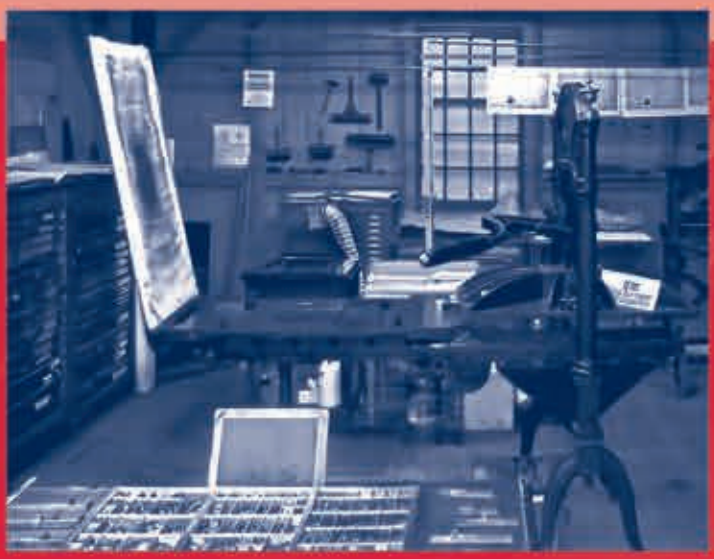
DAVID REUTER

Newspapers, Politics, and Canadian English

A Corpus-based Analysis of Selected Linguistic Variables in Early Nineteenth-century Ontario Newspapers



Universitätsverlag
WINTER
Heidelberg

ANGLISTISCHE FORSCHUNGEN
Band 457

Begründet von
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Herausgegeben von
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Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation
in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie;
detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet
über *http://dnb.d-nb.de* abrufbar.

UMSCHLAGBILD
Print Shop W. L. Mackenzie

ISBN 978-3-8253-6759-6

Imprimé en Allemagne · Printed in Germany
Druck: Memminger MedienCentrum, 87700 Memmingen

Gedruckt auf umweltfreundlichem, chlorfrei gebleichtem
und alterungsbeständigem Papier.

Den Verlag erreichen Sie im Internet unter:
www.winter-verlag.de

Acknowledgments

Many nice people have, in one way or the other, contributed to the success of my Ph.D. project. Above all, I need to thank **Matthias Meyer**, my Doktorvater and Professor of English Linguistics at the University of Kiel, for his consistent and knowledgeable help with my thesis, his frequent expert advice, and for his support of my work, not only during my Ph.D. years but throughout my studies at the CAU English Department as well. Matthias Meyer also had the wonderful idea to ask **Stefan Dollinger** to be my second doctorate supervisor. Stefan Dollinger, now Professor of English Linguistics at the University of Goteborg, is another true expert in the field of Canadian English, especially regarding real-time linguistic data from early 19th-century Ontario, and made sure several times that my work progressed in the right direction whenever I hit a dead end, for which I am very grateful. This especially holds true for my occupational stay in Vancouver during which he thoroughly introduced me to the practice of working with old text material. I would also like to thank **Lieselotte Anderwald**, Professor of English Linguistics at the University of Kiel, for frequently providing valuable feedback to my work after colloquium presentations. **Erik Smitterberg**, Senior Lecturer in English Linguistics at the University of Uppsala, was so kind to let me use his Corpus of Nineteenth-Century Newspaper English (CNNE) as a basis for comparison and even ran some searches for me – thanks again! The building of my own Corpus of Early Nineteenth-Century Ontario Newspaper English (CENCONE) was a time-consuming and meticulous piece of work and it wouldn't have been possible without the help of **Anja Konen**, **Arnbjörn Mechau**, **Martina Otten**, **Laura Witschel**, **Lena Reimann**, **Shanna Kenyon**, **Nicole Hudman** and **Elisabeth Maria Schlierike**, who spend a large number of hours deciphering and copying hardly readable Canadian newspaper pages. All of the former are or were employed at the CAU English Department and the rededication of their valuable working hours was generously arranged for by my Doktorvater. I also need to thank my former colleague **Uwe Vosberg** for his frequent encouragements, his great help with some tricky statistical issues and his valuable advice concerning the analysis of my grammatical variables.

