked to select which child with whom they would rather play a game. They were also asked a *selective trust forced choice question,* in which they were presented with a novel object, and were asked, "If you did not know the name of this object, which child would you rather ask to find out the name of it?" The order in which the forced choice questions are presented were counterbalanced across participants.

Individual speaker ratings. Participants were subsequently presented with stimuli depicting each of the animated children by themselves and were reminded which labels for the items that child used. They were told, "Remember, this child uses words like ____, _____, and

_____." Participants were asked to answer four questions about each of the children: "How much do you like this child?" "How smart do you think this child is?" "How friendly do you think this child is?" and, "How quickly do you think this child would be to help you if you needed help?" Participants were asked to answer each question on a three-point photo scale ranging from "not at all" to "a little" to "very" (see Appendix C**)**. The photo scale was created using the animation software, and depicted lightbulbs to represent degrees of agreement. No lightbulbs were used for the "not at all" response, three lightbulbs were used for the "a little" response, and five lightbulbs were used for the "very" response. These picture scales were presented accompanied by written labels for each point for children who could read. Lightbulbs were selected as an arbitrary representation of amount that would avoid potential confounds from using existing photo scales that could convey emotion (e.g., using photos of facial expressions, using thumbs up or thumbs down icons, etc.) The order in which these four questions were asked were randomized, and the order in which each animated child was presented for these four questions were counterbalanced across participants: half of the participants answered these four questions about the user of British words first, and half of the participants answered the questions about the user of American words first.

Memory check. Participants were then asked to identify which of the two children speaks most like them as a memory check, in order to make sure they were able to identify the similarities between their vocabulary and the vocabularies of the animated children.

Results

Social Preference and Selective Trust

Five (5) participants were excluded from the analysis due to failure to pass the memory check, putting the total sample size at forty-five (45). A binomial test for the social preference

question indicated that the proportion of participants who demonstrated a preference for the child who used American dialect labels (.82) was significantly greater than the proportion of participants who demonstrated a preference for the child who used British dialect labels (.18), $p < .001$. A binomial test for the selective trust question also indicated that the proportion of participants who demonstrated selective trust for the child who used American dialect labels (.91) was significantly greater than the proportion of participants who demonstrated selective trust for the child who used British dialect labels (.09), $p < .001$. An individual participant's social preference did not significantly predict their selective trust choice, $\Phi = .059$, $p = .692$ (See Table 1). Previous in-person exposure to different dialects or languages did not significantly predict social preference ($\Phi = .164$, $p = .27$; see Table 2) or selective trust ($\Phi = .11$, $p = .459$; see Table 3). Previous media exposure to different dialects or languages did not significantly predict social preference ($\Phi = .039$, $p = .793$; see Table 4) or selective trust ($\Phi = .134$, $p = .368$; see Table 5) either.

Individual Speaker Ratings

Participants' ratings of each child in domains of likability, niceness, intelligence, and helpfulness were analyzed using one-sample *t*-tests to compare responses to midpoint values. For each trial, participants' responses were coded as a 0 if they selected "not at all," as a 1 if they selected "a little," and a 2 if they selected "very." Given the coding criteria, the midpoint value was set to 1. Overall, participants rated the user of American dialect words significantly more favorably than the midpoint on domains of likability, ($M = 1.69$), $t(44) = 9.87$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = .47$; niceness, ($M = 1.78$), $t(44) = 12.4$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = .42$; intelligence, ($M = 1.87$), $t(44) = 16.9$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = .34$; and helpfulness, ($M = 1.87$), $t(44) = 16.91$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = .34$. Participants also rated the user of British dialect words significantly

more favorably than the midpoint on domains of likability, (M=1.2), $t(44)=2.14$, $p=.037$, Cohen's $d=.62$; niceness, (M=1.67), $t(44)=7.41$, $p<.001$, Cohen's $d=.60$; and intelligence, (M=1.27), $t(44)=2.74$, $p=.009$, Cohen's $d=.65$. Participants did not rate the user of British dialect words more favorably than the midpoint on the domain of helpfulness, (M=1.2), $t(44)=1.71$, $p=.095$.

