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Canadian English: a Conservative Variety?

Zusammenfassung

Dieser Artikel untersucht die Frage, ob Kanadisches Englisch (KE) eine konservative Varietät des Englischen ist. Da die Frage sehr generell ist, können nur Teilfragen erörtert werden. Theorien über die Herkunft des KE und Konzeptionen einer kolonialen Latenzzeit werden als Ansatzpunkte eingeführt, die um Fragen zur linguistischen Autonomie/Heteronomie erweitert werden. Fallstudien aus den Bereichen der Morphosyntax, Phonetik und des Vokabulars werden zur Einschätzung herangezogen, wobei eine zentrale Rolle dem methodischen Problem gilt, wie Varietäten anhand eines Merkmalsgefälles von konservativ bis progressiv eingestuft werden können. Es wird gezeigt, dass bisherige Bemerkungen zur angeblichen Konservativität des KE primär als Meinungen betrachtet werden müssen und nicht als unantastbare wissenschaftliche Typologisierungen.

Abstract

This paper aims to assess whether Canadian English (CanE) can be considered a conservative variety of English. As the question is profoundly general, only partial answers can be expected. Theories on the origins of CanE and notions of colonial lag offer a starting point that is complemented with questions of linguistic autonomy vs. heteronomy. Variables from morphology/syntax, phonetics, and select vocabulary items offer test cases for assessment. A central role is afforded to the methodological problems of assessment on a cline from conservative to progressive. It will be shown that most statements on the general conservative/progressive character of CanE must be treated as opinions based on selective evidence and not as unassailable assessments based on hard facts.

Résumé

L'article pose la question si l'anglais canadien est une variété conservatrice de l'anglais. S'agissant d'une approche très générale, seulement des questions de détail pourront être approfondies ici. Seront présentées, dans un premier temps, des théories concernant les origines de l'anglais canadien et des conceptions d'un legs colonial pour ensuite élargir l'analyse de questions à propos de l'autonomie/hétéronomie linguistique. L'analyse s'appuiera sur des études de cas morphosyntaxiques, phonétiques et lexiques tout en mettant l'accent sur le problème méthodologique qui consiste à savoir comment

classifier les variétés à partir d'un écart de caractère allant du qualificatif « conservateur » au qualificatif « progressif ». L'article se propose de démontrer que toute remarque à propos d'une soi-disant conservativité de l'anglais canadien est hypothétique et ne peut être considérée comme une spécification scientifiquement valable.

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1. Introduction

The traditional view of the development of Canadian English (CanE) acknowledges that the first two settlement waves of English speakers laid the foundations of English-speaking Canada from present-day Quebec westwards (Avis 1973). The usual interpretation is as follows: starting with the American Revolution in 1776, the United Empire Loyalists laid the basis of Anglophone Canada in Upper Canada (present-day Ontario) and Lower Canada (Quebec). Following them, starting in 1815 and peaking around the time of Confederation, settlers from Britain and Ireland immigrated in great numbers, outnumbering the first wave by a large margin. Their arrival is generally considered as not significantly altering the character of CanE in the long run.

From the 1970s to the 1990s the above scenario was general wisdom in the field. Only very recently, attention has been afforded to subsequent settlement waves which are, bit by bit, systematically probed for their linguistic contributions to the mixed dialect we now refer to as CanE (for "waves" III, IV and V, see Chambers 2010; see Boberg 2010, Dollinger 2012a for more detail on settlement history). The traditional view is that these later, post-Confederation immigrants arrived too late to have any noteworthy effect (but see Hoffman & Walker 2010, Dollinger 2012b, Nagy et al. 2014 for more recent approaches). Today, evidence is mounting that the established perspective may be simplifying and glossing over features that are the result of later language and dialect contact scenarios. While it may be true that the first wave first settled in the "bush", cleared the land and instilled a significant part of its cultural and linguistic features onto the newly-forming variety, this was only the beginning of a complex process of new-dialect formation (e.g. Trudgill 1986, 2004, or in the 19th-century Canadian context Dollinger 2008).

The argument of a time lag in Canada, the proverbial "they arrived too late", was brought forth early by (Morton) Bloomfield (1948), which antedates the general incorporation into linguistics (incidentally, from biology) by Mufwene (1996) by half a century. What the British migration did affect, one is told, was not so much the linguistic structure (except some 'isolated' linguistic items, e.g. pronunciations of *schedule* with 'sh' as in *ship*) but the linguistic attitudes towards CanE, and these profoundly so. From today's perspective, it seems that the predominant view of the genesis of CanE proposes a perspective that appears to be too narrow. And yet, the realization that innovation was part of the makeup of CanE is found early on, as in

the following passage by Walter S. Avis, the most important pioneer in the study of CanE:

> Canadian English is a fairly recent hybrid which resembles American English in some respects and British English in others while exhibiting much that is singularly Canadian. It is, in fact, the composite of these characteristics which gives Canadian English its unique identity.
>
> (Avis 1973: 43)

One can see that Avis is very careful in his choice of words: he speaks of some parts that 'resemble' but are not identical with American English (AmE) or British English (BrE), with which he leaves the door open for the mixing or koinéization processes that have only since been studied systematically in the field of contact linguistics, which did hardly exist at the time.

