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Canadian English usage : focus on syntax

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Canadian English Usage. Focus on Syntax

*In Canada we have enough to do keeping up
with the two spoken languages without trying to
invent slang, so we just go right ahead and use
English for literature, Scotch for sermons and
American for conversation.*

Stephen Leacock

*Now that Canada has become post-colonial
both historically and spiritually, CE is likely to
undergo a great many linguistic changes. They
will come not only from global networking.
Modern technology extends our reach around
the globe, but in another sense the globe has
come to Canada. The largest cities and towns
are cosmopolitan; they make neighbours of
people of diverse creeds and colours. The
majority of the Canadian population no longer
traces its ancestry to either the Loyalists or the
British Isles. The integration of diverse peoples
into the social fabric will have subtle effects just
as the integration of the Scots and English did
in the 1850s.*

J.K.Chambers

Abstract

*Canadian English can be called as such on political grounds. Linguistically,
however, it is included in the North American English continuum and, more
precisely, shares a number of regional features with the northern diaslect of US
speech. What about usage preferences among Canadian Anglophones? As in
previous papers (Albu 2001, 2002, 2003, 2005) I have tried to answer this
question, this time focusing on the syntactic compartment, by processing and
interpreting the results of a sociolinguistic questionnaire administered in urban
Ontario in 2000. The data analysed in this paper are divided into three groups:
(1) verba, that is, verb phrase structures and related clause patterns; (2) nomina,
that is, noun phrase structures (3) instrumenta, that is, the choice of prepositions
and conjunctions in particular phrases. Just as in the spelling, pronunciation and
vocabulary compartments, the "American" options are occasionally
complemented by "British" preferences. In terms of subjective evaluation, the*

idea of a link to British English rather than American English is present with a considerable number of respondents.

Résumé

L'anglais canadien peut être nommé ainsi en invoquant des raisons politiques. Du point de vue linguistique, il est inclus dans le continuum de l'anglais nord-americain. Mais que peut-on dire des préféerences des anglophones canadiens? Comme dans les ouvrages anterieurs (v. Albu 2001, 2002, 2003, 2005), nous avons essayé de répondre à cette question en nous axant cette fois-ci sur la syntaxe par l'interprétation des résultats d'une anquête sociolinguistique fite dans la zone urbaine d'Ontario en 2000. Les données analysées dans cet étude sont divisées en trois groupes: (1) verba *– les structures des expressions verbales et des patterns propositionels; (2)* nomina *– les structures des expressions nominales; et (3)* instrumenta *– le choix des prépositions et dess conjunctions dans certains expressions. Tout comme dans le domain de la prononciation et du vocabulaire, aux options «americaines» s'associent occasionellement des préférences « britanniques ». Quant à l'évaluation subjective, l'idée de la prédominance de l'anglais britannique se retrouve chez un nombre important d'informateurs.*

General Frame

It is commonly acknowledged that Canadian English can be called as such on political grounds. Linguistically, however, it is included in the North American English continuum, and, more precisely, shares a number of regional features with the northern diaslect of US speech. What about usage preferences among Canadian Anglophones? I have tried to answer this question with regard to different language 'compartments' (see Albu 2001, 2002, 2003, 2005[1]) through processing (in data-base format) and interpreting the results of a sociolinguistic questionnaire that I administered in Urban Ontario in 2000. (For details about the content and the representativity of the questionnaire see Albu 2001).

The general question I had in mind when devising the grammar and usage section of the questionnaire was: to what extent Canadian Anglophones' occasional "deviations" from the standard grammar as we know it can be interpreted as traces of "Americanisms", "Britishisms", "Canadianisms" (if any), "foreignisms" reflecting trends in the Englishes of the Outer Circle (say Indian, or Singaporean) or "foreignisms" that are merely due to the incomplete acquisition of standard norms?

The present paper discusses several questions included in the questionnaire, mainly of a syntactic nature, that raise problems of correctness and usage ratio in relation to the two major endonormative standards, the British and the American, as well as to other Englishes. As in the previous papers, the respondents that were born in Canada are called "Old Canadians" (OCs for short) and the ones born elsewhere are called "New Canadians" (NCs for short). The population sample providing completed questionnairs (almost) evenly divided into the two groups: of the 77 respondents, 38 were Canadian-born and 39 were New Canadians.

The data analysed in this paper will be divided into three groups: (1) *verba*, that is, verb phrase structures and related clause structures; (2) *nomina*, that is, noun phrase structures and (3) *instrumenta*, that is, the choice of prepositions and conjunctions in particular phrases.

1. *Verba*

1.1. Verb Phrase structures

Verb phrase structures raise problems of different natures, namely:
1. infinitives or subjunctive (past perfect) verb forms as verb complementation structures;
2. form levelling in disjunctive questions;
3. subordinate structures expressing wishes and conditions;
4. transitivity vs. intransitivity expressions confused.

The questions devised to elicit the respondents' preferences are listed below. Questions 1a and 1b suggest a 'foriegnism" and an "Americanism", respectively. Question 2 is meant to evidence the widely-spread tendency to level the forms of disjunctive questions, a normal phenomenon in European languages, with the notable exception of English, whether Brtitish or American.. Questions 3a, 3b and 4 are related to the American-British ratio in the speakers' choices, which is also presumably correlated with the speakers' formal education.

