

Introduction:

- We all hear the same sounds, but when sounds are expressed as words through onomatopoeia, they are represented differently in different languages.
- Words that represent the same sound differ greatly phonetically and morphologically in different languages.
- A dog may say "woof-woof" in English, but "wan-wan" in Japanese.
- I will be examining the variations of sound words in different languages within a Canadian English environment.

Objectives:

1. To look at different factors that cause ESL individuals to adopt Canadian English sound words into their vocabulary.
2. To discover whether ESL individuals in Canada show preference towards sound words in their native language or towards Canadian English sound words.

Hypothesis:

1. I believe that people who speak English as a second language will favour sound words in their first language, even in the context of a Canadian English speaking environment.
2. I also believe that time spent in Canada and the age at which they began speaking English will be correlated with the amount that they favour Canadian English varieties of onomatopoeia versus those in their native languages.

Sample Images and Responses From Surveys



C.E. Response: "Neigh"
Japanese Response: "Pakka Pakka"
Portugese Responses: "Ieee"



C.E. Response: "Glug Glug"
Japanese Response: "Goku Goku"
Qc/French Response: "Seup Seup"

Method:

- To gather information, I constructed and distributed surveys.
- I collected information about participants that determined their level of experience with the English language.
- Survey: participants look at a series of images and write down the sound word that they associate with the image.
- I used responses from native Canadian English speakers to determine the most common Canadian English variations of the sound word.
- I used these variations as a basis for comparison to determine whether ESL participants were using Canadian English variations or not.
- I looked at each ESL response and determined whether it matches the C.E. variations or not.
- If it matched, the participants would be given one point.
- I considered the responses to 10 images
- Each participant was given a score out of 10; 10/10 = all C.E. responses; 0/10 = no C.E. responses.
- I calculated the average of all of the scores to determine whether or not the majority of ESL participants favoured sound words from their native languages.
- I then looked at the results based on the following factors: (1) Years living in Canada (2) Years studying English in school (3) Years speaking English (4) Age at which participants began speaking English
- I examined trends within these categories to determine whether different levels of experience with the English language effected choice of sound words.

My Dog Speaks Your Language

Anne Cass
Queen's University

Results:

Distribution of ESL Responses

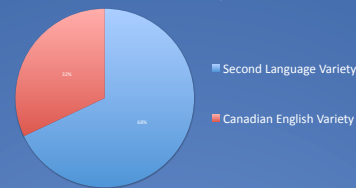


Figure 1

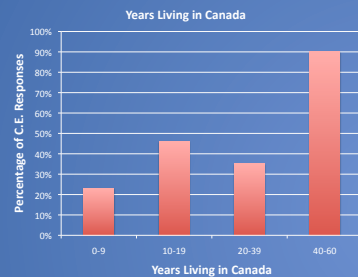


Figure 2

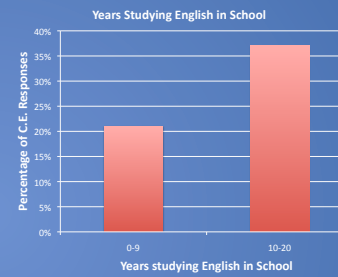


Figure 3

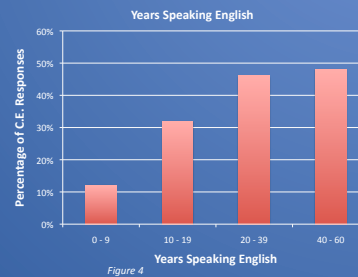


Figure 4

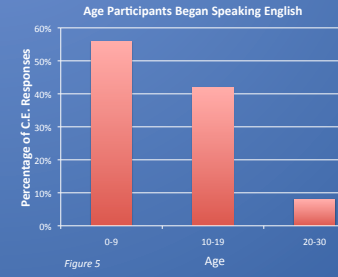


Figure 5

Summary:

- Figure 1: Majority of ESL participants favoured native language sound word varieties
- Figure 2: Lack of trend in this category indicates that this factor does not have a significant effect on choice of sound word varieties (40-60 represents 2 participants – Biased result – not seriously taken into consideration)
- Figure 3: Correlation between English study in school and C.E. responses indicates that this factor has an effect on participants' choices of sound words
- Figure 4: Correlation between years speaking English and C.E. responses indicates that this factor has an effect on participants' choices of sound words
- Figure 5: Correlation between age participants began speaking English and C.E. responses indicates that this factor has an effect on participants' choices of sound words

Conclusions:

- **Hypothesis 1:** true – majority of ESL speakers favour native language varieties
- **Hypothesis 2:** partially true – age at which participants began speaking English was correlated with their favouring of Canadian English varieties, but time spent in Canada was not
- **Additional Conclusions:**
 - More years speaking English resulted in higher use of C.E. variations – this can be attributed to mere exposure to the English language and opportunity to hear sound words in context and adopt them into their vocabulary
 - Learning English at a younger age resulted in higher use of C.E. variations – If participants began speaking English before the time of language fossilization, proficiency would be higher than those who began speaking it after this stage. They would be able to recognize sound words in both languages, and would likely choose the one that corresponds their current environment.
 - More time studying English in school resulted in higher use of C.E. variations – can be attributed to exposure to written sound words that appear in books, worksheets posters etc. or through song, poetry, or images in a classroom
 - Time living in Canada did not have a prominent effect on the participant's choices of words – can be attributed to the fact that participants live in a community in which their native language is spoken regularly, they never studied English in school or they speak only their native language at home: exposure to C.E. more related to ethnic orientation that time spent in Canada.

Limitations:

1. **Ethics restraints:** no data from individuals below the age of 18 – responses were not all encompassing in terms of age.
2. **Time restraints:** only able to survey 30 ESL speakers – results not based on a wide range of data.
3. **Limited number of surveys:** many participants were the only ones who spoke a particular language, so I was not able to compare responses of ESL participants to others who speak the same language – Some responses may have differed from the Canadian English varieties but not matched the native language varieties either.
4. **Limited range of responses:** could not consider factors such as bilingualism, time spent outside of the Canadian English environment, language spoken at home or language spoken by parents.
5. **Data Collection:** may have been more effective if data was collected orally, and transcribed – I could have compared the phonetic interpretations of the sounds as opposed to their spellings. Because spelling can be interpreted in different ways, the pronunciation that the participant is trying to convey through spelling may be interpreted differently by the person reading the response.

Further Study:

1. Survey a wide range Native Canadian English speakers to create a corpus of Canadian English sound words and determine most common C.E. variations
2. Survey large groups of ESL individuals to create a corpus of sound words in some of the more common second languages in Canada – would a means to compare responses both to Canadian English and to the participant's native languages, and consider participants who responded with neither the expected Canadian English or native language response, and factors that may have influenced this response.
3. Record responses and transcribe them using the IPA system – compare the oral interpretation of sound words rather than the written interpretation of sound words.
4. Study of the phonetic interpretation of sound words in other languages could also indicate, based on the IPA features present in any given language, why sounds are interpreted with different phonetic features in different languages.
5. It would be interesting to conduct an apparent time study and look for a common point at which ESL individuals begin to adopt Canadian sound words into their vocabulary.