

A Sociolinguistic Survey of Canadian English

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Introduction

The following survey is intended to provide a brief analysis of the variation of English spoken in Canada, by considering both a linguistic and sociolinguistic perspective. As an introduction, it is important to consider issues of identity and the problems involved in distinguishing Canadian English as a specific dialect. For this purpose, a comparative analysis of English around the world and a short description of sociolinguistic research methods in the study of language will be given. The aim is to provide a sample of research and an explanation regarding the rationale and difficulties in conducting an in depth study of Canadian English and regional dialects in general.

This survey is divided into four parts, which describe the origins and foundations of Canadian English and analyze the geographical, structural, linguistic, social, and cultural aspects of the dialects found north of the 49th Parallel. Each section will highlight and explain relevant examples of social, cultural and linguistic characteristics. These are as follows; rationale, history and etymology, linguistic and lexical considerations and the future of Canadian English.

Rationale

To fully understand the challenges of a sociolinguistic analysis, it is important to note several problems in distinguishing Canadian English as a dialect. Firstly, that such distinctions may be superficial in that they gloss over regional dialects; secondly, that there may not be significant differences between American and Canadian English per se and that any differences may be either political or have greater variance east to west, rather than north or south of the border (Labov, et al. 2006). However, the

rationale for a sociolinguistic analysis of Canadian English, clarifies that most studies of North American English tend to ignore Canada and focus on local variations. From this premise, a comprehensive analysis of Canadian English, as a variation in its own right is warranted. In this respect, dialects are not just regional constructions but contain psychological, political, and social meaningfulness for the users and should be considered accordingly. In light of these characteristics, a sociolinguistic approach is needed in order to encompass and accurately describe all the variables and relevant factors involved in understanding the dialect. According to Walker's (2015) analysis, Canadian English is more than just a structural variation in pronunciation, vocabulary or grammar; rather it is the social, cultural, and historical elements, which define the language as unique and worth considering.

In order to create a complete understanding of the nature of a dialect, which extends beyond purely structural elements, a sociolinguistic methodology is needed. As the components of language analysis vary based on context, a sociolinguistic rather than purely linguistic approach can produce a more detailed survey of the nuances and qualities of Canadian English.

History and Etymology of Canadian English

To understand how Canadian English differs from other varieties, it is important to consider its origins, especially the language-external history and the events that have led to its development. Theories of new dialect formation such as language transmission and diffusion, founder effects, dialect mixing, and language contact, are useful to characterize the unique qualities that make up Canadian English (Boberg,

2010). However, a further analysis of Canada's rich and diverse history puts these theories in perspective to give a complete picture of the dialect's development. Major historical influences such the settlements in Newfoundland, British and loyalist immigration after the war of 1812, as well as the mass immigration and population shifts of the 19th and 20th centuries, document how Canadian English became a unique and socially-evolving variation which is historically and demographically diverse. These events can be described as occurring in five settlement waves, each leaving their mark on the characteristics of Canadian English.

Canada's five major immigration and settlement waves (Chambers 2010: 12-19, 28-32

1. 1776-1812 Wave I American immigration ("United Empire Loyalists")
2. 1815-1867 Wave II British & Irish immigration
3. 1890-1914 Wave III Continental European immigration (Germany, Italy, Scandinavia & Ukraine), & British immigration
4. 1945-70s Post WW-II Wave IV Highly diverse immigration populations, including Europe, Asia (Korea, China, Vietnam, India, Pakistan), Latin America and the US
5. 1990s-present Wave V Diverse immigration continues, with Chinese immigration now peaking

The first two waves established Canadian English's connection to British English and included aspects of spelling and pronunciation. The following three immigration waves are mostly limited to cultural items and loan words, with little or no impact on linguistic structure. By analysing these patterns of immigration and population shift, it becomes clear that through its colourful and diverse history, the distinguishing features of Canadian English evolved.

Linguistic and Lexical Considerations

The linguistic elements of Canadian English can be best described through lexical, phonological, and grammatical differences. Considering lexical variation, the Canadian lexicon is quite diverse and multicultural, as it is not only a blend of Americanisms and British English, but also Aboriginal languages and language introduced by immigrants and minorities. These reflect the historical demographic shifts and influences of population change. To highlight this diversity, it is important to consider not only how Canadian English differs from other varieties but also how it varies regionally within Canada. Such an in depth lexical analysis would reveal Canada's colourful history and illustrate the common heritage Canadian English speakers have as a result of borrowing, innovation, and semantic shift.

