



# Perceptual dialectology: The application of Google Trends in the study of dialect labels on the basis of Brummie, Mancunian and Devon<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

This article has two aims: First, to study specific dialect labels using Google Trends and, second, to assess the usefulness of this tool in this respect. The motivation was Jensen's (2017) suggestion to use Google Trends in the field of perceptual dialectology. Following her idea, the paper examines the social perception of Brummie, Devon and Manchester dialects when Google users search for the dialect names using the Google Trends search tool. The main question addressed here is whether these Google search results denote dialect labels of the three dialects or if they denote something different. Dialect labels are important since they are used to mark the dialect with which a word is associated. Google Trends is an online software, which can be used free of charge. It shows the searches of Google users within the specified time period and area. The findings of the study revealed that Google Trends is a helpful tool in conducting research in the field of perceptual dialectology since it helps to determine the perception of terms (here dialect labels) in different locations. Furthermore, there are differences between the three dialect labels concerning the collocations to which they are related. The study revealed that the terms 'Brummie', 'Devon', 'Mancunian' are not exclusively dialect labels, and therefore they may refer to more than just linguistic phenomena.

## KEYWORDS

Perceptual dialectology, Google Trends, Brummie, Devon, Mancunian, urban dialects of English

## 1. Introduction

According to Cramer & Montgomery (2016), dialect localization is not the only topographical factor for identifying a particular variety perception. Instead, we find close connections between localization and factors such as identity and language use. Social reality is a sociological concept that represents the idea that social interactions form our attitudes towards reality, i.e. how people discuss various topics and talk about other people to whom they are close. When

<sup>1</sup> The results of this research were discussed at the *13th International Conference on Native and Non-native Accents of English* at the University of Lodz, Poland on 12 Dec 2019.

it comes to the notion of perceptual dialectology, the concept of social reality underpins our study of the location as a subjective entity. Perception of reality is influenced and formed, not only by localization of a particular dialect, but rather by a more diverse array of phenomena having influence on speakers and listeners. UK research in the field of perceptual dialectology has demonstrated that urban locations are surprisingly distinct on the country's perceptual map (see Montgomery 2007, 2016). As stated by Cramer and Montgomery (2016: 14), this must be linked to the prominence of large urban areas in the apparently accelerating development of supra-regional linguistic varieties of English language; for instance, research conducted in this field by Kerswill (2003) and Watt (2002) in the UK is related to the perception of specific dialect areas. However, the research discussed in that paper does not pay close detail to the perception of geographical areas or linguistic variants. Instead, it focuses on the attitude to dialect names or dialect labels. By contrast, the present study examines whether the names of dialects (here Brummie, Devon and Mancunian) are used to designate linguistic varieties or whether they denote something more than simply a language variety. The study does this in order to explore the names of the dialect labels and what they denote to non-linguists (available on <https://trends.google.com/trends>). Google Trends is a corpus of Google searches with information about time, location and related searches. It uses data from *Google's* search engine to display how often a given phrase or word is searched, thereby making it feasible to map the words most frequently linked to Brummie, Devon and Mancunian dialects as well as to identify variation in terms of time and space. Google Trends data has been used in the field of marketing, but not for quantitative sociolinguistics and perceptual dialectology research. The present study is an effort to fill this gap.

## 2. Perceptual dialectology

Perceptual dialectology is a branch of linguistics, which takes attitudes to language held by non-linguists into account. Therefore, the perception of dialectal variation studied by laymen has been neglected, but also regarded as unscientific. This is due to the fact the average person is assumed to have an insufficient vocabulary to express thoughts on dialects (Niedzielski and Preston 2000). However, a great number of studies in Perceptual Dialectology (PD) have shown that speakers of a given dialect are very conscious of the dialect they speak and are perfectly responsive when asked about their dialect awareness. Thus, according to Dennis Preston (1988: 175), PD seeks to examine the views of non-linguists on such questions as: 1. How different from, or similar to, their own speech do respondents find the speech of other areas? 2. What (i.e. where) do respondents believe the dialect areas of a region to be? 3. What do respondents assume about the characteristics of regional speech?

To provide answers, PD researchers use specific tasks for respondents on collecting data about respondents' 'mental maps', for example, their perceptions on their own language and the language of other people (Gould and White 1986). For example, respondents are asked to draw lines on maps to demonstrate why the respondents think that different dialects are contrived.

Within this branch of linguistics, Dennis Preston's seminal work has profoundly influenced the field of modern PD. Notably, his book *Perceptual dialectology: Nonlinguists' Views of Areal*

*Linguistics* (1989) provides numerous pioneering studies. Furthermore, his paper published in 1993 'The Uses of Folk Linguistics' offers an introduction to methods applied in the field of PD. His subsequent book: *Handbook of Perceptual Dialectology* (1999) confirms the importance of this branch of linguistics, providing methods and findings of early and modern studies. As Preston states:

[w]ithout knowledge of the value-ridden classifications of language and language status and function by the folk, without knowledge of where the folk believe differences exist, without knowledge of where they are capable of hearing major and minor differences, and, most importantly, without knowledge of how the folk bring their beliefs about language to bear on their solutions to linguistic problems, the study of language attitudes risks being: 1) a venture into the investigation of academic distinctions which distort the folk reality or tell only a partial truth or, worse, 2) a misadventure into the study of theatrically exaggerated speech caricatures. (Preston, 1993: 252)

Thus, studies in modern PD aim to fill the incoherence disparity between production and perception and act as an argument for exploring the controversial aspects of PD, as Bloomfield and Grootaers claimed that non-linguistic perceptions were subjective and worthless (see Cramer 2016: 4). Nonetheless, there has been a great number of studies in the field of perceptual dialectology concentrating on the perceptions of respondents as non-linguists in the USA (Preston 1989, 1993; Fought 2002; Fridland, Bartlett and Kreuz 2004; Hartley 2005; Fridland and Bartlett 2006; Benson 2003; Bucholtz et al. 2008; Evans 2011; Cukor-Avila et al. 2012). The research introduced by Preston in 1989 and 1993 was undoubtedly influential and widespread and employed in various topographical locations around the world, for instance Brazil (Preston 1989), France (Kuiper 1999), Germany (Dailey-O'Cain 1999; Diercks 2002; Palliwoda and Schöder 2016), Korea (Long and Yim 2002; Jeon and Cukor-Avila 2016).