The actual questions are the following:

1a. *Would you ever say "I would like that you come"?*
1b. *Would you ever say "I suggested that he do it?"*
2. *Would you ever say "He's gone to town, isn't it?"*
3a. *Would you ever say "If I would have known, I would have come."?*
3b. *Would you ever say "I wish my husband wouldn't have eaten so much garlic last night"?*
4. *Would you ever say "If you are tired, why don't you lay down?"*

1.1.1. Infinitives or *that*-clauses?

Question 1a. *Would you ever say "I would like that you come"?*

The question above was formulated on the assumption that there is a marked tendency among Indian speakers of English to use *that*-clauses where native speakers expect an infinitival clause. Apart from that, the use of *that*-clauses may be a foreignism indicating the incomplete acquisition of standard norms of English syntax. The native-like competence of the large majority of my informants made them choose the negative answer:

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Yes	13	16.9	17.3
	No	59	76.6	78.7

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
	(other)	3	3.9	4.0
	Total	75	97.4	100.0
Missing	System	2	2.6	
Total		77	100.0	

The YES answers belong to ten of the New Canadians and to only three of the Old Canadians. As for the New Canadians' countries of origin, these are China (4), Romania (2), Hong Kong, Netherlands, Philippines and Vietnam (1 each).

Obviously, the selection of a *that*-clause after the verb *like* by four Chinese and two Romanians can only have to do with their status of EFL speakers who have not internalised all the syntactic norms of the English standard.

Question 1b. *Would you ever say "I suggested that he do it?"*

The question is based on the assumption that the presence of the 'old' subjunctive form of *do* (uninflected *do* in the third person singular) in the subordinate clause is an American English conservative feature (cf. Present-day British English: *that he should do it.*), and, indeed, the answers reveal the preference for this form of over 60 per cent of the respondents:

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Yes	47	61.0	62.7
	No	27	35.1	36.0
	(other)	1	1.3	1.3
	Total	75	97.4	100.0
Missing	System	2	2.6	
Total		77	100.0	

Of these, the majority is formed of Old Canadians, as anticipated:

Birthplace:	Yes	No	Other
New Canadians	19	18	
Old Canadians	28	9	1 (NA)

1.1.2. *He's gone to town, eh?*

This question illustrates the assertion that the *eh?* coda is typically Canadian (according to Halford 1998, McCrum et al 1987 etc). However, I did not include the sentence-final *eh?* in the questionnaire because, to me, it is a tag that, with variations, transcends linguistics borders. With slightly different pronunciation and intonation, I hear it in the speech of Romanians, although formal education highly stigmatises it. The same stigmatisation is reported by Woods (also mentioned in Brinton and Fee 2001: 433) with regard to Canadian speech. Its functions in English and Romanian are also comparable (inviting agreement, as a reinforcement or as a request for repetition) Avis (1972) cites examples from different varieties of English over time to prove its presence beyond the borders of Canada. On the basis of Canadian oral evidence, he also identifies "narrative

eh?", which is "virtually meaningless" and appears as an automatism of speech. Its usage is "more common in the lower socioeconomic class" (Brinton and Fee 2001: 433)

Since I assumed, at the time I devised the questionnaire, that my respondents' answer to the question about their using the *eh?* coda would be ES, I reformulated the question as:

Question 2. *Would you ever say "He's gone to town, isn't it?"*[2]

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Yes	12	15.6	16.0
	No	63	81.8	84.0
	Total	75	97.4	100.0
Missing	System	2	2.6	
Total		77	100.0	

As anticipated, most of the "yes" answers came from New Canadians of different origins.

Birthplace:	Yes	No
New Canadians	10	27
Old Canadians	2	36

Since the Chinese-Hong Kong and the Romanian communities were better represented in our sample, their "yes" answers represent half (3 + 3) of the total number:

1.1.3. American rules in the making?

The following questions regard the tendency that has been noticed among American speakers to use analytical verb forms with the modal-auxiliary *would* in conditional clauses and object clauses required by the verb *wish* instead of the standard structures (particularly in constructions requiring the past perfect form of the verb in standard English):

Question 3 a. *Would you ever say "If I would have known, I would have come."?*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Yes	38	49.4	50.7
	No	34	44.2	45.3
	(other)	3	3.9	4.0
	Total	75	97.4	100.0
Missing	System	2	2.6	
Total		77	100.0	

Birthplace:	Yes	No	(other)	Total
New Canadians	22	16	-	38
Old Canadians	16	18	3	37
Total	38	34	3	75

36

The distribution of variants among New Canadians appears as follows:

NCs' birthplace:	Would you ever say *"If I would have known, I would have come."*?	
	Yes	No
Algeria		1
Argentina	1	
Brazil	1	
China	1	4
France	1	
Great Britain	2	2
Ghana		1
Hong Kong	1	2
India	1	
Ireland		1
Mauritius	1	
Netherlands	1	
Pakistan	2	1
Philippines	1	
Romania	7	2
San Salvador	1	
Ukraine		1
US		1
Vietnam		

3b. Would you ever say *"I wish my husband wouldn't have eaten so much garlic last night"* ?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Yes	35	45.5	46.1
	No	37	48.1	48.7
	(other)	4	5.2	5.3
	Total	76	98.7	100.0
Missing	System	1	1.3	
Total		77	100.0	

