

**THE *DICTIONARY OF CANADIANISMS ON HISTORICAL PRINCIPLES*, SECOND EDITION
AND REGIONAL VARIATION:
THE COMPLEX CASE OF NEWFOUNDLAND**

Stefan Dollinger

Introductory remarks¹

LEXICOGRAPHY AND LINGUISTICS HAVE BEEN uneasy bedfellows for quite some time now. In the context of Canadian English one might say that linguistics – in the sense of the institutionalized, academic discipline – has all but abandoned lexicography, by which I mean the art and craft of making dictionaries. The one notable exception to this statement may be in the field of aboriginal language studies, where a need for dictionary creation is widely recognized.

The present situation is, however, an entirely different scenario from some decades back, when Canada's leading linguists, pioneers such as Walter Avis, Matthew Scargill, or Robert Gregg on the national level and, on the Newfoundland side, George Story, William Kirwin and associates, expended considerable resources, time, expertise and money towards the creation of dictionaries of varieties of Canada's official languages, English and French. These projects were of immediate relevance to Canadians, setting the benchmark in terms of language awareness in the country, and addressing for the first time, as it were, questions of linguistic identity in English and French. "Do we speak British or American English, or something our own?" was the question of the day. Today, interest in such questions often comes from foreign Canadianists, those with an interest in lexicography, typology and language-internal variation.

In this short and informal account I will speak briefly to the problem of regionalisms in the context of Canadian English as it relates to the forthcoming Second Edition of the *Dictionary of Canadianisms on Historical Principles*, DCHP-2, which I have had the honour to lead since its inception in March 2006. I will present some data and statistics, yet my conclusions will be tentative and will end with a plea for assistance. At the time of writing, DCHP-2 is targeted for completion in 2016 in open access format (Dollinger et al. forthc.). A digital

¹The casual style of this account is both the result of intent and coincidence, as the author's library on Canadian English was being shipped from Canada to Europe at the time of writing.

edition of the first edition (Avis, Crate, Drysdale, Leechman, Scargill and Lovell 1967) is now available as DCHP-1 Online (Dollinger, Brinton and Fee 2013).

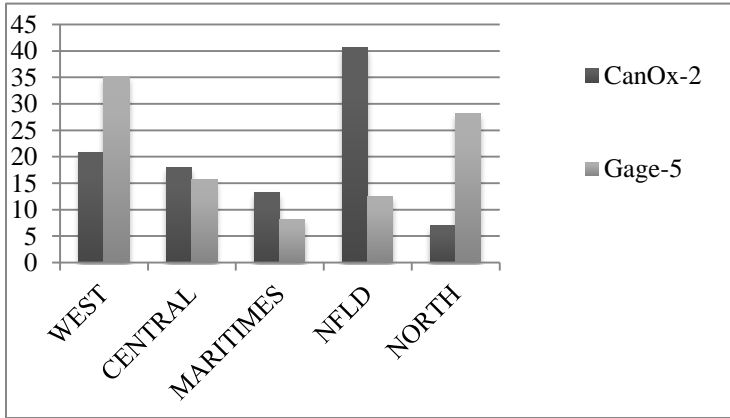
Regionalisms: A problem from day 1

A decade ago, one of the first issues to come to terms with was the treatment of regionalisms; ultimately, this derives from one's working definition and delimitation of Canadian English, which I defined rather generously as the English language as used in what is now Canada. In 2006 I wrote to William Kirwin for advice on what I soon began to see as the "Newfoundland Problem" and while Dr. Kirwin responded very kindly, he unfortunately felt the need to say that his personal circumstances would render assistance very difficult. In Dollinger and Brinton (2008), for which I delivered the data and concepts, the question of regionalism was first raised by analyzing the Canadian desk dictionary that was widely considered as the "best" at the time (*Canadian Oxford Dictionary*, 2nd ed., 2004; COD-2). An analysis of the regionally marked terms in COD-2 produced a strange pattern: Ontario and Quebec were both equally represented with 9% of all regionalisms, while Newfoundlandisms account for a stunning 40% of all regional terms. It appeared as if these figures were meant to represent a "balance" of power between Quebec and Ontario – in typical Canadian fashion – while Newfoundland terms, which were easily mined through the *Dictionary of Newfoundland English* (Story, Kirwin and Widdowson 1990 [1982], 2nd edition, mounted online in 1999; DNE-2), were apparently used to increase the token count of "Canadian" terms. This interpretation was independently confirmed by a study of the fifth (and most current) edition of the *Gage Canadian Dictionary* (DeWolf, Gregg, Harris and Scargill 1997; Gage-5), which predates the first edition of COD, but which also displays a "balance of power" between Ontario and Quebec, which both contribute 18 regionalisms to that dictionary.

