There’s a New Ethnolect in Town: Vowel Patterning of Filipino English in Winnipeg

Nicole Rosen*, Sky Onosson† and Lanlan Li*

University of Manitoba*, University of Victoria†

Ethnicity has only recently begun to be investigated as a factor in variation in Canadian English. Our study investigates the heritage Filipino population in Winnipeg, Canada, an important yet previously understudied group in the city. Statistical models reveal that ethnicity is a strongly significant factor across several dimensions. Filipino Winnipeggers have significantly shorter vowels across the board. Their vowels appear to be consistently further along in the Canadian Shift, being more retracted and lowered. These results are explained within the Emergent Market model (Hall-Lew 2009).

Background

The Filipino population in Winnipeg

The first wave of Filipino immigration into Winnipeg began in the late 1950s when primarily medical professionals arrived from the Philippines (Dalya et al 2005).

A second wave consisted primarily of garment industry workers in the 1970s; a steady flow since (Bonifacio 2013).

9% Winnipeggers are of Filipino ethnicity, the largest immigrant visible minority population (Statistics Canada 2013).

30% of the immigrant population in Winnipeg is Filipino (2011 National Household Survey).

Geographically concentrated within North-Western neighbourhoods of Winnipeg.

Strong familial, religious and community ties, occupy a visible and prominent position within Winnipeg.

Methods

Participant groups:

A. 26 Filipino Winnipeggers born between 1952 and 1995, including 15 English L1 speakers.


Data: Wordlist

Analysis: Aligned using FAVE-align and extracted using FAVE-extract (Rosenfelder et al. 2011).

Emergent Market Model

- Retracted /u/, /iy/ suggests possible language transfer from English L2 generation.

- Fronted /u/, advanced Canadian shift vowels suggests Filipinos are advanced speakers.

- Evidence for an Emergent Linguistic Market as described in Hall-Lew (2009) for Chinese Americans in San Francisco.

- Language transfer features are embedded and become the source of some features in the system of the Emergent Market in the linguistic marketplace.

Future directions

- investigating possible gender differences

- investigating social history

- perceptual study

References


Vowel durations, English L1 speakers

Vowel durations are significantly shorter for Filipino L1 speakers (red) vs. Caucasian speakers (black), with a couple of exceptions.

Emergent Market Model

1. Lax vowels of Canadian English are undergoing a substantial shift, the pivot for which is suggested to be vowel merger in the collocated sets (Clarke et. al., 1995).

2. Regional studies in Montreal (Bogor 2005), Toronto (Roeder & Jarmasz, 2010), Vancouver (Pappas & Jeffrey, 2015) suggest more nuanced model, e.g.: “Vowels are ultimately moving towards the equilibrium of a symmetrical vowel system ... Canadian Shift comprises two stages. The first involves concurrent lowering and retraction and the second involves retraction only.” (Roeder & Jarmasz, 2010).

3. Adding more vowels...