

The verb phrase in contemporary Canadian English*

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1. Introduction

In this chapter I explore several changes underway in the verb phrase in contemporary Canadian English as spoken in the largest urban centre of the country, Toronto. In the early 2000s, I built a data set especially designed to track ongoing and in particular recent variation and change in the city (Tagliamonte, 2003-2006). I first describe the challenges of creating such a body of materials — currently 275 people between the ages of 9-92, all born and raised in the city. Then, turning to sociolinguistic theory, I argue that this data provides the ideal apparent time window on the origins and development of this (major) variety of English (see Chambers, 1995).

Examination of the data reveal that there are innumerable changes in progress including *have to* in the deontic modality system as *must* and *have got* recede, as in (1a), and *have* for stative possession in place of *have got*, as in (1b), use of *be going to* for future temporal reference rather than *will*, as in (1c); and the dramatic emergence of *be like* in the quotative system instead of *said*, as in (1d);

1. a. You *have to* be taught to do your homework. (rJ)
- b. He *has a* fishing boat but it's *got* music in it. (bG)
- c. If you're saying East York's *gonna* carry on, I think it *will* carry on. (NX)
- d. And then he *said*, "You remember Robin Hood, right?" And I *said*, "yeah." And he's *like*, "Ever since then, I really liked you." And I *was like*, "okay." (NY)

This shows that the changes in the verb phrase span many different systems of grammar. A question that arises is: Are all these changes happening in the same way and over the same period? Two changes are nearing the end point of their development, e.g. deontic *have to* and possessive *have*, however they are progressing along a unique trajectory in Canada suggesting that longitudinal change may evolve local deviations. Other longtime changes, e.g. *be going to*, are consistent with an interpretation of gradual grammaticalization. Another development can be traced to the mid 1980s, e.g. *be like*, making this the newest change under investigation. Yet all these features are being pushed forward at an increasing rate among the youngest generations.

I discuss further details of these findings as well as the implications of the contrastive patterns and argue that the over-arching socio-historical context is a critical explanatory factor (Tagliamonte, 2006). Geographic and economic mobility, shifting social norms as well as the current

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revolution in communication technology all contribute to the acceleration of certain types of linguistic change at the turn of the twenty-first century.

First, I situate Toronto in its geographic and social context. Second, I describe the fieldwork enterprise that led to the body of materials from which the analyses arise. Third, I offer the results of large-scale sociolinguistic analyses of various areas of the verb phase that are undergoing change in progress. Finally, I will interpret these findings.

2. Background

Toronto is situated on the northwest shore of the smallest of Canada's great lakes, Lake Ontario, as in Figure 1.

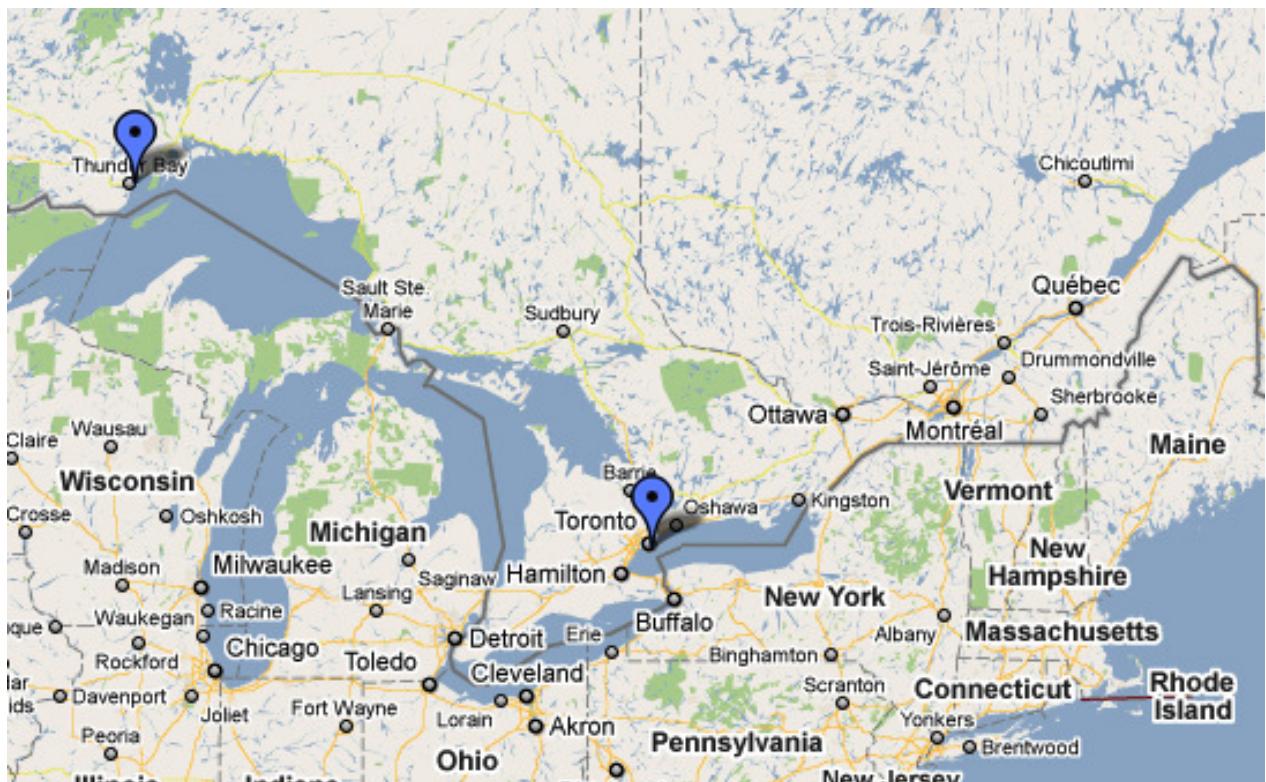


Figure 1: Map of Toronto in the context of southeastern Canada and northeast United States.

People of British descent have lived in this location since about 1750. Immigrants from the northeastern United States (New York, Pennsylvania, Vermont, New Hampshire, etc.)— United Empire Loyalists — provided a large influx of British settlers after the American Revolution in 1783. These were recent and long-time British migrants to the US who wanted to stay loyal to the British crown and for the free land Britain offered them in Canada. By 1793, the community — then known as York (or affectionately as *Muddy York*) — became the capital of the province of Upper Canada which comprised the lands higher up the river basin from the great lakes from the

headwaters of the St Lawrence river near Montreal in the east to Thunder Bay in the west.¹ In 1824, twenty years later, Toronto became a city. Throughout the nineteenth century Toronto was one of the main destinations of immigrants to Canada and so the population steadily increased. In the 2nd half of the twentieth century after World War II, there was a big influx of immigrants. In the 1970s there was another surge of immigrants, this time from the developing world. Migration continues to the present day. Thus, Toronto has only been a city for 200 years, but in that time span the population has undergone a steady layering of peoples — from British founders (the Loyalists) to people from all over the world. Today nearly 50% of the population of Toronto are immigrants. In a nutshell, Toronto is a sociolinguistic goldmine and the ideal context to tap ongoing linguistic change.

3. The Toronto English project

The first challenge in studying change in progress in the verb phrase in Toronto was to find authentic speakers of the variety. The question was: *Where are the Torontonians?* We needed to document the language of the people born and raised in Toronto across the generations of the community. This would also provide a base-line of Toronto English to use as a foundation for future research. However finding this population was not an easy task. The methods developed in early sociolinguistic projects in the US and Canada had gone door to door to find the locals (e.g. Labov, 1966; Sankoff & Sankoff, 1973). The problem is that many neighbourhoods in Toronto are over 90% immigrants. In terms of fieldwork, this presents a logistical nightmare. In the beginning, interviewers had to knock on about 300 doors before they found someone born in Toronto. It might have taken ten years to collect a corpus of Toronto English that could track the study of change in progress.

