CANADIAN ENGLISH

Introduction

English is the second most widely spoken language in the world. It is accorded as the official language of The United Kingdom, Ireland, The United States, Canada, Jamaica, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand and it is a lingua Franca in India. It is the language that truly transcends nationality. As so many people speak English in so many countries, there are many different varieties of English. The Standard English and is the paragon to be attained and is the language of educated English speakers. The government, The BBC, The Universities, uses it and it is often called Queen’s English. American English is the variety of the English spoken in the United States. It is different from English in pronunciation, intonation, spelling, vocabulary and grammar. An Englishman goes to the town center to see a film while an American goes downtown to see a movie. If an Englishman needs a pen he would ask you: "Have you got a pen, please?" but the American would say:" Do you have a pen?" Canadian English is different both from American and from British English.

Introduction

English is the majority language in every Canadian province and territory except Quebec (which has a French-speaking majority) and Nunavut (which has an Inuit language majority who speak Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun). English is spoken as a mother tongue by over 30 million Canadians. Canadian English spelling is a mixture of American and British. Pronunciation of the English language in this country is overall very similar to American pronunciation, which is especially true for Central and Western Canadians. The Eastern provinces of Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island have a maritime accent which overall sounds more similar to Irish pronunciation than American. There is also some French influence exerted on pronunciation for some English-speaking Canadians who live near, and especially work with French-Canadians.

Introduction

Even where English is the majority language, it often coexists with other languages. In Toronto and Vancouver, high levels of immigration from non–English-speaking countries have reduced the proportion of native speakers of English to just over half of the metropolitan population. It should also be remembered that not all native speakers of English in Canada are native speakers of Canadian English; some are immigrants who grew up in other English-speaking countries and therefore speak other types of English. In the discussion that follows, Canadian English will be taken to mean the type of English spoken by people who acquired native competence in English while growing up mostly in Canada.

History

Canadian English owes its very existence to important historical events, especially: the Treaty of Paris of 1763, which ended the Seven Years' War and opened most of eastern Canada for English-speaking settlement; the American Revolution of 1775–83, which spurred the first large group of English-speakers to move to Canada; and the Industrial Revolution in Britain, which encouraged an even larger group to join them in the 19th century. These and other events determined the patterns of English-speaking settlement in Canada, which in turn influenced the current form of Canadian English.

Modern Canadian English

More recent immigration to Canada from all over the world, though involving much larger groups of people than earlier periods, has had comparatively little effect on the development of Canadian English, which reached something like its present form by Canada's Confederation in 1867. With such a large Canadian-born population to blend into, the children of today's immigrants rapidly assimilate to the patterns of the English already spoken by the majority of people in their adopted communities. Nevertheless, Canadian English, like all dialects and languages, continues to evolve, with small changes seen in each generation of speakers.

Spelling

One domain where Canadian English shows a more balanced mixture of American and British standards is spelling, reflecting a continued belief that British English is more correct than American. Thus, Canadians tend to use British "**-our**" spellings in words like ***color***, ***labor*** and ***vigor*** and "**-re**" spellings in ***center***, ***fiber*** and ***theater***. Other British spellings preferred by Canadians are ***cheque*** over American ***check***, ***grey*** over ***gray*** and ***travelled*** over ***traveled***. There are many inconsistencies, however: Canadians prefer British ***catalogue*** to American ***catalog*** but not British ***programme*** to American ***program***, while use of British ***defence*** and American ***defense*** is mixed. Even the use of "**-our**," which is the most systematic and iconic pattern, has exceptions: most Canadians prefer ***odor*** and ***favorite*** over ***odour*** and ***favourite***. Moreover, some British spellings rarely occur in Canada, like ***kerb*** for ***curb*** and ***tyre*** for ***tire***, or some foreign-influenced spellings of fancy words like ***analyse***, ***criticise***, ***paediatrics*** and ***foetus***. Technological developments have tended to increase American influence on Canadian spelling, with American spellings normalized by the use of American-made spell-checker applications in word-processing programs and intensive exposure to written American English on the Internet, especially among younger Canadians.