Meanwhile, more substantial data (Dollinger and Gaylie 2015), affords a better look into what appears to be an unaddressed arbitrariness of lexicographical selection policies.

Figure 1 (next page) shows that two competing dictionaries, Gage-5 and COD-2 took quite different approaches to regionalisms other than the "balance of power" between Ontario and Quebec. COD-2 features 697 regionalisms, but increased its count of Canadianisms with 40% of Newfoundland regionalisms, while Gage-5, the most successful Canadian school dictionary and very important for establishing the use of Canadian dictionaries in Canadian schools, includes "only" 230 regionalisms, most from the West and North of the country. How can such difference be justified in dictionaries that have, more or less, a similar scope?

Figure 1 Relative distribution in % of regional terms in COD-2 (2004) and Gage-5 (1997)



Whatever the reasons for these different editorial choices, the important role of Newfoundland, and its treatment, in dictionaries of Canadian English becomes apparent in the context of the roughly 1700 to 2200 words and meanings that carry a Canadian label – national or regional – in the existing desk dictionaries. The question of how the most linguistically distinct Canadian English-speaking province should be treated in the national context is a vexing one. Should Newfoundland figure prominently and if so, which terms should be included, which intra-provincial regional and social variation should be considered? Clearly there is social variation in all Canadian regions, variation that generally is not treated much in dictionaries of English, and some of that variation does not figure prominently in discourse on Canadian English, which is often dominated by the concept of homogeneity (see Dollinger and Clarke 2012 for an overview). Should, therefore, Newfoundland English figure only to a very limited degree? And if so, how can this choice be justified given the substantial resources on the variety that are available today, from textbooks (Clarke 2010), to specialist literature (e.g. Childs and Van Herk 2010, Thorburn 2011) to digital atlases (Clarke and Hiscock 2013) and, of course, to the *Dictionary of Newfoundland English* (Story, Kirwin and Widdowson 1990 [1982])?

The data shown above from two of the most respected Canadian dictionaries highlights the problem of how to create a "balanced" national dictionary that would do justice to important regional forms. DCHP-2 will, just like DCHP-1, fail on this account. But it will fail not for a lack of trying, but for the immensity of the task. There is a precedent for what might be called Newfoundland's "discontent" with DCHP-1 in Story and Kirwin (1971), an account that was published in the 3rd issue of this journal. Entitled somewhat

cheekily, if provocatively, "National dictionaries and regional homework," the article drives home the central point that local institutions will necessarily know more about regional and local features than national ones. Kirwin picks a number of Newfoundland examples to correct some of DCHP-1's Newfoundland entries.

Quite predictably for dialectologists, Story and Kirwin took issue with DCHP-1's exclusive focus on print sources and the treatment of a mix of various speech levels (regional, dialectal, colloquial, etc.) as unmarked items in a national dictionary. On the one hand, the limitation to print material only and a lack of precision for some Newfoundland terms are clearly drawbacks. As a trained dialectologist, Avis regretfully reports elsewhere on the former issue and was fully aware of the problems.

The only way to overcome these problems, which are inherent in any dictionary, is to elicit the expertise of those in the know, i.e. in the case of Newfoundland and Labrador, those affiliated with Memorial University's English Language Research Centre (ELRC). DCHP-2 has taken some steps in that direction, but it will only be in subsequent editions, DCHP-3 perhaps, that the issue might be more satisfyingly tackled.