This paper concentrates on perception of dialects from the UK (Birmingham, Manchester, and the county of Devon). Therefore, it is essential to focus historically on the studies undertaken in the UK. As Maquire and McMahon claim:

Historically there has been little interest in the study of perceptual dialectology in Great Britain (although there has been a good deal of folk linguistics study, in the shape of language attitude research). This is now changing, with modifications to the Survey of Regional English (SuRE) methodology (Burbano-Elizondo 2006: 116; Llamas 1999), and Montgomery's (2006) research (discussed below). There are exceptions to this lack of prior interest, starting with Inoue, whose two mid-1990s investigations on perception in England and Great Britain (collected in Preston, 1999a) follow research in Japan which examined perceptual dialect boundaries and regions based on 'dialect image'. (Maquire and McMahon 2011: 130)

In contrast, five years later, Cramer and Montgomery state the opposite:

Such historical interest in production notwithstanding, non-linguists' perceptions have not been neglected. In fact, they have been extensively studied as part of language attitudes research in Great Britain (Giles 1970; Giles and Bourhis 1975; Giles and Powesland 1975; Edwards 1982, Rhyan and Giles 1982, Bishop, Coupland, and Garrett 2005; Coupland and Bishop 2007) [...] The wealth of data from production studies over the last 140 years, along with interest in perceptual dialectology since the early 1990s, means that stability and change in both production and perception can be examined. (Cramer and Montgomery 2016: 185-190)

There were a few studies of great significance undertaken in the UK. The first study conducted by Inoue (1999) was to classify dialects and draw them on a map of Great Britain. Inoue has doubts about the usefulness of non-linguists drawing the maps because of their lack of knowledge of dialects. Therefore, Inoue (1999: 17) sums up the results of the study and states that 'people often form dialect images even without listening to the actual dialect.

Another investigation on vernacular perception was conducted by Kerswill and Williams (2002). The research involved dialect levelling, and its aim was to analyze three communities to identify the features of their dialects, which in turn were substituted by features of other dialects in the geographical region. In Kerswill and Williams' study, the respondents were not asked to draw the map, but to examine if they were able to geographically identify voice recordings from Hull, Reading, and Milton Keynes. The study found certain perceptual misunderstandings of the locations because of fast social variations in the communities (Kerswill and Williams 2002: 202).

Montgomery's (2006) research on perceptual dialectology (located in northern England) raised worldwide interest among linguists. His study was based on Preston's five-item approach, and respondents from Carlisle, Hull and Crewe participated in this study. The respondents were involved in drawing-a-map of dialect locations. Afterwards, the results were explored, and maps were created. The next phase of study concerned placing the voices from eight areas; Barnsley, Preston, Warrington, Liverpool, Newcastle upon Tyne, London, Hull, and Carlisle. A map of participants' responses was handed to respondents reflecting the study conducted by perceptual dialectologists. Participants were asked to identify the areas proposed by Preston. Finally, respondents were requested to react to eight voice samples and assess them on the same levels. They collected samples, and dialect locations were compared side by side in order to determine any differences.

Recent advances in the field in the UK have produced studies implementing digital tools. The strategies applied in Perceptual dialectology have evolved significantly from drawing-a-map tasks to Internet search engines such as Google Trends. Jensen's innovative research, presented in 2017, does not deal with the perception of geographical areas or linguistic varieties as such, but with the perception of dialect names (or dialect labels as Chris Montgomery (2016) calls them). To explore the names of the dialects labels and what they denote to non-linguists, data

from Google Trends was analyzed in Jensen's (2017) study. She reported the results of a perceptual and exploratory study of Google Trends data to analyze the usability of this search tool in dialect labelling. Moreover, Jensen (2017) wanted to know what Google users are curious about or interested in when they search for words such as *Geordie*, *Scouse* and *Cockney*. She investigated vast differences between the dialect labels both in sense of searches over time as well as the collocates with which they are associated. The motivation for this study was Jensen's suggestion to use Google Trends in the field of perceptual dialectology for further research. Following her idea, the present paper replicates her study with different dialect labels – the social perception of Brummie, Devon and Manchester dialect (Mancunian).

### 3. The factors affecting the perception of dialect locations

Braber and Jansen (2018: 143) point to a comparatively stable set of aspects that affect the spatial perception of English dialect areas (specifically *proximity*, *cultural prominence and claiming/denial*). Furthermore, Johnstone (2013: 107) adds one more factor which is “ways of doing things associated with places”. This means that “ways of speaking” – language variation – does not correlate only with a geographical area but to socio-cultural behaviors as well. The factor of claiming/denial concerns the interface between social attractiveness and voice-sample placement (see Watt 2014: 119) hence, is not applicable to this study since Google Trends does not provide any voice samples. The *proximity* factor relates to the ‘closeness’ to a certain dialect area and it is a drawing-a-map task or a dialect recognition task. Although the theory of *proximity* is one of the most essential factors that affect the way in which dialect locations are perceived, I do not consider this factor in the present study. The reason is that respondents will not be asked to draw dialect areas or complete the maps. Instead, each dialect name (here Brummie, Mancunian, Devon) will be set as the worldwide interest/location on Google Trends. Therefore, I restrict my discussion in this section to *cultural prominence*.

#### 3.1. Cultural Prominence

Montgomery claims that cultural prominence “is related to metalinguistic knowledge and refers to the boosting effect that the media or other mechanisms might have on the way in which a location is perceived” (Montgomery 2016: 199). Cultural prominence is a form of justifying high percentages of dialects (in this case Brummie, Mancunian and Devon), and is firmly related to dialect enregisterment (Johnstone 2011). This means that a certain dialect is popular. People talk about it and situate it in a particular location. Thus, certain characteristics of a dialect are regularly enregistered and, therefore, classified as distinctive for a location.

