

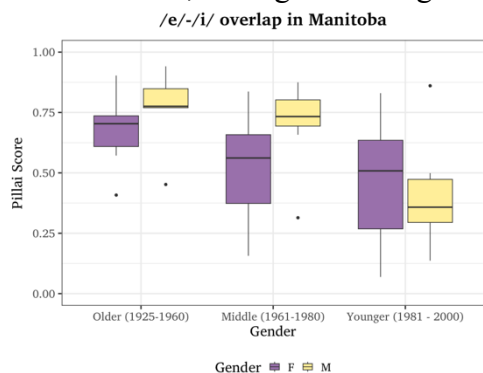
## /e/-/i/ overlap in Manitoba English

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Labov et al (2006) and Boberg (2008, 2010) posit a dialectal difference arising from a number of isoglosses between Ontario and Prairies English in Canada. This paper investigates a previously unreported sociophonetic difference, i.e. the degree of overlap between /e/ and /i/ in Manitoba English, adding additional support for this dialectal split. We show how this overlap is conditioned by social factors such as age, gender, rurality, socioeconomic status and ethnicity, and set these findings in a broader Canadian context by comparing with speakers from the Greater Toronto Hamilton Area (GTHA) in Ontario.

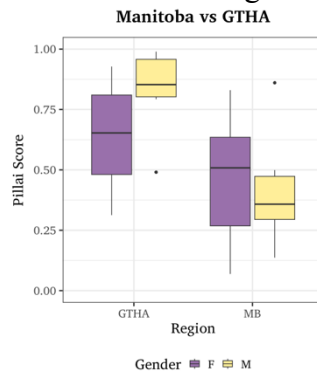
This study uses word list data from the Languages in the Prairies Project (LIPP), a corpus collected from nine different communities across Alberta and Manitoba between 2009 and 2019. We investigate aspects of vowel patterning in 25 speakers from the Interlake region of Manitoba, a rural community settled primarily by Ukrainians and Icelanders, comparing them with results from 36 speakers from Winnipeg, the urban capital of Manitoba, as reported on in Li (2021) and Onosson (2022). We compare this with data from 22 GTHA speakers collected online from 2021 to 2022 (Sullivan, 2022). We measured the F1 and F2 at the midpoint of /e/ and /i/ before /t/, /d/ and /n/ in wordlist data using Praat (Boersma & Weenink, 2021) and calculated Pillai scores (Stanley & Sneller, 2023) to determine the degree of overlap between /e/ and /i/, where the lower the Pillai score, the higher the degree of overlap.



Preliminary results indicate a change in progress in apparent time towards more overlap of /e/ and /i/ in both the rural Interlake region, and in Winnipeg, with each age group overlapping /e/ and /i/ more than the last. A gender effect where women have more overlap than men further supports this analysis of change in progress. This gender effect is most prominent in the older age groups where women display more overlap than men, disappearing in the youngest age group where the men's overlap appears to have caught up to the women's (see

figure to right). Finally, there is an interaction between socioeconomic status and region whereby professionals in the Interlake region appear to be overlapping less, whereas Interlake non-professionals and both SES groups in Winnipeg are overlapping more, to about the same degree.

Comparing results of the youngest Manitoban speakers (n=27) to those of the same age from the GTHA, we find that that Manitobans display significantly more overlap than Torontonians, establishing another phonetic difference between the two regions. Interestingly, an interaction between gender and region was also found (see figure to right). Unlike the young Manitobans for whom there is no gender effect, GTHA women display more overlap than their male peers. The GTHA pattern is consistent with the pattern of the older age groups in Manitoba, which may suggest that the change is in its initial stages in the GTHA. However, given that linguistic changes are generally found to begin in larger centres and be diffused to smaller ones (Trudgill 1974, Labov 2001), more data



is needed to ascertain whether this overlap is indeed a change in progress in the GTHA and what are the drivers of change of the phenomenon.

Overall, we find that /e-/i/ overlap has changed over apparent time in Manitoba, and that it plays a part in the phonetic differentiation between Manitoba and Ontario speakers posited in Boberg (2008, 2010).

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