The "odd and weird": The mainlander's approach

In lexicographical terms, Newfoundland and Labrador vocabulary is a "tough nut." The region's radically different settlement history and socio-economic development in comparison to the mainland present the biggest challenge in regional terms for any Canadian dictionary of national scope. While there are many other linguistically rich regions in English and other languages alike in Canada, no other region has been researched to such a degree. It might seem as if the national lexicographer should easily draw from the Newfoundland wealth of lexical items and meanings. This plentitude presents itself as more of a problem than a blessing, however, and a problem of magnificent scope.

DCHP-2 represents an update of about 1000 lexical items, most of them post-1967, an increase of about 10% compared to DCHP-1. Among these 1000, how many items should be allotted to Newfoundland? DNE-2 alone includes more than 5000 lexemes, many with multiple meanings. Their complete inclusion would distort the proportions of DCHP-2. In other words: how much local can be included in a national dictionary? In what follows, I address the complex issue of term selection in some detail, as it highlights some of the problems and misconceptions of outsiders, when contextualizing local information (in this case lexemes and meanings) in the national context.

I will outline the initially somewhat arbitrary, trial-and-error process applied in DCHP-2, in order to allow, in a hopefully not-so-distant future, some tangible principles to emerge. How are Newfoundland and Labrador terms to be selected in DCHP-2? Which terms make it into the dictionary? Initially, it

seemed like a reasonable idea to start with COD-2 and look for its Newfoundland terms. What we did not know at the time, until we finished the (manual) extraction of regional terms from the paper copy, was that COD-2's selection policy seemed devoid of a discernible principle. In total, 279 terms were labelled *Cdn (Nfld)*, though their distribution seemed odd in the sense that 38 of them occurred in fascicle B (that is, the letter B) alone, with no other letter coming close to it. B is, generally, not a very long letter in English dictionaries (see Thorndike-Barnhardt's list in Landau 2001), though some allowances need to be made for regional or specialist dictionaries, as some concepts might produce more lexical items than others (e.g., for Newfoundland, compounds with *cod*).² We had, however, no reason to assume that the letter B was more productive for Newfoundland terms than traditionally longer English letters such as C or S, nor did the terms in B pertain to traditionally especially productive semantic domains in Newfoundland, such as fishing or sealing. The best explanation we could muster was that B appeared to have been taken as the start of the integration of Newfoundland terms in the COD master list (namely, the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* from 1992) and that the practice was then scaled back considerably, leaving B overrepresented. In traditional lexicography, fascicle A is the starting point for work; occasionally, A is replaced with a later letter, if the editorial policy is deemed to have been less consistent in the beginning, which is usually the case. Certainly, if correct, this reasoning does not instill confidence in the scholarly quality of dictionaries, but this is the matter of another paper.

Naturally, our initial list, which we gleaned from COD-2, did not impress Newfoundland scholars. And how could it? Based on COD-2's skewed list, student workers from the Canadian west coast (Baillie Ford and Sasha Gaylie) and the editor-in-chief, a New Canadian from Austria, selected terms on the principles of "oddity" or "eye-catching factor," which speak more to mainland or outsider's conceptions of "Newfoundland" than anything else. In the fall of 2013, Sandra Clarke kindly took the time to look through our suggested list of then 91 Newfoundland terms slated for inclusion in DCHP-2 and this cross-check revealed the actual problem with the approach. Clarke asked the polite but poignant question why certain terms were included, as many as 21 of the 91 had never been heard or read by local consultants, which would render them suspicious as lexical items chosen to linguistically represent Newfoundland, unless they were important obsolete terms of pure historical significance. These words are listed in Table 1, which also offers their attestations in DNE and Memorial University's Digital Archive Initiative (<http://collections.mun.ca/cdm/>) with number of "hits" in that database:

²Editor's note: The *DNE* devotes 10.7% of the 2nd edition to B, second only to S which accounts for just over 20% of the *DNE*. However, this does not explain the 13% of Newfoundland terms starting with B in the *COD*.