Stuart-Smith (2011) stresses the importance of media in dialect perceptions and the ideologies associated with them. Furthermore, stereotypes may become intertwined in an ideological system. Below are a few instances in which the media (especially *Gazeta Wyborcza* newspaper and *Głos Wielkopolski*) transmit stereotypes about dialects spoken in Poznan, Krakow and Warsaw:

1. Krakus (native of Krakow) is perceived as being conservative intelligent and faultfinding.<sup>2</sup>
2. Warszawiak (native of Warsaw) is perceived as being a snob.<sup>3</sup>
3. Poznaniak (a native person of Poznan) is perceived as being penny-wise and parsimonious.<sup>4</sup>

In the above examples, we can notice the intensified emphasis in the media on the three urban dialects and the people who speak those dialects.

The dialects covered in this research are located in England. Below I introduce each of them, focusing on the recognition rates from ITV Tonight Regional Accents survey 2013 that concerns perceptions of several UK dialects with reference to their intelligence and friendliness. I also include views expressed by Montgomery (2007) on perceptual areas of Brummie, Mancunian and Devon. Lastly, examples of stereotypes related to the three urban dialects will be examined on the basis of *UK Answers Yahoo Forum*, *Quora forum*,<sup>6</sup> *The Student Room*<sup>7</sup> and *Antimoon Forum*.<sup>8</sup> It is very important to mention that I do not analyze linguistic features specific for each specific variety.

### 3.1.1. Brummie

The Brummie variety is found in Birmingham (see Beal 2010: 6). As stated in Collins English Dictionary (CED). The word “Brummie” denotes “a native or inhabitant of Birmingham, England” or informally “a Brummie accent”. It originates from “Brummagem” and was first recorded in 1822 (CED *Brummie*).

Montgomery’s (2007) research suggests areas recognized across pilot studies on respondents from three cities (Newcastle, Sheffield and Hull). The studies conducted by Montgomery show that Brummie is the 7th most recognized dialect out of 10 by respondents coming from mixed locations. ITV Tonight Regional Accents (2012) survey reveals that only 37% of British people identify a Brummie accent as friendly (21% as ‘not friendly’), which means that Brummie is the least friendly accent. No more than 15% of respondents claim that a Brummie accent sounds intelligent (33% unintelligent). To sum up, Brummie is at the bottom of the list as far as friendliness and intelligence (*remove*) are concerned.

In 2010, *UK Yahoo! Answers* users were asked “What do you think of the Birmingham Accent?”<sup>9</sup> There were 28 answers. “The favorite answer” (four-star rated) is that

2 [https://krakow.wyborcza.pl/krakow/1,42699,7629596,Glosy\\_z\\_sieci\\_\\_o\\_Krakowie\\_i\\_jego\\_mieszkancach.html](https://krakow.wyborcza.pl/krakow/1,42699,7629596,Glosy_z_sieci__o_Krakowie_i_jego_mieszkancach.html), 09.09.2020

3 <https://natemat.pl/40859,krakus-to-konserwatysta-warszawiak-to-snob-sprawdzaja-charlotte-czuly-barbarzynca-i-galilu>, 01.08.2020

4 <https://glosnielkopolski.pl/oszczedny-jak-poznaniak-to-mit/ar/415353>, 05.10.2020

5 <https://uk.answers.yahoo.com>, 02.09.2020

6 [www.quora.com](http://www.quora.com), 03.09.2020

7 <https://www.thestudentroom.co.uk>, 03.10.2020

8 <http://www.antimoon.com>, 04.10.2020

9 [https://uk.answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20060630064038AAcifix&guccounter=1&guce\\_referrer=aHR-0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2x1LnNvbS8&guce\\_referrer\\_sig=AQAAACi1lg3\\_WjVX9rW8Cy5omKLhg4uXEIkvavpcE30O-juXFpuBIIKRG8lxBa2mVp6ajoS-fxjRF3tUwh1lpFPIWTJFabAjbMXz\\_ylDz2Sze7AHdpAxRPCsQUK1-xMXnmaPI-7nYJwlzbiDt5AKJqe6h9DG-jX3MK7FTQ8Rof9oJ8ny](https://uk.answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20060630064038AAcifix&guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR-0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2x1LnNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAACi1lg3_WjVX9rW8Cy5omKLhg4uXEIkvavpcE30O-juXFpuBIIKRG8lxBa2mVp6ajoS-fxjRF3tUwh1lpFPIWTJFabAjbMXz_ylDz2Sze7AHdpAxRPCsQUK1-xMXnmaPI-7nYJwlzbiDt5AKJqe6h9DG-jX3MK7FTQ8Rof9oJ8ny), 01.09.2020

“Like most people - I think it’s quite unattractive. A recent survey showed that accents from the Midlands, Liverpool and Manchester are the accents people find the least trustworthy, where those from Yorkshire, Scotland, and (perhaps surprisingly) London are the most trustworthy. Unfortunately, there are regional British accents you can get away with anywhere, and those you can’t, and each accent has different connotations. Ever noticed how when they’re trying to advertise household products, or appeal to the everyday person, it’ll be a Yorkshire accent, or maybe a Scottish one, and when they want to sell you something seen as ‘sophisticated’ or upmarket, they bring out the flat ‘BBC English’ (unaccented as some would say)? Times change though – 50 years ago an Irish accent in Britain would have got you instantly barred from many places, whereas now it’s associated with (and used in advertising to denote) someone who’s friendly and down-to-earth. Be curious to know what the Brummies think of their own accent, as a lot of people will try to hide an accent if they move elsewhere...” (contributed by user *Edsephiroth*).

User *Glittershelly* states “I can’t stand that Brummie accent. It hurts my ears lol” or “absolutely awful. Sorry. It makes them sound unintelligent and common” (*anonymous user*). *Thestudentroom* user *Howard* asked “What’s wrong with Brummies?”<sup>10</sup> in 2012. User *Teknik* says “The Birmingham accent is not actually an accent; it is a symptom of brain damage”. As we can see, most of the answers on forums are very negative towards the Brummie accent. When it comes to accent stereotypes, user *Konrad Valentin* states in 2004 that “Brummies (from Birmingham) are unintelligent” ([www.antimoon.com](http://www.antimoon.com)).

### 3.1.2. Mancunian

The Mancunian variety is commonly associated with the city of Manchester. According to CED (CED, *Manc*) the word ‘Manc’ comes from Medieval Latin ‘Mancunium’. As stated in CED, the term ‘Manc’ refers to ‘a native or inhabitant of Manchester, and in informal British English it is short for Mancunian. Its first recorded usage was in 1715 in accordance with CED.

