

Newfoundland English: Sociolinguistic Variation in Placentia Bay

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The goal of this research is to examine and describe language change in Newfoundland English. The primary sites of investigation are the towns of Argentia and Placentia. This research will be conducted using a variationist linguistic framework. In this theoretical approach, variation in language use is seen to be structured, not random, and this structure can be discovered by studying the correlation of linguistic variables and social and linguistic factors. Building on current initiatives of the Memorial University Sociolinguistics Laboratory (MUSL), this research will provide clues to how language changes spread from urban centers. I will attempt to discern how social forces such as resettlement, out-migration and the introduction and closure of the Fort McAndrew Air-Force Base (during which there existed prime conditions for dialect mixing) have affected present day speech.

This project will focus on two salient variables: s-marking and interdental stopping. S-marking is the realization of 3rd person singular morphology on verbs in the absence of a 3rd person singular subject. For example, the *-s* on *he/she lovess it* appears in contexts where it is not found in Standard English, such as *I/we/you/they lovess it*. Interdental stopping is a process by which interdental fricatives become alveolar stops. For example, the voiceless dental fricative /θ/ in *thin* becomes the voiceless alveolar stop /t/ in *tin* and voiced dental fricative /ð/ in *this* becomes the voiced alveolar stop /d/ in *dis*. Variationist research is crucial in fostering an understanding of how language is changing in this province, how these changes spread and which social factors condition changes. The region's placement relative to the major urban center of St. John's makes it an ideal region in which to carry out variationist research under the hypothesis that older traditional forms persist longer in more rural areas.