4. The Neighbourhoods

Fortunately, census data about Toronto is readily available. Perhaps the most useful information comes from sociological profiles of each of Toronto's forty-four electoral wards and cogent summaries of the 2001 Census from Statistics Canada.² Toronto, as a whole, has 49.9% immigrants, as shown in the total in Table 1. We then targeted wards with the lowest proportion of speakers born elsewhere and thus the highest proportion of those born in Canada. These neighbourhoods are – in descending order of immigrant population: Eglinton/Lawrence, The Beach, Toronto North, the West End, The Annex and Scarborough and East York, as in Table 1.

¹ Upper Canada comprised all the land lying east of the Ottawa River, but not the land to the north which was then called "Rupert's Land" and governed by the Hudson's Bay Company. Upper Canada was renamed Canada West in 1841 and became the province of Ontario at Canadian Confederation in 1867.

² http://www.toronto.ca/city_wards/ accessed June 28, 2006 3:06pm.

NEIGHBOURHOOD	% IMMIGRATION
Eglinton/Lawrence	25.9
The Beach	26.3
Toronto North	34.7
West End	38.6
Annex	41.8
Scarborough	43.3
East York	44.1
City of Toronto	49.9

Table 1: Toronto neighbourhoods with the lowest proportion of immigrants.

The two neighbourhoods with the lowest proportion of immigrants are Eglinton/Lawrence and The Beach. Eglinton/Lawrence includes the first planned suburbs of Toronto, which were developed in the early 1900s and after World War 2. The streets comprise medium sized houses on narrow, but deep lots and there are very few commercial businesses. Just to the east of the city core are a series of sand beaches — not surprisingly the neighbourhood around them is called “the Beach”. The Beach is a mix of single and semi-detached homes, with low-rise apartment buildings and some mansions. It is considered a transitional neighbourhood as smaller and older homes undergo renovation. The northern suburbs of the city are referred to as “Toronto North”. This area is predominately suburban middle class area well on the outskirts of the city core. The “West End” comprises areas to the west of the central core. These areas have innumerable public parks and thus the lowest population density in Toronto. The Annex is a neighbourhood in downtown Toronto just north of the University of Toronto. The streets are mainly residential, with quiet tree-lined one-way streets and Victorian homes. Residents range from university students to long-time residents, including well-established and wealthy families. East York is a former suburb of Toronto to the east of the centre core of the city. This area is filled with middle class homes and is currently undergoing renewal as the small bungalows built after World War 2 are being transformed into two story mega homes. Scarborough is the eastern suburb of Toronto. Much of Scarborough was settled by suburban housing developments in the last third of the twentieth century. Scarborough is so big an expanse that it has many different neighbourhoods inside it. The ones we focused on were in the north east section where there are mostly detached single family homes and duplexes typical of middle class Canadian suburbs. Figure 2 shows a map of Toronto identifying the geographic landscape of these locations.



Figure 2: Map of Toronto showing the neighbourhoods sampled in the Toronto English Project.

For each of these neighbourhoods we filled a quota, as in Table 2.

AGE	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
20-39	2	2	4
40-59	2	2	4
60+	2	2	4
Total	6	6	12

Table 2: Quota-based sampling.

This ensured that each neighbourhood had representative sample by age and sex with at least two people per cell, a key element for establishing apparent time change. At the same time, this strategy enables us to test the effects of the different neighbourhoods and to secure the interpretation of ongoing linguistic change. However, even with this fieldwork strategy each interviewer had to visit approximately 150 residences per day (and over 2,000 residences in the initial three months of our field work phase) with abysmally low success rate. Over 69% of people were not at home, 19% were not born and raised in Toronto, and even within our selected neighbourhoods, the chances of getting an interview were slim — our success rate was 2.4%. We had to find another solution.

We turned to other fieldwork techniques — in particular networking and the tried and true ‘friend of a friend’ method. Using these approaches we went to our targeted neighbourhoods and knocked on doors to get initial interviews. Then, when we had completed an interview, we attempted to network for additional speakers in the same neighbourhood. Our method of combining social networking with modified random sampling provided us with a sample that is about 50% random and 50% social networking. In the end, we were able to collect a foundational corpus of home grown Torontonians, stratified by age, sex and neighbourhood, as in Table 3.

DATE OF BIRTH	AGE	M	F	TOTAL
1991-1993	10-12	7	5	12
1990-1989	13-14	4	2	6
1987-1988	15-16	4	4	8
1984-1986	17-19	10	13	23
1979-1983	20-24	7	6	13
1974-1978	25-29	6	7	13
1964-1973	30-39	7	12	19
1954-1963	40-49	12	11	23
1944-1953	50-59	5	14	19
1934-1943	60-69	4	4	8
1924-1933	70-79	3	8	11
1914-1923	80-89	6	6	12
pre-1913	90+	1	0	1
TOTAL		76	92	165

Table 3: Demographic distribution of speakers in the *Toronto English Archive*.

For each speaker we conducted sociolinguistic interviews between one and three hours long. The individuals range in age from those who were born in the early 1900s to adolescents who were born in the 1980s and 1990s — a time span of approximately 100 years. The data are a rich resource of stories, reminiscences, and vibrant characterizations of life and times in Toronto. This type of socially stratified sampling can effectively model changes underway in a speech community (Labov, 1966, 1970, 1981).

The sampling criterion stipulated that of the people born and raised in Toronto, the majority of the people are middle class. This is the nature of the Canadian ecology — anyone who was born and raised in Toronto is typically middle-class. Furthermore, the corpus constitution is precisely 56% Anglo Saxon. Interestingly, however, when we compare the *Toronto English Archive* with the overall ethnicity proportions from the 2001 Census, as in Figure 3, we find that this is actually a fairly good match of the ethnic composition of the city as whole, at least as of 2001.

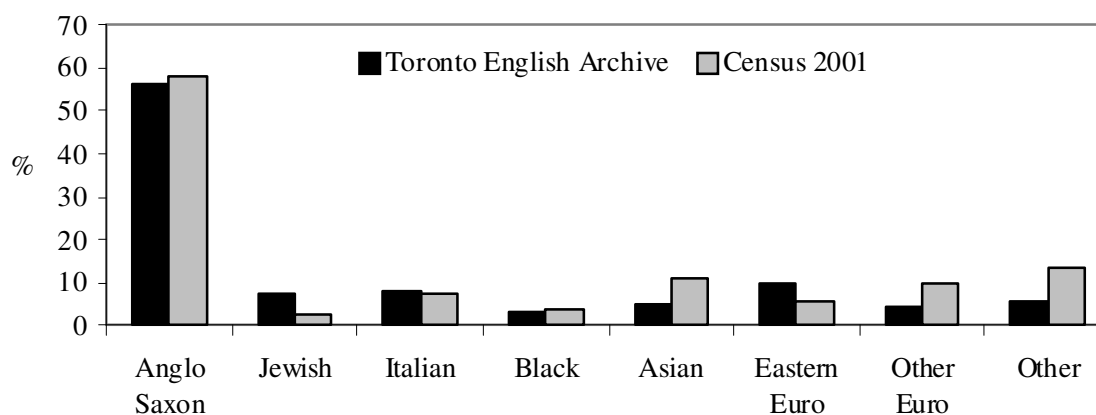


Figure 3: *Toronto English Archive* in comparison with the 2001 Census.

Notice that corpus constitution and the city of Toronto proportions by ethnicity from the census match each other quite well. However, it is notable that the corpus has small deviations of under-representation (e.g. Asian, Other European and other). This is due to the extreme levels of immigration in recent years into Toronto. Thus we have caught the population of the city just at the brink of another wave of migration. How Toronto will change over the next few generations will be an entirely different story to the one we will be able to tell with these data, and how this will affect language use and language change in the city will be the subject of future research. For now, the *Toronto English Archive* provides a base-line for developments to come.

