

Michael Zhang

1. *Introduction*

Canada is a nation of immigrants. The most recent wave of immigration to Canada is characterized by the influx of skilled labour from the developing world, notably countries in Asia. This wave of immigration has had relatively little effect on Canadian English because the language had been largely crystallized by the late twentieth century (Chambers, to appear). These skilled workers often bring with them their children, who receive their education in Canada and learn to talk like Canadians. But with English being a global language of communication, commerce, and education, to what extent do first generation immigrants from Asia adopt Canadian patterns of speech? Do newcomers to Canada adopt the Canadian dialect immediately? Can Canadian speech patterns be acquired if a person were to move here after puberty? This paper takes a sample of the speech of first-generation immigrants who were born outside of Canada and came to this country at different times in their lives, taking into account the age of their first exposure to English, their location of English acquisition, and benchmarks

2. *Objective*

The objective of this paper is to investigate the patterns of Canadian characteristics of English language use in first-generation immigrants. The author of the paper hypothesizes that Canadian characteristics of speech will be acquired shortly after a

3. *Methodology*

This study took an audio sample of 14 university students from age 18 to 22. These students were all born outside of Canada. Some of these students had lived in countries

first received their English education. Respondents were not informed of the purpose of the study to alleviate any anxiety and minimize subjectively induced adjustments. All of the respondents were asked to read the following passage as it appears:

Mark actually lied to me about the location of the house, so I called Sarah about the situation and borrowed her keys. He was a bit flustered and decided to say sorry. I simply smiled and told him to reschedule our rendezvous for tomorrow instead.

From a phonological perspective, there are seven different key words within this passage and these were investigated. These seven words covered three characteristics of Canadian speech. The most important point of investigation was the use of Canadian Raising, a feature

4. *Results and discussion*

The results showed a small linear correlation between time spent in Canada and the Canadian Speech Scale (CSS) (Figure 1). However, a respondent from Toronto who has spent nineteen years of his life in Canada only received a 3 on this speech scale. In addition, some respondents who have only been in Canada for a relatively short period of time show a great factor on their Canadian Speech Scale. These anomalies in the data suggest that they are likely more than simple outliers. It is evident that for some individuals, penetration of Canadian speech characteristics is relatively fast, but in others, speech remains persistently non-Canadian. Hockett (1950), amongst other studies, documents that linguistic crystallization occurs at around the age of puberty, after which the acquisition of a second language becomes more difficult. However, the acquisition of certain dialect features post-puberty is possible. This theory is not fully supported by the given data in Figure 1.