Participants' ratings of the user of American dialect labels were then compared with their ratings of the user of British dialect labels for each of the four domains listed above. Paired samples *t*-tests compared participants' mean ratings of the American dialect user to mean ratings of the British dialect user. Overall, participants rated the user of American dialect labels significantly more favorably than they rated the user of British dialect labels on domains of likability, $t(44)=4.3$, $p<.001$, Cohen's $d=.76$; intelligence, $t(44)=5.85$, $p<.001$, Cohen's $d=.69$; and helpfulness, $t(44)=5.09$, $p<.001$, Cohen's $d=.88$. Mean differences for each of these ratings are listed in Table 6. Participants did not rate the user of American dialect labels significantly more favorably than they rated the user of British dialect labels in the domain of niceness, $t(44)=1.04$, $p=.3$.

Discussion

The current study examined young children's attitudes and social judgments toward users of familiar versus unfamiliar dialect vocabulary. Consistent with previous research (Myers-Burg & Behrend, 2021), participants demonstrated significant social preference as well as selective trust for users of familiar (American) dialect vocabulary, further strengthening the claim that young children prefer interacting with others who speak similarly to them over others who may speak differently. The results of this study further substantiate the claim that young children can use dialect-specific vocabulary as a cue they can employ to identify

speakers of familiar dialects and languages. As with spoken language and accent, dialect-specific vocabulary seems to serve as a strong indication of shared similarities, and young children seem to be capable of inferring shared similarities with others who use familiar dialect-specific vocabulary. Additionally, each participant's social preference did not necessarily predict that participant's selective trust decision, suggesting that children may use different strategies for determining preferences related to social interactions than they use for determining sources of reliable information. Recent research suggests that young children's perceptions of others are shaped not only by familiarity with that person but also with that person's accuracy on previous tasks (Brosseau-Liard & Birch, 2010), and that an individual's previous accuracy on a task will take precedent over shared physical similarities when young children make decisions involving selective trust (Kinzler, Shutts, DeJesus, & Spelke, 2009). That being said, young children also understand the difference between accent differences in pronunciation and inaccuracies, and will choose use to endorse a speaker who uses accurate labels pronounced in a non-native accent over a speaker who uses inaccurate labels pronounced in a native accent (Corriveau, Kinzler, & Harris, 2013). Children may have based their social preference decisions more heavily on shared linguistic similarities, while incorporating their knowledge of language into their decision for selective trust decisions. It is possible that the children who selected the American dialect users for the selective trust decision based their decision more off of the desire to know how they themselves should refer to the object, while the children who selected the British dialect users may have based their decision off of curiosity to know how someone who speaks differently than they do refers to the object. However, because the vast majority of participants indicated social preference and selective trust for users of the American labels, ceiling effects for both social preference and

selective trust questions may make comparing answers difficult. Further research is needed to explore the specific motivations behind the differences between the selective trust and social preference choices. For example, one study could manipulate the behaviors of the dialect users, making one of the two speakers exhibit less accurate answers or more anti-social behaviors than the other speaker. These manipulations could provide more insight into the motivations behind young children's preferences for familiar dialect users as well as into factors that could potentially change social preference and selective trust.

