

## The Canadian Vowel Shift: Shifting Westward

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The current study presents detailed research of regional variation in Edmonton, AB and sheds light on the production of vowels and the status of the Canadian Vowel Shift (CVS) in Inland Canada. The Canadian Vowel Shift (CVS) is defined as the backing of /ɒ/, the simultaneous retraction and lowering of /æ/, and the lowering of /ɛ/. In the past decade, major impressionistic and acoustic work (Labov et al. 2006; Boberg 2005, 2008; Hoffman 2010) has revealed evidence of a homogenous shift in progress across Canada, mainly focusing on the changes occurring in Ontario and Québec. The present study examines a group of speakers controlled for sex and gender in greater detail than previous studies conducted in the region.

Following Boberg (2005, 2008), this study examines data collected from four young females native to Edmonton using a word list. The word list elicited 115 common, monosyllabic words from each speaker. Of these tokens, 45 contained the short vowels /æ ɒ ɛ ʌ ʊ ɪ/ and were used in the analysis for this study. An acoustic analysis of the vowel formants was conducted using PRAAT. This study offers insights on the productions of the vowels /æ ɒ ɛ ʌ ʊ ɪ/ in Edmonton, AB.

Results show that speakers from Edmonton exhibit differing degrees of participation in the CVS, though the language-internal conditioning and the phonetic characterization of the shift parallel results found in Toronto (Hoffman 2010). Although a great deal of variation exists between words, generalizations can be made based on the averages for each speaker: productions of /ɛ/ are greater than 650 Hz; /æ/ is less than 1825 Hz; and /ɒ/ is lower than 1275 Hz. In comparison with the averages found by Boberg (2008), there are several significant differences in the articulation of /æ ɛ ɒ/ in the present study: the F1 value for /æ/ is realized higher in the vowel space than the average found by Boberg; for /ɒ/ both the F1 and F2 from the speakers of Edmonton English is higher and further forward; and the F2 of /ɛ/ is more advanced. This data shows that the speakers of Edmonton English are more conservative in their realizations of key vowels involved in the CVS than the national average cited by Boberg (2008), lagging behind the Canadian national average their participation in the CVS.

The present study constitutes pilot research for future work on a more detailed and stratified sociolinguistic survey of English in urban and rural Alberta and adds to the growing body of research on the regional variation in the vowel system of Canadian English.

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