There's a New Ethnolect in Town: Vowel Patterning of Filipino English in Winnipeg

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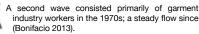
Ethnicity has only recently begun to be investigated as a factor in variation in Canadian English. Our study investigates the heritage Filipino population in Winnipeg, Canada, an important yet previously unstudied group in the city. Statistical models reveal that ethnicity is a strongly significant factor across several dimensions. Filipino Winnipeggers have significantly shorter vowels across the board. Their vowels appear to be consistently further along in the Canadian Shift, being more retracted and lowered. These results are explained within the Emergent Market model (Hall-Lew 2009).

Background

The Filipino population in Winnipeg

The first wave of Filipino immigration into Winnipeg began in the late 1950s when primarily medical professionals arrived in Manitoba from the Philippines (Dalayoan et al 2005).

A second wave consisted primarily of garment industry workers in the 1970s; a steady flow since (Bonifacio 2013).

9% Winnipeggers are of Filipino ethnicity, the largest immigrant visible minority population (Statistics Canada 2013).

30% of the immigrant population in Winnipeg is Filipino (2011 National Household Survey).
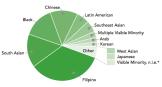
Geographically concentrated within North-Western neighbourhoods of Winnipeg.

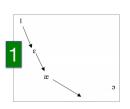Strong familial, religious and community ties, occupy a visible and prominent position within Winnipeg.

Map provided by Philip Kelly, Filipino Youth Transitions in Canada project, York University

Manitoba: Visible Minorities – 2006
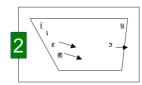
Chinese, Latin American, Southeast Asian, Black, Multiple Visible Minority, Arab, Korean, South Asian, Other, West Asian, Japanese, Visible Minority, n.i.e.*, Filipino
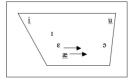
Canadian Shift

1. Lax vowels of Canadian English are undergoing a substantial shift, the pivot for which is suggested to be vowel merger in the cot/caught sets (Clarke et al., 1995).

2. Regional studies in Montreal (Boberg 2005), Toronto (Roeder & Jarmasz, 2010), Vancouver (Pappas & Jeffrey, 2014) suggest more nuanced model, e.g.: "*Vowels are ultimately moving towards the equilibrium of a symmetrical vowel system. … Canadian Shift comprises two stages. The first involves concurrent lowering and retraction and the second involves retraction only,*" (Roeder and Jarmasz, 2010).
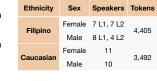
Methods

Participant groups:
A. 26 Filipino Winnipeggers born between 1952 and 1995, including 15 English L1 speakers.
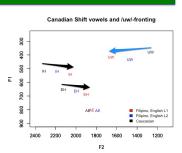B. 21 Caucasian Winnipeggers born between 1963 and 1992.

Data: Wordlist

Ethnicity	Sex	Speakers	Tokens
Filipino	Female	7 L1, 7 L2	4,405
	Male	8 L1, 4 L2	
Caucasian	Female	11	3,492
	Male	10	

Analysis: Aligned using FAVE-align and extracted using FAVE-extract (Rosenfelder et al. 2011).

Canadian Shift vowels

English L2 Filipino speakers show relatively advanced Canadian Shift vowels, and /uw/-fronting.

English L1 Filipino speakers (all born in Winnipeg) show even more advanced Canadian Shift vowels and /uw/-fronting.
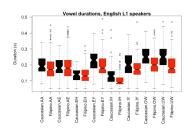
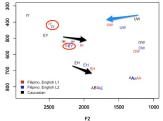/æ/ appears to be relatively stable between the three groups.

Canadian Shift vowels and /uw/-fronting

Filipino, English L1
Filipino, English L2
Caucasian

Adding more vowels…

Filipino front vowels /iy, ey/ also very retracted and lowered compared to Caucasians, without a significant L1~L2 difference unlike Canadian Shift vowels.

/ow/ also slightly lowered.

Canadian Shift and other vowels

Filipino, English L1
Filipino, English L2
Caucasian

Vowel durations, English L1 speakers

Vowel durations are significantly shorter for Filipino L1 speakers (red) vs. Caucasian speakers (black), with a couple of exceptions.

Emergent Market Model

- Retracted /iy, ey/ suggests possible language transfer from English L2 generation.

- Fronted /u/, advanced Canadian shift vowels suggests Filipinos are advanced speakers.

- Evidence for an Emergent Linguistic Market as described in Hall-Lew (2009) for Chinese Americans in San Francisco.

- Language transfer features are embedded and become the source of some features in the system of the Emergent Market in the linguistic marketplace.

Future directions

- investigating possible gender differences
- investigating social history
- perceptual study

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