1.1 M. Bloomfield and M. H. Scargill

Since the late 1950s, a debate exists that pertains to the American and British element in CanE and that at times overlooks or sidelines aspects of CanE innovation. The debate was triggered by Matthew H. Scargill's (1957) response to Morton W. Bloomfield's (1948) paper, which was the first substantial contribution to CanE (some *kanadistInnen* will be familiar with the former's paper in Klinck et al.'s literary history of Canada, see Scargill [2]1976, [1]1965). Bloomfield explored new directions by treating CanE as worthy of study and by arguing for a variety-specific developmental model. He proposed, arguing from the language-external (social) history, what came to be known as the Loyalist Base Theory, which gives prominence to the Loyalist in-migration from the US in shaping CanE. Bloomfield used present-day evidence for that purpose: CanE sounds more like AmE than BrE. Scargill, some years later, pointed to a methodological problem if the historical development of AmE and BrE varieties was *not* systematically taken into consideration: some features may *look* like AmE, but may actually be mid-19th century regional BrE. For instance, 19th century BrE dialects were widely rhotic (pronouncing post-vocalic [r]), just like North American English is today. From that point on, virtually all debates on CanE have been framed between these two poles: American or British, by often losing sight of Canadian-specific features. In vocabulary studies, such dichotomizing approach is shown in Table 1 in the left and middle columns, which is usually found in popular writing, but also in some linguistic texts. The right column enriches the picture with Canadian innovations:

roots	roots	innovations
	sidewalk	
cash a **cheque**		
	truck	
soother		
		parkade
		chesterfield 'couch'
cent**re**		
neighb**ou**r		
tap 'faucet'		
	faculty 'academic staff'	
	campus 'uni grounds'	
		loonie '$1 coin'
		cube van 'moving truck'

Table 1: Typical approach to CanE lexis and orthography

Table 1 includes lexical and orthographical variants that capture part of the CanE linguistic complexity (see Pratt 1993 for the area of spelling, for instance). It is clear, however, that such approaches can only be the starting point of analysis. Whenever a more detailed perspective is taken, usually a much more complex pattern can be discerned in social, regional or temporal dimensions that co-vary with the linguistic variants. One of the goals of the Second Edition of the *Dictionary of Canadianisms on Historical Principles* (see, e.g. Dollinger et al. 2012) is to move towards a more differentiated and accountable classification of lexical items and some of their non-linguistic co-variants. With a more complete dictionary and database, an assessment of what constitutes conservative and innovative vocabulary items will be greatly facilitated.

1.2 Linguistic Autonomy vs. Heteronomy

Of immediate relevance to the question of conservatism/innovation are the concepts of autonomy (independence) and heteronomy (dependence on other varieties). They deserve special consideration for their application to CanE between the two extra-normative poles of AmE and BrE, and, as a consequence, the resulting under-appreciation of the innovative features in CanE. Some innovations in CanE are hard to spot, which is a fact that is reported in Avis' (1969) unpublished reflections on DCHP-1.[1] Who, for instance, would have been able to tell that there was anything Canadian in *cube van* 'moving truck'? While *cube* and *van* are words of no

[1] Avis' informal lecture typescript was discovered after the lesson had been learned independently of Avis' experience with DCHP-1.

Canadian significance, *cube van* is (Dollinger 2013). Figure 1 shows the normalized frequency charts based on international internet domain searches, with .ca standing out and (bottom left) regional variation within Canada by province. *Cube van* is a term that is most frequent in Ontario (ON) and Quebec (QC), but increasingly used in other parts of Canada:

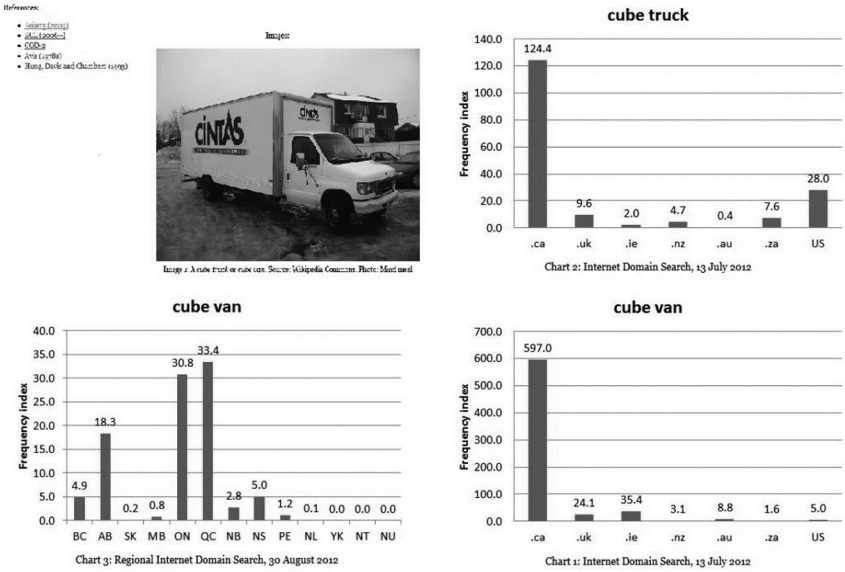

Figure 1: Excerpt from DCHP-2 entry, "cube van"

Since more than 70% of Canadianisms (CanE lexical items) are compound nouns of the type of *cube van*, *pencil crayon* 'colour pencil' or *butter tart* 'type of dessert' (Dollinger/Brinton 2008), while their components are not, this area is an important field of lexical innovation. If one misses these items, one misses what may well be the most pervasive lexical type with a claim to being Canadian.