Birthplace:	Yes	No	Other	Total
New Canadians	23	15	-	38
Old Canadians	12	22	4	38
Total	35	37		

NCs' birthplace:	Would you ever say *"I wish my husband wouldn't have eaten..."* ?	
	Yes	No
Algeria		1
Argentina	1	
Brazil	1	
China	4	1
France	1	
Great Britain	1	3
Ghana		1
Hong Kong	2	1
India		1
Ireland	1	
Mauritius	1	
Netherlands	1	
Pakistan	1	2
Philippines		1
Romania	7	2
San Salvador	1	
Ukraine		1
US		1
Vietnam	1	

Roughly speaking, the answers have been evenly distributed between "yes" and "no". The "yes' section aligns anglophone Canadians' options to the general American tendency that was mentioning above.

1.1.4. Intransitive *LAY* – a conservative form, a Canadian feature or an imperfectly learned *LAY-LIE* distinction?

I would avoid a polemical discussion of the origin of the intransitive use of *lay* since all of the three hypotheses formulated in the head question can be motivated. The *lay-lie* distinction is largely owed to the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century prescriptive efforts made by English grammarians. "Thou dashest him again, there let him lay" (Lord Byron) or "Nature will lay buried a great time, and yet revive" (Francis Bacon) are set illustrations of the former intransitive use of *lay*, still very much alive in Present-day non-standard varieties of English. Yet, with one possible exception, my informants were, or tried to be, standard English speakers, which enables me to say that the hypothesis of an imperfectly *lay-lie* distinction may hold true in the case of the New Canadians, whereas the Old Canadians may have inherited this "confusion" either as a general conservative form or as a Canadian feature.

(Q4) Would you ever say *"If you are tired, why don't you lay down?"*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Yes	48	62.3	64.0
	No	26	33.8	34.7
	(other)	1	1.3	1.3
	Total	75	97.4	100.0
Missing	System	2	2.6	
Total		77	100.0	

The intransitive use of *lay* is, therefore, rejected by about one third of my informants. The distribution of the two choices between the New and the Old Canadians is presented below:

Birthplace:	Yes	No	Other	Total
New Canadians	25	13		38
Old Canadians	23	13	1	37
Total	48	26		

The countries of origin of the New Canadians may complete the picture of the "geographic sources" of intransitive *lay:*

NCs' Birthplace:	Would you ever say "If you are tired why don't you lay down?"	
	Yes	No
Algeria	1	
Argentina		1
Brazil	1	
China	3	2
France	1	
Great Britain	3	1
Ghana	1	
Hong Kong	1	2
India	1	
Ireland	1	
Mauritius	1	
Netherlands	1	
Pakistan		3
Philippines	1	
Romania	8	1
San Salvador	1	
Ukraine		1
US		1
Vietnam		1

To conclude, the intransitive use of *lay* appears as normal for about two-thirds of the informants. Both the "yes" and the "no" options are evenly distributed between the "Old" and the "New" Canadians. Interestingly enough, three of the four New Canadians of British origin favour intransitive *lay*. In the case of the New Canadians of Romanian origin, the large number of *lay* supporters – eight out of nine – can be the consequence of imperfectly learned rules.[3]

The two verbs, *lie* and *lay*, "have been closely related throughout their history and are in fact ultimately variant forms of a single ancestral root." (SWW 1985: 408), and they may still be used instead of each other in many regional and social dialects of both British and American English.. What may turn out to be a specific Canadian feature is the presence of intransitive *lay* in the speech of educated speakers of Standard English. However, neither the evidence provided here nor my occasional notes "in the street" are sufficient to enable me to support this idea. Historical continuity, integration in the American non-standard continuum and the imperfect acquisition of the English Standard may equally be invoked.

1.2. Varia

1.2.1 Choice of tense and of clause structure

The structure of the English sentence that translates the Romanian "Sunt trei ani de cînd nu l-am mai văzut" generally confuses the EFL learner. In traditional TEFL[4], students are trained to practise the pattern "It's three years since I (last) saw him" (or "since I saw him last"), where "it's ... since ..." is felt as framing a cleft construction. In American speech, however, one often notices the preference for "It's been three years" for the first part, which is a logical choice with respect to the temporal contour of the situation expressed by the verb phrase. This is also the choice of my Canadian informants:

Which do you say: (1) *It's three years* or (2) *It's been three years*?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	*It's three years*	8	10.4	10.7
	It's been three years	65	84.4	86.7
	either	2	2.6	2.7
	Total	75	97.4	100.0
Missing	System	2	2.6	
Total		77	100.0	

As for the second part, somewhat illogically, Americans' preference goes towards "since I've seen him.", marked as (3) below and EFL students have their own favourite version, illustrated in (4) below. Which are Canadians' choices with respect to this second part?

Which do you say: (1) *since I last saw him*, (2) since I saw *him*, (3) *since I've seen him* or (4) *since I haven't seen him*?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	(1) *since I last saw him*	38	49.4	51.4
	(2) *since I saw him last*	10	13.0	13.5
	(3) *since I've seen him*	23	29.9	31.1
	(4) *since I haven't seen him*	1	1.3	1.4
	(5) (1), (2) or (3)	2	2.6	2.7
	Total	74	96.1	100.0
Missing	System	3	3.9	
Total		77	100.0	

Interestingly enough, my Canadian respondents, who go for the "American" choice in the first half (86,7 valid percent) of the sentence, favour the "British" choice(s) with respect to the second half (64,9 valid percent, which sums up (1) and (2)).