Table 1 Terms considered too opaque to represent Newfoundland English in DCHP-2, as assessed by Clarke and associates.

	ITEM	MEANING	DNE quotation range	MUN hits
1.	airsome (a.)	cold, fresh, bracing	(1924-1972)	10
2.	ashore (adv.)	on board (a vessel)	(1922-1924)	?
3.	eat (v.)	as in "eat oneself"; to provide oneself with food	(1786-1966)	?
4.	fairity (n.)	Fairness (EDD Ir).	recordings	7
5.	galloper (n.)	A type of small vessel used in the cod-fishery, the seal hunt, and coastal trade.	(1866-)	317
6.	gentles (n. pl)	People of high status and leisure. (OED ~ n 1 b obs; EDD 7.)	(1912)	10?
7.	half-saved (a.)	8 half-saved. Comb half-saved: (a) of cod-fish, only partially cured; (b) of a person, mentally deficient. See SAVE for sense (a). (EDD ~)	(1920)	5
8.	harbour price (n.)	price paid for fish by a local merchant; BAY PRICE.	recordings	13
9.	hungered (a.)	(1). Hungry, starved for food. (DD hunger v 3)	recordings	145
10.	jonnick (a.)	1 Fair, equitable, honest. 2 Ready, fit, in proper condition. 3 An asseveration, 'I swear.' (EDD jannock (var jormick IW W Do So Co) 1, 3 for senses 1 and 2.)	(1895-1924)	5
11.	maze (v.)	to confuse, bewilder. (OED ~ sb 3 obs (1430-1819); EDD ~ v, sb. adj; 6 (2) ~ headed So D)	(1897-1937)	39 for <i>mazed</i>
12.	muckle (v.)	To tug or strenuously pull up (something).	(1924-1975)	95
13.	newing (v)	Waxing; the waxing of the moon. (Cp OED ~ vbl sb1 obs)	recordings	5
14.	oreweed (n.)	Sea-weed, sea-wrack; kelp. (EDD ore sb2: ~ weed D Co.)	recordings	2

15.	overtop (v.)	To overburden with care or worry. (OED ~ v 3 'to render top-heavy' obs)	(1920)	?
16.	quism	A quaint saying; a remark felt to be foolish or silly.	(1894-)	?
17.	rightify (v.)	To correct, rectify; put right (EDD ~ v Ir, ADD.)	(1924-)	7
18.	rowt	Phr hard rowt: unpleasant experience; difficult, exhausting employment.	(1924-)	2
19.	sagwa (n.)	1 A patented medicine. 2 Rum, whisky	(1891-)	163
20.	stall fed (a.)	stall-fed Of a person, fed to satiety. (EDD stall sb1)	recordings	62
21.	weatherish (a.)	Of the weather, threatening (ADD ~)	(1918-1924)	4

These 21 terms are apparently not attested by local contemporary consultants. It therefore stands to reason that they have been lifted, by a "mainland hand," straight out of the DNE, which is, of course, a historical dictionary. This further suggests that a big part of COD-2's Newfoundland vocabulary focuses on the "odd and weird," which is, clearly, a point to be avoided. When we add two "questionable items" in terms of their current use, a full 25% (n = 23) of the original list of 91 items involves inadequate terms.

Towards a Canadian compromise: The current DCHP-2 list

We have seen how the inclusion of archaic or obsolete terms might create a skewed list, but this does of course not mean that obsolete or archaic terms are to be ruled out. After all DCHP-2 is a historical dictionary. But the kind of historical terms should be, first and foremost, the ones that are of great "significance," e.g. *harbour ice* rather than *harbour price* 'bay price for fish' – the first is widely known, while the latter is of more restricted use.

