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# French Influence in Canadian English from the 18<sup>th</sup> century: from words to sounds?

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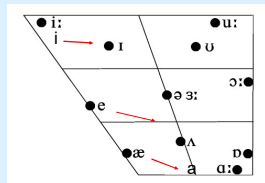
## Introduction: What is Canadian English?

### Canadian English is often described as:

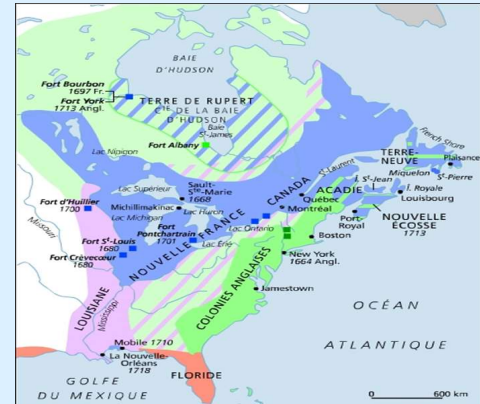
- Relatively homogeneous variety of English (Josselin-Leray, Durand, Lopez, 2015).
- 2 sets of linguistic norms: similar to General American (e.g. rhotic variety), while retaining some British English features (e.g. suffix *-le* [aɪl] unlike General American [əl] in words like *fragile*).

### However Canadian English also has its specificity:

- The linguistic situation in Canada has been complex from the 18<sup>th</sup> century (see map):
  - Built on colonization and immigration in addition to indigenous people.
  - Unique contacts between French and English facilitating linguistic interactions and mutual influence until now.
- North American variety: several phonological features in common with some American varieties. e.g. low-back merger = LOT vs THOUGHT neutralization
- Independent variety with typical Canadian features (e.g. Canadian Shift):



Canadian Shift: lowering and retraction of /i:/, /e:/, /æ/ activated by low-back merger (Boberg, 2010)



Colonization of North America, 1697-1713 (source: Encyclopédie Larousse)

Lack of studies on the influence of French in Canadian English, diachronically speaking (H.B. Woods, 1991).

## Question

How and to what extent does Canadian French influence Canadian English from a lexical as well as a phonological point of view from the 18<sup>th</sup> century?

## Hypothesis

- Canadian French also contributed to the construction of Canadian English as a distinct variety, especially in the areas having borders with French-speaking Quebec.
- French lost influence over the years to American varieties, making present-day Canadian English a typically North American variety - from a phonological point of view - but with French-origin specificities reflecting its unique linguistic contact situation.

## Methods

### Study of dictionaries:

- Establish the extent to which French pervades Canadian English lexicon and pronunciation from the 18<sup>th</sup> century until nowadays e.g. *mush* (> Fr. *Marche!*)
- *Dictionary of Canadianisms on Historical Principles* (Avis, 1967) ; *Canadian Oxford Dictionary* (Barber, 1998):
  - Semantic classification,
  - Frequency of occurrence,
  - Morphological characteristics,
  - Phonological integration into English,

### CoPho database:

- Comparison with contemporary database of French loanwords into Canadian English: 674 loanwords (Paradis, Lacharité, 2011).

### PAC/LVTI protocol: Ottawa

- Completion of previous survey in Ottawa (2007-2008): 8 male - 3 female.
- Interview of English speakers from Ottawa, both bilingual (French/English) and monolingual to see if there is any difference in their systems.

### PRAAT:

- Coding specific features characteristic of Canadian English: Canadian Raising, Canadian Shift, -Vr, t-tapping. e.g. coding t-tapping taking into account the realization of <t> (/t/ - /t/ - elision), the surrounding contexts (VtV - ntV - rtV), position of the syllable containing <t> (initial - medial - final), stress and prosodic boundaries,...

## Preliminary finding

### Focus on Canadianisms:

- Representative of the specificity of Canadian variety by reflecting Canadian reality.
- Borrowings from French referenced from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many of which are now obsolete or belong to specialized vocabulary.

Dictionary of Canadianisms on Historical Principles (W. Avis, 1967)		
Total of headwords	French-origin headwords	Obsolete French-origin headwords
9900 (100%)	415 (4,2%)	108 (26% of French headwords)

- Quebec English full of Gallicisms apparently not used in any other Canadian English variety corresponding to everyday realities in the Province or local political institutions. e.g. *dep* for *depanneur* (=convenience store)

### Impressionistic review of Wordlists in Ottawa protocol:

- Comparison of Wordlists between an early bilingual English speaker and a monolingual English speaker.
- No significant difference between the two speakers in their systems so far.

## Conclusion

- The influence of English on Canadian French has always been well known and well documented. However it is hard to believe that French never played a role in the formation of Canadian English, given their close geographical contacts in North America and the common history shared by French and English in Europe, not to mention the fact that until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, French still radiated as an international language in Europe and the New World.
- In addition to French-origin lexicon common to most English varieties, a good amount of Canadianisms come from French.
- However there seems to be virtually no influence of French from a phonological point of view in Canadian English nowadays. What could be the reasons to explain this phenomenon, especially in border areas with Québec?

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Sujet de thèse: Intégration du français en anglais canadien à partir du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle : du lexique à la phonologie. Comparaison avec l'anglais britannique standard.  
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