1.2.2. Problematic interrogative and negative forms

1.2.2.1. Which do you say: *do you need to be* or *need you be*?

The treatment of *need* and *dare* as lexical verbs rather than as auxiliaries in negating and questioning is the general tendency both in England and the United States. However, English English still has the option of two variants (Trudgill 1994: 62). In my questionnaire I have taken over the example used by Trudgill to illustrate these statements:

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	*do you need to*	70	90.9	92.1
	need you	4	5.2	5.3
	neither *(Must you/*			
	Do you have to be so rude?)	2	2.6	2.6
	Total	76	98.7	100.0
Missing	System	1	1.3	
Total		77	100.0	

As anticipated, the quasi-totality of the respondents follow the general trend. Two of the four informants who have chosen to treat *need* as an auxiliary are from Pakistan, which might not be incidental. One sometimes notices "a tendency towards florid and archaic style" in post-colonial Englishes, "where the masters of Victorian literature and the Authorised Version of the Bible played a major role in the curriculum as long as the British still ran the educational system" (Mair 1995: 76)[5].

1.2.2.2. Which do you say: (1) *used not to* (2) *didn't use to* (3) *usedn't to* or (4) *never used to*?

A certain degree of embarrassment occurs when it comes to the interrogative and negative forms of *used to*. Trudgill illustrates the behaviour of *used to* in negating sentences by mentioning two examples:

He used not to go there. (auxiliary)
He didn't use to go there. (lexical verb)

Then he explains that *used to* is treated only as a lexical verb in US English and "this is also becoming increasingly the case in EngEng." (Trudgill 1994: 61). To these remarks let me add a strategy I first noticed in the late sixties, namely, the use of the negative adverb *never* in order to avoid either of the two constructions. This is a commonsensical solution in the case of a verb whose *use* form is questionable. It is also the solution favoured by a large number of informants, along with the second ("modern") solution. Solution (3), *usedn't to*, was unanimously rejected:

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	(1) *used not to*	2	2.6	2.7
	(2) *didn't use to*	15	19.5	20.3
	(4) *never used to*	31	40.3	41.9
	both (2) and (4)	25	32.5	33.8
	both (1) and (4)	1	1.3	1.4
	Total	74	96.1	100.0
Missing	System	3	3.9	
Total		77	100.0	

1.2.2.3. Epistemic *must not*

With respect to the negative constructions corresponding to epistemic *must*, Trudgill remarks that in southern English English the negative form is *can't*, as in the examples:

He must be in – his TV is on.
He can't be in – his car is gone.[6]

In US English "the most common negative of epistemic *must* is *must not*" (Trudgill 1994: 61)[7]. Can the US usage also be found in Anglophone Canada? This is what our sample reveals:

Which do you say: (1) *can't* or (2) *must not*?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	*can't*	59	76.6	78.7
	must not	15	19.5	20.0
	both	1	1.3	1.3
	Total	75	97.4	100.0
Missing	System	2	2.6	
Total	77	100.0		

So the answer is "yes". Although these (limited) results point to the prevalence of epistemic *can't*, 20 per cent of the respondents have chosen the "American" form. Who are these "20 per cent" Canadians?

		Which do you say: *can't* or *must not?*			Total
		can't	*must not*	both	
Birthplace	New Canadians	30	6		36
	Old Canadians	29	9	1	39
Total		59	15	1	75

Of the nine Canadian-born informants who have chosen *must not*, eight are in their twenties and thirties and may represent an orientation of the young generation towards US patterns. But, for the particular case we are discussing, this statement naturally needs yet to be checked against larger population samples.

2. *Nomina*

In discussing the areas of difficulty in structuring noun phrases (NPs), the focus is mainly – but not exclusively – on the ratio between "British English" and "American English" in the Canadian Anglophone speakers' preferences regarding expressions of countability, the use and position of the definite article in certain set phrases, case choice, co-reference, and word order.

For that I have selected eight questions from the questionnaire section regarding vocabulary, grammar and usage, which are meant to evidence Canadians' choices with respect to six issues, namely,

A. "British" or "American"?
1. the different distribution of the feature [+count] /[-count] in British and American English;
2. the different word order in phrases denoting names of rivers;
3. the presence or absence of the definite article in the structure prep. + (def.art.+) *hospital*;
4. the choice of pronominal forms in co-referential chains in *one* is the initial item;

B. *Me* or *I*?
5. word order and choice of case in a compound subject of the type *Tom and I*;
6. choice of case in the prepositional set phrase *between you and me*.

The questions devised to compel the respondents to choose between two (or more) alternatives are listed below. The first four (actually No. 2 includes three questions) are related to the American-British ratio in the speakers' choices and the last two to the *me/I* problem, which is shared by the whole English-speaking world:

Which would you say:

1.*(1) two heads of lettuce* 🖋
  (2) two lettuces 🖋

2. *a.* *(1) the River Thames* 🖋
        (2) the Thames River 🖋

    b. *(1) the Mississippi River* 🖋
        (2) the River Mississippi 🖋

    c. *(1) the River Olt* 🖋
        (2) the Olt River 🖋

3 . *(1) He is in the hospital for surgery.* 🖋
    (2) He is in hospital for surgery. 🖋

4. *One has to try hard if*
    (1) one wants to succeed 🖋
    (2) he wants to succeed 🖋
    (3) (Other; specify)...................................