The studies found in Montgomery (2007) indicate that Mancunian is the 5<sup>th</sup> most recognized dialect out of 10 by respondents coming from mixed locations. ITV Tonight Regional Accents (2012) survey reveals that 38% of British people identify a Mancunian accent as friendly (21% as ‘not friendly’), which means that Mancunian is the second least friendly accent after Brummie in the research (out of 10 accents), and 20% of respondents claim that a Mancunian accent sounds intelligent (22% unintelligent).

The stereotypes of Mancunians mentioned in ‘The Student Room Forum’<sup>11</sup> thread from 2004 posted by user *Kandy\_Kain\_94*, who asked “What do you think of the Mancunian accent?”<sup>12</sup>, show that the perception of this variety seems to be negative: “Horrendous, that’s why Michelle

10 <http://www.antimoon.com/forum/2003/2650.htm>, 01.09.2020

11 <https://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/showthread.php?t=2565058>, 03.09.2020

12 <https://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/showthread.php?t=2565058>, 03.09.2020

Keegan goes down from a 10/10 to an 8” (contributed by user *2ndClass*), “It sounds horrible/disgusting and reminds me of poverty” (user *marcus2001*), “I don’t know, it’s just...bad. Only the scouse accent is worse” (user *Silver Arrows*), “It sounds so unintelligent and just generally makes you sound poor. I also can’t help but associate it with the Gallagher’s and they’re both tos\*ers” (user *Wade*).

### 3.1.3. Devon (West Country English)

The Devon dialect is a variety spoken in Devonshire, a county in the South-West of England between the Bristol Channel and the English Channel (including the island of Lundy). The area includes Plymouth and Torbay, which became independent as unitary authorities in 1998. The hilly landscape rises to the uplands of Exmoor and Dartmoor, with wooded river valleys and a rugged coastline. The administrative centre is in Exeter, which has a population of 714,900 (2003 est.). It has an area of 6569 sq km (2536 sq miles). The word ‘Devon’ also refers to ‘a breed of large red beef cattle originally from Devon’. Unfortunately, CED does not provide any data on the first recorded usage of the word ‘Devon’.

The studies found in Montgomery (2007) reveal that West Country English is not listed by respondents who hail from mixed locations. This means that a Devon dialect was not recognized at all. In terms of pilot study 4, which included the Hull area, West Country English was recognized at the rate of 26.7% (the 7th most recognized dialect out of 10 in Hull area). ITV Tonight Regional Accent (2012) survey shows that 65% of British people believe a Devon accent as friendly (only 4% as ‘not friendly’), which means that Devon is the friendliest accent of all that were found (out of 10 accents), and 28% of respondents claim that a Devon accent sounds intelligent (15% unintelligent). It is essential to add that in the ITV study a Devon accent together with RP are the most trustworthy accents in the study. The stereotypes of West Country English mentioned in (a) ‘Reddit’<sup>13</sup> thread from 2012 posted by *anonymous user*, who asked “Country stereotypes?”<sup>14</sup> show that West Country is perceptualized as the country of farmers as *Intangible-tangerine* user states:

County of Bristol. Every stereotype about Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, (*and*) Somerset indeed (*include*) the whole West of England and South West England region gets applied to us because people can’t fathom that we’re a county in our own right and we’re city folk damnit! We are urbane and cosmopolitan and having a west country accent and being a farmer isn’t actually the same thing.

Furthermore, *North London UK Stereotype Map* (2012) by Reddit user *holytriple*<sup>15</sup> confirms that farmers are located in the West Country. The user *holytriple* continues “Farmers: The Westcountry. Rural area usually associated with yokels/country bumpkins (what we call hicks) who drink cider and speak with a Hagrid/Pirate-type accent”.

13 [https://www.reddit.com/r/unitedkingdom/comments/m3wtm/county\\_stereotypes/](https://www.reddit.com/r/unitedkingdom/comments/m3wtm/county_stereotypes/), 01.09.2020

14 <https://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/showthread.php?t=2565058>, 05.09.2020

15 [https://www.reddit.com/r/MapPorn/comments/2v6lfm/stereotypes\\_of\\_the\\_uk\\_from\\_a\\_north\\_londoners/](https://www.reddit.com/r/MapPorn/comments/2v6lfm/stereotypes_of_the_uk_from_a_north_londoners/), 05.09.2020

#### 4. Google Trends data and its functions.

This section of the paper shortly discusses the Google Trends corpus while explaining functions used in the analysis and methods in which the data was collected. To explore the names of the dialects and what they mean to non-linguists, Google Trends output was studied (available on <https://trends.google.com/trends>). Google Trends is a corpus of Google searches with information about time, location and related searches. It uses data from Google's search engine to display how often a given phrase or word is searched. Google Trends can show us much more than keywords, which are 'trendy', or trends that currently prevail. We can compare the search volume of a given phrase over TIME to assess how different REGIONS search for the same phrase. It is a tool that provides us with the information we need when we want to develop a marketing strategy, or a completely new business based on what people type into an Internet search engine. Google Trends has been mostly used in the field of marketing so far. It has not been used to research the field of quantitative sociolinguistics and perceptual dialectology. Therefore, it is possible to use the data to map words which are most frequently linked (in this case, vocabulary most frequently linked with Brummie, Devon and Mancunian) as well as to show any differences over time and in different locations.

For the study, I used the Google Trends tools in order to search for all three terms *Brummie*, *Mancunian*, *Devon*. It is important to mention that I searched for the terms, not the topics. For each dialect, I downloaded the output based on worldwide location and set the time period from January 2004 (the earliest available data on Google Trends) till the time of writing this paper. According to Google, Google Trends 'provides access to a largely unfiltered sample of actual search requests made to Google. It's anonymized (no one is personally identified), categorized (determining the topic for a search query) and aggregated (grouped together). This allows us to display interest in a particular topic from around the globe or down to city-level geography'.<sup>16</sup> The data is normalized so that you can compare searched terms faster. The points below illustrate how Google Trends data is normalized:<sup>17</sup>

- Each data point is divided by the total searches of the geography and time range it represents to compare relative popularity. Otherwise, places with the most search volume would always be ranked highest.
- The resulting numbers are then scaled on a range of 0 to 100 based on a topic's proportion to all searches on all topics.
- Different regions that show the same search interest in a term do not always have the same total search volumes.

