Ethnolinguistic vowel differentiation in Manitoba English

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Research Goal & Study Foci

GOAL: To document vowel production differences among ethnic groups in the English dialect spoken in Manitoba, Canada.

Phonological processes investigated:
1. Post-coronal /uw/-fronting
2. Pre-nasal and pre-velar raising of /æ/, i.e. ban- and bag-raising
3. Canadian Raising

Research Context

● While ethnolinguistic research in Canada is a growing area of study, the Canadian Prairies (Manitoba, Saskatchewan & Alberta) remain under-researched.

● Prior research (Onosson et al., 2019) established that Filipinos in Winnipeg exhibit more lowered and retracted productions of the Canadian Shift vowels /æ/ /u/ than other Winnipegners, but similar to larger centers e.g. Toronto.

Mennonite Manitobans

● One of Manitoba’s most important historical ethnic-religious groups

● Two “Mennonite Reserves” established in 1870, attracting nearly 40% of 18,000 Mennonites migrating from Imperial Russia to North America in late 19th C. to settle in Manitoba (Lawren, 2001).

● 25% of all Canadian Mennonites reside in Manitoba (Statistics Canada, 2016).

● German is Manitoba’s second-most widely-spoken L1 at 63,825 speakers.

Filipino Winnipeggers

● One of the largest ethnic groups in Manitoba’s capital, Winnipeg.

● Regular migration from the Philippines began in late 1960s; remaining the current #1 source of migrants to the province.

● 9.7% of Winnipeg’s population (cf. 2.3% nationally), with the largest concentration in the north-west quadrant of the city.

● Tagalog is Winnipeg’s second-most widely-spoken L1 at 48,530 speakers.

Data & Methods

● N = 108 sociolinguistic interviews with Mennonitans in the Languages In The Prairies Project (LIPP; Onosson et al., 2019): 60 Mennonites; 29 Filipinos; 19 un-differentiated European ancestry.

● Audio processed in FAVE (Rosenfelder et al., 2014) yielding n = 505,870 vowel tokens.

● Statistical analysis conducted in R (R Core Team, 2019); all results significant at p<0.05.

● Plots generated with ggplot2 (Wickham, 2016).

/æ/-raising (and fronting)

Unique Prairies configuration (Bohberg, 2008; pre-velar F1 < pre-nasal F1 (i.e. more raised)

ANOVA of /æ/ forms by codasegment significant for F1 (F=628.5, F2 =1237):
– Nasals [m, n, n] all significantly different from each other: “pre-nasal” = only /æ/
– Voiced velars /g, /d/ not significantly different: “pre-velar” = both /g/ and /d/

ANOVA of /æ/ forms by ethicity, sig. (F1: F=19.67, F2: F=6.27) only for pre-nasal (pre-velar = low n); Mennonites & Filipinos distinct from Europeans but not each other:
– Mennonites: pre-nasal /æ/ lower (F1 =10.2 Hz), fronter (F2 =15 Hz)
– Filipinos: pre-nasal /æ/ lower (F1 =15.8 Hz), fronted (F2 =16.3 Hz)

Lower F1 = more raising; higher F2 = more fronting; ellipses indicate 95% confidence intervals; n = 5824 tokens

Research on the Mennonite Reserves in Manitoba (Lebedevski, 2001)

Canadian Raising

Formant trajectory differences compared using GAMs (Hastie & Tibshirani, 1990).

Canadian Raising of pre-voiceless /aw/ /aw/ observed for all groups.

Robust ethnolinguistic differentiation only for pre-voiceless /aw/ F1 trajectories
– Mennonites have greatest degree of /aw/-raising, Filipinos the least.

European & /aw/ analogs similar: transition & off-glide target distinct

Lower F1 = more raising; F2 = 22529 tokens; non-overlap = significant difference (p<0.05)

Conclusion

Ethnolinguistic studies in Eastern Canada have connected variation to expression of ethnic identity (Hoffman & Walker, 2010), high rates of bilingualism (Bohberg, 2014).

Studies in other regions (Umbal, 2016; Smith, 2018) find more ethnic homogeneity.


Manitoba’s ethnolinguistic situation appears to be both unique & complex:
– Mennonites least conservative group for /uw/-fronting, more so for /aw/-raising.
– Filipinos aligned more with national trends vs. local variants for /æ/-raising, in line with previous findings (Umbal, 2016; Onosson et al., 2019); /aw/-fronting less conclusive.

European innovative on /uw/-raising, conservative on /uw/-fronting.

References


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