* * *

5. *(1) Me and Tom are rooting for the Red Barons.* 🖋
    (2) Tom and me are rooting for the Red Barons. 🖋
    (3) Tom and I are rooting for the Red Barons. 🖋

Would you ever say:

6. *Just between you and I, your aunt is often wrong.*
    (1) Yes 🖋   (2) No 🖋   (3) ....

The results of the statistical processing of the empirical data provided by the respondents will be presented and discussed in turn.

2.1. *A lettuce* or *a head of lettuce*?

It seems that the representation/conceptualisation of the same entity that exists in perceived reality may differ not only from one language to another but also from one variety to another within the same language with regard to the feature [±COUNT][8]. Such words as *cabbage* and *lettuce* may be treated both as [C] and as [U] in British English, whereas American English usage is restricted to [U]. The table below clearly illustrates the preference of Canadian English speakers (81.8 per cent) for "two heads of lettuce", where the syntax of *lettuce* evidences the feature [U].

Which do you say: *heads of lettuce* or *lettuces*?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	*two heads of lettuce*	63	81.8	81.8
	two lettuces	14	18.2	18.2
	Total	77	100.0	100.0
Total		77	100.0	

2.2.   *The River Olt or the Olt River?*

A well-known distinction between British and American English is the word order in noun phrases denoting names of rivers, i.e., **def. art.** + *River* + **proper name** of the river in British English vs. **def. art.** + **proper name** + *River*. Although the typical names *The River Thames* and *The Mississippi River* are fixed as such in most English speakers' memory, over 50 per cent of the Canadian respondents "Americanize" the name of the Thames. Compare the data below:

Which do you say: (1) *the River Thames* or (2) *the Thames River*?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	*The River Thames*	34	44.2	45.3
	The Thames River	39	50.6	52.0
	either	2	2.6	2.7
	Total	75	97.4	100.0
Missing	System	2	2.6	
Total		77	100.0	

Which do you say: (1) *the Mississippi River* or (2) *the River Mississippi*?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	*The Mississippi River*	72	93.5	96.0
	The River Mississippi	3	3.9	4.0
	Total	75	97.4	100.0
Missing	System	2	2.6	
Total		77	100.0	

Their definite preference for the American form has been evidenced by the next question in my questionnaire, about the name of a river they have presumably never heard of.. About three quarters of my informants display, once again, their preference for the American form.

Which do you say: (1) *the River Olt* or (2) *the Olt River*[9]?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	*The River Olt*	17	22.1	24.3
	The Olt River	51	66.2	72.9

	either	2	2.6	2.9
	Total	70	90.9	100.0
Missing	System	7	9.1	
Total		77	100.0	

2.3. *In the hospital* or *in hospital*?

The semantic difference between the **prep. +** *school/prison/church/etc.* construction and its counterpart **prep. + def. art. +** *school/prison/church/etc* have often been mentioned in grammar books. British and American English apply the same rules in the case of these constructions with one notable exception: the use of the definite article in both cases with the word *hospital*. Thus **prep. + def. art. +** *hospital* is looked upon as a distinguishing structure of American English speech. It is also the preferred form of almost 70 per cent of my Canadian informants.

Which do you say: (1) *in the hospital* or (2) *in hospital*?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	*in the hospital*	52	67.5	68.4
	in hospital	23	29.9	30.3
	either (depending on context)	1	1.3	1.3
	Total	76	98.7	100.0
Missing	System	1	1.3	
Total		77	100.0	

In respect to this prepositional idiom, Brinton and Fee (2001: 432) state that "Canadians resemble British speakers in the omission of articles in expressions such as *in hospital.*" Our results, however, seem to testify to the "Americanisation" of this idiom. The issue is worth considering for further research.

2.4. One has to work hard if... *one* wants to be successful?

As for the repetition of the impersonal pronoun *one* in a co-referential chain, which is the recommended Standard British form mentioned in traditional normative grammars and books of rhetoric, in this respect there has been a lot of relaxation lately, partly because the formality norms have slid towards the "lower" end of the formality scale and partly because of the relatively recent requirements of political correctness. Thus, instead of the recommended *one ... one* chain in British English and the *one ... he* chain in American English, one can hear several alternatives such as *he or she, she or he, you, they.*

Surprisingly enough, this time the Canadian respondents' preference clearly goes toward the recommended British form (88.2 per cent).

Which do you say: (1) *one... one* or (2) *one.. he*? (3) (other; specify) ......

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	*One ... one*	67	87.0	88.2
	One ... he	8	10.4	10.5

	One ... you	1	1.3	1.3
	Total	76	98.7	100.0
Missing	System	1	1.3	
Total		77	100.0	

The Canadian Oxford Dictionary (1998) specifies that *one* is "regarded as formal usage" and that "where a sentence requires that the pronoun be repeated, either *one* or *he, she,* or *they* (or *his, her, their,* or *theirs*) may be used, but it is important to avoid ambiguity".

2.5. *Me and Tom, Tom and me* or *Tom and I*?

