

## **Children, Canadian raising and new directions for an old variable**

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"Canadian Raising" (CR) is the process of raising the nucleus of the diphthongs /aw/ and /ay/ before voiceless consonants (Joos 1942). Yielding the "oot and aboot" stereotype of Canadian speech, CR characterizes the speech of most Canadians and is not generally found in the speech of Americans (Labov, Ash and Boberg 2006). Recent reports have suggested the process may be weakening, perhaps as a result of a competing process associated with American speech, /aw/ fronting (Chambers and Hardwick 1986). The present research addresses this claim, and examines newly occurring developments, in a modern comparison of adults' and children's use of CR in Vancouver. Sociolinguistic interviews were conducted with 37 native Vancouver English speakers in 4 age groups: adults, teens (13-15), tweens (8-11) children (4-6). 2707 tokens were extracted from wordlist or picture-naming data, normalized and measured acoustically using Praat (Boersma and Weenink 2009). 84% of speakers raised /aw/; 92% raised /ay/. The height of the raised variants showed no effect of age, indicating CR is being retained in the English being acquired in Vancouver today. In contrast to this apparent-time stability, teens' raised diphthongs were found to be on average fronter than adults' and significantly fronter than their younger counterparts ( $p < .05$  for both diphthongs). This simultaneously suggests that F2 is currently the most active dimension for both CR diphthongs and that fronting does not preclude raising. The results reveal that, while maintaining an important symbol of Canadian identity, young Canadians are innovators, driving the CR diphthongs in a new direction.

A major focus of the current paper is the examination of potential causes for tweens' and children's "lag" in the fronting process. A second analysis of the data, based on a re-normalisation of the initial results, suggests maturational factors, including differential dimensions of the maturing vocal tract, contribute to this lag. However, persisting sex differences in the 4-6 age group indicate that physical considerations are not the sole contributor to young children's formant frequencies. Overall, the results suggest an important role for young children in language change, in which social and physical factors combine at an early age to eventually drive change forward during the maturational period.