Canadian English only became “a unified, focused dialect” in the early twentieth century (Chambers, 1995, 2004). This means that the oldest speakers in this corpus are among the first generations of native speakers of Canadian English and the generations of native-born speakers that came after them authentic speakers of Canadian English. In other words, this foundational corpus of Toronto English is in essence a snapshot of ‘old-line’ Toronto English at the turn of the twenty-first century.

Canadian English in general is considered a conservative dialect (Chambers, 1998:5), due in large to the linguistic inheritance of an Anglo-Canadian prestige that persisted through the first half of the twentieth century (Chambers, 2004:233). Brinton and Fee (Brinton & Fee, 2001:426) point out that Canadian English, despite being a North American variety, “is often described in terms of its unique combination of American and British features, primarily phonological and lexical, but also a number of features of syntax and usage.”

Using the apparent time construct and this corpus of old-line Torontonians aged 9-90 the next step is to actually explore the social and linguistic patters of variation and change across the population. What kinds of changes are going on? How are they proceeding? How do they compare with changes going on elsewhere? And how does Canadian English fit in with the rest of the world’s Englishes? Given the following observation about Canadian English by Chambers we might anticipate many changes in progress.

If teenagers spoke only to octogenarians, there might indeed be a breakdown in intelligibility. (Chambers, 2002:264)

As we shall see, it is surprising, indeed remarkable, how extensive changes in the verb phrase have been over the past century.

5. The linguistic analyses

Innumerable large-scale quantitative studies have been undertaken on the Toronto English Archive over the past decade (Tagliamonte, 2004b; Tagliamonte & D’Arcy, 2004a, b; Tagliamonte, 2005; Tagliamonte & D’Arcy, 2005; Tagliamonte, 2006; Tagliamonte & D’Arcy, 2007a, b; Tagliamonte, 2008b; Tagliamonte & Denis, 2008; Tagliamonte & D’Arcy, 2009; D’Arcy & Tagliamonte, 2010; Tagliamonte, D’Arcy & Jankowski, 2010). In what follows, I provide highlights of some of the studies that have involved the verb phrase. For each analysis I show the results for two key sociolinguistic patterns: 1) change in apparent time focusing on the use of incoming linguistic forms by speaker age and 2) sex differentiation focusing on a comparison between male and female. These results are presented as distributional analyses of the proportion of the incoming forms (out of all

other variants in the system) by speaker age and partitioned by male and female speakers. Each figure shows the overall proportions along with 95% confidence intervals.³ The confidence intervals offer two insights: 1) the smaller the interval the greater the precision and certainly attached to each overall point and 2) statistically significant differences can be inferred where intervals are separated. Non-overlapping intervals mean that the contrast is statistically distinct; while any point that falls within the interval of another cannot be significantly distinct.⁴ The predictions for change are that an incoming form will show a monotonic increase in apparent time and that women will adopt incoming variants at about a generation ahead of men (Labov, 2001: 274). Further, the four linguistic variables under investigation reflect different time depths. Thus, an additional sociolinguistic pattern to keep in mind is that new changes are predicted to be vigorous and show robust sex differentiation while changes nearing completion will slow down and sex differences will level.

Two areas of the verb phrase that have been undergoing change for several hundred years or more are encoding the meaning of stative possession and the deontic modality system (obligation/necessity). Both areas of the grammar involve alternation between *have* and *have got*, with the added variant *must* in the latter. The use of *have got* for stative possession entered the system in the sixteenth century (c. 1596) while its use for deontic modality developed much later, not until the late nineteenth century (c. 1865). Thus each system provides a particularly appropriate test site in which to examine morpho-syntactic change but at varying degrees of time depth, the first 500 years and the second only 200 years. Examination of these systems while they continue to evolve means we may catch changes as they are happening. Moreover, due to the fact that the systems are said to differentiate varieties of English, we may be able to assess the impact of social factors on linguistic change. Finally, their varying time depths in the language may offer added insights.

5.1 Stative possession

The encoding of stative possession, as in (2), involves vigorous alternation between *have* and *have got*, which is often contracted, as in (2a-b).

2. a. *It has* some strength and *it's got* some character. (TOR/I2)
- b. He *has* a cottage up on um Lake-Simcoe and he's *got* a broken leg right now (TOR/Nf)
- c. I've *got* my, you-know, ghetto-blaster that I *have* an adapter that runs off of the car lighter. (TOR/NE)

The use of *have* to encode stative possessive meaning can be traced back to the roots of English in the late tenth century and was the only variant in the language for many centuries; *have got* is the newcomer. *Have got* was not used for possession until the Early Modern period (Crowell, 1959:280; Jespersen, 1961b:47-54; Visser, 1963-73: 1475, 2202-2204), when it begins to occur frequently in

³ The confidence intervals were calculated using Wilson's score interval method. These predict that were this analysis repeated, we would be 95% certain that a new data point would fall in the range indicated by the interval bars. See Aarts, Close & Wallis (this volume) Appendix 1 for further discussion.

⁴ If two intervals partially overlap, the difference must be tested using a 2x2 χ^2 or Newcombe-Wilson test to determine their statistical significance more precisely. I do not pursue this here. Readers are referred to the analyses reported in Tagliamonte and D'Arcy (2009) for additional findings.

the writings of Charles Dickens (c. mid 1800s) (Krug, 2000:62). Another point of relevance is that *have got* has a long history of sociolinguistic meaning. In the first half of the twentieth century, American writers tended to think of *(have) got* as an error (e.g. Rice, 1932). In contrast, British usage guides from the same time period do not stigmatize this form (Fowler, 1927; Fowler & Fowler, 1931). Studies of variation in the stative possessive in British English and New Zealand English report that *(have) got* is the preferred form. Moreover, its use has been reported to be rising over the past century, (e.g. Noble, 1985; Kroch, 1989; Quinn, 2004). Yet an antithetic situation is reported for North America where high rates of *have* are amply attested in the US (e.g. Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad & Finegan, 1999; Jankowski, 2005).

This means that examination of the forms used for stative possession may enlighten our understanding of the impact of social embedding on the progress of what is essentially a grammatical development. Toronto English as a variety of Canadian English thus provides a new context in which to tackle these issues. What are the Torontonians doing?

Figure 4 shows that the proportion of *have* is generally high across the population, nevertheless there is a step-wise rise from one generation to the next. In most age groups there is an obvious significant difference between men and women with women in the lead. The Figure displays a classic monotonic pattern of change in progress (Labov, 2001: 171) towards categorical use of stative *have*.