The issue of *Tom and me* regards both a morphosyntactic choice (the subject vs. the object form of the personal pronoun) and a pragmatic one (the egocentric *Me and Tom* vs. the polite *Tom and me/I*. The high percentage of options in favour of *Tom and I* (82.9 per cent) may be correlated with the prevailing middle-class status of the Canadian population as well as with the effect of school education among both Old and New Canadians.

Which do you say: (1) *Me and Tom*, (2) *Tom and me*, (3) *Tom and I*?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	*Me and Tom*	4	5.2	5.3
	Tom and me	7	9.1	9.2
	Tom and I	63	81.8	82.9
	both (2) and (3)	2	2.6	2.6
	Total	76	98.7	100.0
Missing	System	1	1.3	
Total		77	100.0	

2.6. Would you ever say "just between you and I..."?

A question of peripheral interest is meant to check the respondents' attitude to the use of the subject pronoun *I* after a preposition in the set phrase *between you and me/I*. The result are similar to those obtained by British sociolinguists about thirty years ago, which showed a relatively high degree of acceptability of this case of hypercorrection.

Would you ever say "*Just between you and I...*"?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Yes	29	37.7	38.2
	No	46	59.7	60.5
	(other)	1	1.3	1.3
	Total	76	98.7	100.0
Missing	System	1	1.3	
Total		77	100.0	

The classical example of hypercorrection "Between you and I...", in which the object form of the pronoun is replaced by the subject form, transcends the British/American dichotomhy since it has been recorded on both sides of the Atlantic. It has to do more with the distribution of choices along the social-educational scale than with geographic distribution.

3.   *Instrumenta*

The few questions focusing on expressions involving the use of prepositions and conjunctions start from the same assumption that there is a choice of two phrases in each case, one being typical of British English and the other of American English. The British version comes first in all the five questions listed below:

1: Which do you say: (1) *for weeks* or (2) *in weeks*?
2: Which do you say: (1) *by day-at night* or (2) *days-nights*?
3: Which do you say: (1) *Is John at home* or (2) *Is John home*?
4: Which do you say: (1) *meet sb.* or (2) *meet with sb.*?
5: Which do you say to express concession? (1) Strange as it may seem, ...
     (2) Strange though it may seem, ... (3) As strange as it may seem,
     ...
6: Which do you say: (1) *As I said* ... or (2) *Like I said* ... ?

3.1. Which do you say: (1) *for weeks* or (2) *in weeks*?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	*for weeks*	41	53.2	53.9
	in weeks	31	40.3	40.8
	(either)	4	5.2	5.3
	Total	76	98.7	100.0
Missing	System	1	1.3	
Total		77	100.0	

Although the two choices are relatively evenly distributed, the preference of my respondents goes slightly in the direction of the British form. The hypothesis of its prevalence among New Canadians exposed to British patterns by the education systems in their countries of origin does not prove to be valid – the preferences divide between the two choices once again, both among the Old Canadians and among the New Canadians, but the scales are tipped in favour of the British form:

		Which do you say: *for weeks* or *in weeks*?			Total
		for weeks	in weeks	(either)	
Birthplace	New Canadians	21	16		37
	Old Canadians	20	15	4	39
Total		41	31	4	76

3.2. Which do you say: (1) *by day... at night* or (2) *days... nights*?

The prepositions that govern the two phrases functioning as adverbials are dropped in the American version and the nouns are pluralised. The respondents evenly divide between the two choices:

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	*He works by day and studies at night*	38	49.4	50.7
	He works days and studies nights	37	48.1	49.3
	Total	75	97.4	100.0
Missing	System	2	2.6	
Total		77	100.0	

Once again the crosstabulation count reveals the preference for the British form among both the New Canadians and the Old Canadians::

		Which do you say: *for weeks* or *in weeks*?			Total
		for weeks	*in weeks*	(either)	
Birthplace	New Canadians	21	16		37
	Old Canadians	20	15	4	39
Total		41	31	4	76

3.3. Which do you say: (1) *Is John at home* or (2) *Is John home*?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	*Is John at home?*	18	23.4	24.0
	Is John home?	56	72.7	74.7
	either	1	1.3	1.3
	Total	75	97.4	100.0
Missing	System	2	2.6	
Total		77	100.0	

This time the prevailing option favours the form preferred by Americans "Is John home?"[10]

3.4. Which do you say: (1) *meet sb.* or (2) *meet with sb.*?

The use of *meet* as an intransitive verb followed by the preposition *with* is associated with two different types of subjects and of prepositional objects, hence with two different meanings: (a) NP $_{[-ANIMATE]}$ + *meet with* + NP$_{[-ANIMATE]}$, e.g., *All appeals for aid met with bureaucratic refusal...* (*CCLD* 1987: 904); (b) NP$_{[+ANIMATE]}$ + *meet with* + NP$_{[+ANIMATE]}$, meaning "to come together for discussion, bragaining" etc. (*WNWD*: 883).[11] I was only interested in the frequency of the (A) meaning among my informants:

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	(1) *He met the head... at 10 o'clock.*	22	28.6	29.3
	(2) *He met with the head... at 10 o'clock.*	48	62.3	64.0
	(1) and (2) have different meanings	5	6.5	6.7
	Total	75	97.4	100.0
Missing	System	2	2.6	
Total		77	100.0	

Meet with accompanied by two animate arguments seems to be specific to American speech, Canadian speech included, since 64 percent of the respondents prefer it. Five more will use both structures, depending on context.

