

## Hablando Inglés Canadiense en el año preparatorio de la Licenciatura en Lengua Inglesa de la Universidad de La Habana

### *Speaking Canadian English in Havana University Prep Year of the English Major*

Guillermo Ronda Velázquez <sup>1</sup>    
Miguel Ángel Olivé Iglesias <sup>2</sup> 

<sup>1</sup>Havana University, School of Foreign Languages. Havana, Cuba.

<sup>2</sup>Holguín University. Holguín, Cuba.

Recibido: 21/10/2023  
Aceptado: 16/1/2024

#### RESUMEN

La Facultad de Lenguas Extranjeras de la Universidad de La Habana prepara cada año nuevas generaciones de profesores y de traductores e intérpretes. La mayoría de las variantes del inglés se forman en la carrera de cinco años utilizando textos orales y escritos. Lo predominante, sin embargo, es el inglés americano. La necesidad de liberarse de las ataduras impuestas por los viejos hábitos que dictan el uso excesivo de esta variante es cada día mayor. Desde esta perspectiva, los profesores de inglés del año preparatorio han emprendido la implementación de una sección lingüística para la formación de nuestros estudiantes en el inglés canadiense. Se ha utilizado básicamente en expresión oral, una de las áreas principales de la actividad verbal, pero se ha sugerido extenderla al resto de las habilidades. La sección *How to Say It* del libro de texto *Spectrum I* pretende ofrecer elementos de vocabulario canadiense junto con funciones comunicativas en inglés americano. Se añade, además, apoyo fonético para garantizar la formación y el aprendizaje del inglés canadiense.

**Palabras clave:** inglés de Canadá; expresión oral; funciones comunicativas.

#### ABSTRACT

*The School of Foreign Languages at the University of Havana prepares new generations of professors, translators and interpreters every year. Most English variants are trained in the five-year major using oral and written texts. The predominant one, however, is American English. The need to break free from the restraints imposed by old habits dictating the overuse of this variant is increasing each day. From this perspective, professors of English in the preparatory year have undertaken the implementation of a language section for training our students in Canadian English. It has been basically used in oral expression, one of the main areas of verbal activity, but it suggested to extend it to the rest of the skills. The *How to Say It* section of *Spectrum I* Coursebook intends to offer Canadian vocabulary items along with communicative functions in American English. Added also, phonetic support to ensure training and learning of Canadian English.*

**Keywords:** *Canadian English; oral expression; communicative functions.*

## Introduction

Professors of English Language at the School of Foreign Languages at the University of Havana have met challenges over the years to prepare young generations of students who have increasingly become "digital learners." Language learning has gone beyond the limits imposed by physical boundaries between countries and students have become more autonomous in learning as time goes by.

The teaching of English in Cuba has other significant issues derived from the embargo the United States of America has imposed for more than half a century. Cuban teachers and professors have learned English in Cuba and have taught that foreign language for decades without the aid of English native professionals or without the possibility of taking updating courses in English speaking countries.

Most syllabuses, books and guidelines have been used for years, which are now out of date. However, most of them are still in use. Thus, the need to keep Cuba among developed countries worldwide in the educational field has increased motivation in contemporary pedagogy of language teaching. Outstanding professionals have set their minds to finding everlasting solutions to this problem.

This paper presents the efforts directed at suggesting new ways to help the preparatory-year students improve their English learning before they start their major in the language at the School of Foreign Languages in the University of Havana. To lead the teaching-learning process more successfully at this school, English is divided into the four verbal areas of language: oral expression, written expression, listening comprehension and reading comprehension. As well, grammar and pronunciation are taught independently. All in all, English is divided into six "subjects" or areas of study, each one of which is taught by a different professor. This teaching staff gathers once every week to monitor the process.

