

Pulmonic Ingressive Discourse Particles in Canadian Maritime English: Enregisterment in Real Time

Dr. Matt Hunt Gardner
QMUL Ling Lunch
October 18, 2024, iQ East Court (Scape): 0.11

A new and central emblematic feature of Canadian Maritime English (CME) is the use of an ingressive airstream for discourse particles like *yes*↓, *no*↓, and *right?*↓,^{1,2} – a previously “below-the-radar” phenomenon alleged to be linked to female speech and Scottish heritage [1, 2, 5]. Since 2010, however, the latent use of an ingressive airstream has entered the Maritime zeitgeist as an index of affirmative localness. Overt public discourse and use in popular media evidence a profound metamorphosis. No longer tethered exclusively to Scottish or feminine stereotypes, ingressive discourse markers have been repurposed by Millennial Maritimers as emblems of a progressive “East Coast Lifestyle”. The enregisterment of the feature, manifested in instances like the “Inhaled Affirmative” pilsner by Big Spruce Brewing (Fig. 1), underscores a detachment from traditional gender-, heritage- and class-based confines. Advantageously, this process has unfolded in real time, coinciding with ongoing sociolinguistic research on CME. In my talk, I will track the rise of ingressives from non-salience to cultural prominence and reveal the unintended but pivotal role linguists played in this development.

Additionally, my talk will describe this unusual feature for those perhaps unfamiliar with ingressive speech. For example, from an interactional perspective, CME conversational data reveals how ingressives actively manage discourse by serving specific functions in controlling TOPIC, TURN, and FLOOR [6, 7], as in (1)–(3) from [8]. They also function to resolve ambiguity in backchannels, as well as to signal a speaker’s emotion, attitude, and affective stance, and to contribute to the establishment or demonstration of inter-speaker solidarity.

(1) Relinquishing FLOOR

1 Woman b. 1915: Oh yes, we had one dog. Poor old Percy. He was a lovely dog. Yeah↓(.)
2 Woman b. 1916: That’s like our dog. So good. Yeah↓(.)

(2) Changing TOPIC

1 Woman b. 1989: That boy’s crazy(.)
2 Man b. 1989: Yeah↓ Yeah↓ Yeah↓(.)
3 Woman b. 1989: Who else was friends with him?

(3) Affirming truth value of negative statement

1 Man b. 1896: No, no he didn’t tell us anything about that at all. No(.)
2 Interviewer: No(.)
3 Man b. 1896: Yeah↓(.)
4 Interviewer: No(.)
5 Man b. 1896: No(.)

¹The International Phonetic Alphabet employs ↓ after a sound symbol (or in isolation) to indicate ingressive airstream/inhalation.

²Ingressive particles are not exclusive to Canadian Maritime English. The phenomenon is dispersed across the Atlantic/Baltic region, marking it an intriguing areal feature with intersecting historical ties. See [1–4] for an overview.



Figure 1: *The Inhaled Affirmative*, image courtesy of Big Spruce Brewing, Baddeck, NS.

References

- [1] Sandra Clarke and Gunnel Melchers. “Ingressive particles across borders. Gender and discourse parallels across the North Atlantic”. In: *Dialects across borders. Selected papers from the 11th International Conference on Methods in Dialectology (Methods XI), Joensuu, August 2002*. Ed. by Markku Filppula et al. Vol. v. 273. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2005, pp. 51–72.
- [2] Eleanor Josette Thom. “The Gaelic Gasp and its North Atlantic Cousins. A study of Ingressive Pulmonic Speech in Scotland”. MA thesis. University College London, 2005.
- [3] Robert Eklund. “Pulmonic Ingressive Phonation. Diachronic and Synchronic Characteristics, Distribution, and Function in Animal and Human Sound Production and in Human Speech”. In: *Journal of the International Phonetic Association* 83.3 (2008), pp. 235–324.
- [4] Robert Eklund. “Languages with pulmonic ingressive speech. Updating and adding to the list”. In: *Working Papers, 55, 2015: Proceedings from Fonetik 2015 Lund, June 8–10, 2015*. Ed. by Gilbert Ambrazaitis Malin Svensson Lundmark and Joost van de Weijer. Lund, Sweden: Centre for Languages and Literatures, Lund University, 2015, pp. 31–34.
- [5] Michael Kieffe and Elizabeth Kay-Raining Bird. “Canadian Maritime English”. In: *The lesser-known varieties of English. An introduction*. Ed. by Daniel Schreier et al. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 59–71.
- [6] Harvey Sacks, Emanuel A. Schegloff, and Gail Jefferson. “A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation”. In: *Language* 50.4 (1974), pp. 696–735.
- [7] Emanuel A. Schegloff. “Overlapping Talk and the Organization of Turn-Taking for Conversation”. In: *Language in Society* 29.1 (2000), pp. 1–63.
- [8] Matt Hunt Gardner. “Canadian Maritime English. Solidarity and resistance, yeah ↓”. In: *The New Cambridge History of the English Language*. Ed. by Natalie Schilling, Derek Denis, and Raymond Hickey. Vol. 5. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming.