

Does regional variation exist? From acoustic realities to perceptual representations

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Variation is inherent in language. During each interaction, interlocutors perceive, whether consciously or not, variations at different linguistic levels (lexical, syntactic, prosodic, etc.). They interpret these variations and use them in order to elaborate representations about the interaction participants and the communicative situation. Variation is perceived and exploited by listeners for the construction of the speakers linguistic identity. Therefore, studying variation is crucial in order to understand language and its working. Whatever the linguistic aspect of interest, the study of variation involves several methodological questions and risks. This communication aims to discuss notions of variation and linguistic varieties used by empirical studies in order to highlight methodological challenges and risks of these studies and to underline the implications of these different approaches.