Interestingly, previous exposure to multiple languages or dialects did not significantly predict participant social preference or selective trust. Participants who had previous in-person exposure to different languages or dialects demonstrated social preference as well as selective trust for users of American dialect words over users of British dialect words. The proportion of these participants who demonstrated preference and trust for American dialect word users did not significantly differ from the preference and trust proportions for participants who had not had previous in-person exposure to different languages or dialects. Similarly, participants who had previous media exposure to different languages or dialects demonstrated social preference and selective trust for users of American dialect words over users of British dialect words. The proportions of preference and trust for these participants did not significantly differ from the proportions of preference and trust for participants who did not have previous media exposure to different languages or dialects. These results fail to establish any connection between exposure to additional languages and preference or trust for users of familiar dialect vocabulary. There are a few potential reasons why a relationship between multiple language exposure, preference, and trust was not found. Participants who had previous exposure to other languages or dialects may not have been exposed to the British dialect before, which may have

influenced a tendency to favor the more familiar American dialect vocabulary. Additionally, there were significant differences in the number of participants who had previous exposure to other languages or dialects and the number of participants who did not have previous exposure, which is described in more detail in the limitations section. It is difficult to compare the preferences of the two groups of participants with much confidence, which opens possibilities for future research to address this potential relationship. Future studies could include a standardized measurement such as the Language Exposure Assessment Tool (De Anda, Bosch, Poulin-Dubois, Zesiger, & Friend, 2016) to evaluate the specific dialects that participants have been exposed to, as well as to more accurately assess the degree to which they have been exposed to those dialects. Using more sensitive measures for dialect exposure would allow researchers to more obtain a more accurate and nuanced understanding of the relationship between dialect exposure and preferences for familiar versus unfamiliar dialects.

For individual speaker ratings, participants showed clear favorable attitudes toward the user of American dialect words. On all four domains- likability, niceness, intelligence, and helpfulness- participants rated the user of American dialect words more favorably than the midpoint value. This could suggest the existence of a halo effect in which participants formed favorable opinions on the dialect users based on familiarity, and those favorable opinions positively influenced participant judgments for other domains. Interestingly, participants also rated the British dialect user more favorably than the midpoint in domains of likability, niceness, and intelligence. While participant ratings of the British dialect user were not more favorable than midpoint in the domain of helpfulness, the ratings were also not significantly less favorable than neutral. The favorable ratings of the British dialect user suggest a tendency

for young children to view others favorably regardless of their choice of dialect-specific vocabulary.

Although ratings of both the American and British dialect users were more favorable than midpoint in all domains but helpfulness for the British user, participants rated the American dialect user significantly more favorably than they rated the British user in domains of likability, intelligence, and helpfulness. This difference in speaker ratings suggests that, while children may not necessarily view users of unfamiliar dialect vocabulary as unlikable, unintelligent, and unhelpful, they still view users of familiar dialect vocabulary as more likable, more intelligent, and more helpful than users of unfamiliar dialect vocabulary. These judgments may contribute to children's clear preference and trust for users of familiar dialect vocabulary. Of important note is the lack of difference between speaker ratings in the domain of niceness. Because young children are encouraged so frequently to be nice to others (Coalter, 2017), it is possible that children assume that others will be nice to them unless others' behavior suggests otherwise. Additionally, there is evidence that young children exhibit a "positivity bias" toward themselves and others (Boseovski, 2010), evaluating others positively in domains of various personality traits. When compared with older children and adults, young children seem to require more evidence of one's negative behaviors before they will make negative assumptions about one's personality (Boseovski & Lee, 2006). This positivity bias could potentially explain participants' favorable ratings of the British dialect user.

Limitations and Conclusions

Of important note, there are a few limitations to this study that need to be addressed. The number of participants who had no previous in-person exposure to different languages or dialects was double the number of participants who had no previous in-person exposure (see

Tables 2 and 3). In contrast, the number of participants who had previous media exposure to different languages or dialects was significantly greater than the number of participants who had not have previous media exposure (see Tables 4 and 5). These sample size differences make it difficult to draw reliable conclusions for a relationship between language exposure and social preference/trust. Future studies could recruit more balanced samples in terms of in-person/media exposure to different languages or dialects in order to more reliably evaluate the potential relationship between exposure and preference.