Phonology

With respect to phonetic and phonological variations, the sound system of Canadian English is also quite diverse. This diversity is characterized primarily by differences in vowel phonemes. These are represented in Canadian Raising, the Canadian Vowel Shift, and the Low-Back Merger. Examples of each are as follows: the raising of diphthongs before voiceless consonants in words like *about* or *house*, pronunciation of words like *pasta* or *drama*, and the blurring or merger of the vowels in words such as *pin* and *pen*. Within Canada, the phonetics of the dialect is said to range regionally between General Canadian English, Quebec English, Maritime English, and Newfoundland English (Labov, etal. 2006). Over most of the country, from B.C. to Ontario, there is very little variation. Most significant phonological differences occur east of Quebec and in the Maritime Provinces.

Syntax

The grammar of Canadian English is much less salient or regionally identifiable than other distinguishing qualities of varieties of English around the world. Most Canadians may be aware of regional, lexical, or phonetic differences, however, differences

in usage are harder to differentiate. In order to understand these differences of usage, this section focuses on morphological, syntactic, and discourse-pragmatic features of the dialect. Most differences in English usage fall under a North American English category, however, Canada differs in two significant areas: Newfoundland & Labrador English and African Nova Scotian English. As such syntactic variation is difficult to distinguish. An important question concerns whether regional variations are indeed valid or whether grammar is a universal quality within any language. To study this empirically, examples of unique grammaticalization such as the variable agreement in existentials and the grammaticalization of quotative *be like* (Dollinger, 2016).

Future of Canadian English

As populations continue to shift, through immigration and internal demographic changes, the future of Canadian English represents a potential mosaic of globalization and multiculturalism. In Applied Linguistics, it is commonly thought that language change is determined by social rather than regional or linguistic internal factors. As a result of increasing ethno-linguistic diversity, Canadian English will likely continue to evolve and change socially. This change could be accurately studied and documented by applying the sociolinguistic methodology proposed in the outset of this survey.

Considering recent census data from 2011 and 2016, even short term demographic changes are having a major linguistic impact. In 2011 only 57.8% of Canadians reported that their mother tongue was English and only 21% French, over 80% reported that they spoke an immigrant language other than English or French with 20.6% stating that they spoke a non-official language as their mother tongue. Of these new and emerging languages, Punjabi, Chinese, Spanish, Italian and German were ranked in the top five, respectively with Tagalog increasing by 64% over a five-year period. As populations under 15 years old increase and continue to be the most diverse, the predominantly European, aging population continues

to decline. This shift in demographics represents a significant change to the face and voice of Canada, particularly considering the traditional Eurocentric perspectives of minority and majority communities, cultures and languages.

Conclusion

Although, the influences of immigration and globalization have had a strong impact on Canada, in terms of creating multicultural and multi-linguistic societies, the fear that Canadian English is being Americanized or heavily influenced by speakers with different linguistic or ethnic heritage is largely untrue. While the frequency of usage or rate of change may vary, users of Canadian English, regardless of their background or heritage, seem to possess or develop the standard or salient features of Canadian English, especially in lexical and phonetic categories such as regional vocabulary and aspects of pronunciation, in particular the characteristic vowel shifts, raising, and mergers.

Further research should include a multi-level investigation into the finer points of the study of Canadian English by looking at connections between lexical, phonetic and geographic variation. A more diverse range of examples, descriptions, and explanations of regional and linguistic differences would support this. With regard to the field of Applied Linguistics, a more comprehensive application of the sociolinguistic framework as well as a description of the empirical methodology for conducting such research and quantifying the range of social influences making their mark on Canadian English would also make the salient features regional dialects less ambiguous. The study of Canadian English remains relatively under researched and has a great potential to shed insight into language shift and development in general (Walker, 2015). This is particularly relevant in the age of Globalization and mass communication, where dialects such as Globish or local varieties like Singlish are growing to outpace native speakers (Crystal, 2003). As social phenomena and linguistic change tend to follow patterns, the history and

evolution of Canadian English may well foreshadow future changes in other dialects.

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カナダ英語についての社会言語学調査

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概要

この調査の目的は、カナダ国内において話されている英語の違いについて、言語学と社会言語学の両方の視点から分析することである。この調査は4つの研究課題に細分化される。それぞれの研究課題では、カナダ英語の起源から、地理的、構造的、言語学的、社会的、文化的な方言の多様性まで幅広い視野から具体例を挙げて分析を行う。上述の4つの研究課題とは、調査の背景、歴史や語源、カナダ英語の語彙論的研究、カナダ英語の今後の展開である。このような社会言語学的方法論を採用することで、それぞれの方言の特徴についてのより体系的な理解を促進し、カナダ英語やその地域的変異の研究に貢献することが本調査の目標である。

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