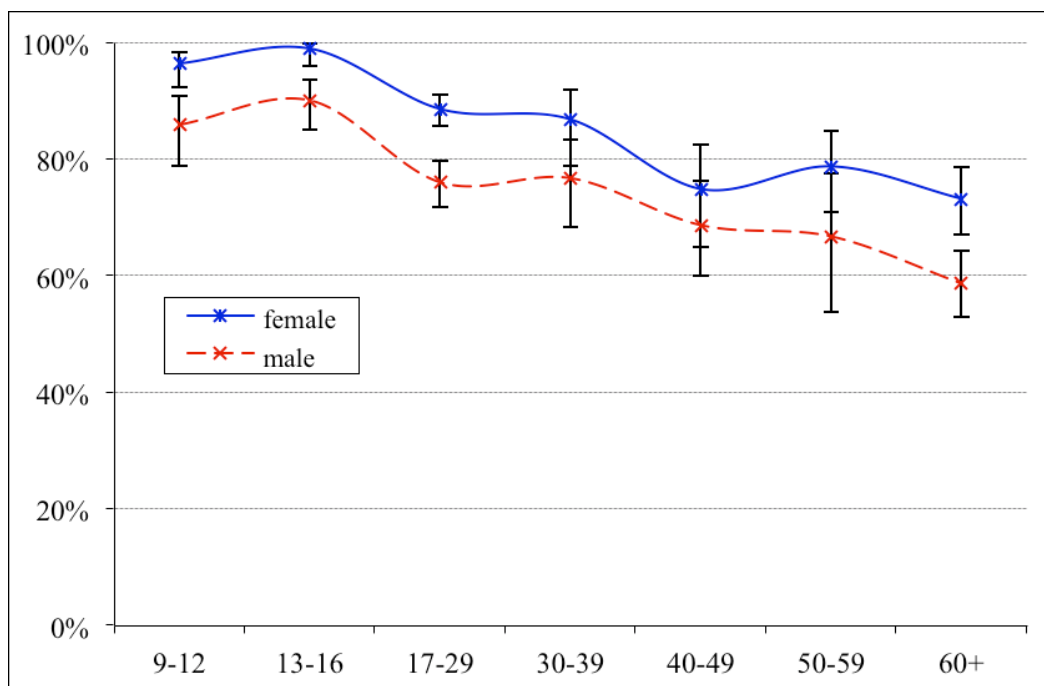


Figure 4: Proportion of *have* by speaker age and sex.

5.2 Deontic modality

According to research by Collins (2005), Krug (2000) and Leech (2003) among others, the place to catch recent and rapid change in English is in the modal system. The area I focus on here is the system that encodes obligation and necessity — deontic modality. Variation comprises the forms *have to*, *have got to* and *must*, as is readily notable in the alternation of forms in the speech of the same individual in the same stretch of conversation in (3).

3. I said “You *have to* come up.” I said “You *must* come up.” And um the person on the phone, I said “I’ve *gotta* go.” (TOR/Ns)

Each of these variants represents a successive stage in the development of the system, i.e. grammatical layering. *Must* is the oldest, dating back to the Old English period (Warner, 1993; Traugott, 1999). Alternation between *have to* and *must* can be found as early as Chaucer (1386-1400) (Brinton, 1991:34) and was established by the Late Middle English to Early Modern English period (c. 1400-1500) (Crowell, 1955:69; Traugott, 1999:8; Krug, 2000:54). *Have got to* is a much more recent addition, believed to have entered the paradigm approximately 500 years ago (Jespersen, 1961a; Visser, 1963-73; Traugott, 1999; Krug, 2000).

Perhaps the most dramatic finding of the research on this system is the change in the proportion of different forms over time. There is an overall reduction in the use of *must* and a concomitant rise in the use of the semi-modals, *have got to*, *have to*, and *need to*. This trend is consistent across American (Krug, 1998:2000; Smith, 2003, Leech, 2003 #5233; Jankowski, 2004), British (Krug, 1998, 2000; Leech, 2003; Trousdale, 2003), and Antipodean Englishes (Collins, 2005; Close & Aarts, 2010).

In particular, the variants *have got to* and *gotta* are reported to be increasing (Coates, 1983; Krug, 1998). Once again, the question is what is happening in Canada? Figure 5 shows the rise of deontic *have to* in apparent time, separated by male and female individuals by age group. The extreme proportion of *have to* overwhelms all other variants in the system. These comprise in large part variants of *have (got)* while the variant *need to* is a stable low proportion (8%) variant across generations. There is a steady increase of *have to* across the generations. Note that, numerically, in each age cohort the females use *have to* more than the males; however the overlaps in the confidence intervals are generally larger because we have less evidence than with stative *have* (Figure 4). Nonetheless the difference is statistically significant in four out of seven cohorts (13-16, 17-29, 50-59 and 60+). By the youngest age group, the proportion of *have to* is nearly categorical and the confidence intervals are completely overlapping; the sex difference has levelled out.⁵

⁵ At least part of the reason for the differences between *have to* vs *have* is the fact that there are more cases of *have* (so larger confidence intervals for *have to*).

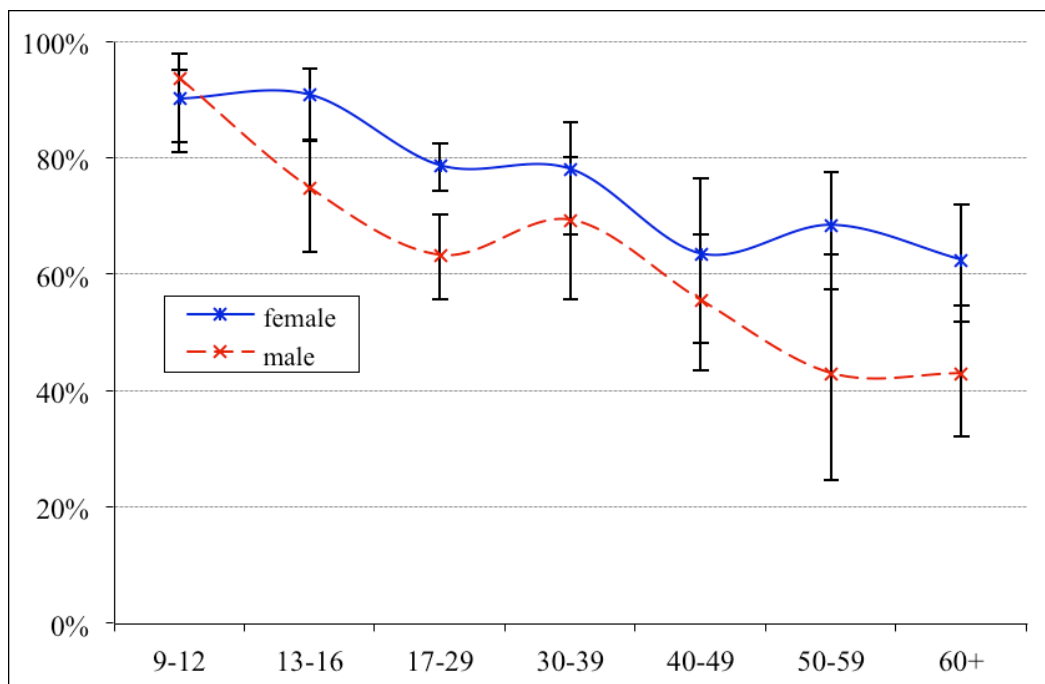


Figure 5: Proportion of *have to* by speaker age and sex.

Thus, despite variability among forms, as in (3), from a 52 year old woman, the speech in Toronto among anyone under 40 is more accurately illustrated by (4a-b) where all the tokens of deontic modality are rendered with *have to*:

4. a. That kind of made me excited so I *have to* see what courses I *have to* take to get into that. (TOR/MH)
- b. If you want people to come back to your web-site you *have to* keep it current, you *have to* keep it visually intriguing and interesting for them (TOR/I\$)

A similar trajectory of increasing use of *have to* is also reported for American English (Myhill, 1995:171-72; Smith, 2003:249; also Jankowski, 2004:90). Collins (2005; 2009) studied the ICE corpora and demonstrated that not only does *have to* surpass *must* in England, Australia, New Zealand, and the U.S., but it is also “consistently more popular than *have got to* in all four dialects” (Collins, 2005:256); however, he notes that American English is ahead of the other varieties; *have to* is more frequent than *have got to* by a ratio of 8:1, by far the widest gap. In the Toronto data, which contrasts with the ICE materials in being an informal spoken register, we see an even more advanced system.

