

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN NEW BRUNSWICK AND PRINCE  
EDWARD ISLAND: RESEARCH PUBLISHED, IN PROGRESS,  
AND REQUIRED.

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Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Its geographical position and its history alike make New Brunswick a rich field for the dialect geographer. Its position makes it the natural trade route between Nova Scotia and upper Canada, and it would be interesting to know what, if any, features of New Brunswick dialect owe their being to Nova Scotia. A herring-choker is often defined as a bluenose who went broke on his way to Toronto: how much support will dialectology lend to this calumny?

On the one hand, New Brunswick's settlement history makes it quite distinct from the neighbouring province of Maine. On the other hand, there is at least one enclave in the province

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was read by A.M. Kinloch, on behalf of both authors, at the inaugural meeting of the Atlantic Provinces Linguistic Association/Association de linguistique des Provinces Atlantiques Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, N.S., 29th October, 1977

which housed settlers from Maine (MacNutt 1963:3-4), whose speech ought to provide an interesting contrast to the speech of the rest of the province. Do the descendants of the settlers who moved from Essex County, Me., to Maugerville, N.B., still show any recognizable traces in their speech of their New England origins? At all events, we ought to be trying to find out. Again, how far has there been a rapprochement between the speech of the communities on each side of the Maine/New Brunswick border? (The authors' impression is: Not much. Whatever else may drop off your car as you drive across the bridge from St. Stephen to Calais, it certainly loses its final /r/). The district of New Denmark, in northwestern New Brunswick, was settled a little over a hundred years ago by Danish speakers (New Denmark Women's Institute n.d.:9). How far does the English of the descendants of these settlers differ from that of their fellow New Brunswickers? Finally, there is the French fact in New Brunswick; about one third of the province's inhabitants are Francophone (Statistics Canada 1973:18-1). What effect has this had, what effect is it still having, on the English of those New Brunswickers who live in areas predominantly Francophone?

Prince Edward Island, too, is interesting both geographically and historically. How far has its comparative isolation preserved on the island a dialect more archaic than the English spoken elsewhere in Canada? That Prince Edward Island

has a dialect of its own is almost certain; words like ice, nice, fine, and tide, which have /aI/ in the rest of Canada, appear to have /oI/ in Prince Edward Island. Likewise, its settlement pattern includes elements from Ireland and Scotland as well as from England (MacNutt 1965:113 and 236); and Cullen (1971) shows that this settlement pattern has affected the dialect of the island even to this day. In addition to this, Prince Edward Island has a Francophone element in its population (Statistics Canada 1973:18-1), and the relationship between the speech of the Francophone area and that of the rest of the island ought to be examined.

All of these questions ought to be asked, and some attempt should be made to answer them. The attempt should be made in terms of regional variation within the provinces, as well as in terms of differences between the speech of each province as a whole, on the one hand, and the speech of the rest of Canada, on the other.

#### Research Published

To date, most of the studies of the speech of New Brunswick deal with individual features of the dialect of the province, the use of specific words like pung, bogan, etc. this would matter little, had these articles addressed themselves to the research themes adumbrated above. For various reasons, they have not done so, and they leave our knowledge of the dialect

of New Brunswick still fragmented and unsystematized.<sup>2</sup>

Two major linguistic surveys have been made in New Brunswick. The first is the survey made for the Linguistic Atlas of the United States and Canada; the project is described and the results of the survey are recorded in Kurath, Hansen, Bloch, and Bloch (1939) and in Kurath, Hanley, Bloch, Lowman, and Hansen (1939-1943). These two works answer between 300 and 700 questions about the speech of each of eight communities in New Brunswick. First of all, of course, one should note that, with one exception, all the communities lie to the west of, or on the banks of, the Saint John river; the exception is Lower Southampton, which now lies some 300 feet or so below its surface. There is no record from the capital city of the province, and only one record, with a displaced informant, from the largest city in the province. Also, one should note that the fieldwork for this survey was done in the 30s, and is now over forty years old; a complete generation has had time to reach middle age since the original survey was made. Moreover, the questionnaire for this survey was drawn up on the basis of American English: it takes account of some but not all of the features mentioned in the works listed in footnote 2. Finally,

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<sup>2</sup> Avis and Kinloch (1978) list forty-two such articles, these being their items 004, 028, 040, 055, 056, 071, 075, 126, 129, 177, 178, 195, 196, 233, 270, 287, 288, 290, 291, 326, 335, 363, 386, 389, 398, 416, 424, 427, 445, 447, 454, 455, 456, 538, 561, 569, 583, 616, 635, 646, 654, and 672.

the questionnaire used for the Linguistic Atlas of the United States and Canada, excellent though it be, does not always produce results which are perfectly adapted to phonemicizing. Having tried to phonemicize the results of one interview, one author (Kinloch 1975) found himself dealing not in minimal but in quasi-minimal pairs, some of which were more quasi- than minimal.

The two works cited above, of course, simply publish the data from the Atlas survey. They do not interpret it in any way, save in so far as the use of any standard phonetic alphabet is in itself an interpretation.

The other major project which has been carried out in New Brunswick is the Survey of Canadian English, whose results are recorded in Scargill and Warkentyne (1972) and in Scargill (1974). In contrast to the work done for the Linguistic Atlas of the United States and Canada, the work done for this survey is relatively recent, and is province-wide. But it is not free from disadvantages. Perhaps its major disadvantage is that by its very nature it took no account of regional variation within the province but concentrated instead upon age-related variations--the generation gap. A very successful attempt to derive intra-province variation from the Survey of Canadian English results was made for British Columbia by Rodman (1974/1975); so far, this had not been done for New Brunswick.

