

Do you speak "Canadian"?

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Introduction

- Books on Canadian English tend to feature lists of various "Canadianisms"
- Speakers of other varieties of English often poke fun at Canadians because of their marked lexicon

Objective

- To determine whether native speakers of Canadian English will recognize and/or use words that are considered to be iconic of Canadian English

Hypothesis

- We hypothesize that respondents will be able to recognize most of the "Canadianisms", but will not be likely to use many of them
- We believe that many "Canadianisms" are geographically limited in their usage, thus participants who have lived in certain areas will be familiar with, and probably use, such terms
- We hypothesize that participants from rural areas will be more likely than their urban counterparts to have heard and to use these "Canadianisms"

Survey

3. There is always a huge _____ at Tim Horton's

	I have heard	I would use
line		
queue		
snake up		
lineup		

Figure 1 Sample question from our survey

Method

- We selected fourteen reputed "Canadian" terms to investigate
- We created and distributed a print survey to asses native Canadian English speakers' familiarity with and usage of the selected terms
- To compile our list of "Canadianisms" we consulted a variety of sources
- Terms in our survey had to be included in a minimum of three sources
- We included in each question other terms that encapsulated as similar a meaning as possible to the "Canadian" variant
- Participants chose which variant(s) they had heard and which they would use
- We only looked at whether or not they had selected the "Canadian" terms

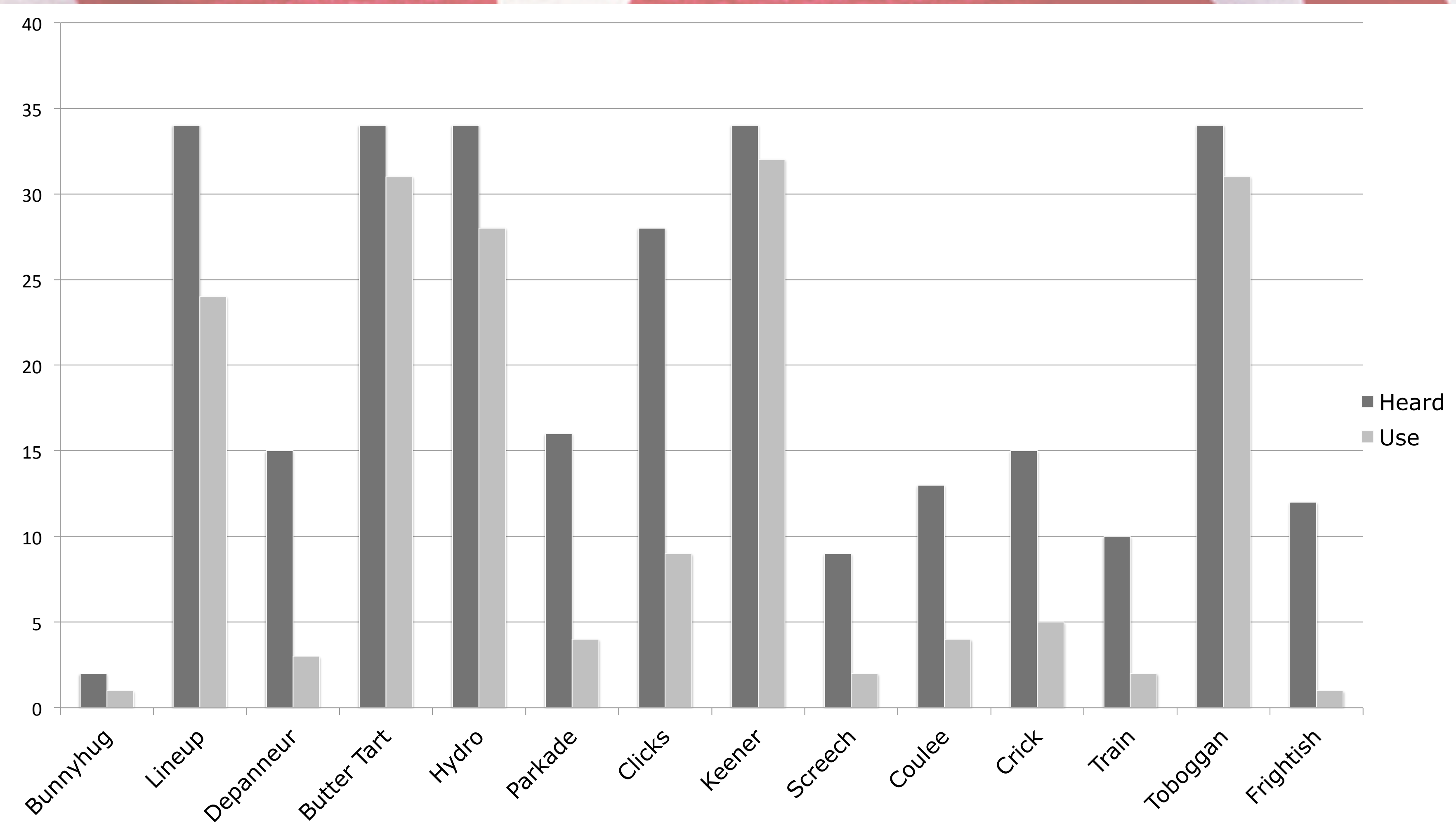


Figure 2 Graph of Canadian English speakers' knowledge and use of "Canadianisms"

Results

- One "Canadianism" (*bunnyhug*) was barely recognized by native speakers
- Several Canadian variants were recognized, but native speakers were less likely to use these variants themselves (*parkade*, *coulee*, *crick*, *train*, and *frightish*)
- The regional terms *depanneur*, *bunnyhug*, and *screech* were recognized and used more by participants who had lived in the region that corresponded with the variant (Quebec, Alberta/Saskatchewan, and Newfoundland respectively)
- Other regional terms did not show the regional variation that we expected

Discussion

- Most of the participants of our study were university students at Queen's University
- They mostly fall within a limited age range, and most have lived mainly in Ontario
- Most of our participants were from urban areas; only five participants cited living in rural areas
- Results are not representative of the Canadian population
- We may have omitted or overlooked additional Canadian terms that would have been more appropriate in our given contexts

Conclusion

- Most participants displayed an even greater familiarity with Canadian terms than we had hypothesized
- Participants were more likely to recognize than to use "Canadian" terms
- Certain terms demonstrated geographic variability, while other did not
- More data from rural participants may support our hypothesis regarding an urban and rural distinction
- Lack of data renders our results inconclusive

Selected References

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