THE CANADIAN SHORT VOWELS IN MOTION: REAL-TIME CHANGE AND REGIONAL DIFFUSION

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Notation used in this presentation

/ɛ/ = /e/ = BET
/ɪ/ = /i/ = BIT
/æ/ = /ae/ = BAT
/ɔ/ = /o/ = BOT=BOUGHT (merged low back vowel)
/ʌ/ = /u/ = BUT
What is the Canadian Shift?
Esling & Warkentyne (1993)

- Vancouver
- Based on data collected in 1979-1980
- Older group: pre-1920
- Middle group: 1920-1955
- Youngest group: 1956-1964
- First mention of apparent-time /æ/ retraction in Canada

æ → [a]
Clarke, Elms and Youssef (1995)

- Ontario speech
- Impressionistic measurement
- Characterized it as a pull shift
Boberg (2005)

• Montreal
• Older group: 1919-1946
• Middle group: 1946-1965
• Younger group: 1965-1981

FIGURE 4. The Canadian Shift in Montreal.
Hoffman (2010)

- Toronto
- Older group: 1930-1958
- Younger group: 1983-1995

Sadlier-Brown & Tamminga (2010)

- Older group: 1922-1972
- Younger group: 1981-1986
- Vancouver

\[ \varepsilon \rightarrow \ae \]

\[ \varepsilon \rightarrow \ae \rightarrow \]

\[ \varepsilon \rightarrow \ae \rightarrow \]

- Halifax
Roeder & Jarmasz (2009)

- Toronto
- Older group: 1920-1935
- Middle group: 1951-1965
- Younger group: 1966-1985
- Middle and Younger groups pattern together: “Canadian Shift has not been active in Toronto since the WWII era”
Roeder and Jarmasz’s (2010) proposal
Research subjects

- Have at least one Jewish parent
- Grew up speaking English as a first or home language
- Grew up in Montreal
Methodology

• Classic sociophonetic experiment
• Participants read 44 sentences at their own pace
• Vowel formant information extracted for 44 ‘target’ words in /ɛ, æ, ʌ, ɔ/ classes and from ‘anchor vowels’ elsewhere in the sentences
Individual means, normalized (Lobanov method)
Group means, normalized (Lobanov method)

Non-high short vowel space, group means

- Younger Male (YoungerM)
- Older Male (OlderM)
- Younger Female (YoungerF)
- Older Female (OlderF)
Boberg (2005)

- Studied Anglo Montrealers (Irish, Italian, and Jewish)
- Divided them into three generations by birth year:
  - 1919-1946 (group 1)
  - 1946-1965 (group 2)
  - 1965-1981 (group 3)

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Difference between groups 1 and 2
Difference between groups 1 and 3
Difference between groups 2 and 3
Real-time change

Boberg (2005): overall picture of movement

Current study: difference between 1937-1961 and 1984-1992 groups
Regional Diffusion

- Roeder and Jarmasz (2009): “Can these findings be reconciled in light of the situation in Toronto?”
  - CS is no longer active in Toronto, has not been for the past 60 years
  - In Montreal, however, Boberg’s (2005) results indicate that CS only really took off in Montreal once it was over in Toronto
  - They point to Hagiwara (2006) as an example of how Winnipeg females are currently only showing retraction of /æ/ and incipient retraction of /ɛ/ - HOWEVER, this paper was NOT an apparent-time or sociolinguistic interview-based study, but a comparison of the Winnipeg vowel space with that reported as ‘General American’ by Peterson and Barney (1952)
    - As such, more research is needed in tertiary cities and rural areas throughout Canada to improve modeling of geographic spread
Possible Causes of /æ/ retraction

• Merger of /oh/ and /o/
  • Supported by: Labov, Ash, Boberg (2006); Boberg (2005, 2008); Roeder and Jarmasz (2010)
  • /æ/ retraction after /o/-/oh/ merger also occurring in California

• Social indexation of back /æ/ with ‘classier’ British English
  • Pros: mentioned by several participants
  • Cons: difficult to know whether backed /æ/ is due to media/social influence from California or from England

• French influence of /a/ on /æ/
  • Pros: nearly all Anglophones must use French on a daily basis, mentioned by several participants
  • Cons: seen in the rest of English Canada as well as California; presence of [a] and [aː] in Quebec French may not create as much