The autonomy debate in CanE has often treaded water and has occasionally reflected Canadian angst of Americanization. Reading a landmark 1993 collection (Clarke 1993) in this particular light, one cannot help but detect a linguistic reflection of that angst, as most of the contributions seem to detect "Americanization" in their CanE variables, while often lacking comparative American data to make confident claims. Such views have been corrected since (e.g. Boberg 2008, 2005), but the earlier examples illustrate the state of affairs into the more abstract characterizations of CanE. Some of the Canadian cultural pessimists' voices are still heard, e.g. views that suggest "the gradual Americanization of Vancouver English or vigorous joint participation in a continent-wide culture that is increasingly less sensitive to an

invisible line [i.e. the international border]" (Sadlier-Brown 2012: 547), which show little appreciation for cultural differences along the Canada-US border.

By considering other data one can more often than not conclude that despite all pressures, CanE in Vancouver is holding its ground (see Dollinger 2012b), which is to a considerable degree also the work of immigrant L2 speakers who now uphold some of the traditional CanE phenomena.

1.3 Colonial Lag: Type 1 and Type 2

Most linguistic accounts of postcolonial Englishes deal with the notion of 'colonial lag' in one way or another. The American linguist Albert H. Marckwardt appears to have popularized, if not coined, the term. His definition follows:

> These post-colonial survivals of earlier phases of mother-country culture, taken in conjunction with the retention of earlier linguistic features, have made what I should like to call a colonial lag. I mean to suggest by this term nothing more than that in a transplanted civilization, such as [US-American] undeniably is, certain features which it originally possessed remain static over a period of time. (Marckwardt 1958: 80)

As can be gleaned from the excerpt, Marckwardt was dealing exclusively with retentions or preservations of older word stock and linguistic forms in new settings as a result of an idealization of the mother land. Possible examples include forms that carry over from British norms, e.g. *tap* 'faucet' in CanE, *dummy* or *soother* 'baby pacifier'. Note that the length of time lags can be long and blend with a re-appropriation of the feature as indicative of the new society rather than the old one, as in the example of *tap*. As such, Marchwardt's notion (Type 1) is fairly flexible and imprecise and its use has been limited. A more recent definition of colonial lag must be credited with reviving the concept in mainstream linguistics. This notion of colonial lag, Type 2, was proposed by Trudgill (2004 and preceding work) and is defined in a technical manner as a result of the dialect acquisition process in children. Trudgill uses the term colonial lag

> to refer to a lag or delay, which lasts for about one generation, in the normal progression and development of linguistic change, and which arises solely as an automatic consequence of the fact that there is often no common peer-group dialect for children to acquire in first-generation colonial situations involving dialect mixture. (Trudgill 2004: 34)

Trudgill's "one generation" cut-off is founded in historical data that gave rise to a model of "new-dialect formation", which was applied and tested in the Canadian context (and slightly modified) in the late 18th and early 19th-century Ontarian context (Dollinger 2008). It is clear that this notion of a lag is driven by assumptions

about exposure to varieties of English and the lack of a peer group for locally-born children in early settler societies as a behavioral model. After one generation, Trudgill suggests, this lag lessens considerably. Marckwardt's and Trudgill's notions are therefore different concepts but not mutually exclusive: there stands nothing to reason against colonial lag Type 2 (Trudgill) in operation on the grounds of language acquisition (peer group dialect etc.), while colonial lag Type 1 (Marckwardt) is socially triggered.

In the Canadian case, linguistic features of a Type 1 colonial lag were used to express a special admiration for the British connection. Identified in Avis (1973: 42, termed "Canadian Dainty" in Chambers 2004), sentiments of British superiority can be found in many things Canadian until the latter half of the 20th century, with some relics remaining today. Avis offers one of the best assessments of this phenomenon for the post-war period relating to phonetics, but it can be found on many linguistic levels:

> Canadian antipathy for the British accent [as of the late 1960s, SD] is not, by and large, an expression of anti-British sentiment. Rather, it is a rejection by a former colonial people of British attitudes after a century and a half of domination in Canada by Britishers whose condescending ways and superior airs have come to be associated connotatively with British speech mannerisms. (Avis 1973: 62)

And Avis goes on to say that such rejection of Canadian Daintyism – as fashionable as this speech style may have been among Canadian elites till about WWII – "is just one manifestation of the contemporary preoccupation in Canada with the quest for a national identity" (Avis 1973: 62).

