

## **DIALECT-BASED VARIATIONS AND SPECIFICATIONS OF CANADIAN AND NEW ZEALAND'S TYPES OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

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**Annotation:** Canadian English claims a rather small number of speakers and spans a relatively brief history – the term “Canadian English” was first recorded only in 1854. As a dialect it has typically been described either as an amalgam of British and American features or as a repository of quaint terms such as moose milk. However, as Richard Bailey observes:

It is now generally agreed that Canadian English originated as a variant of northern American English (the speech of New England, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania). Throughout its history, it has been influenced by two powerful external norms, those of British English and American English; the relative prestige of these norms and hence their effect on Canadian English have varied according to the social and political conditions. Nonetheless, Canadian English can be seen as pursuing its own course, with the development of distinctive linguistic features and dialectal forms.

Standard (or general) Canadian English, though perhaps a “scholarly fiction” (R. Bailey 1982, 152), has traditionally been defined as a class dialect, namely, the variety spoken by educated middle-class urban Canadians from the eastern border of Ontario to Vancouver Island. There is a remarkable homogeneity in speech over this vast area. The differences that mark the major dialects – the English of the Maritimes (Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island), of Quebec (Montreal and the Eastern Townships), and of the Ottawa Valley – from the minor variants found in the West (British Columbia), the Prairies (Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba), and the Arctic North are quite insignificant.

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### **Varieties of Canadian English**

Canadian English is not a single dialect, similar for all speakers throughout the provinces. It differs from region to region and often within the same towns, cities and local communities. However, controversy has occasionally erupted over the similarities to American English: the argument that Canadian English is largely a “fiction” created to support a sense of national identity has been much-debated.[1] However, the idea that there is only one ‘North American English’ is disconfirmed by studies showing, for example, that the pronunciation of Canadian English is in many ways distinct from that of American English, despite prolonged contact. Often this is age-related, with younger speakers far more likely to pronounce the /t/ in city as a ‘flap’ (brief contact) that would be natural in American English: [sɪɾɪ] not [sɪtɪ]. Canadian vowels are often quite different from those in the USA.[2]

Is ‘Canadian English’ also ‘Standard English’?

‘Standard Canadian English’ - meaning the formal variety of Canadian English which is the subject of dictionaries and grammar books, and is taught in schools and to learners of English in Canada or in various places overseas - is just one form of Canadian English today. Linguists would consider its

study highly valuable, but other dialects would be equally worthy of consideration. Confining the definition of 'Canadian English' to the standard variety also creates a problem: all forms of a living language change all the time, as new generations develop new vocabulary or re-analyse one aspect of their native language's grammar in a slightly different way from how their parents used it. This also applies to the 'standard' language, though this process is typically slowed by its being codified in a set of written conventions and prescriptivist grammar rules. If linguists were to agree with the popular definition of Canadian English as standard English, new innovations would go uncatalogued and linguistic diversity could not be used as data to further understanding of language itself. Canadian English (CanE, CE, en-CA) encompasses the varieties of English native to Canada. According to the 2016 census, English was the first language of 19.4 million Canadians or 58.1% of the total population; the remainder spoke French (20.8%) or other languages (21.1%). In Quebec, 7.5% of the population are anglophone, as most of Quebec's residents are native speakers of Quebec French. Phonologically, Canadian and American English are classified together as North American English, emphasizing the fact that most cannot distinguish the typical accents of the two countries by sound alone. While Canadian English tends to be closer to American English in most regards, it does possess elements from British English and some uniquely Canadian characteristics. The precise influence of American English, British English and other sources on Canadian English varieties has been the ongoing focus of systematic studies since the 1950s. Canadians and Americans themselves often have trouble differentiating their own two accents, particularly when someone speaks with an urban Standard Canadian English accent because it sounds very similar to Western American English. There is also evidence that Standard Canadian English and Western American English have been undergoing a very similar vowel shift since the 1980s. Canadian English varies very little from Central Canada to British Columbia. But, some noticeably different accents can be found in the Atlantic provinces, most especially in Newfoundland with Newfoundland English. Accent differences can sometimes be heard between those who live in urban centres versus those living in rural settings. In the early 20th century, western Canada was largely populated by farmers from Central and Eastern Europe who were not anglophones. At the time, most anglophones there were re-settlers from Ontario or Quebec who had British, Irish and/or Loyalist ancestry. Throughout the 20th century, the prairies underwent anglicization and linguistic homogenization through education and exposure to Canadian and American media. (en)

## Sound and Accent

The most obvious difference between the way Canadians speak and the way the British speak, is the accent. The British tend to pronounce each word clearly, which makes their speech sound clean, crisp, and "proper," with the exception of the letter "r." The British tend to omit the "r" sound in words, when speaking. Thus if a British person were pronouncing the word "far," it would sound like "Fah." Canadians on the other hand, tend to enunciate their vowels with exaggeration. Vocabulary words like, "color," would be pronounced "Culaur" in Canada, and "Culer" by the British. To summarize this information, round out your "o's" for the Canadian accent, omit the **"r's" for the British accent, but crisply enunciate all other letters.**

## Canadians Have Language Flexibility

Canadian dialect is directly influenced by the United States because of its close proximity. The truth is, Canadians can spell "colour" with the "u" or without, like "color," as Americans do. Canadians have the choice of spelling the American way or the British way, when creating prose. Canadian English is more flexible than British English, where spelling rules are more rigid. Although Canadians do have some American word spellings in their language, most words follow British word spellings.

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