Spelling

While some Canadians have strong opinions on these matters, often pointing to isolated examples of British spelling as symbols of Canadian cultural independence from the United States, most linguists agree that the main characteristic of Canadian spelling is the absence of any consistent pattern, with choices between American and British forms varying by word, context, publication, genre, region and social group, thereby reflecting Canada's transitional position between the two main standards of World English. It might be said that tolerance of disagreement about spelling is in any case a truer reflection of the modern Canadian character than a rigid adherence to British standards. As a result Canadian writers, editors and other language professionals face sometimes uncertainties that do not burden their British or American colleagues, at least not to the same extent.

Pronunciation

That distinctive Canadian pronunciation pattern is called **Canadian Raising**. This is a shortening of the diphthongs in words like ***price*** and ***mouth***, causing the vowel to be produced somewhat higher in the mouth than in other dialects. Since Canadian Raising only occurs before the voiceless consonants **/p/, /t/, /k/, /f/, /th/** and **/s/,** Canadian English distinguishes the raised and unraised vowels in pairs of words like ***type***, ***tie***, ***write***, ***ride*****,** ***spike*****,** ***spy*****,** ***shout*****,** ***loud*****,** ***south*****,** ***sound*****,** or ***house*** . While some American dialects also raise the vowels of *price* words, raising in *mouth* words is more distinctively Canadian.

Pronunciation

Another characteristic of Canadian vowels is in **the distribution of pre-rhotic (before-r) vowels.** A notable aspect of Canadian pre-rhotic vowels is their resistance to the pattern in American English of substituting **[a]** for **[o]** before inter-vocalic **[r]**. In a number of highly frequent words, such as **“sorry”, “tomorrow”, “borrow”, “sorrow”,** and **“Laura”**, this pattern has become obligatory in American English. The pattern is also variably evident in a few more words, such as **“Florida”, “orange”, “oracle”, “Norwich”, “adorable”,** and **“thesaurus”**.

Pronunciation

The **“low-back merger,”** is a collapse of the distinction between two vowels pronounced in the lower-back part of the mouth — those of words like ***lot*** versus words like ***thought***. These sound different in Britain and in parts of the eastern United States. In Canada, as in the western United States, they sound the same; ***lot*** and ***thought*** rhyme, while ***cot*** and ***caught***, ***stock*** and ***stalk*** and ***don*** and ***dawn*** are homophones. This merger is thought to be the cause of a phonetic pattern called the Canadian Shift, a change in progress in modern Canadian English that involves a lowering and retraction of the short front vowels in words like ***kit***, ***dress*** and ***trap***. For instance, ***head*** may sound something like ***had*** in other dialects, while ***hat*** may have the same vowel quality as many Americans’ pronunciation of ***hot*** (especially those living across the border from Ontario, in Buffalo or Detroit).

Pronunciation

Equally distinctive is the way Canadians adapt or “nativize” words borrowed from other languages whose vowel sounds are spelled with the letter ***a*****.** Speakers of British English vary in this respect between the **/ah/** sound of ***palm*** for words like ***avocado*****,** ***lava*** and ***saga*** and the **/æ/** sound of ***trap*** for words like ***kebab***, ***mantra*** and ***pasta***, while Americans prefer the **/ah/** sound in all of these words. Canadians, by contrast, tend to use **/æ/** in all of them, though younger Canadians have begun to use a more American **/ah/** vowel in some words, like ***macho*****,** ***mafia*** and ***taco***. In a related pattern, most Canadians, like the British, use the vowel of ***cost*** in words like ***Costa Rica***, whereas Americans prefer the vowel of ***coast*****.**

Pronunciation

The most popular stereotype of Canadian English is the word ***eh***, added to the end of a phrase to solicit confirmation that the hearer has understood or agrees with what the speaker is saying. A Canadian might say, **“The game starts in half an hour, eh? So we have to leave now,”** or, **“Put your jacket on, eh? It’s cold outside,”** or **“Let’s go have some lunch, eh?”** Like most stereotypes, however, this one is exaggerated and may now be obsolete; recent research suggests that, at least among younger Canadians, actual use of *eh* is much less frequent than its popularity as a stereotype would suggest.

Grammar

When writing, Canadians will start a sentence with ***As well***, in the sense of ***"in addition"****;* this construction is a Canadianism.