Forty years later, Canadian identity has stabilized. By contrast in the 19th century, there cannot have been anything than complacency or, worse, disgust over the notion of CanE. As DCHP-1 shows nicely, the first mention of the term "Canadian English" on record is a slur. Delivered by the Reverend A. Constable Geikie, the insult originates in an 1857 scholarly talk in which Geikie castigated all features in the English language in Canada he deemed "vulgar". There were many, as any differences with BrE were considered as such. These "infractions" Geikie considered as comprising "Canadian English". Like other words in Canada (such as the term *Canuck*, see Dollinger 2006: §4.2), the term had to undergo massive semantic amelioration before acquiring its present-day meaning. Knowledge of Geikie's attack on Canadian English is owed to the fact that his speech was preserved for posterity in the *Canadian Journal of Science, Literature and History*. The irony is, of course, that Geikie's rant – while neither scientific, nor literary, linguistically or historically accurate and objective – was deemed worthy of publication by the journal's *Canadian* editors in a Canadian scholarly journal as a prime example of Canadian Daintyism. If

someone with a university degree from Britain thinks so, the editors may have thought, he must be right. Here is an excerpt from Geikie's text:

> Canada inevitably partakes of the same influences [as the United States]. Her language is largely affected by such lawless and vulgar innovations. New words are coined for ourselves by a process similar to that which calls them into being in the neighbouring States; still more, they are imported by travellers, daily circulated by American newspapers, and eagerly incorporated into the language of our Provincial press. The result is that, with that alacrity at sinking which belongs to human nature, we are in a fair way of appropriating what is worthless in the word coinage of our [American] neighbours, in addition to all which our peculiar position may generate among ourselves.
>
> (Reverend Geikie 1857 [2010: 44])

The first person pronoun refers to the British Empire, part of which Canada was at the time. Geikie's "we" and "our" must have seemed flattering to the mid-19th-century Canadian, especially when considering the alternative: "you colonials".

This "lawless and vulgar" linguistic behaviour that originally characterized CanE had to undergo a massive reassessment of attitudes before any meaningful work on the variety was accepted or indeed possible. The origins of this reorientation go back to that late 1880s (e.g. Lighthall 1889). And by 1920 an early enlightened voice imagined CanE even *on par* with AmE or BrE (Dollinger and Clarke 2012: 452).

Geikie, of course, was part of the British immigration of wave II himself. His attack must be seen as an expression of colonial hegemony that is indirectly proportional to distance from the centre: the farther removed from the metropolitan centre, the more viciously metropolitan standards are defended by those striving towards greater accomplishment. In this sense, as Considine (2003: 251) points out, Geikie was "triply remote from the norms of the metropolitan elite [of London]": first he felt removed as a Scot, second as someone working in the Canadian colony and, lastly, as someone who lived in a township in the hinterland that included a large German-speaking population (Berlin, now Kitchener, Ontario): what other reaction could one expect from the Reverend, who was likely the most learned member in the young pioneer community? The irony here is, of course, that Geikie would soon be removed even further – quadruply removed? – when he was to call the Australian outback home for most of his life.

Canada was a British colony and expressed a mindset that would not change much until after World War I, Vimy Ridge and the most important Imperial Conferences of the 1920s. Even then it would take a few more decades for a Canadian identity to be thrown into sharp relief. The Canada Post Christmas stamp from 1898 (Figure 2) shows the motto "We hold a vaster Empire than has been" and shows that at that point in time official Canada was still striving to be British. Linguistically, the

picture was quite different, though. As shall be shown below, apart from the upper social stratum, statements as to the British character of Canadian speech must have been outright wrong and merely wishful thinking about a more profound linguistic connection to the 19th-century London elites as the culturally preferred space in the Empire.

Figure 2: Canada Post Christmas stamp from 1898 (source Görlach 1991)

Some of the signs of resistance against BrE linguistic norms are found even only after WWII. It was not until the 1950s, for instance, when the affected and unnatural British speech by Canadian-born & Canadian-raised speakers would be subject to ridicule. Irving Layton's poem *Anglo Canadian*, published in 1956, bears evidence to this change in attitudes between about 1920 – the time of the first clear evidence for the *possibility* in thought of an accepted CanE – and the 1950s, when it became possible to poke fun at a native-born Canadian from Kingston, Ontario, who went to Oxford, England, for his B.A. and returned with an English accent that "makes even Englishmen / wince, and feel / unspeakably colonial" (Layton 1992: 87 [1956]). It is perhaps no coincidence that, just one year later, Scargill published his paper on the British influence on CanE. Scargill's text can be seen as a corrective to Bloomfield's American Loyalist base theory as the dominant view at the time. The theory on the importance of BrE was not, however, brought forth by what one would call an unbiased observer: British-born and British-educated Canadian professor of linguistics Matthew H. Scargill.

2. Assessing linguistic features as conservative or progressive: case studies

The above sketch of the social and political situation in Canada will allow putting the following data into sociohistorical perspective. The overall question to be addressed in this section is if, and to what extent, CanE can be characterized as conservative.

2.1 Methodological considerations

Linguistics in general and in particular variationist linguistics, dialectology and historical linguistics have *not* dealt extensively with the direct assessment and classification of features into conservative vs. innovative (progressive) categories. Historical linguistics, and here particularly European schools of thought with their penchant for typologies, has perhaps afforded most attention to this question. The reason for this relative neglect may lie in the attitude that innovation as such is not a concept of theoretical significance on its own – it does, however, figure prominently in theoretical approaches that take other vantage points, e.g. language variation and change (focus on new forms and features) or the social and regional indexing of variables (social functions of forms).

