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Supervisor: Mikko Laitinen
Examiner: Chris Allen

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Investigating the Yooper Dialect

A Study of the Dialect in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan

Sara Waernér

Abstract

This paper aims to explore the linguistic features of the dialect in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan in the United States. The study sets out to define what the distinct features of the dialect are, and investigate frequencies among Upper Peninsula natives, specifically from Marquette County. The research conducted for this thesis is based on multiple recordings of a small number of native dialect speakers from this area. The results show that features such as pronunciation, and the vowel sounds in particular, as well as dialectal expressions play a large part in defining this characteristic dialect. Furthermore, analyses of consonant sounds, lexical items, dialect expressions such as *eh* and *ya*, and the matter of stress, are included in the study as well as a brief discussion on how age-grading may affect the dialect.

Keywords

American, Age-grading, Dialect, English, Ishpeming, Marquette, Michigan, Sociolinguistics, Swedish, Upper Peninsula, Yooper

The Yooper Dialect

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1. Introduction

The term “Yooper” (from the phrase ”U.P.'er”) originated in the 1970s, and refers specifically to the residents of the Upper Peninsula (the U.P.) of the U.S. state Michigan (Simon, 2006: 131). Yoopers differ from the people living in the Lower Peninsula of Michigan primarily because of their distinct dialect which has been influenced by several foreign languages, among them Finnish and Swedish. These languages were brought to the Upper Peninsula by immigrants who arrived as early as the 17th century but mainly during the 19th and early 20th century, and as there was such a large number of foreigners moving to this area their languages had quite a significant impact on the local dialect and accent (Remlinger 2007: 3).

The Yooper dialect is not a common subject of research, and those who do research it often focus on its interesting historical and linguistic background rather than frequencies of the different dialect features. Since neither Remlinger (2007) nor Simon (2006) provide them, this study hopes to supply numbers that further help describing the characteristics of the unique Yooper dialect.

The focus will lie on researching the dialectal features, i.e. primarily the pronunciation of vowel and consonant sounds, grammar, and lexical features. Rather than researching the dialect of the whole Upper Peninsula, this study will focus on the dialect variety in Marquette County in the midwestern part of the peninsula, the largest county in the U.P.. This part of Michigan is not the focus of research as often as the Lower Peninsula and the more well-known urban areas such as Detroit, which might be because the Yooper dialect is not a very well-known dialect throughout the United States or the world (as an illustration, one interviewee for this study pointed out that they sometimes are mistaken for Canadians when they travel to other parts of the United States). For example, when searching for 'Michigan' in *American English* (Wolfram, 2006), Northern Michigan is only mentioned once (p 120). Instead, it is written as if there is a standard Michigan dialect spoken in the entire state, not separating between the north and the south. There is also not much data available for analysis from the Marquette area, which is another reason for choosing this particular area. The lack of previous research does not have to be negative for this study but may instead provide for a more open outlook when researching this specific variety of Yooper, where previous studies on other varieties become basic support rather than key.

Using multiple recordings of native Yooper speakers, this thesis will investigate the different aspects of the Yooper dialect, such as vowel sounds and consonants, as well as lexical items and dialectal expressions typical for Yooper. The main research questions for this study will therefore be: (1) What are the main features of the Yooper dialect, (2) how frequently do these features appear in locals' speech, and (3) as the informants in the material are of different generations, what role

will the age factor play when comparing the results?

Firstly, the thesis presents an introduction to dialectology, as well as examples of studies within the area. The major dialect areas in the United States are described, and specifically the Yooper dialect itself is looked at more closely; its historical background, previous studies, and its most common features. Next, the results of the study are presented in three parts: vowel sounds, consonant pronunciation, and lexical items and dialectal expressions. In this section the results of the analysis of the recorded material are presented and compared through quotes, tables and diagrams. A discussion on the results of the analysis concludes the thesis, looking at similarities and differences between the informants' speech features, patterns from which certain conclusions about the dialect and its features may be drawn.

2. Dialectology and dialects in the United States

Sociolinguistics may be defined as "the study of language in relation to society" (Wolfram et al, 2006: 405). It is a broad area of linguistics where the main focus lies on studying the sociological aspects of language, like gender, age, class, and ethnicity. A large subfield of sociolinguistics is dialectology, which is used to study variations of languages and dialects with the help of isoglosses and other geographical variables. Other areas which sociolinguistics focus on are code-switching, multilingualism, and language change (Holmes 2008: 1ff). This section contains an introduction to the study of dialects, as well as a presentation of the different dialect areas in the United States.

2.1 What is a dialect?

A dialect can be defined as being a language variety and a distinctive feature which helps determine where a person is from, geographically as well as socially. When a dialect is discussed geographically, it is known as a *regional dialect* (for example Yooper, the New York dialect and Appalachian English), and when socially it is a *social dialect*, or *sociolect*, such as AAVE (African American Vernacular English).

