

Linguistic resistance on the New Brunswick-Maine border

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Comparison of New Brunswick data from Scargill and Warkentin's 1972 survey of Canadian English and from the Dialect Topography Project (1994-present) reveals a significant convergence over the past 30 years towards American English forms in seventy-eight percent of the items studied. This is noteworthy in itself, given that there is little evidence of sufficient contact to determine any pattern of linguistic diffusion. Still more remarkable, however, are the data from responses to the Dialect Topography questionnaire by younger speakers along one section of the New Brunswick-Maine border. There, in an area where there is significant social contact with Americans, the evidence indicates that Canadian youth are using fewer American forms than their peers in the rest of the province. This paper considers the border effect in the responses of 14-19 year-olds living in St. Stephen, New Brunswick, and in the adjacent town of Calais, Maine. It examines 17 items of the DTP questionnaire that were determined to be Canadian/U.S. shibboleths after Chambers' original Golden Horseshoe Study in 1994, and discusses the results in relation to the conclusions of Boberg's examination of geolinguistic diffusion.

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