In speech and in writing, Canadian English speakers often use a transitive form for some past tense verbs where only an intransitive form is permitted. Examples include: ***"finished something"*** (rather than "finished with something"), ***"done something"*** (rather than "done with something"), ***"graduated university"*** (rather than "graduated from university").

Vocabulary

British and American English have developed distinct vocabularies for many aspects of modern life, especially in such semantic domains as clothing, food and transportation. In general, Canadians follow the American model in these cases; like Americans, they say ***apartment*** rather than ***flat***, ***diaper*** rather than ***nappy***, ***elevator*** rather than ***lift***, ***flashlight*** rather than ***torch***, ***freight car*** rather than ***goods wagon***, ***fries*** rather than ***chips*** (Canadian *chips* are what the British call *crisps*), ***pants*** rather than ***trousers***, ***sweater*** rather than ***jumper***, ***truck*** rather than ***lorry***, and ***wrench*** rather than ***spanner***. Canadian cars, like American, have ***hoods***, ***fenders***, ***mufflers***, ***trunks***, ***turn signals*** and ***windshields*** — not ***bonnets***, ***wings***, ***silencers***, ***boots***, ***indicators*** and ***windscreens*** — and drive on ***gas*** from ***gas stations***, not ***petrol*** from ***filling stations*** or ***petrol stations***.

Vocabulary

In a few cases, however, most Canadians prefer British words: ***bill*** rather than ***check*** for the tally of charges in a restaurant; ***cutlery*** rather than ***silverware*** for knives, forks and spoons; ***icing*** rather than ***frosting*** for the top layer of a cake; ***icing sugar*** rather than ***powdered sugar*** for the finely ground sugar sprinkled on desserts; ***tap*** rather than ***faucet*** for the device that controls the flow of water into a sink; and, ***zed*** rather than ***zee*** for the last letter of the alphabet.

Vocabulary

Allophone	A resident of Quebec
Anglophone	Someone who speaks English as a first language.
Biffy	An outdoor toilet usually located over pit or a septic tank
Chesterfield	A sofa, couch, or loveseat
Click	Slang for kilometre.
Francophone	Someone who speaks French as a first language
Joe job	A lower-class, low-paying job
Runners	Running shoes; sneakers
Sook or suck	A crybaby.
Ski-Doo	A brand name now used generically to refer to any snowmobile. Can also be used as a verb
Sniggler	Someone who does something perfectly legitimate, but which nonetheless inconveniences or annoys you

Vocabulary

Buff	Enthusiast
Ripstaker	A conceited person
Dump	A pub, a bar
Bend	Outdoor party, feast
Shellacking	Defeat
Boomer	Seasonal worker
Flannel-mouth	Somebody who is fond of backbiting
Hush-hush	Confidential talk
Bushwa(h)	Nonsense, rubbish
Doodad	A thing for reminding about something

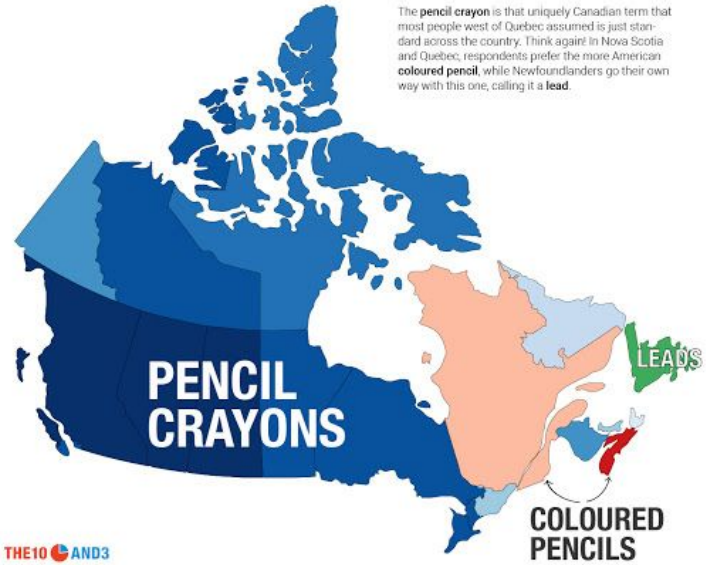
Canadianisms

Canadianisms **: words which are native to Canada or words which have meanings native to Canada**