It is very rare to find statements relating to a variety *in toto*, such as variety X is conservative, while variety Y or language Z is innovative. Linguists do not generally make statements on such profound a scale, as adequate data for such purpose is generally difficult to muster. It is important to consider that any language or variety includes both innovative and conservative elements alike. Depending on one's focus, one will obtain radically different assessments, as one area may be more or less innovative than another one.

CanE is a particularly interesting case, as claims of its general conservative nature have been made. Perhaps the most forceful reiteration of this assessment is seen here:

> Linguistically, colonies and former colonies are famously conservative; they have less regional variety than the mother country and undergo fewer innovations as time goes by. In this respect, Canada represents an extreme case. It is, if anything, more conservative linguistically than the United States and Australia. (Chambers 1998: 253)

In the light of a lack of data that would allow the analysis of features on an innovative-conservative cline, this assessment must be read as an opinion based on casual long-term observation, which is interesting but does of course not satisfy the more objective benchmarks of validity. Put in the wider field of variation and dialectological studies as such, comparative cross-border Canada-US studies are still the exception today (but see Boberg 2009, Labov/Ash/Boberg 2006, Tagliamonte/D'Arcy 2007 and Chambers 1995, 2002). The work that focuses on Canadian variables of long standing (e.g. *chesterfield* 'couch') is, however, by design more likely to conclude in a conservative assessment as mostly traditional features comprise the variable pool and few new variables or incoming variables are part of the assessment.

Conservatism is, doubtless, a force in CanE; it is, however, also a force to be reckoned with in AmE and BrE and other varieties of English. It is never the only force and the difficult task of the analyst is to find a balanced sample of linguistic material

on which to base one's analysis. Just as other contributors from the *2013 GKS-Tagung*, dealing with political and social issues, have shown a combination of overall quite progressive ideas with some more conservative strands as characteristic of modern-day Canada, so one must approach linguistic aspects with a balanced sample.

In other words, to assess the conservative or innovative nature of a variety of English one would need to apply a universally-agreed measure and sampling method. While for individual linguistic features such assessments are possible, the problem lies in the representative selection of features that allow for meaningful cross-comparisons among varieties, and nothing of that sort exists to date. One sine-qua-non, however, is that any such approach will need to be comparative If a study includes only one data set (e.g. CanE) and infers any comparison with, say AmE, from "casual" observation, it will need to be ruled out as unreliable. In other words, rather than working on only one (Canadian) data set, one requires at least one equivalent non-Canadian data set (if not more than one) to investigate this question. I will now address a few linguistic features on three linguistic levels of description that illustrate the extent of the problem.

2.2 Modal auxiliaries: past and present

Table 2 shows the summative results of a historical comparative study of modal auxiliaries in CanE (Dollinger 2008). Methodologically, in this study one variety of Late Modern CanE was systematically compared to AmE and BrE varieties of the same period for 19 semantic-syntactic features of the modal verbs. One of these areas deals with the expression of obligation and necessity and its affiliated modal auxiliary verbs. Examples (a) to (f) show the most frequently used modal expressions for obligation/necessity for what linguists call "deontic modality" or "root uses" (*be to, must, have to, have got to, need to and gotta/got to*)":

a. I know what I *am to* do to get this employment.
b. It's understood that I *must* do this to get the job, you know.
c. Times change. And you *have to* change with it.
d. We told the officer "You'*ve got to* get control of that dog. You'*ve got to* restrain him."
e. You haven't seen *The Good Wife*? You *need to* watch that series, it's a good one.
f. You just *gotta* go for the experience.

Roughly speaking, in the history of English the verbal constructions (a) and (b) are the historically oldest forms, with (c) and (f) competing with these older forms since the 19th century (in the case of (f) the early 20th century). Table 2 summarizes the results for historical CanE in a five-tier pattern and obligation is shown in variable #13 as "root uses". The individual assessment of modal form and function is shown in the grey cells, which depict the position of CanE compared to BrE, with a regional

BrE variety (NW Britain) and American English added into the table. One can see that CanE is ranked more on the progressive (innovative) side (grey shading in line 13 in Table 2). The general picture of Table 2 shows that in the mid-19th century, CanE was – as far as these modal auxiliaries are concerned – rather an innovative than a conservative variety.