Dollinger (2006) investigated modal usage in personal letters written in Ontario (the province in which Toronto is located) during the period 1800-1849 and found that *must* was by far the more frequent form. This evidence, coupled with the trajectory in Figure 3 suggests that by the end of the First World War, when our oldest speakers were adolescents, *must* was likely already a minority variant in Toronto. Thus, the demise of deontic *must* in this variety may have happened quicker than in other major varieties of English. It is also important to keep in mind that only *must* and *have to* encode deontic readings in Dollinger’s collection of nineteenth-century letters. This supports the

hypothesis that in the intervening century *must* was relegated to the least frequent form for encoding deontic modality. It was already surpassed in the oldest generation not just by *have to* but also by the more recent layer, *have got to*. Of course, grammatical change can be expected to proceed faster in spoken than written language. In this case the written vs. spoken register difference may be the main explanation for these differences; however, appropriate comparative data from the spoken vernacular of other varieties of English is not available. In sum, Toronto English represents a considerable advancement of ongoing grammaticalization of this system towards the *have to* variant — indeed the young people in Toronto rarely use anything other than *have to* to encode obligation/necessity.

5.2.1 Putting *have* and *have to* into perspective

A question that arises is whether there are any links between deontic *have to/have got to* and stative *have/have got*. In Toronto the variants with *have* in both systems are robust among the oldest generations (*have to* is used at levels near 60% and *have* at 40%). Moreover, as the speakers get younger the *have* variants progressively increase.

What would pre-dispose Canadian English in this way? Canadian English is founded in British dialects; however it must be kept in mind that it developed in a particular time and place. In the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries British settlers in the United States (referred to as United Empire Loyalists) migrated en masse to Canada (Chambers, 2004) because they wanted to remain loyal to England following the American Revolution. The Loyalists came primarily from the American Midlands, which had originally been settled by the Ulster-Scotch and Scots-Irish. While this heritage is not apparent in either the phonology or the vocabulary of the region, it is apparent in the morphology and syntax (Montgomery, 2001). What was the English of this heritage like? We can gain access to this information from two different sources: research on historical data and on contemporary dialects from the original dialect areas. A study of stative possession in British plays (Noble, 1985; reported in Kroch, 1989) shows that the use of *have* for stative possession shifted from 80% in the 1850s to less than 20% in the early 1900s as *have got* increased. This means that the British use of *have got* for encoding the stative possessive increased dramatically after the major migrations to the US. In this historical context the overall proportion of stative *have* in Toronto English in the early 1900s at 73% female and 59% male (Figure 3) is directly in line with what was typical of England just 50 years earlier. We might extrapolate from this that the Loyalists brought with them a system of stative possession that had a high proportion of stative *have* and only a moderate proportion of *have got*. Supportive to this is the fact that conservative British English dialects maintain high levels of *have* for this function to the present day (Tagliamonte, 2004a, 2008a).

A somewhat similar history can be extrapolated for deontic *have to*. The overall proportion of deontic *have to* in Toronto English in the early 1900s is 77% female and 45% male (Figure 4). A study of deontic modality across contemporary British dialects (Tagliamonte & Smith, 2006), reveals that conservative British dialects are still predominantly using *have to*. In the twentieth century *have got to* apparently gained ground in some parts of England; however, in at least some of these locales it has recently reversed direction, as documented an apparent time trajectory of change for deontic modality in contemporary British English (Tagliamonte & Smith, 2006:370, Figure 7). However, here too Canadian English developed from the earlier system when *have* was a major

variant and carried forward this frequent extant form of the early Loyalist settlers, reflecting the then-contemporary situation in the British donor dialects. Thus, I suggest that the British English norms of the time — both for stative possession or deontic modality — simply endured in the Canadian context, paving the way for *have* to become the standard target for Canadians in the twentieth century. While later migrants to Canada may have had higher frequencies of *have got* as this variant made inroads for deontic modality and stative possession in British English during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the overt prescription of *have* — not *(have) got* — in the North American context undoubtedly played a supportive role for the maintenance of possessive *have*. Thus, the current Toronto English profile stands as another good example of the power of the “founder effect” (Mufwene, 1996) in the development of new varieties.

In sum, the timing of the development of this area of grammar is germane to understanding the relationship between variation and locality. North Americans must have always used *have* more often than any other variant in the system, and supported by the prescriptive sanction against *(have) got*, simply kept using it. At the same time, the *(have) got* variants remained as low proportion, covert prestige variants engaged in social and stylistic work. The fact that the North American development is quite different from British and Antipodean varieties of English provides a unique example of how socio-historical timing and socio-cultural context plays a hand in language change.

5.3 Future temporal reference *be going to*

Another prime site for the examination of ongoing grammatical change in English is in the future temporal reference system (Bybee & Pagliuca, 1987). *Be going to* was attested as a future marker in the late 1400s and has been gaining ground ever since (e.g. Mair, 1997; Poplack & Tagliamonte, 1999; Tagliamonte, 2002). In contemporary varieties of English *shall* is in various stages of obsolescence and alternation between *will/ll* and *be going to* is rampant, as in (5).

5. a. Music’s *gonna* evolve and change, so language *will* evolve and change too. (TOR/I1)
- b. I know I’m *going to* have so much fun so it’ll be fun. (TOR/3L)
- c. He was like “Okay, I’m just *going to* jump down from the branch I’m on and I’ll keep holding it and the extra jolt *will* pull you up”, right? (TOR/ I§)
- d. There’s one lady there, she’s *going to* be ninety. She’ll be ninety-years-old. (TOR/Nf)

This competition has a very long history in English. In fact, the future temporal reference system in English has been variable for centuries leading to its characterization as the “grammar curmudgeon”.⁶ However, this is not due to the contemporary state of variation shown in (5), but to the fact that the ‘rules’ for when to use *shall* and *will* are obtuse. How might this earlier situation have led to the present one? In Old English future time was expressed by the simple non-past and adverbials specifying future time reference, e.g. *we come tomorrow*. Evolution of the future temporal reference system in English has developed through gradual loss of the intrinsic meaning of these verbs through longitudinal variation between them, supposedly based on the nature of the illocutionary act performed and the grammatical person of the subject noun (Lowth, 1762/1775; Zandvoort, 1945; Taglicht, 1970). The ‘rules’ can be encapsulated as in Table 4.

⁶ <http://www.grammarmudge.cityslide.com/articles/article/1026513/8913.htm>, accessed September 6, 2010, 8:53 am.

	Simple future	Determination, promise, command
1 st person	<i>I shall</i>	<i>I will</i>
2 nd person	<i>You/we will</i>	<i>You/we shall</i>
3 rd person	<i>He/She/they will</i>	<i>He/she/they shall</i>

Table 4: Prescriptive rules for using *will* and *shall*.

Notice that there is a (supposedly) antithetic contrast between the choice of form and the nature of future meaning. Yet in contemporary varieties of English *shall* has mostly receded to formulaic and legal uses (Williams, this volume)? What if the meaning differences Table 4 were not as clear cut as prescriptive grammars maintain? It may simply have been the case that there has been variation across the board for a long time. Unfortunately the nuances of future meaning are highly subjective (see discussion Poplack & Tagliamonte, 1996), making the question of how the construction *be going to* encroaches on this earlier system a difficult one.

There are innumerable studies of the grammatical development of the future system (Binnick, 1971; Haegeman, 1981; Haegeman, 1989; Pérez, 1990; Danchev & Kytö, 1994; Nicolle, 1997). In fact, *be going to* is the archetypal feature used to describe grammaticalization (Hopper, 1991; Hopper & Traugott, 1993; Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca, 1994). Yet use of *be going to* from a community-level perspective is rarely (if ever) offered in the literature (but see Tagliamonte, 2002; Torres-Cacoullos & Walker, 2009), thus the actual state of this area of grammar in terms of its ongoing grammaticalization is relatively unknown. The large *Toronto English Archive* provides a timely opportunity to track the development of this area of grammar, as in Figure 6.

