

Pathways to homogeneity in Canadian English
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Dialectologists acknowledge a monolithic Canadian English dialect (CanE) spanning from Ontario west to the Pacific [1–4]. The hypothesized source of this homogeneity is parallel input populations [2,3,5]. The United Empire Loyalists, Americans by birth who fled the American Revolution, were the founding settler population of southern Ontario. From there Loyalists and their descendants migrated westward bringing with them an unbroken sequence of parent-to-child linguistic transmission [6,7]. However, evidence for this Loyalist hypothesis has typically come from self-reported survey data and synchronic snapshots of varieties [8–10]. Recent research that has analyzed vernacular speech data over time suggests that CanE may have been more diverse than first hypothesized [11–13]. This raises the question: how explanatory is the Loyalist hypothesis? Could the reported contemporary homogeneity be due to convergence of previously diverse varieties rather than parallel transmission [cf. 14]?

Investigating this question minimally requires a comparison of sociolinguistic variation in two geographically-disparate speech communities at two time points. The communities considered here are (southern) Ontario and Victoria, British Columbia. Comparison over time is facilitated by considering synchronic and diachronic corpora, representing 130+ years of apparent time [15,16,12]. Four variables are considered: general extenders (GEs), utterance-final tags (UFTs), deontic modals (DMs), and stative possessives (SPs) (1–4). Each has been examined in the Canadian context [17–20,13], establishing baseline methodologies that are replicated here.

- (1) I remember learning how to use a lathe *and stuff like that(/and things/and that...)* (BC/1946)
- (2) We bought a truck in 1923. A Ford truck *eh(you know/you see/right)?* (ONT/1916)
- (3) They *have to(have got to/got to/must/need to)* take a very rigid course. (ONT/1914)
- (4) I *have(have got/got)* a vegetable garden myself. (BC/1932)

5000+ GEs, 2000+ UFTs, 1600+ DMs, and 3000+ SPs were extracted from the corpora. In each system, change is observable in both regions but not all cases support the Loyalist hypothesis. For GEs, the rise of *and stuff* in both regions represents convergence (the variant emerged in Victoria ~40 years after Ontario). In contrast, the UFT *you know* rises and falls in both regions (and subsequently *right* rises), arguably a result of parallel drift from a homogeneous source. However, regionalism also persists with respect to *eh* – viable in Ontario, marginal in Victoria. For DMs and SPs, the diachronic corpora exhibit cross-regional parallelism with respect to the variant distributions, suggesting the same (hypothetically Loyalist) input (cf. [21]). However, subtle differences emerge in the 20th century with Victoria moving toward a more British model [22], increasing the frequency of *have got (to)* as *have (to)* rises in Ontario.

In sum, cross-regional analysis of diachronic CanE suggests that while Loyalist input indeed contributes to the overall pattern of contemporary homogeneity, convergence also plays a role (cf. [14]). Furthermore, homogeneity is neither absolute nor static; regional distinctions have existed, have been erased, and have emerged across the history of this variety. Indeed, the competing forces of source input, convergence, and regionalism have carved the pathway of contemporary CanE and arguably intersect in the development of varieties generally.

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