My work on the corpus was also made a lot easier by the fine material and the nice staff at the **University of British Columbia Library** in Vancouver, the **University of Waterloo Library**, the **Archives of Ontario** in Toronto, and the **Universitätsbibliothek Kiel**.

A six-months scholarship from the **Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD)** made it possible for me to pursue my studies on-site in Canada during the year 2012 and the **Landesgraduiertenstipendium**, granted to me by the federal state of Schleswig-Holstein in Germany for two years, from 2010 to 2012, allowed me to focus on my work during the crucial early stages.

Finally, and most importantly, I want to thank my mother **Konstanze Reuter** and my partner **Annika**, two wonderful women, for their unconditional love and support over the past few years. Without you two, this book would never have been completed.

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Abbreviations

AmE	American English
BNC	*British National Corpus*
BrE	British English
CanE	Canadian English
COHA	*Corpus of Historical American English*
COSD	*Canadian Oxford Spelling Dictionary*
CPS	*Canadian Press Stylebook*
DCBO	*Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*
DMEU	*Dictionary of Modern English Usage*
DOEL	*A Dictionary of the English Language*
DOTP	*Dictionary of Toronto Printers*
EModE	Early Modern English
GCEU	*Guide to Canadian English Usage*
KanE	Kanadisches Englisch
LC	Lower Canada
LModE	Late Modern English
ME	Middle English
ModE	Modern English
OE	Old English
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary*
ODEE	*Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*
OntE	Ontario English
UC	Upper Canada
US	United States (of America)
VP	Verb phrase

Chapter 1

1 Introduction

The present study aims to systematically analyze the influence of political affiliation on early 19th-century Canadian English. By correlating the political allegiances of Canadian newspapers from this period with their usage of selected linguistic variables, a political dimension is added to the existing body of research on real-time diachronic studies on the development of Canadian English (above all by Dollinger, e.g. 2008, 2015a). In order to verify the linguistic assumptions postulated on the basis of the language-external political history, this study employs a corpus of early 19th-century Ontario newspapers (CENCONE) which is stratified along political lines into Tory and Whig papers with a temporal division into three years (1810, 1835, and 1860). The years have been selected with major political events in mind that most decisively shaped the history of the former British colony: the *War of 1812*, the *Rebellion of 1837/38* and the *Canadian Confederation* of 1867.

The possibility of a direct connection between political allegiances and language choices in early Ontario (that is, without adhering too much to settlement history) has been suggested in various studies before, but has never been thoroughly explored. Landon (1967) and Avis (1973) both briefly touch the issue in their detailed description of the colony's development. Gold (2004) looks at the (British or American) spelling of 15 lexical items in four early Canadian spelling books and lists several commentaries from Canadian officials or British visitors concerned with the number of American texts and teachers in Canadian schools at the time. And Dollinger states that "[t]he situation [in early Canada] must have been chaotic as language was used as an ideological battleground between the British Empire and the aspiring American empire" (personal correspondence, March 19, 2016, quoted with permission) but suggests until the 1820s "a 'western tilt' in terms of political allegiances" (2008: 68) in Ontario. In an earlier study Dollinger analyzes the development of *have to* vs. *must* in CanE and finds that "[s]ince the move away from British English did not even stop in times of war, it must have occurred as a change from below, criss-crossing political allegiances" and that the change thus "must have occurred without social awareness", and he assumes this result to "stand in contrast with more overt stereotypical variables, of which spelling variables are likely to be prime candidates" (2006: 299f). And indeed, portraying the norm change from *-or* spellings to *-our* spellings over the same period, Dollinger (2008) notes that "[i]t seems that Ontarians changed their spelling habits as a result of the War of 1812 and shed their American roots, so to speak, by converging closer to a British English norm" (2008: 126). He does not work out this assumption in more detail but notes that "[p]olitical allegiance as an independent variable is of linguistic interest, but needs to be relegated to future study" (2008: 69).