This paper aims at:

- Offering arguments for the introduction of Canadian English in the curricular map.
- Illustrating briefly the richness of Canadian culture so as to help readers become aware of the wealth and relevance of the Canadian cultural mosaic.
- Explaining the way the teaching of English unfolds in the English major. Oral expression is taught with the aid of two main course books. In the first semester, students use Spectrum 1. Spectrum is a communicative course, it contains fourteen units. It is based on the idea that "communication is not merely an end-product of language study, but rather the very process through which a new language is acquired." (Spectrum 1, iii)" (Ronda, 2020). In the first semester, dialogs are presented, memorized, transposed to new situations and adapted to new communicative functions. This semester emphasizes accuracy. During the second semester, students continue to practice the oral skill. The book they use at this point is called Passages 1. This is an American course book, as Spectrum 1. The main



difference is that it focuses on the students' individual performances. The book is divided into twelve units. Each one proposes controversial issues that activate varied reactions in the students. By the time students start the second semester, they have developed oral strategies to face the new activities and exercises in this book (Ronda, 2020). This semester emphasizes fluency.

As both course books contain materials in American English, this paper lists words, phrases and communicative functions to enrich the syllabus with the corresponding Canadian ones. Furthermore, vocabulary items and phonetic support are offered so as to pave the way for the learning of Canadian English along the preparatory year.

It is the authors' understanding and conviction that Canada and Cuba have cemented strong, lasting relations for decades. Such privilege must be expanded to all possible working and cooperation grounds.

Initially, the paper focuses on Canada as a nation, to enter then the pedagogical objectives in mind.

## Development

### Canada and Canadians. Canada's vast impact

Archibald Lampman, a Canadian Modernist, wrote his arresting "Winter Uplands." The poem reflects all that surrounds him as part of his vast Canada. The poem is part of his poetic legacy that laid the foundation for contemporary poets' bond with their nation: "... Like jets of silver from the violet dome, / So

wonderful, so many and so near, / And then the golden moon to guide me home...; / And silence, frost and beauty everywhere." (Benson, Brown and Lampman were taken from *New Horizons*, McClelland and Stewart Limited, Revised edition, Canada, 1965) Regarding this unique connection between Canada and Canadians, outstanding Canadian historian, Desmond Morton, referring to Canadians in general, speaks of "a kinship with nature." Morton also said that "Canadians have a sense of place." (Both quotations taken from *The Ambassador* 06, the Canada Cuba Literary Alliance, official magazine, words by Morton in his article "What Do Canadians Have In Common?").

More poetic approaches to Canadian land and spirit come in fine poems by Richard Grove, like "Land of a Dream": "Before me lies / the land of my dreams. / Sprawling dense bush. / A canopy / of shimmering leaves / that purr..." (Taken from Grove's book *Poems for Jack*. National Library of Canada, 2001) or his "My Heart Grows Wings": "... brilliant sundrenched view... / vast wilderness panorama / unsullied, pristine... / Wing tips dip, / loon lances / silver mirrored sky." This touching poem is included in his book *A Small Payback, Ode to Victoria Lake* (Hidden Brook Press, 2016). In



his Preface he explicitly says: "The book is also a small payback to Victoria Lake for her pristine beauty." John B. Lee's Foreword to the book states: "In this book... you have the spirit of the place... A glimpse of grace. Rare and precious." The entire book is a visual-worded hymn to the beauty of a specific location that embodies Canada as a whole. Another poet charmed by Canadian beauty is James Deahl. An example of how drawn he has been is his poem "After Coming to the North": "For miles around: only rock, / trees, these cold spring lakes. / And our tiny lives. / Ovid never saw this, nor / the Elizabethans, for all / their brilliance. Already night / has started to draw heat / from the day, its deep sky / searching, reaching ever deeper." (Taken from Travelling the Lost Highway. Guernica Editions Inc., 2019)

The impression left on him is obvious, and straightforwardly expressed in his middle lines: "Ovid never saw this, nor / the Elizabethans, for all / their brilliance." To the poet, there is nothing that compares to the Canadian scenes before him. Yet, his most eloquent "love affair" with Canada is the fact that U.S. born, he moved to it in 1970 never to move back to the United States. He firmly stated that "I never developed my own voice, my own vision, until I moved to Canada in 1970." (Taken from Under the Watchful Eye, Broken Jaw Press, 1995). This is the Canada that features its own English variant.