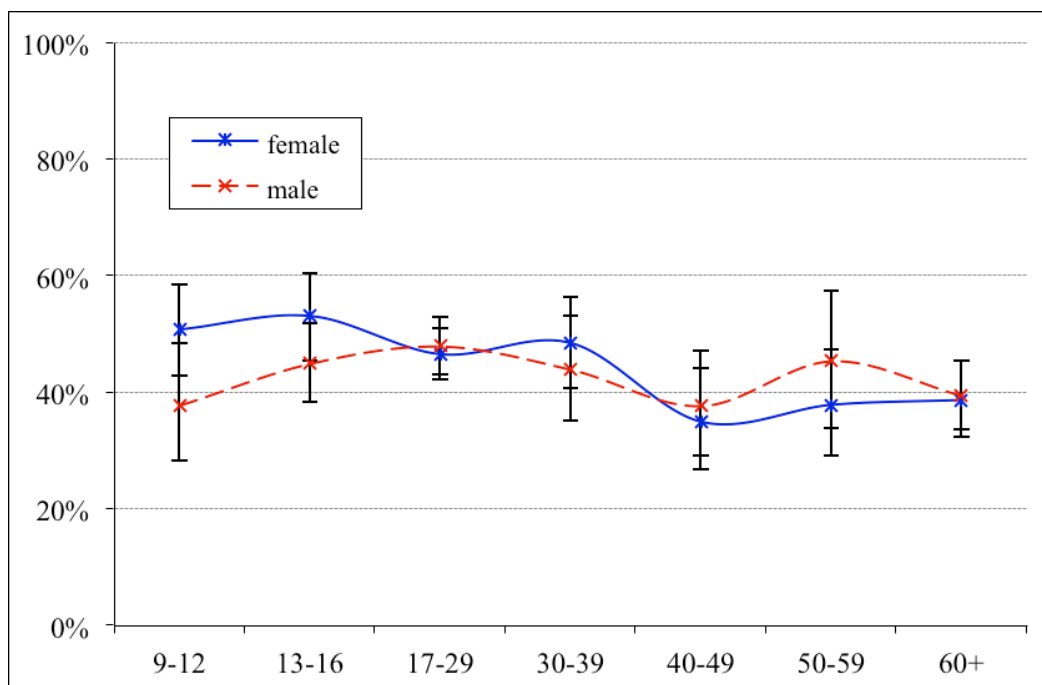


Figure 6: Proportion of *be going to* by speaker age and sex.

Figure 6 shows that — with the exception of the young males (9-16) — *be going to* shows a fluctuating pattern, which, for females at least, does involve a rise from the 60+ year olds to the 17-29 year olds.⁷ Since there is virtually no use of *shall* in this variety, this indicates robust variability between the two major forms — *will/’ll* and *be going to* — across generations.⁸ Such balanced variation between forms is quite different from the other trajectories of change where one variant is incrementally supplanting the others over time. Nevertheless, statistical tests show that the trajectory from oldest to youngest speakers is significant (Tagliamonte & D’Arcy, 2009:86). However, there is no statistically significant difference among male and female speakers in any age group as the overlapping confidence intervals indicate, and this is corroborated by an independent analysis in Tagliamonte & D’Arcy (2009:90). This finding rules out gender differentiation and thus suggests no change in progress. These findings suggest that the rise of *be going to* as a future temporal reference marker is a borderline significant change where there is no systematic change by age cohort. If a change has leveled out the size of the gradient effect would be expected to be small, which is the case here.

Tagliamonte and D’Arcy (2009:90-91) argued that the rise of *be going to* may be progressing very slowly and/or slowing down, or perhaps the division of labor between *will* and *be going to* is solidifying. This calls for further study of the competing linguistic mechanisms underlying this system. Recent work on another variety of Canadian English — the English spoken in Quebec City, the capital of another Canadian province, provides an insight. Torres-Cacoullous and Walker (2009) argue that variation between the future variants *will* and *be going to* is the result of collocation effects from earlier stages in the development of this system of grammar. The extant variants remain entrenched in certain contexts rather than undergoing extension. For example, they found that contracted *’ll* tends to be used for first person and with the indefinite adverb *never*, as in (6). Similarly, there is a preponderance of *be going to* for questions, as in (7).

6. a. I *’ll* get over that. I *’ll* just work on it and get over it. (TOR/N)
 - b. I *’ll* never *speak* to you again. (TOR/N)

7. a. What are they *going to* do? (TOR/N)
 - b. Who’s *going to* be checking out the tan lines? (TOR/I)

If this is a common characteristic of this system, the same collocation effects should be found in the future temporal reference system elsewhere. Yet in Toronto only some of them are found, such as the collocation of *will* with *never* (87%, n= 61) and the use of *be going to* with questions (87%, n = 132) and these are only small niches in the overall system. Other (more substantial contexts) do not appear to have the same extreme imbalance towards one variant or the other. For example, in first person singular contexts *be going to* (40%, n=330), is nearly as likely as *’ll* (46%, n= 377) or *will* (14%, n=116).⁹ This means that different varieties may be undergoing quite different processes in the evolution of future meaning. Further comparative research is needed to fully understand the

⁷ All phonetic variants of *going to* (of which there are many) were grouped together. *Shall* is exceedingly rare in these data. There are only 5 tokens, most in contexts of quotation, e.g. *God said, "There shall be light."*

⁸ Due to the non-occurrence of *shall* in this variety, I assume that *’ll* variants are contracted *will* (Aarts et al., this volume).

⁹ Cases of ellipsis were not included.

nature of change in this area of the verb system. If the results from Toronto are any indication, the future temporal reference system presents a unique opportunity to understand grammatical competition in contemporary English.

5.4 Quotative *be like*

A newcomer to the English quotative system, *be like*, as in (8), is perhaps the most vigorous change in contemporary English.

8. a. And I said, “Yup, you should.” And then he goes, “Go away.” And I *was like*, “what?” (TOR/Nr)
 b. She *'s like*, “guys, I’m going to cry.” She *'s like*, “But I won’t.” And we *were like*, “you won’t.” (TOR/2c)

The number of studies of this innovation has mushroomed over the past 10 years. The first Canadian study documented this feature in university students in 1995 in Ottawa, the capital city of the country. At the time, *be like* was used about 13% of the time (Tagliamonte & Hudson, 1999). The first replication study in Toronto in 2002 found that *be like* was used in 58% of all quotatives (Tagliamonte & D’Arcy, 2004a: 501, Table 2).

Unlike the other features, *be like* is a very recent and vigorous change in progress. How is its development reflected in the Toronto speech community? Figure 6 shows the proportion of *be like* out of all other quotative verbs according to speaker age and sex.

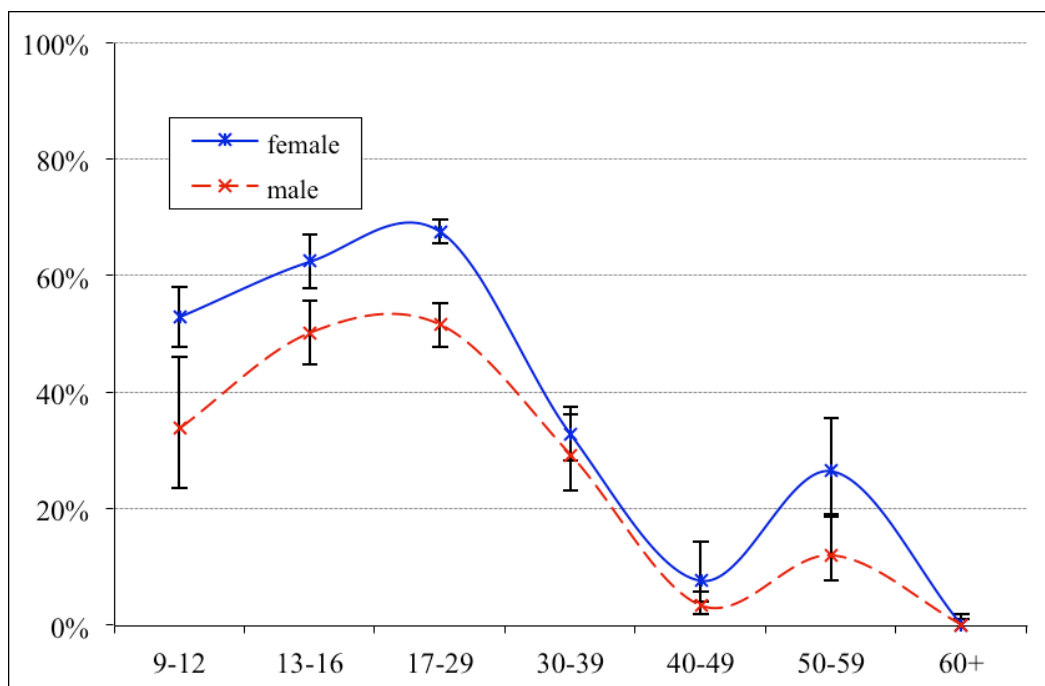


Figure 7: Proportion of *be like* by speaker age and sex.