VARIABLES		Function and/or context	Conser-vative	Towards cons.	Neutral	Towards progr.	Progres-sive
changes from **above**	CAN & MAY	1) permission					
		2) root poss.					
		3) affirmative contexts			(AmE-1)		
		4) negative con-texts			(AmE-1)		
	OUGHT TO	5) overall					
	SHALL & WILL	6) 1st person	(NW-BrE)		(AmE-1)		
		7) 2nd person					
		8) 3rd person					
		9) inanimate subjects					
		10) passive structures					
changes from **below**	SHOULD & WOULD	11) hypotheticals					
		12) non-hypotheticals					
	MUST & HAVE TO	13) root uses					(AmE-1)
		14) epistemic uses		(AmE-1)			
		15) sp. MUST NECESS.		(NW-BrE)			(AmE-1)
	COULD & MIGHT	16) affirmative contexts			(AmE-1)		
		17) negative contexts			(AmE-1)		
		18) epistemic uses					(AmE-1)
		19) non-epis-temic uses					

Table 2: Assessment of the status (conservative/innovative) of the modal auxiliaries in Canadian English (18th & 19th-century Ontario English) (Dollinger 2008, 276)

A present-day study exists for two of the 19 functions analyzed in Table 2, i.e. variables 13 and 14 for Toronto English in a comparative approach (Tagliamonte/D'Arcy 2007, Tagliamonte 2013, 144-5). Figures 3 & 4 show the uses of variants (a) to (f) in 13 varieties of English, including York, England (YRK), Buckie, Scotland (BCK), Toronto (TOR), Samaná, Dominican Republic (SAM) and the Gullah Creole from outlying island regions in North Carolina, US (GUL). Historically speaking, deontic MUST in Figure 2 is the oldest form (as in an order or an obligation, e.g. *You must pay the bill*), which has been replaced by HAVE TO, e.g. *You have to pay the bill,* and other forms

(*gotta* etc.). Figure 2 shows that in the international comparison, Toronto has one of the lowest percentages (only 2%) of these functions. Figure 3 cross-compares the "subjective" functions of MUST called epistemic MUST, as in, e.g. *She left two hours ago. She must be there by now*. Epistemic forms are developments from the original deontic forms, which makes epistemic MUST younger than deontic MUST. With this universal cline in mind, deontic → epistemic, one can interpret the overall development of deontic and epistemic forms in CanE (in Ontario). As Figure 4 shows, Toronto English has by far the lowest percentage of epistemic MUST. Epistemic MUST, however, can be considered the main function of MUST for much of the 20th century. But in Toronto, speakers have moved on to yet newer forms and, in this regard, CanE must be considered as the most progressive variety for obligation and necessity markers among the 13 analyzed varieties.

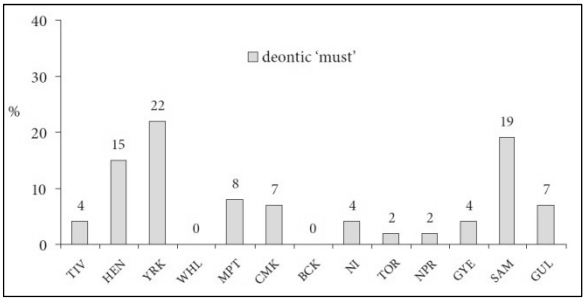

Figure 3: Tagliamonte/D'Arcy (2007)

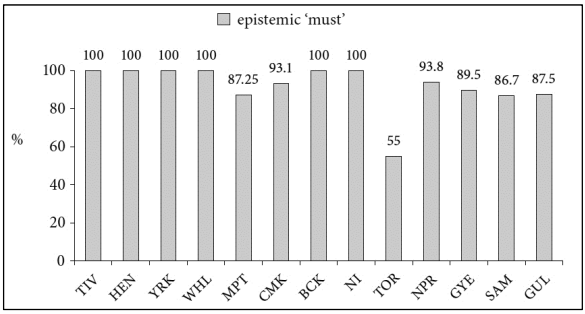

Figure 4: Tagliamonte/D'Arcy (2007)

Tagliamonte/D'Arcy's own interpretation stresses this point:

> […] the results in Figure [4], where TorE is actually ranked unusually low for epistemic uses of *must*, suggest that TorE may have grammaticalized further than British and Antipodean varieties. It may even be ahead of AmE where *must* appears to account for a greater proportion of epistemic contexts […]. (Tagliamonte/D'Arcy 2007, 70)

In the bigger picture we can say that, as far as this modal auxiliary system is concerned, CanE is the most progressive variety of a number of Englishes *including* AmE, which is usually considered the most innovative national English (e.g. Leech et al. 2009, 252-259). Please note, though, that this assessment says nothing about the innovative or conservative nature of the other areas or functions in CanE.

2.3 Phonetics and Phonology: A problem area

In like manner as in the previous section, a representative sample of forms would need to be assessed in phonetics. Unfortunately, an assessment on the conservative-innovative cline is not easily possible in phonetics and phonology. In phonetics, two phenomena are particularly noteworthy as the most important features: Canadian Raising (which I translate as Kanadische Hebung) and Canadian Shift (transl. as Kanadische Vokalverschiebung).