A second limitation of the study involves the methodology used to screen for previous exposure to language or dialect. Every participant who had exposure to any language or dialect was placed in the same group for comparison with participants who had no exposure to other languages or dialects. Previous research suggests that bilingual children or children with exposure to other languages show preferences for the languages that they have been exposed to, and that exposure to other languages does not necessarily reduce preferences for familiar languages over unfamiliar languages (Kinzler, Shutts, & Spelke, 2012). The current study used British dialect labels as the unfamiliar dialect labels, and it is possible that the participants who had been exposed to different languages or dialects had not been exposed to a British dialect, which may not have affected the participants' preferences. Future studies could examine children's previous exposure to specific dialects using more standardized measures such as the Language Exposure and Assessment Tool (De Anda et al., 2016), which would allow researchers to more accurately examine the relationships between specific dialect exposure and preferences for unfamiliar dialects.

A third limitation of the current study involves the specific dialect used. While British English employs vocabulary that may seem unfamiliar and even funny to young children,

British English is featured heavily in American media, including media aimed toward young children. *Peppa Pig*, for instance, is a British children's television show that has become so popular in the United States that some young children have started pronouncing certain words in British accents and using British terms from the show in their everyday conversations (Lungariello, 2021). While young American children do tend to recognize the differences between British dialects and their own, it is possible that the familiarity of our participants to British English in particular may have influenced participants' overall favorable ratings of the British dialect user. Several studies have demonstrated that people perceive different accents and dialects differently based on pre-existing social stigma and prejudice (Bauman, 2013; Cheung, 2013; Cremona & Bates, 1977; Davis et al., 2014; Deprez-Sims & Morris, 2010; Dovidio et al., 2010; Dragojevic & Giles, 2016; Fasoli et al., 2017; Fuertes et al., 2012; Giles & Billings, 2004; Hosoda & Stone-Romero, 2010; Roessel et al., 2017; Rosenthal, 1974; Ryan, 1983). Young American children may form different social perceptions of users of unfamiliar dialect vocabulary if that specific dialect is less widely available in media, or if the dialect is one that is associated with social stigma or discrimination. Future research could include dialect vocabulary from less well-known or less historically romanticized dialects to examine potential accent biases in young children.

An important detail of note in the current study is that in the stimuli, the animated children who were assigned dialect-specific labels did not actually speak. The methods involved the experimenter informing the participants of the labels each animated child used for each particular object. The reasoning behind this method was to ensure that participant perceptions of the animated children was motivated by the specific vocabulary the animated children used, rather than by spoken accent or voice. Using the experimenter's voice and

native accent to describe both the native and non-native dialect vocabulary eliminated any potential effects of accent or vocal differences that may have been introduced if the animated children had been given their own voices. However, dialect-specific vocabulary is just one facet of dialect as a whole, and dialect differences encompass differences in vocabulary as well as differences in accent, tempo, vocal register, and nonverbal communication. Because the results of the current study suggest that dialect-specific vocabulary is a powerful cue to distinguish between dialects, future studies could incorporate dialect-specific vocabulary differences into more robust dialect differences that include factors such as accent in order to examine children's perceptions of dialect variation from a more holistic, whole-language perspective.

Based on the results of the current study, dialect-specific vocabulary does seem to serve as a powerful cue that young children can use to identify others with whom they share linguistic similarities. Additionally, young children seem to use the familiarity of a speaker's dialect-specific vocabulary to determine their personal social preferences and selective trust of others. Young children also tend to think favorably of others on a variety of domains, especially when others use dialect-specific vocabulary that is familiar to them. While they don't seem to think of others unfavorably based solely on the dialect-specific vocabulary they use, young children do tend to rate familiar dialect users more favorably than they rate users of unfamiliar dialect, indicating a clear ingroup bias toward familiar others. The results of the current study contribute to the continuously growing area of research regarding children's perceptions of language, accent, and dialect, and further demonstrate that young children use dialect-specific vocabulary to shape their social judgments of others.