The Google Trends tool displays the output of your searches in visual charts and maps. We are able to see the searched term over time and also see in what location the term is most often used. In addition, each search created a set of similar searches that can be categorized by two criteria

<sup>16</sup> <https://support.google.com/trends/answer/4365533?hl=en>, 03.09.2020

<sup>17</sup> <https://support.google.com/trends/answer/4365533?hl=en>, 03.09.2020

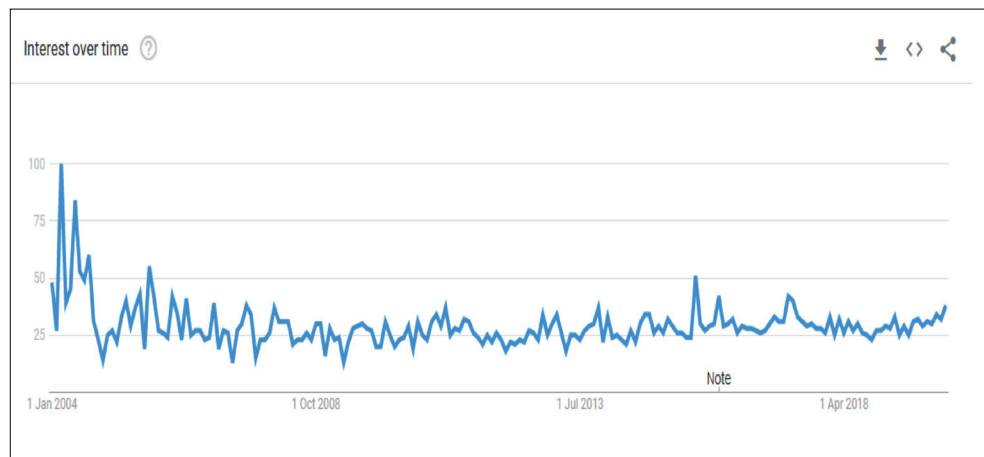
'top' and 'rising'. The 'top' search results are by far the most popular keywords ranked from 0 to 100. This analysis focuses only on 'top' searches. This is because the top searches will allow us to see what facets of Mancunian, Brummie and Devon the users search for.

## 5. Data Analysis

In this part, I present the summary of the data extraction from the Google Trends corpus. The online software has classified and reviewed the data. Each dialect term will be entered independently, beginning with the worldwide interest over time, interest by region, sub-region (The UK), by city and by worldwide top related search queries. The searches are based exclusively on locational dimensions. If there is an interest in attitudes to dialect labels, then the interest in the compound terms like Brummie + accent/dialect, Mancunian + accent/dialect and Devon + accent/dialect should be found. After each graph, a short summary will be provided.

### 5.1. Birmingham dialect

Figure 1: Worldwide interest over time for *Brummie*.



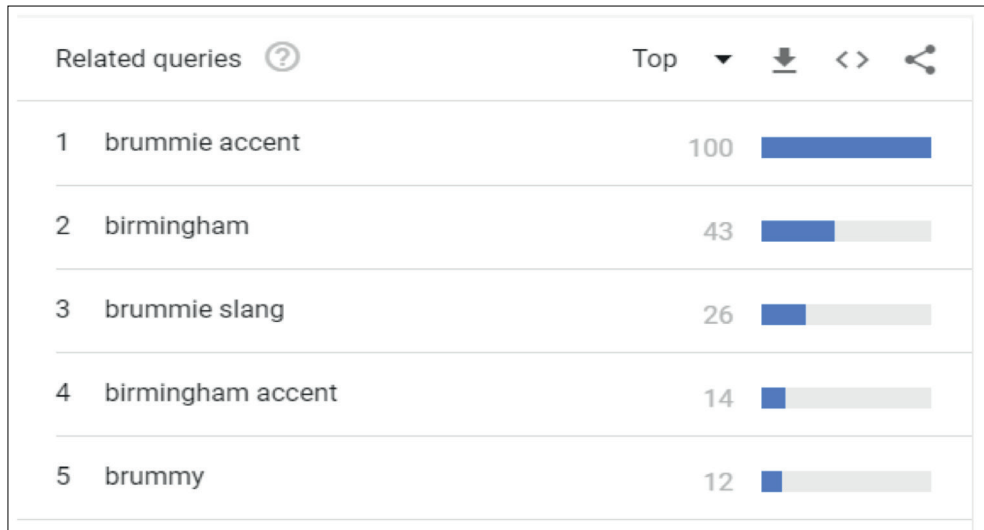
When looking at the worldwide interest in Brummie over time, we can notice a sudden increase in June 2004. A plausible explanation would be the 2004 football season for Birmingham City Football Club, their third season in the Premier League.

Figure 2: Interest by region in (for) *Brummie*.



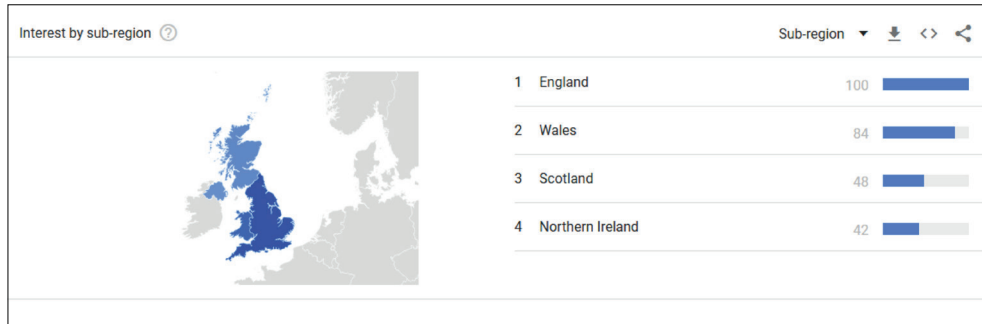
Figure 2 indicates that the United Kingdom is the region with the highest amount of search volume.

Figure 3. Worldwide top related search queries for *Brummie*.



