Background

• People often talk about Canadian English as not really being distinctive or interesting.
• There are a number of books that list hundreds of terms unique to Canada. These terms are called “Canadianisms” and are known and used by most Canadians.

Purpose

• To investigate whether Canadian English has unique lexical features.

Hypotheses

1. Native Canadian English speakers will be able to identify more Canadianisms than non-native speakers (including non-native English speakers and native English speakers of another variety).
2. Of these non-native speakers, the longer a respondent born outside of Canada has been in Canada, the more Canadianisms he/she will identify correctly.
3. Native Canadian English speakers will identify more Canadianisms than native American English or British English speakers.

Methodology

• Twenty Canadianisms were selected from three book sources that outlined Canadianisms and their origins (shown in References).
• Surveys were distributed online to both native Canadian and International individuals via Facebook, email, and the Queen’s University International Centre student list serve.
• Respondents include people born in Canada, as well as people born in Brazil, UK, Taiwan, India, Mexico City, USA, China, Germany, Spain, France, Italy, Romania, Sri Lanka, Scotland and more.
• Survey questions asked respondents to either:
  (1) Look at and identify a picture, or,
  (2) Read a description and pick a corresponding term (See examples in Survey Samples).

Results

Graph 1.0: Canadian Native English Speakers vs. Non-Native Speakers

Graph 2.0: Non-Canadian Respondents and time spent in Canada

Graph 3.0: American vs. British vs. Canadian English

Discussion/Conclusion

• All hypotheses were confirmed.
• As hypothesized, native Canadian English speakers identified the most Canadianisms (see Graph 1.0).
• For the most part, the longer a person born outside of Canada has been in Canada, the more Canadianisms they chose correctly (see Graph 2.0).
• In general, native Canadian English speakers identified more Canadianisms than British and American respondents (see Graph 3.0).
• However, there was a trend that native British English speakers’ results were more similar to Canadians than native American English speakers. (Graph 3.0).
• Can conclude that these terms are unique Canadian English features.

Interesting Survey Responses

• Canadianism: Timbits
  Responses: berries, buns, squirrel balls, sweet balls...
• Canadianism: Beavertail
  Responses: schnitzel, pancake, panned chicken...
• Canadianism: Toboggan
  Responses: sledge, mouse trap, slider, trineo...

References