Canadian Raising (CR) is the oldest distinctive phonetic feature of CanE. First described by Joos (1942) and studied, among others, by Hung et al. (1993), Chambers (2006) and Boberg (2008), CR was long thought to be the key feature of CanE. It describes a conditioned sound change in the MOUTH and PRICE diphthongs, thus affecting the diphthongs in words such as *house, mouse, out*, or *wife, knife, price*, but not in related words (for the distribution rule, see Avis 1973). With more profound studies available since about 2005, however, it has become clear that, while important in Canada, CR may no longer be the most important sound feature of CanE. Figure 5 shows the geographical provenance of CR from the *Atlas of North American English*:

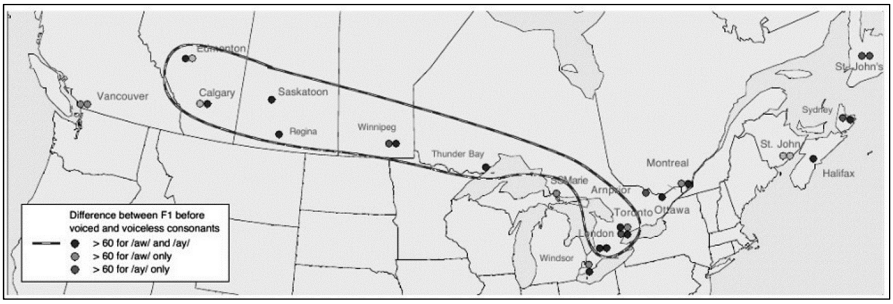

Figure 5: Key area of Canadian Raising in Labov/Ash/Boberg (2006, 222)

What Figure 5 shows is that CR more or less coincides with the Canadian border but does not extend to all regions of Canada in a consistent manner. A follow-up study considers CR a mainland Canadian phenomenon, including British Columbia, which is excluded in Figure 5, yet with variation and a possible "weakening of the Canadian pattern in the urban area of southwestern British Columbia" (Boberg 2008, 140).

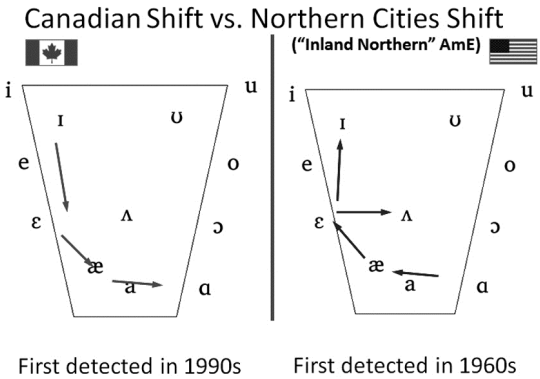

Figure 6: Simplified schematic depiction of the Canadian Shift (left) and the Northern Cities Shift (AmE)

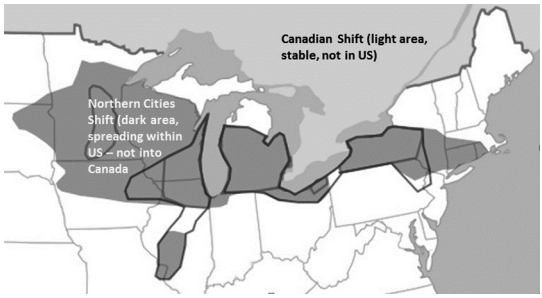

Figure 7: Approximate geographical dissemination of the Canadian Shift (light) and the American Northern Cities Shift (dark) (graphic: Wikipedia).

The Canadian Shift affects the front vowels KIT, DRESS & TRAP, which are pronounced differently in most speakers of CanE, especially as far as TRAP is concerned. Figure 6, on the left, schematizes the main changes of the Canadian Shift. The vowels, with arrows, are either lowering or retracting, so KIT [ɪ], DRESS [ɛ] are lowering and TRAP [æ] is retracting (because it is already a low vowel that cannot lower further). The Canadian Shift is as a "pan-Canadian" phenomenon (Boberg 2008, 136) and probably the most distinct and most prevalent sound change in CanE. First detected and so named only in 1995 (Clarke, Elms and Youssef 1995), it is going in the opposite direction of a change that affects the "Inland North" of the US, the area from roughly Detroit, Chicago to Buffalo and Rochester, NY and more recently south to almost St. Louis and spreading westwards into Wisconsin and the Dakotas (see Figure 7, dark shading). However, unlike Canadian Raising, the Canadian Shift is not found in these US regions and the Northern Cities Shift is not found on Canadian soil.

An assessment which of the two changes is more "innovative" is a difficult task, as one requires a developmental perspective for both features. For CR, this partly exists in Thomas (1991), who considers CR a Canadian innovation, and Trudgill (1986, 159), who views it as a result of the dialect mixing process in early Canada. But unlike the

syntactic changes in section 2.2, phonetic and phonological changes are difficult to assess in terms of progress unless their developmental stages and origins have been clearly identified. Neither is the case for CR and CS and these changes therefore cannot be classified along a conservative-innovative cline.

2.4 Vocabulary

Much of the same holds true for the area of vocabulary, a hugely important field. While assessments are possible for competing patterns based on productivity criteria, for example current active word-formation patterns include, e.g. clippings, initialisms and acronyms while "older patterns" can be established by language historians. There is, however, no clear "yardstick" to measure lexical innovations on a grand scale: are compound nouns, e.g. *gem jar* 'canning jar, such as a Mason jar', or *cube van* 'moving truck', both of which are Canadianisms (both of Type 1, see Dollinger/Brinton/Fee 2012) "more progressive" than, say simplex items such as *parkade* (Type 1) or *soother* (Type 2)? One might introduce a criterion from the history of English, which can be derived from linguistic changes over long time periods, e.g. the past two or three millennia (since Indo-European times), during which time English developed from a synthetic (highly inflecting language) to an increasingly analytical language (where no for few inflections are found, but syntactic rules such as word order must be strict). In that light, the compound nouns, which are more analytical than the simplex neologisms would be more "innovative". Besides this, there are also very powerful counter approaches available. From another point of view, *parkade* could be considered more economical as a simplex term when compared with compound constructions (*parking garage*) and, in some approaches at least, more innovative. In other words: the various yardsticks (e.g. productivity of word-formation patterns vs. principles of economy) may contradict one another.