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Tables

A. Table 1

Social preference by selective trust

		Social Preference		
		American	British	Total
Selective Trust	American	34	7	41
	British	3	1	4
Total		37	8	45

B. Table 2

Social preference by in-person exposure

		Social Preference		
		American	British	Total
Person Exposure	No	26	4	30
	Yes	11	4	15
Total		37	8	45

C. Table 3

Selective trust by in-person exposure

		Selective Trust		
		American	British	Total
Person Exposure	No	28	2	30
	Yes	13	2	15
Total		41	4	45

D. Table 4

Social preference by media exposure

		Social Preference		
		American	British	Total
Media Exposure	No	6	1	7
	Yes	31	7	38
Total		37	8	45

E. Table 5

Selective trust by media exposure

		Selective Trust		
		American	British	Total
Media Exposure	No	7	0	7
	Yes	34	4	38
Total		41	4	45

F. Table 6

Mean differences between ratings for American vs. British dialect users

	Paired Differences	
	Mean Difference	Standard Deviation
AmericanLike-BritishLike	.49	.76
AmericanSmart-BritishSmart	.60	.69
AmericanNice-BritishNice	.11	.71
AmericanHelp-BritishHelp	.67	.88

G. Table 7

Correlations between individual ratings of dialect users

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. AmericanLike	1.66	.519							
2. AmericanSmart	1.86	.350	.182						
3. AmericanNice	1.78	.419	.118	.203					
4. AmericanHelp	1.82	.437	.623**	.232	.225				
5. BritishLike	1.22	.648	.227	.049	-.044	.071			
6. BritishSmart	1.26	.664	.202	.247	.063	.094	.623**		
7. BritishNice	1.68	.583	.171	.075	.040	.089	.618**	.479**	
8. BritishHelp	1.24	.771	-.200	.127	.230	-.172	.382**	.234	.399**

** $p<0.01$ (2-tailed)

Appendices

Appendix A. Consent Form

"Children's Social Judgments of Others on the Basis of Dialect-Specific Vocabulary"
Word Play Extends an Invitation to Participate in Child Development Research

Principal Researcher: Madison Myers, B.A.

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Douglas Behrend

Your child is invited to participate in University of Arkansas research on children's preferences for others based on their spoken dialects. It is designed to be a fun game for children to play. Children who participate will be given $10 as compensation for participation. This research will be conducted over Zoom and will take approximately 10 minutes.

Your child's participation is voluntary. Please read the attached information sheet carefully before deciding whether to allow your child to participate. Please feel free to call or email Dr. Douglas Behrend, the faculty supervisor of this study, at 479-575-4256 or dbehrend@uark.edu or Madison Myers-Burg, the principal researcher, at 479-575-5819 or mrmyers@uark.edu. If you permit your child to participate, please fill this form out and return to Madison Myers-Burg via email at mrmyers@uark.edu. You will receive a copy of the form. We must also have your child's assent to participate in this study.

Thank you so much!

I have read the above statement and have been able to ask questions and express concerns, which have been satisfactorily responded to by the investigator. I understand the purpose of the study as well as the potential benefits and risks that are involved. I understand that participation is voluntary. I understand that significant new findings developed during this research will be shared with me and, as appropriate, my child. I understand that no rights have been waived by signing the consent form. I have been given a copy of the consent form.

Permission to Participate

_____ _____
Name of Child Child's birth date

Is your child exposed to other languages or dialects regularly? Yes No
If yes, how frequently is your child exposed to other languages or dialects? _____.

Does your child regularly consume media (TV, apps, games) that feature speakers of different languages or dialects (e.g. Peppa Pig, Bluey, Handy Manny)?

Yes No

If yes, how frequently does your child consume this media? (This is to measure exposure to other dialects- please answer honestly. We do not shame screen time!)