It is not difficult to think of distinctively Canadian things: flora and fauna that are found only or mostly in Canada, like the Canada goose, Canada jay or Canada lynx; aspects of Canadian Indigenous cultures, like the buffalo jump, pemmican or the totem pole; Canadian historical artifacts, like the Hudson's Bay point blanket, the Red River cart or the York boat; Canadian inventions, like IMAX films, kerosene, the McIntosh apple, Nanaimo bars, poutine, the Robertson screw or the snowmobile; Canadian institutions, like the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police or the United Church of Canada. All of these things contribute to a Canadian cultural identity and their names are Canadian words in one sense, yet if people outside Canada found occasion to refer to them, they would use the same words as Canadians. In a parallel way, Canadians use Australian words like boomerang, didgeridoo, kangaroo and koala; these words are part of World English, not of Canadian or Australian English exclusively.

Canadianisms

Only the second type of word, where Canadians use their own word for something that has other names in other dialects, is a true Canadianism in the linguistic sense. Some examples include the following: a small apartment without a separate bedroom is a ***bachelor*** in Canada but a ***studio*** in the US and Britain; a machine that performs banking services is a ***bank machine*** in Canada but an ***ATM*** in the US and a ***cash dispenser*** in Britain; the structures along the edge of a roof for collecting rainwater are ***eavestroughs*** in much of Canada but ***gutters*** in the US and Britain; the years of school are ***grade one, grade two***, etc., in Canada but ***first grade,*** etc., in the US and ***year one***, etc., in Britain; pencils used for colouring are usually ***pencil crayons*** in Canada but ***colored pencils*** in the US and ***colouring pencils*** in Britain; orange cones used to manage traffic during road repairs are ***pylons*** in Canada but ***traffic cones*** in the US and Britain; a tight-fitting woolen winter hat is a ***toque*** in Canada but a ***beanie*** in the US and Britain; and, a public toilet is a ***washroom*** in Canada but a ***restroom*** in the US and a ***lavatory*** or ***loo*** in Britain.



Canadianisms

Bell-ringing : The ringing of bells in a legislative assembly to summon members for a vote

Confederation : The act of creating the Dominion of Canada; also the federation of the Canadian provinces and territories

First Ministers : The premiers of the provinces and the Prime Minister of Canada

impaired : Having a blood alcohol level above the legal limit

riding : a district whose voters elect a representative member to a legislative body

RCMP : A member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police transfer payment: A payment from the government to another level of government

Canadianisms

Jeux Canada Games : An annual national athletic competition, with events in summer and winter

murderball : A game in which players in opposing teams attempt to hit their opponents with a large inflated ball

Participation : A private, nonprofit organization that promotes fitness

Stanley Cup, Grey Cup, Briar, Queen's Plate: Championships in hockey, (Canadian) football, curling and horse-racing

Canadianisms

all dressed : A hamburger with all the usual condiments on it

drink(ing) box : A small plasticized cardboard carton of juice

Nanaimo bar : An unbaked square iced with chocolate

screech : A potent dark rum of Newfoundland

smoked meat : Cured beef similar to pastrami but more heavily smoked, often associated with Montreal

bursary : A financial award to a university student (also Scottish and English)

French immersion : An educational program in which anglophone students are taught entirely in French

reading week : A week usually halfway through the university term when no classes are held

Loanwords

A few examples of Indigenous loanwords in North American English are ***caribou***, ***chinook***, ***chipmunk***, ***husky***, ***igloo***, ***inukshuk***, ***kamik***, ***kayak***, ***moccasin***, ***moose***, ***mucky-muck***, ***mukluk***, ***muskeg***, ***powwow***, ***raccoon***, ***saskatoon***, ***skunk***, ***sockeye***, ***teepee***, ***toboggan***, ***wapiti*** and ***wigwam***. Admittedly, most of these do not occur very often in everyday speech and their number is remarkably small, compared to the much larger vocabulary transferred from European languages. The major contribution of Indigenous languages to Canadian English is therefore not in common nouns or other parts of ordinary vocabulary, but in place names, something few modern Canadians stop to think about: the names ***Manitoba***, ***Mississauga***, ***Niagara***, ***Nunavut***, ***Ontario***, ***Ottawa***, ***Quebec***, ***Saskatchewan***, ***Toronto***, ***Winnipeg***, and ***Yukon*** — as well as the name ***Canada*** itself — all come from Indigenous languages.

Regional Pronunciation

Despite general homogeneity, important regional indicators can be identified, even within the domain of what might be labeled Standard Canadian English. Some of these involve pronunciation. For instance, the vowel of words like ***start*** (e.g., *bar*, *far*, *market*), is pronounced further forward in the mouth by **Atlantic Canadians** than by westerners, while **Canadian Raising** produces slightly different sounds in **Ontario** and the **West**. In words like ***doubt*, *house*** and ***mouth***, the diphthong used by southern Ontarians begins with a sound something like the vowel of ***bet*,** whereas that used by people on the Prairies begins with a sound more like the vowel of ***but*.**

Regional Vocabulary

The most obvious regional differences concern vocabulary. One word that varies across the country is the term for **a small house in the countryside**, usually on a lake, where city people go for summer weekends. This is a ***cabin*** in the West and a ***cottage*** in most of the East. In northwestern Ontario, it's a ***camp***, as it is quite often in New Brunswick. In Quebec, it's sometimes a ***chalet***. Another western word is ***parkade*****,** for a multi-level parking structure, called a ***parking garage*** in Ontario. Westerners also call **athletic shoes** worn as casual attire ***runners***, whereas Ontarians call them ***running shoes*** and Atlantic Canadians use the American term, ***sneakers***. Students preparing to take notes in the Maritimes would pull their ***scribblers*** out of their ***book bags***, whereas other Canadians would pull their ***notebooks*** out of their ***backpacks***. Outside school, children in Newfoundland and Quebec might play on a ***see-saw***, but elsewhere that would be a ***teeter-totter***. As a generic term for non-alcoholic carbonated beverages, Canadians across the country use the Midwestern American term ***pop***, except in Quebec and sometimes in Manitoba, where it's ***soft drink***. The standard set of pizza toppings is called ***deluxe*** in the West, *deluxe* or ***everything-on-it*** in Ontario, ***all-dressed*** in Quebec and Saskatchewan, and ***the works*** in Atlantic Canada; similar variation applies to the toppings on hamburgers and hotdogs.

Quebec English

Partly because of its close contact with French, Quebec English is the most distinctive type of Canadian English in terms of general vocabulary. Many of its unique words are borrowings from French that are not found in other regions. For instance, Quebec English speakers tend to refer to a **convenience store** as a ***dépanneur*** (or *dep*), an **internship** as a ***stage*** (rhymes with ***massage***), a **patio** or **sidewalk restaurant** as a ***terrasse,*** and **stomach flu** as ***gastro***.

Quebec English

Other Quebec words exist in other varieties of English but have special meanings in Quebec that are influenced by French. The verb ***pass***, for instance, is often used in French senses, so a Montrealer may ask, "**When does your bus pass**?" meaning, "**When is it coming**?" Montreal schoolchildren get "**7 on 10**" on a test, like "***7 sur 10***" in French, rather than "**7 out of 10**" elsewhere in Canada. Where Torontonians may look for a ***loft*** or ***one-bedroom apartment*** near a ***subway*** **station**, Montrealers search for a ***two-*** or ***three-and-a-half*** near a ***metro*** **station**, the former being a translation of the French nomenclature for apartments, in which the bathroom counts as half a room. Whereas Atlantic Canadian shoppers pay at the ***checkout*** and Ontarians and westerners go to the ***cashier***, Quebecers line up at the ***cash***, a direct equivalent of ***la caisse*** in French.

In conclusion

So, we can say that Canadian English is a new and quite original system that doesn't copy either American or British system. This system appeared due to a number of factors. It is strongly marked by British English and because of the geographical proximity, Canadian English continues to be shaped by American English. The presence of a large French-speaking minority has also had an effect on Canadian English.