The analysis in CENCONE aims to fill this gap somewhat and seeks to provide a new political angle in the language-external perspectives to real-time studies on early CanE. The main goal is to provide evidence for the influence of political changes in the province on the linguistic development in general and to detect differences in the linguistic behavior of newspapers from opposing poles of the political spectrum. The results from the CENCONE analysis will be compared with the letter section of the CONTE corpus (Dollinger 2006) in order to detect genre-related differences. In addition, findings from BrE (and, where available, AmE) will be used to detect varietal differences. Before proceeding to a more detailed description of the structure of this study, I would like to turn briefly to the questions of why the research field of historical Canadian English might merit additional scholarly attention and why the approach chosen for this study can be considered a complement to existing research.

The study of historical Canadian English

The recognition of *Canadian English* (CanE) as a variety of English in its own right emerged as late as the mid-twentieth century. Until then it had been regarded as a kind of hybrid of *British English* (BrE) and *American English* (AmE), this notion, of course, taking account of the linguistic influences of both varieties throughout the Canadian history. The English-speaking Canadians themselves did not seem to be too concerned about this lack of language identity which starkly contrasted with the attitudes of both their neighbors to the south and the large group of French-speaking Canadians within the officially bilingual country. While the Americans early in history demarcated their own variety from BrE and while most francophone Canadians consider themselves speakers of *Canadian French*, anglophone Canadians until recently apparently did not feel the desire to stand out with respect to their own and unique way of using the English language (Dollinger 2008: 2f, Brinton and Fee 2001: 421).

Despite the low level of language awareness in Canada, various attempts have been made in the past six decades in form of scholarly research to emphasize the distinctiveness of CanE and to substantiate the claim of linguistic autonomy, especially in order to distinguish the variety from the two powerful norms of BrE on the one hand and AmE on the other.[1] The success of this research process is evident in the large number of publications that accompanied it and in the emersion of Canadian reference works, such as the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary* (Barber [1]1998, [2]2004), the *Gage Canadian Dictionary* (Avis *et al.* 1983, de Wolf *et al.* 1997), the *ITP Nelson Canadian Dictionary* (Friend *et al.* 1997) and *A Dictionary of Canadianisms on Historical Principles* (Avis *et al.* 1967), as well as handbooks on language usage and style, such as the *Guide to Canadian English Usage* (Fee and McAlpine [1]1997, [2]2007), *The Canadian Press Stylebook* (Tasko 2006), *The Canadian Style: A Guide to Writing and Editing* (The Canadian Style [1]1985, [2]1997) and *Editing Canadian English* (Cragg *et al.* [1]1987, [2]2000).

[1] Concise overviews of the research history on CanE can be found in Avis and Kinloch (1978; for the period until 1975), in Lougheed (1988; for the period from 1976 to 1987), in Dollinger (2008) and in Boberg (2010).

In this context, the focus of the studies on CanE up to date has largely been placed on synchronic observations, i.e. on the present state of the English language in Canada, presumably because of both the late recognition of CanE and the primary need of circumscribing the new variety in contrast to its established competitors. Diachronic studies which are based on real-time linguistic data, on the other hand, are very rare, especially those that reach back to the beginnings of CanE in the late 18th century. Conclusions on the development of early CanE are instead often drawn from the language-external history of the country. In overview articles on CanE, scholars have employed the different waves of immigration into the country and the demographic make-up of the former British colony at certain points in time to make educated guesses about the progression of the new variety of English towards its present state (e.g. Avis 1973, Scargill 1977, McConnell 1978, Bailey 1982, Chambers 1991, 1997, forthc., Brinton and Fee 2001, Boberg 2010).

This lack of 'real' diachronic studies has repeatedly been lamented in the literature connected to the current subject. Brinton and Fee note in their 2001 essay *Canadian English* that "studies of the development of linguistic features of Canadian English over time do not yet exist" (2001: 426). Dollinger's 2008 study on *New-Dialect Formation in Canada* features an entire section titled *The shortage of diachronic studies on Canadian English* (2008: 55f). And Boberg in his 2010 monograph *The English Language in Canada* concludes that "[t]o a great extent, the nature of even early twentieth- and nineteenth-century Canadian English, let alone of its historical inputs in the eighteenth century, is still only vaguely known" (2010: 249).