Figure 7 reveals a dramatic division in the existing population. *Be like* overshadows all other forms among speakers under 30 while among those over 40 it is modest at best.¹⁰ This feature is highly circumscribed to the under 40 year old population. There is a generation in flux right in the centre of the age spectrum — the 30-39 year olds. Among the younger generations there is a clear sex effect; none of the confidence intervals overlap and they are widely separated among the 17-29 year olds. Note that this is precisely where a peak in the trajectory is observed — for both males and females. This shows that the males are following in step with the female lead and they too undergo an acceleration of the innovative form in adolescence. Finally, the vigour of the change can be seen by the observation that in almost every case each cohort differs significantly in usage from the next.

Putting these findings in context with earlier research (Buchstaller, 2001; Singler, 2001; Winter, 2002; D'Arcy, 2004; Tagliamonte & D'Arcy, 2004a; Buchstaller & D'Arcy, 2009; Tagliamonte, 2009), it can be inferred that *be like* was in its incipient phase in the early 1980s. At this time the 30 year olds in the Toronto corpus were teenagers. These were the first generation of native users of *be like*. The upswing between the 30 year olds and the 17-29 year olds reveals the vigorous early stages of a linguistic change in progress. The down turn among the youngest speakers is due to the fact that they are still undergoing incrementation and vernacular reorganization of this feature, i.e. their variable grammar has not yet stabilized (for further discussion see Labov 2001; Tagliamonte & D'Arcy 2009) and their use of *be like* will still increase. To put this into perspective, this linguistic change began back when these 30 year olds were adolescents when there was still considerable variation with other quotatives (e.g. *say*) and sex differentiation had not yet developed. Subsequently, the women split away from the males or the males retracted from the change. Since that time, the proportion of *be like* has continued to increase in real time to the point where the adolescents in this sample (c. 2003-2004) are using *be like* robustly (i.e. between 34-67% of the time).

The *be like* phenomenon provides a quintessential view on linguistic change in progress, exhibiting all the characteristics predicted: an S-curve in apparent time,¹¹ sex differentiation and a developmental sex effect coincident with incrementation. The particular nature of this peak in apparent time and its explanation is discussed in Tagliamonte & D'Arcy (2009). As it continues to evolve in contemporary varieties of English, we will be able to track its development through the tail end of the change.

6. Conclusions

I have now encapsulated four studies of the verb phrase in contemporary Toronto English. Each analysis has depicted the proportion of incoming variants by age and sex. A number of different patterns obtain — some fast; some slow; some steady, some decidedly wavy, summarised by Figure 8, which plots them together on the same scale.

¹⁰ The 50-59 cohort also shows a sex difference, as yet unexplained.

¹¹ In synchronic studies of variation change in apparent time is taken as a surrogate for real time (e.g. Bailey, Wikle, Tillery & Sand, 1991). A recurring pattern is a trajectory of change that mirrors the S-curve of linguistic change in diachrony.

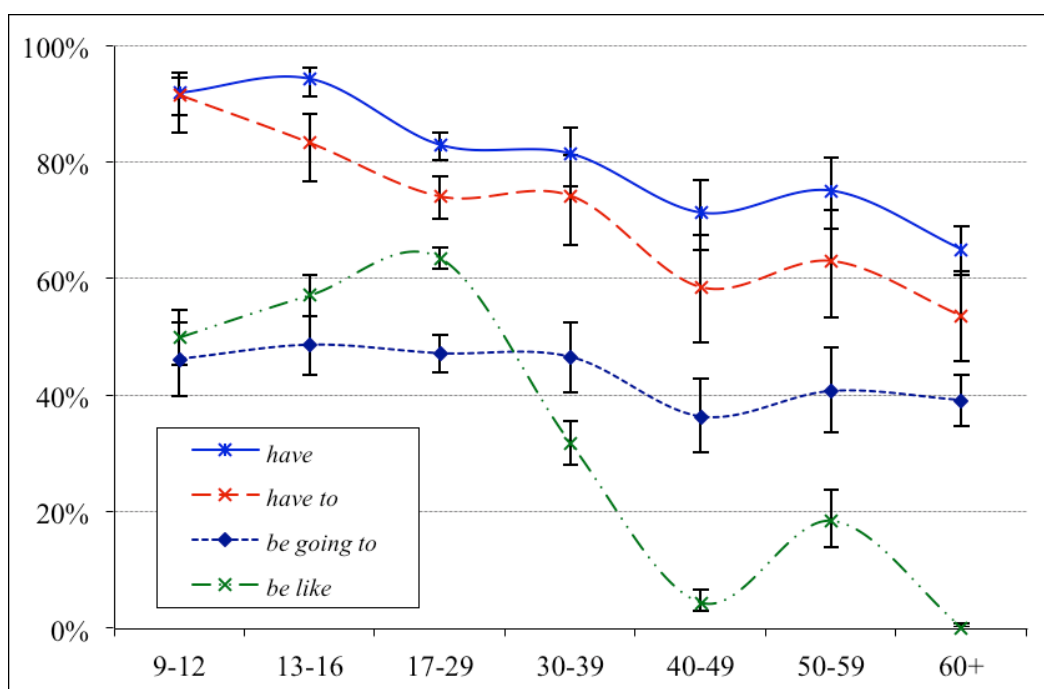


Figure 8: Composite perspective on change in progress in Toronto (both male and female subjects).

Deontic *have to*, possessive *have* and quotative *be like* appear to be rising. The rate of change for *going to* is much more attenuated and *be like* shows a more volatile pattern. In turn, some features appear to be declining, such as deontic *have got to*, possessive *have got*. This is summarized in Table 5.

DECLINING	RISING
DEONTIC <i>must, have got</i>	DEONTIC <i>have to</i>
POSSESSIVE <i>have got</i>	POSSESSIVE <i>have</i>
QUOTATIVE <i>say, think, go</i>	QUOTATIVE <i>be like</i>
FUTURE <i>will</i>	FUTURE <i>be going to ?</i>

Table 5: Changes in progress in Toronto English.

The rise of deontic *have to* and possessive *have* are changes that can be traced back hundreds of years in the history of English and so are not particular to Canadian English, but are consistent with other research on other English corpora (e.g. Krug, 2000; Stenström, 2000; Mair, Hundt, Leech & Smith, 2003). However these changes are evidently progressing faster in Canadian English than in British or Antipodean varieties (see Tagliamonte & Smith, 2006). The more recent innovation, *be like*, which has taken contemporary English by storm is well in advance of other major varieties of English (see Buchstaller & D'Arcy, 2009). Moreover, it displays a peak in apparent time (see Labov 2001 and Tagliamonte & D'Arcy 2009). Contrary to expectation given the historical record increasing use of *going to* since the late 1400's, in contemporary Canada the *will/going to* alternation appears to have stabilized. What do these contrasting patterns of change tell us?