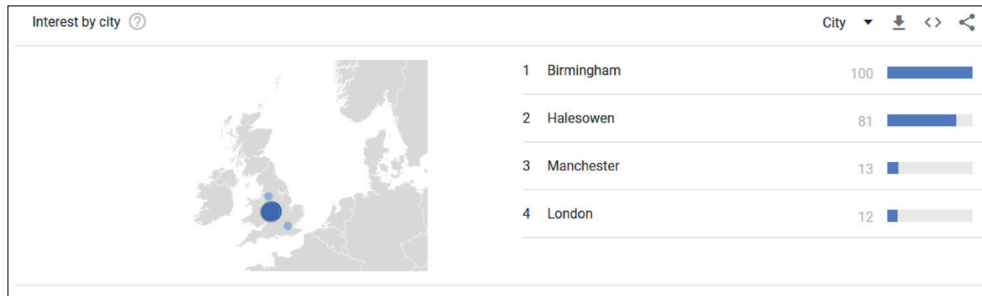
These results suggest that interest in Brummie is linked to the Brummie accent itself. Another query is related to the city of Birmingham.

Figure 4. Interest by sub-region (The UK)



The maximum search volume for *Brummie* is from England, with Wales surpassing Scotland and Northern Ireland. It should not come as a surprise since *Brummie* is spoken in England.

Figure 5. Interest by city.

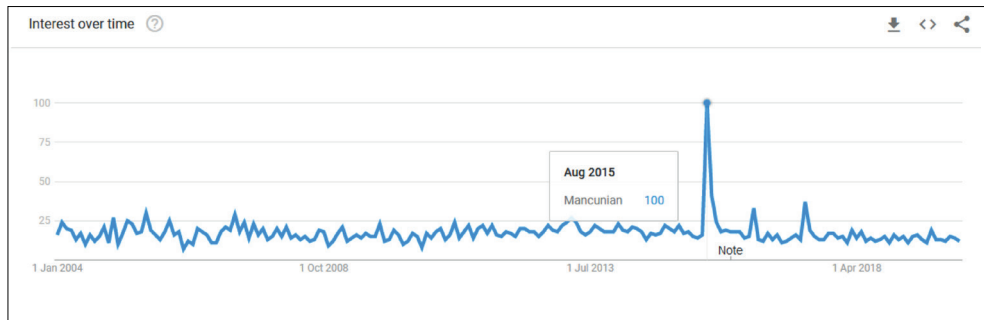


Halesowen is located around 9 miles west of Birmingham in the Metropolitan Borough of Dudley. The first far-away locations are Manchester and London. Manchester is located to the north of Birmingham and London is situated to the south-east of Birmingham.

To conclude the findings for the dialect label *Brummie*, we notice the impact of football in searches entered by Internet users. Moreover, the interest in *Brummie* is mostly related to the accent itself, along with interest in Birmingham as a city.

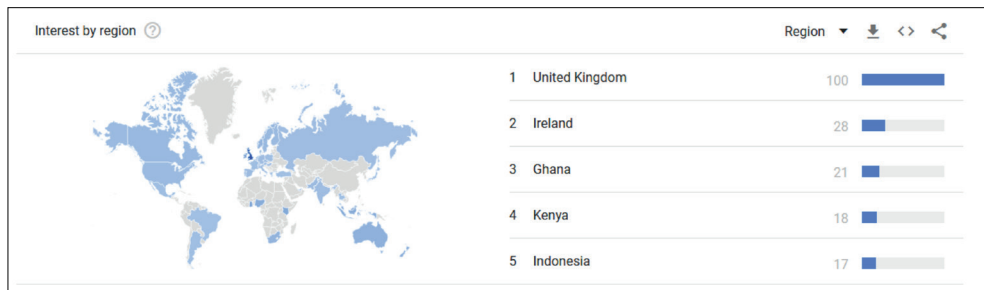
## 5.2. Manchester dialect

Figure 6: Worldwide interest over time regarding *Mancunian*.

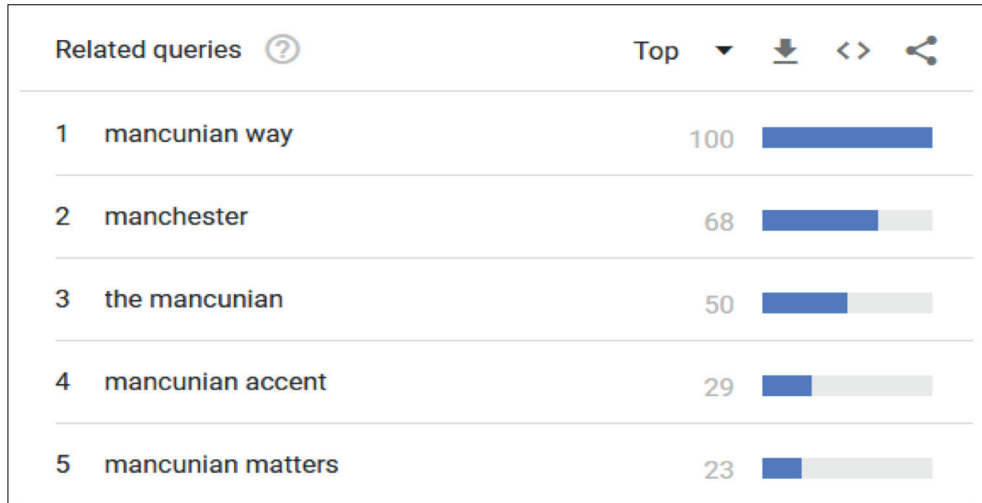


The graph shows a spike in 2015. A reason for this spike is the fact that a part of the easternmost non-motorway section of Mancunian Way collapsed into a 12 m sinkhole on 14 August 2015.

Figure 7: Interest in *Mancunian* by region.