## **Teaching Canadian English in Cuba. General considerations**

Why should the teaching of Canadian English go along with American English in the university? Stronger than the unquestionable historical recognition and support Cuba has always been given by Canada, it is now a matter of mutual understanding, friendship and cooperation. The teaching of Canadian English to our professionals is a powerful bridge of love between our nations.

Based on previous findings published by Olivé (2020) (Read his essay The Canada Cuba Literary Alliance. An on-campus and community activities cultural exchange. An essay about the influence and contribution of the CCLA to friendship and culture, in his review book In a Fragile Moment: A Landscape of Canadian Poetry. Hidden Brook Press, 2020), Cuba and Canada have been amicably connected for years. They have had interactions of some type dating as far back as the 18th century when "Vessels from the Atlantic provinces of Canada traded codfish and beer for rum and sugar."

In 1945 Cuba was the first country in the Caribbean selected by Canada to locate a diplomatic mission and official diplomatic relations. Canada, along with Mexico, was the country on this side of the Atlantic Ocean which did not break relations with the island in the years after the Cuban revolution of 1959. As it goes, "Canada and Cuba enjoy a broad and diverse relationship built on a long history of mutually beneficial engagement, important and growing economic and commercial relations, and strong people- to-people ties across a wide range of sectors and interests." (ibidem).

Canada has also recognized Cuba's strong dedication to economic and social rights, with relevant achievements in education and health. Cuba is the third most popular overseas destination for Canadians (after the United States and Mexico) and Canada is Cuba's largest source of tourists:



"Canada has maintained consistently cordial relations with Cuba, in spite of considerable pressure from the United States, with the island being one of the most popular international travel destinations for Canadian citizens." (ibidem).

Knowledge of Canada, its history, geography, policies and programs, is also promoted through Canadian Studies Centers located in universities across Cuba, and the country is part of the curricular map of the English majors in the Cuban universities. Academic cooperation represents one of the most important aspects of the relationship between Canada and Cuba, with expanding networks of academics and researchers from both countries working together in a wide range of disciplines. Cultural, literary and interpersonal ties do contribute as well to strengthening people-to-people relations between Canadians and Cubans.

The words of the Canadian Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, in his 2016 visit to Cuba clearly summarized Canada's supporting and firm state of mind regarding the island in terms of foreign policy: "Pour moi, les résultats de l'élection aux États-Unis ne changeront pas les relations étroites entre le Canada et Cuba, basées sur l'amitié et le partenariat" ("To me, the U.S. election results won't change the close Canada-Cuba relations, based on friendship and partnership"). (taken from Olivé, 2020)

Despite any changes on the political-diplomatic map, the Cuban and Canadian peoples, writers, poets, friends, will continue to respect each other and share peace, culture and life. This is the context, which has not essentially changed, in which the Havana University puts in practice well thought-out and argument-packed ideas to increase the Canadian presence in the curricula.

Most learners of English worldwide cannot tell American and Canadian English apart. Cuban learners, either. Cubans do not find so many differences between Canadian and American English when it comes to speaking. When writing, however, they may seem easy to spot. Here is a first approach: "Canucks."-as they call themselves- have traditionally preserved the British spelling of many words while Americans have made some changes: they have dropped the "u" in the words: "colour", "neighbour", "flavour," "labour," among others. As well, in words like: "theatre", the -re ending has become -er: theater (see Appendix for further illustration).

There are some vocabulary differences regarding the way money is referred to in some Canadian provinces. Most people refer to a one-dollar coin as "loonie". Meanwhile, the two-dollar coin is called: "toonie". Also, a five-dollar bill may be referred to as a "fiver." A ten dollar-bill is often called a "ten-spot" by many Canadians.

