

Creating Canadian English

This lively account of the making of Canadian English traces the variety's conceptual, social, and linguistic developments through the twentieth century to the present. This book is not just another history of Canadian English; it is a history of the variety's discovery, codification, and eventual acceptance, as well as the contribution of the linguists behind it. Written by an active research linguist focussing on Canadian English, this book is an archive-based biography on multiple levels. Through a combination of new data and reinterpretations of existing studies, a new voice is given to earlier generations of Canadian linguists who, generally forgotten today, shaped the variety and how we think about it. Exploring topics such as linguistic description and codification, dictionary making, linguistic imperialism, linguistic attitudes, language and Canadian identity, or the threat of Americanization, Dollinger presents a coherent, integrated, and balanced account of developments spanning almost a century.

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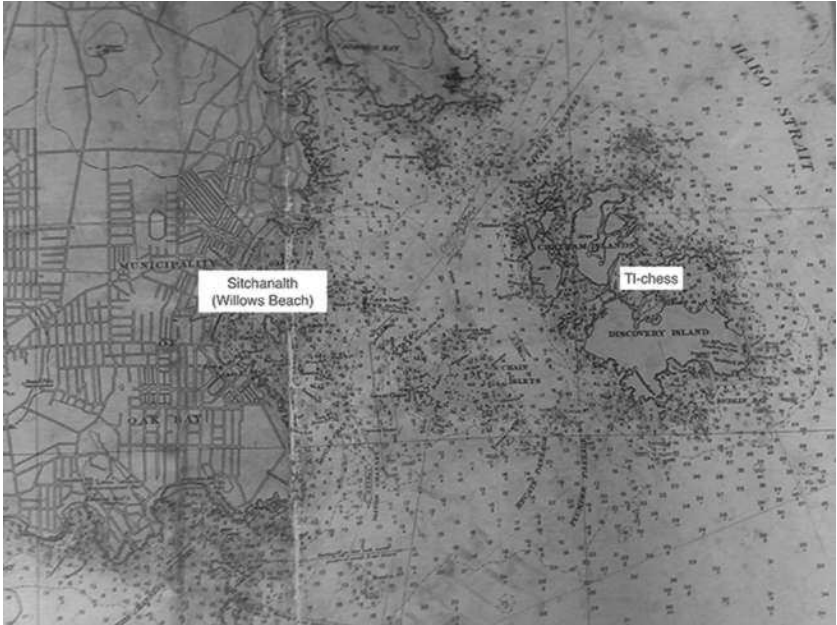


Figure 1 Early twentieth-century map (1920–23) of Oak Bay and Tl-chess – colonial names Discovery and Chatham Islands (Oak Bay Archives, used by permission)

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*The Professor, the Mountaineer, and
a National Variety of English*

Stefan Dollinger

University of British Columbia, Vancouver



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To my most brilliant teachers in Upper Austria,
Vienna,
Ontario,
and
British Columbia

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Preface

The intellectual history of individuals in the field of Canadian English is to a considerable degree also the history of the development of linguistics in Canada. This book is based on archival work, retracing and reconstructing the creation of a Canadian variety of English – against the odds – by descriptive linguists from the 1940s to the 1990s. A synthesis of new data and reinterpretations of older studies reveal that Canadian English appears to have finally solidified as an accepted concept only as late as the 2000s, after a period of prolonged debate.

It is hoped that the present account may start a conversation in Canada and perhaps in the fields of sociolinguistics and English linguistics in general. This is desirable in the light of linguists holding competing beliefs and often making contradictory theoretical assumptions about the nature of language and how it should be studied. The differences in opinion, however, have generally not resulted in increased exchanges redressing incompatibilities, but in the formation of intellectual silos.

Any discipline that forgets its past is bound to repeat errors and add some new ones. In the frenzy of linguistic inquiry today, which includes the relentless and sometimes ruthless battle for funding, we have seen more and more ahistorical perspectives taking hold, so much so that the “founders” of Canadian English need to be written back into linguistic history. I have aimed to present a balanced account of the developments over the past eighty years. While I hope that my interpretations will meet with my colleagues’ approval – by and large, at least – I also hope that any disagreements will be constructively discussed in future exchanges.

I believe that linguistic findings should be made widely accessible, which is why the present book has been written with the general-interest reader in mind. It is geared towards anyone with an interest in language and presumes no advance knowledge.

Historical interpretations are bound to a given place, time, and interpreter. In this light, this book is more personal than any of my previous linguistic texts. While I strove to keep anecdotes to a minimum – hence the focus on 1940 to 1998 – I also felt that readers ought to know where this book’s language historian positions himself.

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A number of people made all the difference in secondary school, including the four “-bauers” in engineering school: Mag. Draxlbauer, who was the prime reason for me, English student at electrical engineering high school, trying the odd choice of an English–German major at university; Dipl. Ing. Rauchbauer; Mag. Ruckerbauer; and Ing. Kothbauer. Dipl. Ing. Jörg Haßlacher modelled an appealing kind of humanity for all of us. Much earlier, I accumulated debts to teachers Liselotte Schermaier, Sister Brigitte, Sister Ariane, and Sister Hamurabi.

More closely related to the present project, Professor Leslie Saxon is thanked not just for assistance with my affiliate-faculty status at the University of Victoria, but above all for spotting mistakes in an early draft of Chapter 1; and Alexandra D'Arcy for giving me the opportunity to present the book.

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The fact that a person's name is listed here does not imply the approval of any part of the book. While I got help from many, all faults and misrepresentations remain entirely my own.

Vielen Dank & Daungschee (in Upper Austrian traditional dialect), y'all

A Note to the International Reader

The use of the term *American* is in line with Canadian usage: *American* is always the adjective/noun for the United States; *North American* refers to both Canada and the USA. Referring to the southern parts of the Americas, we'd use *Central*, *Latin*, or *South America*, respectively. While I use Canadian terminology throughout, e.g. *hockey* but never *ice hockey*, I explain every aspect of it – if not in the main text, then in a note.