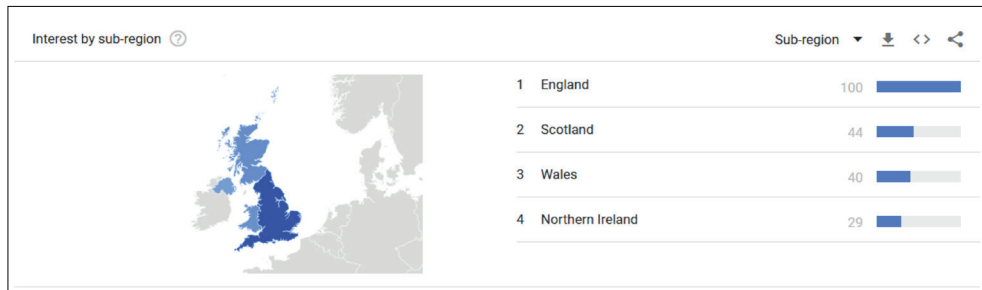


This map indicates that the United Kingdom is the region with the highest amount of search volume, followed by searches in Ireland. Surprisingly, there is some interest in *Mancunian* in African countries (Ghana and Kenya) as well as in Indonesia.

Figure 8. Worldwide top related search queries for *Mancunian*.

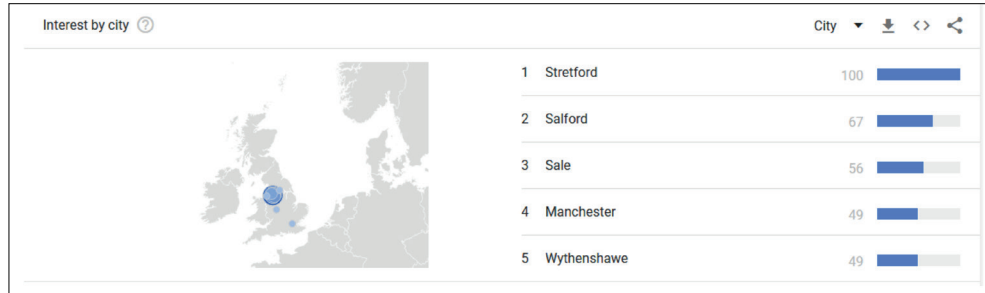
These results suggest that interest in *Mancunian* is linked to the Mancunian Way – the motorway in Manchester. We also note the link between location and dialect. It may refer to the people of Manchester or to the Manchester dialect, also known as the Mancunian dialect. The fourth search refers to the Mancunian accent and the last one to Mancunian matters – the webpage with the local news.

Figure 9. Interest by sub-region (The UK)



As we can see, the maximum search volume for Mancunian is from England, with Scotland surpassing Wales and Northern Ireland. This is not a surprise since Mancunian is spoken in Manchester (England).

Figure 10. Interest by city.

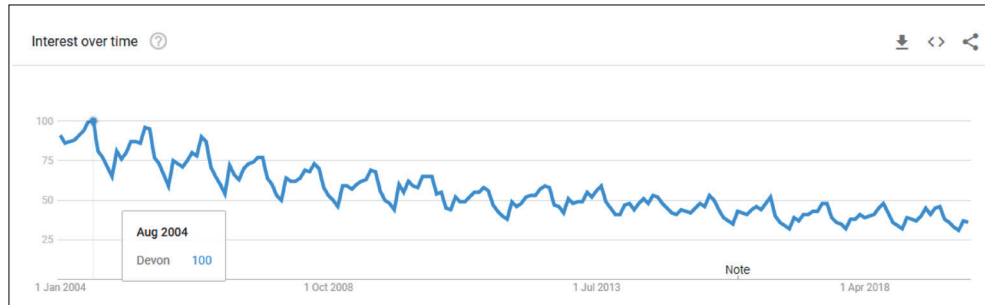


Stretford is a town 3.8 miles southwest of Manchester’s city *centre*. Salford is a district of Greater Manchester located west of Manchester’s city centre. Sale is situated 5.2 miles southwest of Manchester. Wythenshawe is a suburban town of south Manchester.

To sum up, the findings for the dialect label *Mancunian*, we can see that the sinkhole that opened up on the Mancunian Way had a huge impact on the searches. Furthermore, the interest in *Mancunian* is directly related to the Mancunian Way and not to the accent itself.

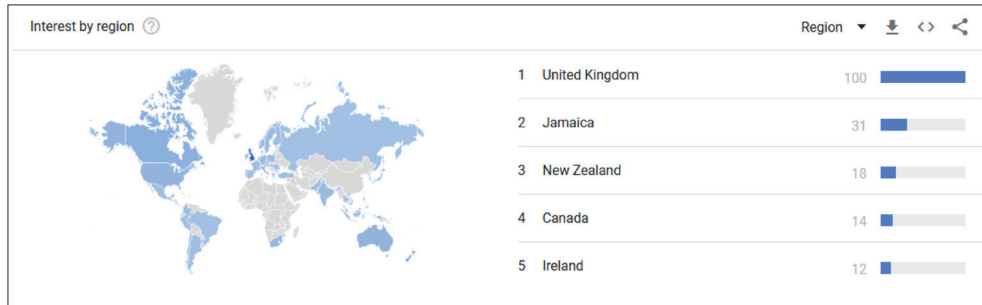
### 5.3. Devon.

Figure 11: Worldwide interest in Devon over time.



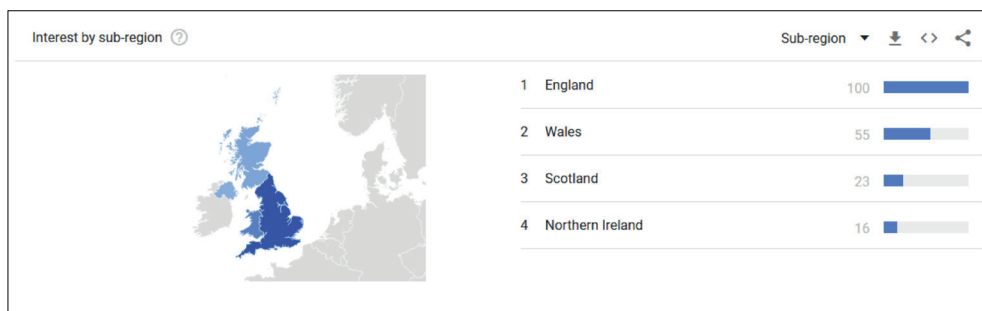
As can be seen in figure 1, the interest in *Devon* over time is constantly decreasing. There are regular positives every August, starting in 2004 up to now. Devon, Cornwall and the West Country are popular holiday destinations for the Britons. This might be why *Devon* trends in searches in August.