Despite the huge region Canada covers, the whole country is famous worldwide for its low temperatures, even in summer. In wintertime, Canada becomes a really cold country. Thus, Canadians have a phrase to refer to people who go to warmer southern climates during the winter: 'snowbirds.' The term is probably known and even used in other English-speaking countries, but it is a typical Canadian phrase.

Education in Canada covers areas such as proxemics, the science that studies the space between people who are engaged in conversations. They always keep some personal distance when talking



to others. North Americans respect this space as well, but they generally get closer to interact with other people. They even dare to slightly touch the other person they are talking to when they believe they have to catch their attention. Even when Canadians are friendly people, they enjoy having their personal space.

"Canadians are well known for their helpful and polite nature. While this may be based on a stereotype, many studies have shown that Canadians actually are nicer than their American neighbors to the south. If you want to talk like a Canadian, you need to increase your levels of politeness." WikiHow Staff (2022).

The arguments above led to the implementation of an elective module in the preparatory year to enhance students' knowledge about Canada, its history and culture. Many Canadians are quick to point out that US citizens are being exclusionary when they call themselves "Americans," as Canada (along with nearly two dozen other countries) is also part of the "Americas." WikiHow Staff (2022). As the Canadian National Anthem expresses: "...the true North strong and free..." each Canadian is proud of his/her idiosyncrasy, and they have proven to the whole world who the real Americans are.

As to the course book, every unit in Spectrum 1 is divided into different sections to cover all areas of language. The How to Say It section is the target of the present research. This section aims at strengthening the pronunciation of the main communicative functions and vocabulary of each unit.

As an approach, seven out of the fourteen units in Spectrum 1 have been chosen to introduce the Canadian English variant progressively. This is an ongoing research and it is expected to cover the rest of the units in the next academic year, along with a new proposal to give continuity to the idea in the second semester. An attempt to do something similar about Passages 1 course book is being considered as well.

As American and Canadian English may sound and seem so similar, there are communicative functions, phrases or words in the following selection that are exactly the same. In those cases, some synonymous ones have been offered all along the proposal to enhance students' language learning.

Some vocabulary and pronunciation items that are part of the communicative functions or appear at least related to the topic being presented are also offered in this paper. The units to be treated are: 4, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, and 14.

## **Proposal of curricular enrichment to introduce Canadian English**

*Unit 4 Where's the Post Office?*

*How to Say It - page 39*



Communicative functions in American English	Communicative functions in Canadian English
I'd like a taxi at Arno's Coffee Shop.	I'd like a cab at Arno's Timmie.
And it's not Mitch's Taxi?	Isn't it Mitch's Cab?
It's Pat's Restaurant.	It's Pat's Diner/ Cafe.

Extra Vocabulary in American English	Vocabulary in Canadian English
Isn't it? / Wasn't it? – Tag-questions mainly.	eh!
whole milk	homo milk – short for homogenized milk.
Coffee with two creams and two sugars.	A double double

Pronunciation in American English	Pronunciation in Canadian English
avenue /'ævənu/	avenue /'ævənju/ ...nue – like in "new" /nju/
huh! /hʌ/	eh! /eɪ/
about /ə'baʊt/	about –like in "about" /ə'but/ or "about"/ə'bout/

### Unit 7 Friday

#### How to Say It - page 74

Communicative functions in American English	Communicative functions in Canadian English
What are you up to?	Whadder yup to?
I'll give him the message.	I'll make sure that he gets the message.
I'll call back later.	I'll give you a call later / I'll get back to you later.

Extra Vocabulary in American English	Vocabulary in Canadian English
power (There was a power cut).	hydro (The hydro went out).
How are you doing?	How ya doin'?
Hi, dude! Buy me a box of beer when you go shopping.	Hey, buddy! Pick me up a two-four when you're out and about.