3.5. Which do you say to express concession?

The respondents were offered a choice of three variants for "no matter how strange it may seem". The first two variants are commonly labelled as "British". The presence of initial *as* in adverbial clauses of concession (the third variant) is considered a mark of American speech.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	(1) Strange as it may seem...	45	58.4	60.0
	(2) Strange though it may seem...	5	6.5	6.7
	(3) As strange as it may seem...	21	27.3	28.0
	any one of them	2	2.6	2.7
	(1) and (3)	2	2.6	2.7
	Total	75	97.4	100.0
Missing	System	2	2.6	
Total		77	100.0	

This time the preference for the first two variants prevails, only 28 per cent of the respondents choosing the third, i.e., the American structure.

3.6. Which do you say: (1) *As I said ...* or (2) *Like I said ...* ?

In standard English, *like* is normally used as a preposition, whereas *as* functions as a conjunction. In casual spoken American English, however, *like* is commonly used as a synonym of *as*. Over 50 per cent of my informants follow the American pattern:

Which do you say: (1) *As I said ...* or (2) *Like I said ...* ?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	*like*	42	54.5	54.5
	as	35	45.5	45.5
Total		77	100.0	100.0

The tendency to follow the general North American pattern is more visible with the younger generations:

		Which do you say: *like* or *as*?		Total
		like	*as*	
Age	12-19	4	2	6
	20-29	9	6	15
	30-39	15	6	21
	40-49	8	11	19
	50-59	6	7	13
	60-69	-	2	2
	70-79	-	1	1
Total		42	35	77

The few senior respondents choose the standard *as*, whereas those aged 40-59 are divided between the two choices, still slightly favouring the generally accepted standard form. The people in the 30-39 year-old bracket, which was prevalent in the year 2000, when I collected the data, prefer *like* to *as*, and the younger generations go in the same direction, despite probable influences via formal education in their countries of origin. Paradoxically, upon checking the counties of origin of the New Canadians in relation to these answers, I found out that the two sixty-year-olds who have chosen *as* are US immigrants, and one person in the 50-59-year-old bracket who has chosen *like* comes from England.

3.7. Further notes

The present sample survey did not include some frequently investigated structures on both sides of the Atlantic, such as *"different from, different than* or *different to?"* or British *behind* vs. American *in back of.* The *in the street / on the street* choice was not included either, but, impressionistically, I noticed a preference for the "American" variant, that is, for *on the street.*

4. American, British or Canadian? What Canadians think their grammar is like

In terms of subjective self-evaluation of their "grammar" with relation to the two major varieties, British English and American English, the respondents had a choice of three answers (numbered 1-3), to which they added two more (see below):

I think in grammar Canadian English is ...

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	(1) *like American English*	26	33.8	35.1
	(2) *like British English*	32	41.6	43.2
	(3) *different from both*	13	16.9	17.6
	like both	2	2.6	2.7
	not sure	1	1.3	1.4
	Total	74	96.1	100.0
Missing	System	3	3.9	
Total		77	100.0	

As in the case of spelling, the idea of a link to British English rather than American English is present with a considerable number of respondents. More precisely, the two major options are distributed almost evenly, particularly in the 30-39 year-old age bracket, both among the Canadian-born and among the New Canadians:

Birthplace			*In grammar Canadian English is ...*					Total
			like American English	*like British English*	*different from both*	*like both*	*not sure*	
NCs	Age	12-19	1	3				4
		20-29		1	1			2
		30-39	5	4				9
		40-49	3	6	3	1		13
		50-59	3	2	1	1		7
		70-79					1	1
	Total		12	16	5	2	1	36
OCs	Age	12-19			1			1
		20-29	4	7	1			12
		30-39	5	5	2			12
		40-49	2	3				5
		50-59	2	1	3			6
		60-69	1		1			2
	Total		14	16	8			38

5. Final remarks

In fact, there are few elements of grammar and usage that distinguish Canadian English from US English – particularly from the Northern US forms – as there are just minor elements that distinguish the British English from the American English standard forms in this respect.

I am deeply aware of the limits of my investigation both in terms of total number of informants and in terms of geographic distribution (restricted to sections of urban Ontario). However, since the population sample I worked with is representative in terms of age, ethnicity, place of origin, occupation and, to some extent, sex (women outnumbering men in a higher proportion than the official ratio), I do believe that the results of my (socio)linguistic and human adventure are worth sharing. [12]

As shown previously, about half of my 77 respondents are New Canadians, that is, not born in Canada, and for 26 of them English is not the language spoken at home:

English spoken at home:

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid always	35	45.5	
45,5			
often	16	20.8	
66,2			
rarely	16	20.8	
87,0			
never	10	13.0	
100,0			
Total	77	100.0	

In their countries of origin many of them were exposed to British English rules via schooling, but they are currently adjusting to the "American continuum" with respect to the details of American English usage, whether in the United States or in Canada. This has naturally led to the results concerning such issues as.those raised by questions 1.1.1.b, 1.1.3, 2.1-3, 3.3., 3.4 and 3.6.