In addition to 23 unsuitable terms or terms of limited suitability, Clarke suggested 30 lexical items for inclusion, such as *angle-dog* 'earthworm', *colcannon*, *logy*, *lunch* 'snack typically eaten before bedtime', *poisoned* 'really annoyed/upset', *girl* 'term of address', *maid* 'term of address', *scoff* 'big feast, dinner', *Jigg's dinner* 'type of meal'. Altogether, 53 changes on a list of 91 terms compiled by mainlanders does likely not speak to a balanced selection of Newfoundland vocabulary, but only to what might be called mainland imaginations of Newfoundland English lexical items, based on historical resources and cultural stereotypes at best. The original list, therefore, and more so the COD-2 list, is interesting for different reasons than lexicographical ones,

as an attempt that was bound to fail. That Newfoundland terms have acquired a "life of their own" outside of Newfoundland is an interesting topic as such, but not what DCHP-2 sets out to document.

Together with about 45 terms that we identified as a result of follow-up work on Newfoundland, i.e. terms that clearly have a Newfoundland connection but are not part of the traditional vocabulary, e.g. *cod moratorium*, *Newfoundland Daylight Time*, we now have a list of 107 terms slated for inclusion in DCHP-2, with some others that we already drafted but are thinking of removing (marked "slated for exclusion" in the table), if only for reasons of offering a "balanced" selection.

The list will have its critics and it will not please everyone. No list ever will. But it is a step in the right direction. Apart from term selection, of course, the issue of resource availability plays a big role. Sometimes, "better" term choices need to be abandoned, as we have no data on them in western Canada, where we mostly rely on digital sources, which are increasingly offered through Memorial University.

Table 2 Terms in DCHP-2 labelled "Newfoundland" (as of June 2015)

1. after (the 'after' perfect)	2. angishore > see hangashore
3. angle-dog (earthworm)	4. apast (prep.)
5. away > see CFA	6. bangbelly 'type of pudding or (pan) cake'
7. barge 'cod-processing boat'	8. bark (v.) 'appying net-coating'
9. bat 'seal hunting instrument'	10. bawn 'cod-drying place'
11. bay boat 'boat connecting to outports'	12. bay ice 'recently formed ice in bay'
13. baynoddy > see noddy	14. baywop 'bay man'
15. bazz 'throw, toss'	16. bazzom 'blue with cold'
17. belong (v.intr.) 'to be related with; to come from'	(blackberry) – slated for exclusion
(blocked) – slated for exclusion	(bond stone) – slated for exclusion
(Bonfire Night) – slated for exclusion	(breaker) – slated for exclusion
18. buck 'collect surreptitiously, to steal'	19. carpenter 'wood-louse/sow-bug'
20. CFA come from away, 'anyone who is not a Nflder; or Maritimer (from PEI, NB)	21. chin music 'acapella folk music'
22. chinse (chinch) (v.) to stuff, pack tightly	23. cockaballoo (n.) 'bully, aggressive person'
24. cod moratorium	25. cod tongue