In theory any number of possibilities may arise in linguistic change, including ousting of older forms via renewal, entrenchment of non-productive forms in routines, division of labour across semantic functions, etc. and there are a range of social phenomena that enter the frays as well. In order to interpret the changes in the verb phrase examined here let us return to the principles of linguistic change (Labov, 2001). The default option is for women to advance incoming linguistic forms and the male/female divide to develop as the change advances (Labov, 1990). When the rate of change is fast this is also where gender asymmetry develops. Thus, the contrasting trajectories captured here in apparent time in terms of proportion and patterning are a reflection of the stage of development of each change (see also Tagliamonte & D'Arcy, 2009). First, females are consistently in the lead, providing corroboration for one of the most enduring principles of linguistic change, Principle 3 and 4, which stipulate that women lead in change from above and below (Labov, 2001). Second, as each of these changes progresses, there are divergent nuances to the male-female contrast.¹² In some changes, male-female differences level out among the youngest generation (stative possessive *have*); in others they develop (quotative *be like*). The unique pattern for *be like* with a peak in apparent time is the result of incrementation coincident with vernacular reorganization, discussed in detail in Labov (2001) and Tagliamonte & D'Arcy (2009). Indeed, it seems evident that as change accelerates up the S-curve the male-female difference is at its maximum; however, as a change progresses to higher levels of frequency this contrast gradually levels out. Why is this not the case for possessive *have* (see Figure 4) where a male-female difference is evident across the board despite the late stage of the change? This is because other social correlates are implicated in this system (see Tagliamonte, D'Arcy & Jankowski 2010). There is a 3rd variant in the stative possession system that is correlated with male speech, namely *got*, as in (*I'm Canadian; I got a Prime Minister*) spoken by a 13 year old boy. There is also no sex difference for future *be going to*. In this case; however, there is neither (substantive) change nor social stigma associated with the variants. Here, ongoing grammaticalization has apparently led to a function split with both forms having their own niche(s) in the system. Thus, hints about the social and linguistic nature of these changes can be inferred by interpreting the complex correlations of the contrasting patterns.

From a broader cultural perspective the diverse trajectories of change, their different rates across varieties, and the specific points in time when they picked up speed are also thought provoking. To put this in context, Figure 9 shows the key generational groups of Torontonians and how their ages link up to the decades of the 20th century.

¹² Interestingly, pairwise tests which compare m/f cohort-by-cohort reveal that for each change except *be going to*, 4 out of 7 cohorts may be differentiated by gender, and in all of these cases female use exceeds male.

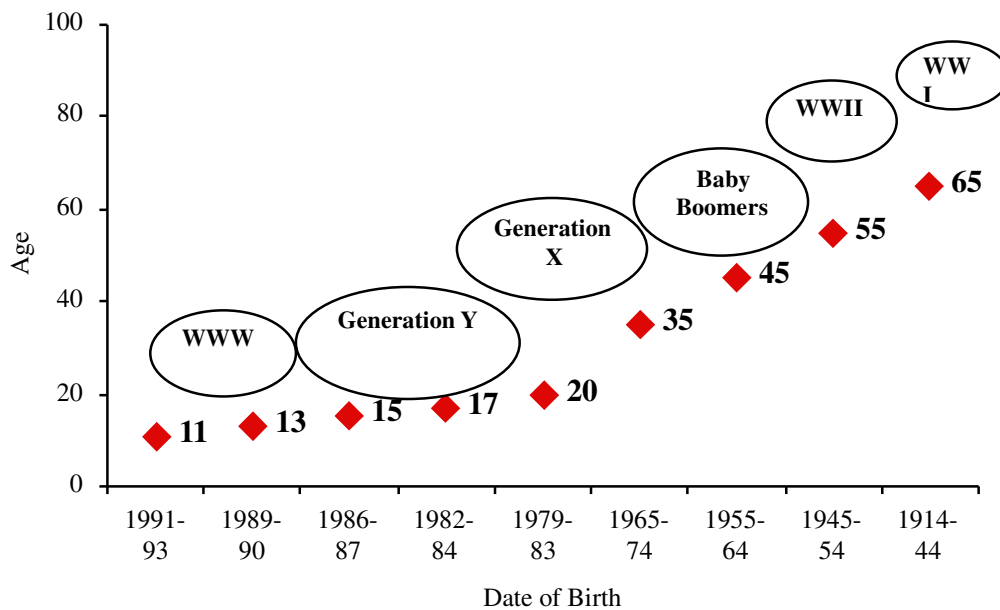


Figure 9: Generations in the *Toronto English Archive*.

The people who are over 70 today are the generations born in the early decades of the 20th century when Canadian English is thought to have begun. Those that are in their 60s, were the generation that were teenagers during the 2nd World War, while their children (the baby boomers) are the people whose children are the tweens, teens and twenty somethings that are pushing the newer innovations forward.

What is the backdrop for these changes across the 20th century? There were two world wars. The US became a superpower. Public broadcasting evolved. There have been massive, widespread technological developments. Modern language science has developed and prescription has become far less persuasive in the wake of ongoing colloquialisation (Leech, Hundt, Mair, Smith & Leetch, 2009). At the same time English has become the global language. As the century came to an end, something entirely unprecedented happens — in the early 1990's the World Wide Web came on line.

These events and developments have strong implications for language change, particularly mass education and the dramatic rise in literacy, the fact that class structure flattens and blurs and the media expands to a multitude of new genres and becomes overwhelmingly important. Popular youth culture develops. Interestingly, teenagers did not even exist before the late 20th century, let alone tweens (the 8-12 year olds) who are now becoming a major advertising market. These developments converge in grandstanding the very youngest sectors of the speech community. This focus is strengthening with unprecedented geographic, social and occupational mobility as well as the increasing tendency towards all kinds of new media for communication which are fundamentally changing the types of contacts young people have on a daily basis. The globe is crisscrossed and interwoven with mass communication. All these sociocultural changes have added to the influence of youth as 'drivers' of current linguistic change.

While some researchers have pinpointed change to the baby-boomer generation (Chambers, 2002: 369; 2004:15); the results reported here consistently show that this generation is just the beginning. Many changes in Canadian English have a clear quickening of pace in generation X and

Y and on down into the generations that have never not known the Internet. If we put these into a socio-cultural context, the speed of ongoing change should not be a surprise. As Chambers has noted: “sociolinguistics provides a barometer of social change” (Chambers, 2004:15). Recall too that these younger generations are growing up with unprecedented geographic and economic mobility, both key factors thought to hasten linguistic change (e.g. Chambers, 2002). They are also the generations that have grown up with the Internet, email, text and instant messaging, *Facebook*, *Skype* and *Twitter* where the networks of communication are more immediate, more multiplex than ever before and with entirely new dimensions of (face-to-face) interaction (e.g. Baron, 2003, 2004).¹³ Here too much more research needs to be done, yet the extreme points of acceleration correlate suggestively with the advent of these new mediums of communication. Chambers has also observed that “linguistic change merely keeps pace with sociocultural change” (Chambers, 2002: 370). If the results from Toronto are any indication, the acceleration of linguistic change documented here is a reflection of just how well Toronto English is keeping up with the times.

The changes in the verb phrase are shifting gradually and imperceptively moving towards new forms that are currently in fashion amongst contemporary young people. Yet they are not haphazard, random, or indiscriminate. They are embedded in the evolution of the verb phrase, in particular, and in the language generally. Indeed, they herald new avenues of exploration and development for all varieties of English in the 21st century.

¹³ Sociolinguists have argued that “dialect leveling requires face to face interaction among peers” (eg. Chambers (2002:370). Yet web cams have made instant messaging, SKYPE, FaceTime and other forms of Internet communication a certain type of face to face interaction.

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