An offshoot of the Survey of Canadian English is the work of Mr. Stanley Bateman, whose M. Ed. thesis (Bateman 1975) compared the Survey of Canadian English results with those

gotten by applying the Survey questionnaire to the speech of 149 students entering the Faculty of Education at the University of New Brunswick. The findings of Bateman's survey differed in eighteen features from the findings of the original Survey of Canadian English, but all eighteen differences could be satisfactorily explained in terms of the extra schooling of the informants of the Bateman survey, and by their desire for "correctness."

To sum up, our knowledge of English in New Brunswick so far consists of coverage of a number of individual features; complete coverage, now forty years old, of the English of eight western communities; the gross provincial figures of the Survey of Canadian English; and Bateman's reapplication of the Survey to one generation of nineteen-year olds. If dialect research has four stages, namely data collection, data transcription, data publication, and data interpretation, then it is plain that only in eight New Brunswick communities has the original Linguistic Atlas of the United States and Canada taken us to stage three, and only with regard to the generation gap has the Survey of Canadian English taken us as far as stage four.

For Prince Edward Island, the picture is much the same, only more so. There are eleven studies each dealing with one or more individual features of the dialect of the island,<sup>3</sup> but

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<sup>3</sup> Avis and Kinloch (op. cit.) items 129, 178, 195, 218, 233, 290, 424, 427, 454, 561, and 646.

only two works (Scargill and Warkentyne 1972, and Scargill 1974) which seek to characterize the dialect of the province as a whole.

To sum up the state of our present knowledge of the dialect of the provinces of New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, one cannot say that it is exhaustive. It is either sporadic in its coverage, out of date in its provenance, or both, or is not yet processed in enough detail to show regional variation within either province. The raw data collected for the Survey of Canadian English hold promise, but as yet that promise has not been fully exploited; indeed, it has hardly been exploited at all.

#### Research in Progress

We should start by noting five records made by earlier workers, which represent research in progress in the sense that the projects they were made for have never been published. The five are one from New Brunswick, made by Henry Alexander in the 40s, two made by Alexander in Prince Edward Island in the same period, and two made there by Raven I. McDavid, Jr. and H. Rex Wilson in the 60s. So far as the authors are aware, there are now only four researchers at work on the English of New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island; hopefully, someone will correct us if we are wrong. The four are A.M. Kinloch, S.S. Drew, Miss Debbie Mosher, and A.B. House.

Kinloch has amassed seventeen field records made in communities in the Saint John valley, over a questionnaire based on that of the Linguistic Atlas of the United States and Canada. The eight communities covered in the original Atlas survey have all been revisited but, because of the questionnaire used, some of these revisittings may present the phonemizer with the kind of intractable data found in the records of the original survey. At the same time, Kinloch has made preparations for assessing the accuracy of the results of the Survey of Canadian English, by having a fieldworker visit each school which took part in the original survey and there do a face-to-face interview with a pupil from the school. This Survey of Canadian English follow-up has produced sixteen tapes, each accompanied by a copy of the questionnaire of the original Survey completed by the informant of the follow-up. So far, these are unanalyzed, and anyone who wishes to analyze them is welcome to use them if he will contact Kinloch at the University of New Brunswick.

S.S. Drew is working in Saint John County, and has made four field records over the Illinois Institute of Technology questionnaire (Davis and Davis 1969), supplemented by some additional questions designed to give even more thorough coverage of the vowel sounds. He has completed his fieldwork, and is now engaged in transcription. Miss Mosher is working on the speech of New Denmark, and has completed her fieldwork; she is planning to transcribe her records as soon as the commitments of her job allow.



A.B. House's work on the English of Francophone New Brunswick is in its third year of progress. The goal of the study is to record and transcribe the English spoken by Anglophones in areas of New Brunswick where there is a substantial number of Francophone speakers. The method of the study is to use a conflation of the Linguistic Atlas of the United States and Canada and the Illinois Institute of Technology questionnaires. The geographical area of this project is from the south-east to the north-west of the province of New Brunswick; it includes the towns of Moncton, Shediac, Rexton, Tabusintac, Bathurst, Campbellton, and Edmundston. The informants are drawn from three generations of speakers. So far, it appears that the youngest and the oldest are the easiest to tape. They are accessible. The "mid" informants, probably because they are hard at work, are hard to record. The work done in this study to date consists of one completed and one partially completed interview from Moncton, one partially completed interview from Shediac, one completed and three partially completed interviews from Tabusintac, one completed and one partially completed interview from Bathurst, and a completed interview from Campbellton.

It may be, and the authors hope it is, a sign of their ignorance, that they know of no fieldworker currently at work in Prince Edward Island. However, Professor Terrence Pratt of the University of Prince Edward Island may possibly make a start on the dialectology of the island in the summer of 1978.

Research Required

It seems to the authors that the most urgent tasks in New Brunswick are the completion of the projects now under way; this is all the more true in that Kinloch's first records were made over seven years ago, and the data from the original Survey of Canadian English are becoming steadily more out of date and hence more difficult to validate, although not less valuable, once validated. Further urgency is given to this project by the fact that its success might cast light on the validity of the Survey results elsewhere in Canada. In Prince Edward Island, the basic blueprint is, happily, now in preparation.

Good Queen Bess was no dialectologist. When she wrote "META INCOGNITA" across the map of Canada, she missed the Maritimes entirely. But perhaps, in principle, she had the right idea.

Concluding Note

If anyone is interested in helping with this work, the authors will be only too glad to assist him or her with copies of questionnaires, specimen tapes and (probably) far too much advice. Both authors may be contacted through the University of New Brunswick.

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