

From overhead transparencies to GIS-produced composite maps: A methodological case study from Great Britain

CHRIS MONTGOMERY
University of Sheffield

The 'draw-a-map' task (Preston 1999, xxxiv) is now perhaps the most well-known of the methods of perceptual dialectology and arose from similar tasks that had been undertaken by perceptual geographers (e.g. Lynch 1960; Orleans 1967; Gould and White 1986). The purpose of the draw-a-map task is to provide quick, unaided impressions (cf. Gould and White 1986, 12) of the dialect landscape from groups of respondents. In the same way that perceptual geographers wanted to examine the extent of agreement about the routes people use to navigate around cities, the landmarks that were important to them, and the way in which social and locational factors interacted with groups' perceptions of their environments, so perceptual dialectologists want to find out more about the location, placement, and extent of perceived dialect areas.

As noted in the abstract for the workshop in which this paper will sit, as well as in Montgomery & Stoeckle (2013), developing a robust and reliable method of examining perceptual dialectology data in the manner mentioned above has not been an altogether straightforward process. From the basic processing tool reported in Preston & Howe (1987), to the PDQ tool developed to deal with Japanese perceptual dialectology data (Onishi and Long 1997), to contemporary GIS approaches (Evans 2011; Cukor-Avila, Evans, et al. 2012; Cukor-Avila, Jeon, et al. 2012; Montgomery and Stoeckle 2013), processing such diverse and unguided data as that produced by the draw-a-map task presents numerous challenges.

This paper will present different methods of processing data from the author's own research, and reflect on the efficacy of each of the methods. The data all arose from perceptual dialectology studies undertaken between 2003 and 2007 and have been processed using numerous techniques. These techniques range from the low-tech (tracing lines on overhead transparencies) to the high-tech (using GIS technology similar to that to be discussed in the hands-on workshop session), and demonstrate other processing techniques 'in between' these two ends of the processing continuum.