Figure 12: Interest in Devon by region.



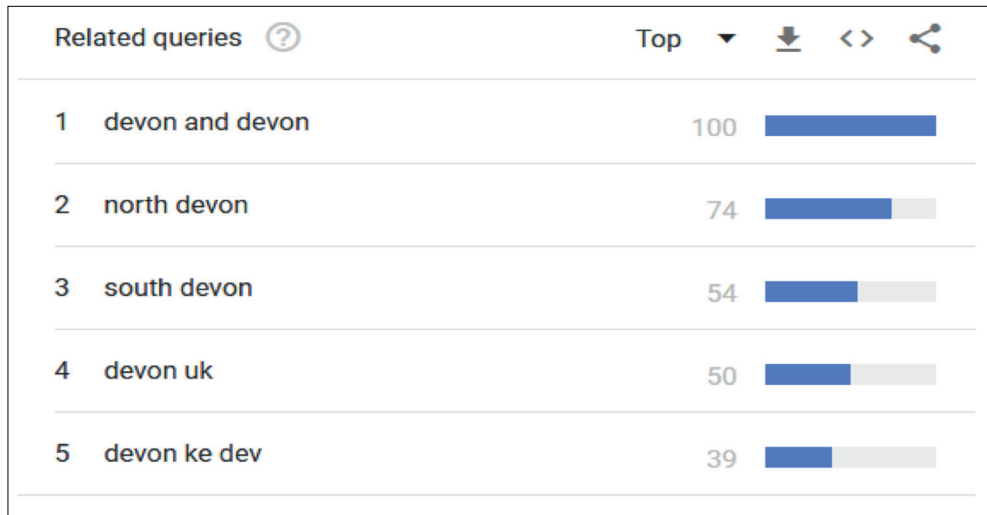
The map illustrates that the United Kingdom is the *area* with the highest amount of search volume, next is Jamaica. Jamaica shows up in search results because Devon is also a small town in Jamaica.

Figure 13. Worldwide top related search queries for Devon.



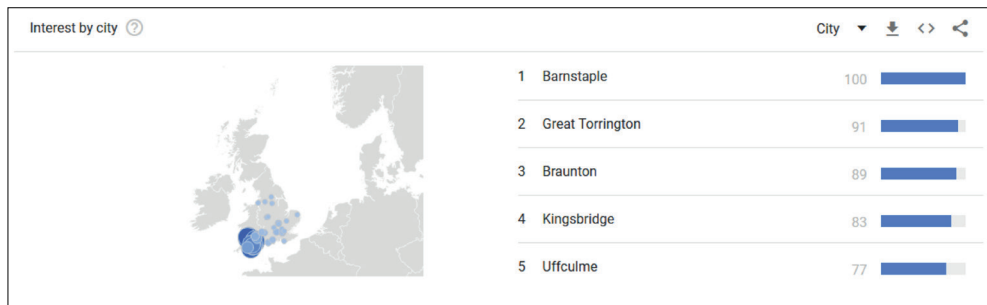
What is interesting, the dialect label *Devon* is never searched in relation to language. These results suggest that interest in *Devon* is linked to *Devon & Devon* – an Italian interior-design brand. We also see the links with North and South Devon (the northern and southern parts of Devon). The last search refers to *devon ke dev* – TV series (2011-2014).

Figure 14. Interest by sub-region (The UK)



As shown in figure 4, the maximum search volume for *Devon* is from England, with Wales surpassing Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Figure 15. Interest by city.



All the names seen in the graph are the names of small towns or villages located in and around Devon.

To summarize the findings for the dialect label *Devon*, we notice that Devon is a holiday location that is very popular in August. The highest search volume comes from the UK. Furthermore, there is a definite link to the popular culture aspect of the *Devon & Devon* brand.

## 6. Summary

The main objective of the paper shows the results of a perceptual and exploratory study of Google Trends data which analyze the usability of this search tool in dialect labelling. The Google Trends data extract revealed significant differences between top related search queries and the search volume. This study shows that the names of dialects (here Brummie, Devon and Mancunian) are not always used to depict linguistic varieties, but to denote something more than dialects. 'Brummie', 'Devon' and 'Mancunian' are not terms which are exclusively dialect labels, and therefore they can refer to many other aspects, i.e. places, brands etc. Google Tools can help us see whether these terms are searched as dialect labels - referring to linguistic matters and when they are searched as other phenomena. The results of this study suggest that two dialect labels (Mancunian and Devon) are highly prominent due to a correlation with Mancunian Way and Devon & Devon's brand. It is important for understandings of cultural prominence that when people search, e.g. for Devon, it is mostly in relation to a design brand. Moreover, the dialect label *Devon* is never searched in relation to language. This means that *Devon* is not searched as a dialect label. However, when we look at the popularity of the three accents, it is Brummie's accent, which has spurred the most interest with a rate of 100, followed by Mancunian accent with a rate of 29. Devon accent is not listed in the worldwide top searches in Google Trends data. Devon's cultural prominence is boosted by the exposure to the Devon & Devon brand, with stores located around the world, and in the media (Devon & Devon commercial on TV). Moreover, Google users are interested in *devon ke dev* - TV series (2011-2014) and in Devon county as a popular holiday destination and, therefore, there are a great deal of searches for *Devon* in August. By comparison, Jensen's (2017) study found that users who googled *Geordie* were interested in *Geordie Shore* (another TV series)

By contrast, Brummie is a well-known accent in the UK. Therefore, the results from Google Trends suggest that interest in Brummie is linked to the Brummie accent itself like Cockney in Jensen's (2017) study - when googling *Cockney*, users were interested in the particular language variety. The Google Trends maps illustrated above show us where in the world people have interest in Brummie, Mancunian and Devon. We clearly see that the majority of queries come from the UK, which is logical since all three dialects are located in the UK.

To sum up, Google Trends offers quick and simple tools, which might be used in the field of perceptual dialectology. With the help of Google Trends, we can analyze whether certain terms are searched as dialect labels in different locations, or they might denote something else in other locations. The output from Google Trends is anonymous, which means that there is not enough information about people who search for the names of the dialects. This kind of data might never be available due to the legal consequences.

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