

Language Variation in New Brunswick's Anglophone and Francophone Communities: Ça va être right d'la fun.

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Most studies on linguistic variation in Canada concerning Canadian English are conducted in a small number of areas, notably Toronto and Newfoundland (e.g. Tagliamonte 2006, Clarke 2010). Other regions, however, are often neglected or grouped together, which results in an incomplete view of language use in Canada. This study intends to address this issue by investigating linguistic variation in the Eastern province of New Brunswick. New Brunswick is not only unique because it is a bilingual French and English province, but also because the language is influenced by the local Indigenous cultures (e.g. Mi'kmaq and Maliseet). This results in an intriguing mixed variety that utilizes features from each language source. This mixture has often been called *Chiac* (King 2008), a variety in which speakers utilize both French and English verb and sentence structures together, for example: "*J'ai crossé la street*" ('I crossed the street).

The study examines past and current research on the history of English use in Canada, as well as the distinctions pertaining to lexical, morphosyntactic and semantic variation (Avis 1967). To determine if New Brunswick is as homogeneous as suggested in the literature (cf., e.g. Dollinger and Clarke 2012, Boberg 2010), a linguistic survey was conducted in which 150 participants from all regions of New Brunswick took part. Several social factors were investigated, including age, gender, location and education. Subsequently, they were compared with smaller control groups from other parts of Canada, in order to establish any correlations and differences in language use.

The results of the literature review, as well the survey data findings, indicate several significant, linguistic distinctions in New Brunswick in comparison with other provinces: Regarding spoken New Brunswick English, many lexical, semantic and morpho-syntactic distinctions were found. For example: *What are you sayin'?* is used as a common greeting, whereas in compared provinces, such as Ontario, this was either not understood or interpreted as a request for clarification. Another example is the term *dooryard*, which refers to the exterior area of a home surrounding the most commonly used entryway.

Such examples demonstrate that New Brunswick exhibits unique linguistic features, which have not yet been discussed in the literature, and highlights the need for further study in these areas. The results of this study therefore yield an updated view of language use in the region and help provide a more concise picture of linguistic variation in Canada.

References

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