However, scholars agree that the source of present-day Standard Canadian English[2] can be found in what is today the province of Ontario and was called Upper Canada at the end of the 18th century (see e.g. Avis 1973: 62, Brinton and Fee 2001: 425, Dollinger 2008: 6). Despite earlier scattered English settlements in the Maritimes, the settlements in early Ontario are considered more important with respect to the development of CanE, for two reasons. First, because of the large group of so-called 'Loyalists', that is settlers loyal to the British Crown, who fled the United States in the aftermaths of the American Revolution at the end of the 18th century and settled in Upper Canada, thus constituting the first sizeable English-speaking population in the country. And second, because it were the settlers from Ontario and not those from the Atlantic Provinces who began the peopling of the western provinces in the middle of the 19th century and transported their language westward, thus establishing Ontario English (OntE) as the dominant variety of Canadian English (Chambers 1997: 5, Boberg 2010: 104, Dollinger 2015b: 101).

In this context, generally two positions on the main determinant for the development of CanE exist which go back to the theories put forward by Bloomfield (1948) on the

[2] The term *Standard Canadian English* is used in the literature alongside other terms (e.g. *General Canadian* or *Heartland Canadian*) to describe the dominant homogeneous dialect of English used by urban middle-class Anglophones in Canada today in an area spanning roughly from the Maritimes to British Columbia (see e.g. Avis 1973, Dollinger 2008, and especially Chambers 1973, 1975, 1998). Note that the scholarly discussions regarding both the validity of this definition and the notion of a standard in CanE in general will not be presented in this study. For a detailed overview see Dollinger (2008: 11f).

one hand and Scargill (1957) on the other. Both draw on the settlement history of early Ontario. The former claims that the Loyalist founder population of English-speaking Canada has set the pattern for CanE which was then not significantly altered by subsequent waves of immigration. And the latter reproaches the followers of this so-called 'Loyalist base theory' for their neglect of the linguistic influences of the massive wave of immigration into Canada from the British Isles between 1820 and 1850 and of independent innovations in CanE.[3] Evidence for either one of the two scenarios which is based on authentic language material from the period in question has so far been presented by neither of the two groups, with few exceptions. These include Chambers' (1993) work on 19th-century language attitudes, Thomas' (1991) work on Canadian Raising, Padolsky and Pringle's (1984) work on phonological variables, and Ireland's (1979) and Gold's (2004) works on early spelling practices (listed in Dollinger 2008: 58f). All of these scholars, however, draw on different early Canadian texts (travel reports, novels, spelling books) which are neither directly comparable with respect to content and formality nor available in machine-readable form.

Dollinger's 2008 study of modal auxiliaries in the *Corpus of Early Ontario English* (CONTE)[4] can then be considered the first systematic attempt to analyze early CanE usage by using real-time data and to test the opposing hypotheses postulated by Bloomfield (1948) and Scargill (1957). Besides providing access for further studies on OntE based on the same data set, the corpus also opened up the possibility of comparing the results with findings from similar corpora of other varieties of English (see the aims of CONTE in Dollinger 2008: 99f). The results from CONTE are interesting insofar as the idea of a monogenetic development of CanE is discarded in favor of coexisting influences, namely (in order of importance): parallel development (drift), Loyalist base input, independent Canadian developments, and British influence (Dollinger 2008: 279). Dollinger thus suggests that Bloomfield's and Scargill's hypotheses concerning the shaping of CanE both play an important role but are also only part of the story.

The present study now ties in with Dollinger's work insofar as it also employs real-time linguistic data from early 19th-century Ontario and in that it includes a cross-variety comparison of the Canadian data with the results from BrE corpora. It provides an entirely new approach to the research field, however, in that it focusses on the systematic analysis of the correlation between political affiliation and language use in early Ontario. In contrast to previous studies, it thus does not use the settlement history of the country and the accompanying hypotheses concerning the development of CanE as a theoretical backdrop but instead postulates a new set of assumptions, discussed below, which draw on both the political history and the newspaper history of early Canada. The present study also provides a new perspective insofar as the corpus created for the linguistic analyses entirely consists of Canadian newspapers. It does thus not include a genre-division, as e.g. CONTE does. It does, however, include a political

[3] Both theories and the arguments and of their followers are not discussed here in further detail. A comprehensive overview of the discussion can be found in Dollinger (2008; 121f). See also Bähr (1981: 24f) and Boberg (2010: 100f).

