Influence of Northern “you guys” and Southern “y’all” on Perceived Friendliness of Text Messages

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Use of different words and phrases can indicate that a speaker belongs to a particular group and causes listeners to access their implicit biases about how a member of that particular social group will act and general facets of their personality. Once these specific words are used, a listener is cued to activate those schemas through which they understand that social group. This means that their biases will now potentially shape the way that they perceive the speaker. Two prominent and widely recognized dialects are Southern and Northern English dialects. Southern accents are often seen as less intelligent, less educated and friendlier than their Northern counterparts, thus we hypothesize that the use of the word “y’all” in a text message will lead participants to rank the sender as more friendly compared to a text message containing the phrase “you guys.” We found there was no significant difference between participants’ ratings of friendliness based on the two text conditions. This leads us to conclude that more research must be done to definitively say that the presence of “y’all” or “you guys” activates the regional stereotype that we hypothesized.