

Ling 160 Assignment 2

1. Describe a Dialect. (5 points)

Dialect: Newfoundland English

Dialect type: Regional

Consonant Features		
Th-stopping	"thin" -> "tin" "then" -> "den"	(Clarke, 2010, p. 45)
Insertion or deletion of the letter H at the beginning of words	"happened" -> "appened" "easy" -> "heasy"	(Clarke, 2010, p. 47)
Light post-vocalic /l/	Light /l/ is where the tongue touches the roof of the mouth, and then is released, producing a "luh" sound: "lovely", "lucky" Dark /l/ is when the /l/ sound is elongated, rather than released: "pull", "roll"	(Clarke, 2010, p. 48) (Pronunciation With Emma, 2019)
Insertion or deletion of r	"marsh" -> "mesh" "window" -> "winder"	(Clarke, 2010, p. 49)
Final t or d sound deletion	"grind" -> "grine" "it's" -> "iz"	(Clarke, 2010, p. 55)

Nouns		
Measurements exclude -s suffix	"We had five or six hundred pound"	(Clarke, 2010, p. 82)
Use "and them" or "and they" to represent an unspecified group	"Margie and them were tryin' to say that you were over thirty-five" "And her brother and they lived down there"	(Clarke, 2010, p. 83)
Use of "s/he" instead of him/her	"We gave she and her husband a tour of the place this morning" "I'll always remember he"	(Clarke, 2010, p. 84)

Grammatical syntax		
Due to final t or d sound deletion, present tense can also represent past tense	"And I start to sew when I was 12 year old"	(Clarke, 2010, p. 72)
Addition of -s suffix to indicate non-past tense	"I always calls him Joseph, see." "You looks like Sarah."	(Clarke, 2010, p. 73)
"Was" can be generalized to all grammatical subjects	"What you was eating was good."	(Clarke, 2010, p. 73)

Negation		
Use "never" instead of "not"	"I never did see her, while she was here."	(Clarke, 2010, p. 98)
When multiple negatives are used, requires an indefinite (nobody, no one, nothing, neither/na'r, no) along with a verbal negator (not, n't, never).	"No one don't know what anyone goes through" "There's no one got none of that stuff I don't guess today"	(Clarke, 2010, p. 98)

2. Describe a sociolinguistic study. (10 points)

Newfoundland English has suppressed many of its traditional dialect features due to major socio-economic changes throughout the years (De Decker & Mackenzie, 2017). The next linguistic feature potentially in trouble is its light pronunciation of postvocalic /l/. This [study](#) done by Paul De Decker and Sara Mackenzie in 2017 investigates the variation in /l/-darkness used by Newfoundlanders according to the sociolinguistic variables of age, gender, and region (De Decker & Mackenzie, 2017). "Is the dark pronunciation of postvocalic /l/ associated with mainland Canada displacing the traditional Irish /l/ pattern in Newfoundland?" (De Decker & Mackenzie, 2017)

Subjects

There were a total of 44 participants, each categorized by their respective regions: St. John's, Northern Shore Line, or Southern Shore Line. (De Decker & Mackenzie, 2017) Their ages ranged from 18 to 65, with a mean age of 37.5. (De Decker & Mackenzie, 2017) 24 were female and 20 were male.

Method

An ultrasound transducer was placed below each participant's chin to record them while they spoke. (De Decker & Mackenzie, 2017) While the transducer read the stimuli, ultrasound video of lingual activity was digitized and saved as a file (De Decker & Mackenzie, 2017). Audio recordings were recorded through a headset that the participant wore. (De Decker & Mackenzie, 2017) To elicit productions of /l/ in word-initial and word-final positions, participants were asked to read aloud short sentences presented one-by-one on a computer monitor. (De Decker & Mackenzie, 2017)

Findings

- Men had lighter /l/'s in word-final position than women (De Decker & Mackenzie, 2017)
- The distinction between light and dark /l/'s in males is less than what was found among the female speakers (especially in speakers from the Southern Shore Line region). This meant that men used the traditional pattern more often than women (De Decker & Mackenzie, 2017)
- The heavily Irish-influenced Southern Shore Line speakers had lighter final /l/'s relative to the reference group of speakers from the Northern Shore. The St. John's group also used lighter /l/'s in word-final position relative to Northern shore speakers but this effect was not significant (De Decker & Mackenzie, 2017)
- As age increased, the darker the /l/ sound became. This meant older speakers were more likely to use the standard form (De Decker & Mackenzie, 2017)