26. colcannon 'trad. Halloween dish'	27. cuffer 'tale, story, chat'
28. dry diet 'winter provisions'	29. duckish (n.) 'twilight'
30. dunch (adj.) 'soggy, heavy'	31. emmet 'ant'
32. fall fishery 'biggest fishing season'	33. figgy duff 'pudding with raisins'
34. fish and brewis 'trad. dish'	35. flahoolach (adj.) 'generous, wasteful'
36. flipper pie 'seal pie'	37. fousty (adj.) 'mouldy, bad-smelling'
38. gallery 'porch'	39. girl (also maid, 'term of address')
40. go(ld)-withy 'type of low shrub'	41. gut founded (adj.) 'very hungry'
42. hangashore 'weak, sickly person, lazy person'	43. harbour ice > see bay ice
44. horse-fly, horse-stinger	45. jannyng 'Christmas tradition'
46. Jiggs' dinner 'type of meal'	47. jinker 'person or vessel bringing bad luck'
48. knap (n.) 'raised part of land'	49. landwash 'tidal area at beach'
50. lassy 'type of syrup, molasses'	51. logan 'type of boot'
52. logy (adj.) 'slow-moving (of ship, person or weather)'	53. lopyy (adj.) 'of the water, rough from wind or storm'
54. lunch 'snack typically eaten before bedtime'	55. maiden(hair)tea berry/magna tea berry
56. mainland 'cont. Canada'	57. mauzy 'damp, foggy'
58. mind (v.) 'to remember'	59. mooch (v.) 'to play truant'
60. mummering/mumming 'cult. ritual'	61. narn 'none', arn 'one'
62. NDT/NST see Newfoundland Standard/Daylight Time	63. Newfoundland Standard/Daylight Time
64. nish (adj.) 'thin, delicate'	65. nobby 'seabird; derog. costal inhabitant'v'
66. norther (n.) 'gale from the north'	67. patrick 'fisherman'
68. partridgeberry ' <i>Vaccinium vitis-idaea</i> 'lingonberry'	69. piddly 'type of children's game'
70. pip (v.) 'gut a fish; play truant'	71. poisoned > under poison (I'm poisoned = really annoyed/upset)
72. perished > under perish (e.g. I'm perished with the cold)	73. pratie 'potato'
74. prog 'food, supplies'	75. proud 'glad, delighted'
76. rawny 'thin, gaunt, bony'	77. ree-raw 'state of confusion'

78. right (intensifier)	79. saving (n.) 'moderately profitable fishing venture'
80. scad 'flurry of snow, thin layer of snow'	81. scammed 'stiff, cold'
82. screech-in 'welcoming & bonding ritual offered to non-Newfoundlanders'	83. screed (n.)
84. scrob 'scratch'	85. scrunchins (n.) 'fried fatback pork'
86. skeet 'rogue, rascal; see Brit. chav'	87. sleveen 'untrustworthy person'
88. smatchy 'of food: spoilt or tainted'	89. some (intensifier)
90. sprinkles/bough sprinkles 'needles of coniferous trees'	91. squidding (v.)
92. starrigan 'small evergreen cut for firewood'	93. streel 'slovenly person' (< Irish Gaelic)
94. stunned 'stupid'	95. supercargo (n.) 'ship employee'
96. tansy 'type of leaf; fish'	97. tayscaun 'small amount of something'
98. time 'party'	99. toutin/touton 'fried bread dough'
100.townie 'person from St. John's'	101.trouting (v.)
102.turr 'type of sea bird'	103.twack 'window shopper'
104.unstrip 'to undress'	105.upalong 'location outside Newfoundland/Labrador'
106.vang 'melted pork fat'	(wreckhouse winds) – slated for exclusion
107.yaffle (n.), (v.) 'handful; armful of dried fish'	

There are, of course, more profound complexities, such as the overlap of regional vocabulary. Currently, we have a list of ten terms that we label "Atlantic Canada," and these are *bar clam*, *bayscallop*, *bonnyclabber*, *clumper*, *dipper*, *hay barrack*, *kitchen party*, *kitchen racket*, *scoff*, *swish*. So, currently a total of 99 terms have a profound Newfoundland provenance. And here is our call for assistance: if the reader notices any mistakes, wrongful inclusions and, most likely, exclusions of terms should be included, please contact the author with a rationale for your critique. As for Labrador, for instance, we currently have no term or meaning slated for inclusion. We still do have some capacity to make changes, though we apologize if we cannot go much beyond the current number of words.

Some concluding remarks

As Story and Kirwin (1971: 19) wrote, "Any dictionary that sets out to describe the word-stock of a nation within the larger speech-community is bound to make certain compromises." This statement is a truism and it is, in fact, surprising, how many compromises one needs to make when dealing with more than a couple of words. Such compromises concern regional vocabulary as well, but, it is hoped that DCHP-2 will present an improvement over DCHP-1, whose quality in terms of Newfoundland terms was found wanting.

Stefan Dollinger is Professor of English Linguistics
in the Department of Languages and Literatures,
Göteborgs Universitet, Sweden,
and Associate Professor of English,
University of British Columbia.

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