_____.
Printed Name of Parent or Guardian

_____ _____
Signature of Parent or Guardian Date
(can be typed if easier)

INFORMATION ABOUT THE RESEARCH

What is the purpose of this study? The purpose of this research is to evaluate young children's social preferences for others who speak in different dialects based on the types of names speakers use for different objects. In the study, your child will be presented with photos of two different children, one of which will be assigned American dialect words, the other one of which will be assigned British dialect words. They will then be presented with a photo of an object, such as a truck. Your child will be informed that one of the children in the photos (American) calls the object a "truck," and that the other child (British) calls it a "lorry." After four similar training trials, your child will be asked to select which of the two children they would rather play a game with. They will also be presented with a photo of a novel item, and will be asked to select which of the two children they would like to ask if they wanted to know the name of the object. They will then be asked to rate each of the children in terms of friendliness, intelligence, likeability, and helpfulness.

What are the possible risks and discomforts? To the best of our knowledge, your child's participation is no more harmful or risky than everyday experiences. The game is in a question and answer format. The minimal risks could be boredom with the game or concern about answering correctly.

Will my child benefit from taking part in this study? Children usually enjoy playing a stimulating and fun game one-on-one with our researchers.

What are the options if I or my child does not want to take part in the study? If you do not want your child to be in this study, you may refuse to allow him/her to participate. Your child may refuse to participate even if you give permission. If your child decides to participate and then changes his/her mind, your child may quit participating at any time. Your child will not be penalized or lose any benefits/rights if you refuse to allow participation or if your child chooses not to participate.

Does my child receive any payment or reward for taking part in this study? Your child will receive ten dollars as compensation for participating in the study, which will be administered via Cash App, Venmo, or paper check.

Who will see the information my child gives and how is my child's confidentiality protected? Information from each child is combined with others in the study. When this research is shared with the scientific community, children are not identified individually. Children's information is kept on a password secured computer in a locked laboratory on the campus of the University of Arkansas. Data will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by the law and University of Arkansas policy.

Will my child and/or I know the results of the study? At the conclusion of the study you will have the right to request feedback about the results. You may contact the Principal Researcher, Dr. Doug Behrend, at 479-575- 4256. You will receive a copy of this form for your files.

What if I have questions or my child has questions? Please do not hesitate to ask any questions you have before giving permission for your child to participate.

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IRB#: 2108350178 APPROVED: 16-Sep-2021 EXP: 29-Aug-2022

Appendix B. Trial Object Labels

	American	British
1.	Donut	Roundello
2.	Elevator	Lift
3.	Flashlight	Torch
4.	Cupcake	Fairy Cake

Appendix C. Scale for Individual Ratings

Appendix D. IRB Approval Letter

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS

To:	Madison Myers-Burg BELL 4188
From:	Justin R Chimka, Chair IRB Expedited Review
Date:	09/16/2021
Action:	**Expedited Approval**
Action Date:	09/16/2021
Protocol #:	2108350178
Study Title:	Children's Social Judgments of Others on the Basis of Dialect-Specific Vocabulary
Expiration Date:	08/29/2022
Last Approval Date:	

The above-referenced protocol has been approved following expedited review by the IRB Committee that oversees research with human subjects.

If the research involves collaboration with another institution then the research cannot commence until the Committee receives written notification of approval from the collaborating institution's IRB.

It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to obtain review and continued approval before the expiration date.

Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. You may not continue any research activity beyond the expiration date without Committee approval. Please submit continuation requests early enough to allow sufficient time for review. Failure to receive approval for continuation before the expiration date will result in the automatic suspension of the approval of this protocol. Information collected following suspension is unapproved research and cannot be reported or published as research data. If you do not wish continued approval, please notify the Committee of the study closure.

Adverse Events: Any serious or unexpected adverse event must be reported to the IRB Committee within 48 hours. All other adverse events should be reported within 10 working days.

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of this study, such as the procedures, the consent forms, study personnel, or number of participants, please submit an amendment to the IRB. All changes must be approved by the IRB Committee before they can be initiated.

You must maintain a research file for at least 3 years after completion of the study. This file should include all correspondence with the IRB Committee, original signed consent forms, and study data.

cc: Douglas A Behrend, Investigator