There are several components to a dialect, and it differs from an *accent* in the way that an accent only describes variations in pronunciation and helps define people's regional and social backgrounds. A dialect, on the other hand, "is used to describe features of grammar and vocabulary as well as aspects of pronunciation" (Yule, 2006: 195). The features that separate different dialects from each other are mainly *grammar* and *vocabulary*. Some also count *pronunciation (phonology)* as one of the key features in a dialect, and this essay will use that angle, suggesting that a dialect is an accent (which is mainly focused on pronunciation) with grammar and vocabulary (Ivić & Crystal

[www]).

2.2 Sociolinguistic studies and age

This specific field of linguistics originated in the 1960s, and one of its pioneers is William Labov, whose early study of New York City speech is considered a classic in the sociolinguistic field. He designed a sociolinguistic interview which he then used to collect data from 120 people from different social classes. He could then analyze the pronunciations of specific vowels and consonants, and his results showed connections between patterns of pronunciation and the social class the research subjects belonged to. Some of the patterns and features he discovered have been successfully adapted to sociolinguistic studies in other parts of the English-speaking world to show relations between linguistic features in the same way Labov produced in his study in New York City. One feature that was discovered in this study is that in areas where the pronunciation of the consonant [r] is considered prestigious, the higher a person's social class is, the more distinctly they pronounce the [r]. This can also be seen the other way around: in areas where the [r] is not prestigious, the [r] is pronounced less distinctly in higher social groups (Holmes 2008: 145).

Another famous study performed by William Labov in the 1960s took place on Martha's Vineyard, an island off the coast of Massachusetts, where Labov discovered that the fishermen's negative attitude toward tourists and newcomers, whose presence had recently increased greatly, had affected their dialect. They had begun pronouncing the vowel sounds in words like *light* ([aɪ]) and *house* ([aʊ]) differently, so that the vowel pronunciation had moved forward, becoming more centralized. For example, *light* started being pronounced [lɪɪt], and *house* [həʊs]. The vowel sounds were not new to the island; they had been a part of the area before, but were dying out, and so they were revitalised. These changes, Labov noted, seemed to be unconscious, and were possibly made to distance themselves from the new inhabitants and visitors and build solidarity between the natives on the island. It also created prestige, and marked a person's status as a true Vineyarder (Holmes 2008: 209).

The study of age-grading, the changing of a person's speech as they age, is an important aspect to regard when researching a dialect, especially when using material provided by informants of different ages. As Holmes (2008: 174) states, "vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar can differentiate age groups", meaning that certain speech patterns that are common for children and teenagers, such as slang and swear words, change and disappear as they grow older. These changes are called "age-graded patterns" (2008: 174). Holmes uses a graph to illustrate the changes in dialect in different age groups which shows that specific dialectal features seemingly are at their most frequent at a young age, to then recede as the person ages. However, at somewhere around age

45, the usage of vernacular forms starts rising again, to reach the same amount as it was at a young age, at 70+ years old. This, Holmes explains, seems to be related to prestige; as a person grows older and starts a career and a family, they are more prone to use speech more accepted by the wider society, as Holmes states: "The use of standard or prestige forms peaks between the ages of 30 and 55 when people experience maximum societal pressure to conform" (2008: 177). As one of the informants in this study is of a different generation than the others, the results might differ between them. These differences may be attributed to age-grading.

2.3 Dialects in the United States

To compare the Yooper dialect to other dialects, it is necessary to first define the different major dialect areas in the United States, as well as discern and describe the dialect area that Yooper belongs to. William Labov, together with Sharon Ash and Charles Boberg, created the Telsur Project, which was designed to define the boundaries of regional accents in the United States as well as "the advance of sound changes in progress" (Labov et al [www]). This project has since then resulted in *The Atlas of North American English*. By conducting telephone surveys with subjects representing the urban areas of the United States, three major dialect regions have been defined: the South, the West, and the North. The main areas of linguistic change in these areas are the Southern Shift, the Low Back Merger, and the Northern Cities Shift, respectively; these terms are defined below (Labov et al [www]: 2). There is also a fourth region known as the Midland cities, which is more diverse since the cities in this area have developed specific individual dialect patterns. The cities that are included in this area are Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Columbus, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, St. Louis and Kansas City (Labov et al [www]: 3). For this particular study, the main area of focus is the North.

In 1987, Craig Carver created a similar map with dialect boundaries with corresponding divisions to what the Telsur Project has discovered, also choosing to divide the map into three main regions: the North, South, and West, which resemble the regions produced by the Telsur Project. What Carver also discovered during his studies when researching regional lexical terms in New England was the way the usage of different terms shifted over time. For example, words associated with old-fashioned farming methods had inevitably disappeared from the dialect since they were no longer needed, while newer terms that have to do with more modern lifestyles such as driving (such as the word *parkway* used for a specific kind of highway), and intensifiers like *wicked*, have settled into and are confined to the traditional New England dialect region (Wolfram 2006: 118). This confinement of specific regional terms, Carver suggested, show "proof that dialect expressions inevitably spread or die out, but that dialect boundaries remain relatively stable and alive" (Wolfram

2006: 118).