[4] The pre-Confederation section of CONTE (CONTE-pC) which was used for the study of modal auxiliaries includes three genres (letters, diaries, and newspapers) and a total of 125,000 words (35,100 words in newspapers; see Dollinger 2008: 287).

division into Tory papers and Whig papers whereas all texts in CONTE, including the newspapers, are treated the same in this respect. This focus on newspapers allows for a reliable verification of the assumption concerning the influence of political affiliation on language use, as briefly explained in the following.

Canadian newspapers and Canadian politics

In 1834, a publication of little more than 20 pages, called *A New Almanack for the Canadian True Blues*, featured a paragraph which, without further explanation, divided the existing newspapers in Canada at the time into three camps according to their political affiliation: 15 papers were classified as "patriotic liberal journals", 15 papers as "servile Tory papers", and two other papers, one in Montreal and one in York, had "not decided yet" (Swift 1834: 10). The author of the little pamphlet, as provided on its front page, was one Patrick Swift, a professor of Astrology from York. In fact, however, the small booklet, which besides the brief note on the political bias of the newspapers contained a collection of stats and commentaries related to current political issues, had been penned by William Lyon Mackenzie, one of the most colorful characters in early 19th-century Canadian politics and editor of the *Colonial Advocate*. Mackenzie's political role, that of a radical Reformer and harsh critic of British colonial politics in Canada, shows through both the wording in his newspaper classification and through the subtitle of his publication which announced the "total and everlasting downfall of Toryism in the British Empire" (Swift 1834: 1).[5] The name of Patrick Swift, allegedly a descendant of the famous Irish writer Jonathan Swift, Mackenzie had used repeatedly as one of his many *noms de guerre* (Fetherling 1990:16) in his decades-long efforts of opposing the colonial government.

At the time of the *Almanack's* publication, Mackenzie was playing a vital role at the center of the political battle in Upper Canada that raged between Conservatives (Tories) and Reformers (Whigs), i.e. between loyal supporters of the British colonial government and the monarchical system on the one hand and critics of the colonial government and proponents of Republicanism, modeled on the political system of the United States (US), on the other hand. This battle was fought, of course, through heated debates in the provincial assemblies. It was also, however, intensely carried out through the columns of the early Canadian papers. The reason for the strong involvement of the newspapers in Canadian colonial politics was simple: virtually every newspaper editor in early 19th-century Canada was, for the one side or the other, also active on the political stage. Moreover, many of the early Canadian newspapers had been started in the first place out of the desire to express their editors' political opinion. Accordingly, based on the large number of political commentary in the papers and their editors' political biographies, all newspapers (with minor exceptions, as indicated by Mackenzie's third group above) could unambiguously and objectively be classified as either Tory papers or Whig papers.

[5] The full title of Swift's (Mackenzie's) 1834 publication read *A new Almanack for the Canadian True Blues; with which is incorporated The Constitutional Reformer's Text Book; For the millenial and prophetical year of the Grand General Election for Upper Canada, and total and everlasting downfall of Toryism in the British Empire.*

This clear-cut division into two political groups is a feature characteristic of the Upper Canadian press landscape from its beginnings in 1793, when the governmentally-controlled *Upper Canada Gazette* was first published in Newark, until the early 1860s, when Conservatives and Reformers decided to join forces in the preparation of the Canadian Confederation. In the roughly 70 years in between, a number of decisive political events which shaped the development of the colony, the most important two certainly being the War of 1812 and the Rebellion of 1837/38, fueled the conflict between the two parties and triggered new waves of political debates in the newspapers.

Due to the involvement of the early Ontarian papers in the political skirmishes of the colony, an analysis of newspapers from both sides of the political spectrum appears to be a useful approach to researching the influence of political allegiances on language use in early Canada. Before proceeding to the aims of the present study, a brief note must be made in addition, however, on the general usefulness of newspapers in the context of corpus analyses.

