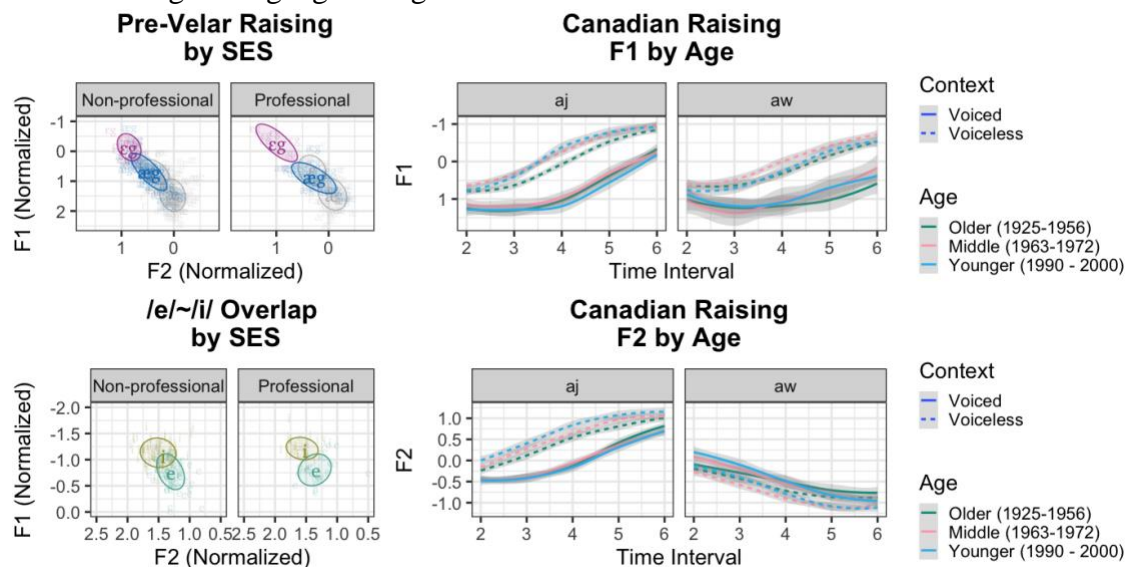


Little work has focused on the speech of the rural areas of the Canadian Prairies. These regions, however, are of particular interest due to the settlement patterns that differed from those in the East. While Eastern provinces were settled primarily by Anglophones (or Francophones), the Prairies saw a large wave of other non-Anglophone Eastern and Northern Europeans, who were settled into ethnic blocks which remain relevant demographically today.

This study uses the Languages in the Prairies Project (LIPP), a corpus consisting of word list, reading passage, and interview data collected from nine different communities across Alberta and Manitoba between 2009-2019. The present project investigates aspects of vowel patterning in 25 speakers from the Interlake region of Manitoba, a rural community settled primarily by Ukrainians and Icelanders, comparing them with results from Winnipeg, the urban capital of Manitoba, as reported on in Li (2021) and Onosson (2022).

Results from the Interlake region show an expected Low-Back-Merger Shift progression with middle-and-young speakers lowering /ɛ/ but only the youngest speakers in the corpus shifting /ɪ/, consistent with the pull-chain characterization of the shift. Significant overlap between /ɛ/ and /ɪ/ for the youngest and non-professional speakers was also found (see figure). Furthermore, /æɪg/-raising is present, particularly in younger speakers and non-professionals (see figure). Lastly, investigation into Canadian Raising reveals that while Canadian-marker /aw/-raising seems to not display any significant socially-motivated variation, the /aj/-raising (found across North America, not just Canada) appears to be changing in apparent-time, with younger speakers fronting more and more every generation (see figure).

Two principal patterns emerge from this study: first, while Canadian-specific /aw/-raising is not changing, /aj/-raising is showing evidence of a change in progress. Most interesting, though, is the evidence that younger and nonprofessional speakers are acting as drivers of change in this rural community, suggesting that more research in rural areas is important for our understanding of language change across different communities.



References

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