Pronunciation in American English	Pronunciation in Canadian English
power /'paʊə/	hydro /'haɪdrɒs/
give him /'gɪvəm /	give him /'gɪvɪm /
dude /dʒud/	buddy /'bʌdɪ/

### Unit 8 Lost and Found

#### How to Say It - page 89



Communicative functions in American English	Communicative functions in Canadian English
Oh, no!	I can't believe this!
What's wrong?	What's the matter?
I lost my wallet!	I don't have my wallet!

Extra Vocabulary in American English	Vocabulary in Canadian English
winter hat	tuque
sneakers	runners/kicks
soft drink/ soda	pop

Pronunciation in American English	Pronunciation in Canadian English
hat / hæʔ/	tuque /tuk /
soda /'soudə/	pop /pɒp/
wallet /'wɒlɪt/	wallet, billfold /'bɪlfould/

*Unit 10 Anything Else?*

*How to Say It - page 111*

Communicative functions in American English	Communicative functions in Canadian English
I like the red sunglasses.	I like those red sunglasses.
How much are they?	How much are those? / How much do they cost?
How's it going?	How's she bootin'er?

Extra Vocabulary in American English	Vocabulary in Canadian English
colored pencils	pencil crayons
school bag	bag pack
book bag	kit bag

Pronunciation in American English	Pronunciation in Canadian English
bag /bæg/	bag /beɪg/ - with a very short diphthong.
sofa /'soʊfə/	couch /'kaʊtʃ/ or chesterfield /'tʃɛstəfɪld/
colored /'kɒləd /	crayons /'kreɪənz/

*Unit 11 Saturday Night...*

*How to Say It - page 121*



Communicative functions in American English	Communicative functions in Canadian English
Where'd you go?	Where did you go?
What'd you do there?	What did you do there?
When did you come back?	When did you return?

Extra Vocabulary in American English	Vocabulary in Canadian English
A coffeehouse / a coffee shop	timmie
Bite-sized doughnuts fried in vegetable oil	timbits
whole wheat bread	brown bread
Pronunciation in American English	Pronunciation in Canadian English
Coffee shop /'kɒfɪ ʃɒp/	timmie /'tɪmɪ/
doughnut /'daʊnət /	timbit /'tɪmbɪt/
American cheese /tʃɪz/	processed /'prəʊsəst/ cheese.

### Unit 13 Would You Like to Join Us?

#### How to Say It - page 145

Communicative functions in American English	Communicative functions in Canadian English
D'you want to go to a movie after work?	Do you want to go to a movie after work?
Oh, I'd really like to, but I can't.	Oh, I'd really like to go, but I can't.
I have to make dinner for my family.	I have to cook dinner for my family.

Extra Vocabulary in American English	Vocabulary in Canadian English
Bathroom	washroom
paper napkin	serviette
tissues	Kleenex

Pronunciation in American English	Pronunciation in Canadian English
bathroom /'bɑθrʊm/	washroom /'wɒʃrʊm/
napkin /'næpkɪn/	serviette /,sə'vɪ'et/
tissues /'tɪʃuz/	Kleenex /'kli:nəks /

### Unit 14 First Day on the Job?

#### How to Say It - page 155

Communicative functions in American English	Communicative functions in Canadian English
Where d'you work?	Where do you work?
At the Press.	I work at the Press.
Where did you work before?	Where did you work before?



Extra Vocabulary in American English	Vocabulary in Canadian English
1 kilometer	clicks
He's going to do some shopping	He's going out and about.
French fries with cheese curds and brown gravy.	poutines

Pronunciation in American English	Pronunciation in Canadian English
kilometer /'kɪlə,mɪtə/, /kɪ'lɒmɪtə/	clicks /kɪks/
fries /fraɪz/	poutines /pu'tɪnz/
dollar /'dɒlə /	loonie /'luːni /

## Conclusions

It must be stated that the present paper aimed at proposing a way to enrich some units in Spectrum 1. So far, only units 4, 7, 8 and 10 have been taught in class the way it is proposed here. Even when there are other units still to be covered, the approximation to Canadian English can be assessed as positive.