Conclusion

- Younger members appear to use the traditional pattern more often than the older speakers (De Decker & Mackenzie, 2017)
- Males (mainly from the Irish-influenced Southern Shore Line communities) were less likely to distinguish initial /l/ from final /l/, meaning they used the traditional form more often (De Decker & Mackenzie, 2017)
- "The fact that articulatory distinctions are more frequent with older speakers suggests that the traditional Irish pattern of light /l/ in final position is undergoing recycling in which a salient regional feature is rejected by one generation of speakers and readopted by a later generation" (De Decker & Mackenzie, 2017)
- The study concludes that "the reported spread of mainland Canadian features has not resulted in dialect leveling" (De Decker & Mackenzie, 2017)

3. Profound contemplation of the findings. (10 points)

What do the findings of this study suggest about the use of language and its interaction with societal, cultural, religious, or political domains?

After reading chapter 7, which is about how age and gender affect linguistic features, I realized that much of the chapter's content was relevant to the findings in the above study. I'll discuss two topics in detail.

First, Holmes and Wilson, authors of *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*, mention this in the section on *Age and Social Dialect Data*: "...as people get older their speech becomes gradually more standard, and then later it becomes less standard and is once again characterised by vernacular forms." (Holmes & Wilson, 2017, p. 186) One of the findings of the study was that younger speakers used more of the traditional form of /l/ than older speakers. At first glance, this finding seems to contradict with the above quote. Why are older speakers using the standard form over the traditional form? Recall that the age group of the study ranged from 18 to 65. The average age of retirement in Canada in 2017 was about 64 (Statistics Canada, 2020). My theory: many older speakers in the study used the standard form because they were still working professionals at the time. At work, people are expected to conform and use the standard form of a dialect, therefore, it would make sense that older speakers, after decades of working, would still use the standard form. I would be interested to see the results of the study for people older than 65, where they have been retired for a longer period of time and don't need to use standard forms often.

Second, Holmes and Wilson mention that women used standard speech forms more often than men. Not surprisingly, one of the findings of the study was that women used the standard /l/ pronunciation more often than men. As we learned, there are four main reasons for why this could be the case: social status, women's role in society, women's status as a subordinate group, and/or to express machismo. In Newfoundland's case, I believe that it is because of social status. In 2016, Newfoundland was rated as the province with the worst wage gap between men and women (The Conference Board of Canada, 2017). Perhaps women are using more standard forms to increase their value or marketability. As suggested in chapter 7, women will speak in a way that will gain them the most linguistic capital, and in a province where women don't seem to be treated equally, this may be necessary.

Do the findings of the study have any implications for attitudes that might be associated with using this specific dialect or variety? Would the findings of this study have any influence on the vitality of this dialect or variety (or induce dialect change or shifts)?

The study claims that the traditional pronunciation of postvocalic /l/ is being recycled by the younger speakers of Newfoundland. If this is truly the case, this implies that Newfoundlanders' attitude towards this dialect are relatively positive because instead of removing linguistic features, they are reintroducing old ones. This is also a good sign for the vitality of the dialect. Perhaps with the reintroduction of one linguistic feature, many more will follow. Another thing to note is that this movement is being done by the younger generation, so perhaps the shift to the standard variety (if there is a shift) will be slowed down.

References

- Statistics Canada. (2020, June 10). *Retirement age by class of worker, annual*. Retrieved from Statistics Canada: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410006001>
- The Conference Board of Canada. (2017, April). *Gender Wage Gap*. Retrieved from The Conference Board of Canada: <https://www.conferenceboard.ca/hcp/provincial/society/gender-gap.aspx>
- Clarke, S. (2010). *Newfoundland and Labrador English*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- De Decker, P., & Mackenzie, S. (2017, July 31). *Tracking the phonological status of /l/ in Newfoundland English: Experiments in articulation and acoustics*. Retrieved from The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America: <https://asa.scitation.org/doi/10.1121/1.4991349>
- Holmes, J., & Wilson, N. (2017). *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. Oxford: Routledge.
- Pronunciation With Emma. (2019, Oct 25). *The Light L /l/ and Dark L /ɫ/ in English* [Video]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ANa8UWr22x0>