Abstract:

Trudgill's (1974) suggestion that the diffusion of dialect features might obey a `gravity'-like law (also known as a hierarchical model or a cascade model) has been tested using individual features undergoing change in several different places, with differing results.

The present paper replaces the examination of individual features with a dialectometric measure of aggregate differences, and eschews the focus on individual features undergoing change for an examination of the residue of pronunciation differences resulting from lengthy interaction. We show that the aggregate analysis indicates that geography indeed plays an overwhelming role, that there is no dominant gravity-like (inverse-square) force evident in the residue of linguistic differences, and that the role of population, while weak, is actually the opposite of that postulated by the gravity model.