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Appalachian Englishes in the Twenty-First Century Educational Materials

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Chapter 5

Identity and Representation in Appalachia: Perceptions in and of Appalachia, Its People, and Its Languages

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Exercise 1

This chapter explores how identities are enacted, manifested, and expanded through the use of various linguistic features. To show that you are a fan of a particular sports team, for example, you not only wear the appropriate clothing and attend games; you also shout specific cheers and use special hashtags. These identities can be connected to any number of social categories: race, ethnicity, region, sexuality, communities of practice, etc. What groups do you identify with? How do you think others recognize this fact in your language? Write 1-2 paragraphs explaining which identities you think are important to you and how you think you exude this belonging through linguistic means.

Exercise 2

An important component of identities is that one's perception of self may differ drastically from the perceptions that others hold about that individual. Can you think of any ways in which your own identities have been "misperceived" by others? Are there ways that you have judged someone's identity before getting to know them only to find that you were wrong? Write 1-2 paragraphs explaining your experiences with misunderstood identity practices with respect to language.

Exercise 3

Many perceptions of linguistic identities are tied up with stereotypes of place. When we hear someone talk, we have many [preconceived notions](#) about people who sound that way. Most people are very aware of the stereotypes being used against them based on [where they are from](#) and [what people from that place sound like](#). Watch these videos and write 1-2 paragraphs explaining how accents and region of origin are tied up with stereotypes. If these videos address your own accent or region of origin, do you think they get it right? How so? Write 1-2 paragraphs about your region of origin while discussing your own linguistic experiences with stereotypes about accent.

If someone had never met anyone from Appalachia, what kinds of stereotypes might they use against Appalachians? What happens when people meet a person who does not fit their stereotypes? Write 1-2 paragraphs explaining Appalachian stereotypes and how people do or do not recreate their mental notion of Appalachianism when presented with discordant information.

Exercise 4

It is pretty common for people to debate [which states count as Southern](#). Can you do this for Appalachia? Take a map like [this](#) and shade in the states you think count as Appalachian. Give the same map to 5 other people and ask them to do the same. In what ways are your maps similar? How are they different? Write 1-2 paragraphs explaining your data.

Exercise 5

This chapter takes a perceptual dialectology approach to understanding linguistic identities. The primary way in which this research approach presents the perceptions non-linguists hold about language variation is through the use of the mental mapping task. Like in Exercise 4, take a map like [this one](#) and draw areas where you think people have a certain way of speaking. Provide each region you draw a label. Give the same map to 5 other people and ask them to do the same. In what ways are your maps similar? How are they different? Did anyone draw an Appalachian region? If so, what label did they give it? Do you think they see Appalachian varieties in a positive, negative, or neutral way? How do you know? Write 1-2 paragraphs explaining your data.