Newspapers in corpus-linguistic studies

The growing interest in corpus linguistics, fostered by technological advancements in the last decades, has produced a range of linguistic studies based on corpus data. In a 2011 article, Biber explains this development by stating that "it could be argued that a corpus provides the best way to represent a textual domain, and corpus analysis is the most powerful empirical approach for analyzing the patterns of language use in that domain" and he adds that "[s]uch analyses are applicable in any sub-discipline of linguistics that includes consideration of language use, including the study of lexical and grammatical variation, discourse patterns, spoken and written register variation, historical change, etc." (2011: 15f).

The fact that newspapers in this context are generally suited for linguistic analyses is mirrored by the inclusion of newspaper material in important text corpora. Corpora of the English language which include newspaper data are, for instance, the *Corpus of Historical American English* (COHA) for AmE, the *British National Corpus* (BNC) for BrE, and the *Strathy Corpus of Canadian English* for CanE (which, however, only dates back to the 1980s). In an article on corpus-based analyses, Hundt and Mair come to the conclusion that newspaper texts are "first-rate material for linguists interested in ongoing change" (1999: 236) and Dollinger points to the need of continuous occupation with newspaper data in the frame of his CONTE description by saying that "interesting features can be found even in short newspaper excerpts […] and provide points of departure for linguistic analyses" (2008: 112).

When analyzing early Canadian newspaper data in the frame of a diachronic linguistic study it needs to be kept in mind that these newspapers constitute a formal written genre and that thus the results from the corpus analysis have to be evaluated accordingly. With respect to the genre-inherent degree of formality, Hundt and Mair found that newspapers form "a written genre unusually receptive to (and in good many instances also productive of) innovations or "changes from below"" (1999: 236), that is to influences from the informal language. While this statement might apply to the 20th-century newspapers analyzed by Hundt and Mair, it must be questioned for the early

19th-century Canadian newspapers, as will become clear in the discussion of the newspapers which are used in the corpus for the present study.

A valuable approach to differentiating between formal and informal language use in early Canada would of course have included a comparison of the written with the spoken language for the period in question. However, no collection of authentic spoken material in general exists before the 20th century (Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 2003: 9). In his chapter on the development of the English syntax in *The Cambridge History of the English Language*, Denison, faced with the same problem, notes that "there can be real difficulty in distinguishing between genuine changes in syntax and mere changes in conventions of decorum in written language" (1998: 95). He goes on, however, to claim that "in syntax it is not too much of a distortion to ignore variation between speech and writing" since differences that appear in different sources "are probably as much to do with formality as medium" (1998: 95). In the present study, a formality index for the early Canadian papers is employed in the analysis in order to detect genre-internal formality differences. And in order to detect formality differences between genres, the results from the newspaper corpus are juxtaposed with the results from the CONTE letters which Dollinger (along with the diary entries) classifies as "indirect indicators of more informal language use" (2008: 100).

The above considerations constitute the basis for the study of linguistic variables in a corpus of Canadian newspapers. The following section presents, as a last point in this short introduction, an overview of the structure of the following chapters and provides the four basic assumptions which form the theoretical backdrop for the linguistic analyses.

Structure and basic assumptions of the present study

The study is comprised of three main parts: the first provides the new language-external perspective, the second describes the corpus of Canadian newspapers, and the third presents the empirical data from the analysis.

Chapter 2 links the political history of early 19th-century Canada, which is shaped by the British-American conflict, to the development of the press landscape in Ontario. It is divided chronologically into three parts, each describing the developments both in the newspapers and on the political stage before the three events which are used as benchmarks for the corpus: the War of 1812, the Rebellion of 1837/38 and the Canadian Confederation of 1867. A fourth section briefly comments on the important role of newspapers in the early Canadian society.

Chapter 3 introduces the development and the structure of the *Corpus of Early Nineteenth-Century Ontario Newspaper English* (CENCONE). It includes details on the individual newspapers and background information on the periodization of the corpus and the method of compilation. It also comprises a section on the different text-types in the early Canadian papers, which form the basis for the calculation of the above-mentioned formality index.

Chapter 4 presents the results from CENCONE. Its three sections comprise the analysis of one spelling variable and two morphosyntactic variables. Each section is structured along the same lines and includes a historical review of the variable's development, the empirical analysis and a summary of the results. The analysis itself