There are forty-seven students registered in the preparatory year and they are divided into two groups with 23 and 24 students each. Group 1, with 23 ones has been taught the Canadian way and 17 of them (73.91 %) have been able to put into practice the new communicative functions in their everyday speech spontaneously. Meanwhile, 18 students (78.26 %) have used some vocabulary items in class.

It must be admitted that pronouncing the Canadian way is still the major challenge. Only seven students (30.43 %) have tried to show their "Canadian variant." Although the proposal is an ongoing research, the partial results show the areas that need urgent emphasis and attention.

Canada's support of Cuba and its immense geography, culture and friendship ought to be present in any university curricula. May this paper be a token of the authors' intention to work towards that end.

## References

- Olivé Iglesias, M. Á. (2020). In a Fragile Moment: A Landscape of Canadian Poetry. Hidden Brook Press.
- Olivé Iglesias, M. Á. (2021). Five Canadian Poets: Analytical Essays on, James Deahl, John B. Lee, Don Gutteridge, Glen Sorestad, A. F. Moritz. QuodSermo Publishing.



Olivé Iglesias, M. Á. (Ed.). (2021). *On the Breeze of Canadian Literature: International Reviews and Essays*. QuodSermo Publishing.

Olivé Iglesias, M. Á. (2021). *A Shower of Warm Light: Reviews and Essays on Canadian Poetry*. QuodSermo Publishing. Canadá.

Olivé Iglesias, M. Á. (2024). *The Light Candling the Mind. A Journey across Canadian Literature. Reviews and Essays*. QuodSermo Publishing. Canada. (work in progress).

Ronda et al. (2020). *The Canadian Presence in the Teaching of Oral Expression in the Preparatory Year at the University of Havana*. WEFLA 2020 Seminar on Canadian Studies Literature and Culture.

### Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interests.

### Appendix 1 - Canadian Variant spellings by category

Word family	Canadian Oxford spelling	Concise Oxford (British) spelling	Merriam-Webster (American) spelling
Words with -our or -or	labour honour humour laborious honorary humorous	labour honour humour laborious honorary humorous	labor honor humor laborious honorary humorous
Words with -re or -er	centre fibre sombre meter (device) metre (metric unit)	centre fibre sombre meter (device) metre (SI unit)	center fiber somber meter (all uses)
Words with -yze, -yse, -ize or -ise and their derived forms	analyze paralyze organize analysis paralysis organization	analyse paralyse organise analysis paralysis organisation	analyze paralyze organize analysis paralysis organization
Words with -ce or -se	defence offence licence (noun) license (verb) practice (noun) practise (verb)	defence offence licence (noun) license (verb) practice (noun) practise (verb)	defense offense license (noun and verb) practice (noun and verb)



Words with double or single "l" and their derivatives	instill enrol fulfillment instalment	instil enrol fulfillment instalment	instill enroll fulfillment installment
Words with double or single consonants in the past tense	travelled labelled marshalled benefited budgeted targeted	travelled labelled marshalled benefited budgeted targeted	traveled labeled marshaled benefited budgeted targeted
Words with single vowels or diphthongs (e.g., "ae" and "oe")	encyclopedia hemorrhage pediatric aesthetic hors d'oeuvre manoeuvre	encyclopaedia haemorrhage paediatric aesthetic hors d'oeuvre manoeuvre	encyclopedia hemorrhage pediatric aesthetic hors d'oeuvre maneuver
Words in which the silent "e" is deleted or kept before a suffix	aging judgment lovable sizable likeable saleable acknowledgement	ageing judgement lovable sizeable likeable saleable acknowledgement	aging judgment lovable sizeable likable salable acknowledgment
Loan words with traditional or anglicized plural forms	tableaux châteaux formulae (math and chemistry) referendums appendices indexes (back of book) indices (technical) formulas (not math and chemistry)	tableaux chateaux formulae (math and chemistry) referendums appendices indexes (back of book) indices (technical) formulas (not math and chemistry)	tableaux châteaux formulas (all uses) referenda appendixes indexes (all uses)