3. Conclusion

This brief account has aimed to show that the concepts of linguistic conservatism and innovation are of limited versatility at the time being. While for some areas the developments of measurement scales and objective criteria is possible (e.g. historical syntax, morphology), assessments of "progress" require a number of benchmarks that are anything but easily obtainable. In some areas of linguistic description (e.g. phonetics/phonology and some aspects of vocabulary/lexis) assessments may be conflicting or, worse, not be meaningful, which may be the prime reason why linguists have not mined this area more actively. But as the question is vexing and tempting, it is to be hoped that a continued focus on such "larger" concepts will shed more light on the question. At present, only a handful of studies exist that expressly address conservatism/innovation from the longer developmental trajectories that are required. As a result, generalizing statements on entire varieties of English (or other languages) as conservative or innovative in nature must be taken with a grain of salt: if such statements are made, they are usually based on educated

guesses, but not or only partially so on adequate, and necessarily comparative, empirical data. For CanE, like for other varieties, such generalizing statements exist and generally express a projection of social values onto linguistic structure rather than a language-based approach that induces the generalization from adequate baseline data (bottom-up). Examples of common deductive (top-down) statements, however, are widespread and may also be found in linguistic texts. They include statements such as *Icelandic is the most conservative language in the world*; *in the Appalachians they speak like Shakespeare*, or *American English is the most innovative form of English*. All of these statements must be considered as linguistically doubtful to varying degrees (given the different amount of comparative studies available).

The question of linguistic conservatism in CanE, however, is usually compounded with two other conceptual pairs: the question of who influenced CanE the most – whether the United Empire Loyalists (Bloomfield 1948) or the British migration (Scargill 1957). A historical real-time study on CanE concluded that in early Canada the following forces were most prevalent: linguistic parallel developments (developments found in all varieties at the time) were the most important factor, followed by the Loyalist (AmE) base (18th century AmE input), which is followed by independent Canadian developments, with British influence coming in fourth and last (Dollinger 2008, 279). While the last word on the matter – especially for linguistic levels other than the one studied – has not yet been spoken, the result suggests the kind of synthesis of the two perceived opposites of Bloomfield and Scargill, with some additional processes, that will, eventually, help understand the genesis, and with it the mix of "conservative" and "innovative" features in CanE.

The second issue that has usually been foregrounded is the issue of autonomy vs. heteronomy. This conceptual pair can also be found in social and political studies, as it reflects the independence (autonomy) or dependence (heteronomy) on the USA. In the light of the long and usually unguarded border between Canada and the US – Figure 8 shows the Canada-US border near Vancouver, BC – any significant linguistic differences are in need of explanation.

Figure 8: The Canada-US border near Vancouver ("0 [Zero] Avenue" in Surrey, BC, close to Blaine, WA). Photo: S. Dollinger

The border runs along "0 Avenue" in Metro Vancouver. Canada is to the left, while the US is to the right of the border mark so that the shed in the centre of the picture is already "deep" in US territory. In the light of an economic, cultural and military superpower as one's neighbour, the question for Canadian self-determination has been one of the most important themes in the history of Canada. In this light, what is surprising is that there should be any linguistic differences between Canada and the US at all. Linguistically speaking, there has been a debate and a tug-of-war, with the 1980s and 1990s characterized as the period of belief in heteronomy and the 2000s as the time when the voices giving prominence to linguistic autonomy in CanE were regaining critical mass. Autonomy can be created by a number of means by a group of speakers. One factor is the promotion of conservative or very innovative features.

Upon closer inspection, however, the fact of symbolic differentiation via linguistic means is not too strange. According to Boberg (2010) linguistic differentiation might even be a logical consequence of the current rapid phase of globalization and continental economic and security integration. As he puts it "regional linguistic variation remains one of the few ways in which Canadians can still be reliably distinguished from Americans, at least in most parts of the continent" (Boberg 2010, 250). What adds to the plausibility of Boberg's view is that this sort of differentiation can be applied ubiquitously, is a "cheap" and effective tool for increasing the chances of not being mistaken for an American. If Canadian front vowels sound more back (TRAP sounds like TRAHP) and the like, one clearly cannot be American – it sounds, if anything, a bit British. So, we are again faced with a problem: would the backing of the TRAP vowel make CanE more conservative (British similarities, though BrE does not show the exact same behaviour) or innovative (it seems to be a newer feature in North America)? And what does it mean if in other contexts, such as California, a similar kind of sound change was recently discovered? Whatever the answer may be, as we have seen, TRAP backing is a Canadian phenomenon that stands in opposition to the American Northern Cities Shift in some immediate border regions. Is the Canadian Shift conservative or innovative? Just like with CanE on the whole at the time, it is difficult to tell.

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