In all the cases discussed, some of the respondents' choices may have to do with the incomplete acquisition of the norms of the (International) English standard. With respect to issues 2.4-6, the results confirm the high degree of literacy, the middle class status and, possibly, the decent social aspirations of the members of the population sample, which have naturally led them to the compliance with the traditional normative rules of "good English" on both sides of the Atlantic.

As for the "British" choices among the New Canadians that have received these variants through formal education in their country of origin, their number is likely to go down in time for several reasons: (1) the newcomers gradually adjust their speech to the prevailing forms in current use among the Old Canadians; (2) their

children will presumably be Old Canadians themselves; (3) the number of distinctive British English features will probably go down everywhere in the world given the fact that "American English and Trans-Atlantic English are rapidly becoming a world language" (Woods 1993: 174).

Notes

1. The "Representations of Language and Identity among English-speaking Canadians" series of published studies is based on the data provided by the sociolinguistic sample survey by the same name. Initiated by the author in the year 2000, it illustrates the linguistic habits as well as the subjective evaluation of these habits by the English-speaking inhabitants of urban Ontario. Whereas the first study (Albu 2001) evidenced the lack of concordance between Canadians' *spelling* choices (51% American - according to the collected data) and what they think their spelling is like (namely, 55% British), with respect to *pronunciation*, Canadians' evaluation of their pronunciation is closer to the truth in the sense that they rate it as closer to American than to British English (Albu 2003). The assertion of the differences by a large percentage of the respondents (c.47%) may not necessarily come from a sense of national identity but, rather, from an awareness of the reflection of both of the pronunciation norms in the Canadians' speech habits. The study of a set of lexical units has brought forth a more realistic perspective of the population with regard to *vocabulary* (Albu 2002). Just as the initial hypotheses had foreseen, Canadians' lexical choices are divided between (1) the British lexical item; (2) the North American lexical item (U.S. and Canada); and (3) the typically Canadian lexical item. (4) Apart from that, New Canadians tend to preserve, at least for some time after their arrival, culture-specific elements that influence their lexical choices. However, their subjective self-reflexive statements reveal the sense of belonging to a common North-American culture, followed by an increasing sense of national identity. Finally, a study of some North American verb forms (Albu 2005) has once more evidenced the fact that the Canadian choices may be integrated within the Northern dialects. However, unlike other "regularised" verbs that I have discussed, the old irregular paradigm of *dream* (marked by the *-t* ending and by the change of the internal vowel) remains Canadians' favourite.

2. Actually, levelling disjunctive questions to a unique form seems to be the general rule in many languages, including non-standard English varieties. Cf. its equivalent forms in other European languages, e.g., Romanian *nu-i așa?*, French: *n'est-ce pas?*, German *nicht so?*. Cf also Welsh English: *isn't it?*, South-African English: *is it?* – according to Trudgill 1982; Scots: *e?* and *e no?* –according to Miller 1993. Crystal (1995 299) lists the following invariant question tags:

- *is it?* (Zambia, South Africa, Singapore, Malaysia)
- *isn't it?* (South Asia, Wales, Papua New Guinea, West Africa)
- *not so?* (West Africa, South Asia, Papua New Guinea)
- *no?* (SW USA, Pueblo)

The standard English elaborated rules for question-tags formation look rather artificial compared to this general tendency towards economy.

3. In all the cases discussed, some of the respondents' choices may have to do with the incomplete acquisition of the norms of the (International) English standard. This seems to be particularly true with respect to questions 1a and 2.

4. Teaching English as a Foreign Language

5. The other two informants were an Irish person and an Old Canadian in his forties.

6. "In the north-west of England, *mustn't* is used rather than *can't*." (Trudgill 1994: 61)

7. In US English "*must not* cannot be contracted to *mustn't* without changing the meaning of the auxiliary to 'not be allowed'" (Trudgill 1994: 61), that is, to its deontic value.

8. Henceforth [C] ="count(able)" and [U] = "uncount(able)".

9. A tributary to the Danube in Romania.

10. British speakers tend to make the distinction between the question" Is John at home?" asking about John's presence in the house at the speech time and "Is John home?", which can be equated to " Has John arrived yet?"

11. The latter meaning is recorded in American dictionaries, but it is not mentioned in the Canadian Oxford Dictionary. *MEDAL* records *meet with sb* as a phrasal verb meaning "have a formal meeting with someone" and *meet with sth* as a phrasal verb meaning either "to unexpectedly experience trouble, danger, difficulty etc" or "to get a particular result, reaction etc" as in *meet (with) opposition/ approval/resistance* etc.

12. For a clearer picture of the ethnic and linguistic variety of the population sample I worked with the Frequency Tables resulting from my Canadian English Data Base, which include respondents' identification, family background, education and knowledge of language(s), exposition to language, as well as the use of English in situations, attitudes to the official languages of Canada (English and French), to Canadian English and to their own English.

It would also have been worth tackling the actual speech patterns of the informants, as well as code-switching conditioned by the type of interaction. (In this respect, see, for instance, Poplack 1987) On formal occasions, I noticed that using "the other's language", at least by way of introduction, was a matter of courtesy and/or diplomacy. Thus, during the Canadian Studies Summer Course (University of Ottawa), the French native speakers would deliver (part of) their discourse in English and the English speakers in French. In Toronto, a similar milieu run by courtesy towards "the other", at least on the surface, was Glendon College (of York University).

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