A defining dialect feature in the South region of the United States, is known as the *Southern Shift*, a term coined by Labov. It is a series of vowel rotations, described by Wolfram and Schilling-Estes as the short front vowels (in words like *bed* and *bid*) moving "upward and taking on the gliding character of long vowels" (Wolfram et al 2006: 149). The vowel in the word *bed*, for example, moves from [ɛ] towards [e] and takes on a more gliding character turning [bɛd] into [beɪd]. While the short front vowels move upward and forward, the long front vowels move backward and downward to some extent yet keeping their gliding character and the back vowels move forward (2006: 149).

What the Southern Shift is for the South dialect region, the *Low Back Merger* is for the West. This region is defined by its lack of the rotations that define the Southern Shift and the Northern Cities Shift. The Low Back Merger's main feature is, as its name suggests, the merging of the low back vowel [ɔ] (as in *dog*) with the low back/central vowel [ɑ] (as in *hot*). Another feature is the stability of the [æ]. This vowel sound (for example *cat* and *bath*) is affected by rotation in the Northern Cities Shift but unchanged in the Low Back Merger (Wolfram et al 2006: 151).



Figure 1: Spreading of the Northern Cities Shift

Although the Yooper dialect is a mixture of different dialect features, it can geographically as well as at least in part linguistically be considered to be a part of the North region. The North can be defined in more than one way, but it is generally a region of *New England expansion*, meaning that people spreading across the North region (seen in blue on the map above) a few hundred years ago at the birth of the United States often had New England as their starting point. Some dialect areas of the North that basically belong to what Carver called the Upper North, are separated from the rest of the North region (or the Lower North, according to Carver) as they were also affected by immigrant expansion from New England, but in this case largely by non-English-speaking Europeans that came to the region in the 19th century. These immigrants' languages influenced the dialects in northern states such as Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan, as they moved further west into the

country (Wolfram 2006: 119f).

In one particular area of the North dialect region, there is a dialect known as the Inland Northern American. This exists mainly in western New England and its surroundings, and is commonly referred to as General American English (or GAE, as it will henceforth be known as in this paper). It is known as General American as it does not have any prominent dialect features that separates it from other dialects in the way that for example the Boston dialect or the New York City dialect do, two other dialects that exist in this region (Crystal [www]).

One of the main features of the North dialect region is the Northern Cities Shift (NSC), which can simply be defined as a vowel rotation where the long vowels primarily move forward and upward, and the short vowels downward and backward. Gordon (2006: 108f) illustrates this shift with the six words *caught*, *cot*, *cat*, *bit*, *bet* and *but*. What separates this NCS feature from the cot-caught merger is that the vowels never merge but instead continue shifting. For example, looking at *cot* and *caught*, whereas with the cot-caught merger the vowels ([ɑ] and [ɔ]) shift toward each other and become homophones, in the NCS the [ɑ] also shifts, moving away from [ɔ] and instead nearing [æ], as in *cat*. This vowel in turn shifts upward, and moves closer to [ɛ] as in *bet*, and even [ɪ] as in *bit*. These two vowels themselves shift toward the vowel in *but*, [ʌ], which, in the NSC, is pronounced with more rounded lips than in GAE, shifting the [ʌ] backward, toward [ɔ] as in *caught* (Gordon 2006: 109).

3. The Yooper Dialect

3.1 Historical background

According to Simon (2006: 131), the Keweenaw Peninsula, a part of the UP, was inhabited by a small number of Native Americans, the Ojibwa tribe, up until the year 1621, when French missionaries and French Canadian hunters arrived in the area. After that, no newcomers would set their foot there until the mid-19th century, when a business man discovered massive amounts of pure copper under the entire peninsula. In 1846, the first commercial mine opened, and became one of the motives for immigrants to move to the UP. People came from all over Great Britain, and especially Cornish miners were sought after.

It is often easy to find research on the effects that the Finnish language has had on the Yooper dialect. One reason may be because of the large Finnish communities in this area, particularly in the western part of the Upper Peninsula. This specific area is also known as the Copper Country, a name derived from the many copper mines that were once active in the area. The

Finns were having large troubles adapting to the new language, probably due to speaking a language of no relation to English (as Finnish is part of the Uralic family of languages). This made it more difficult for the Finnish immigrants to adapt to society, and therefore they often tended to remain in their own communities. According to Remlinger (2007: 5), this "concentration" of Finnish then spread as time went on, which had an influence on the English spoken in the area.

The copper mines were also a major factor for many Swedes who immigrated during this time. For example, there were many families from the Åtvidaberg area in Östergötland, where copper mines had been the main source of work since the 16th century, who were drawn to the massive mines of the U.P. Mormorsgruvan, an old mine outside of Åtvidaberg, became nearly deserted when its miners emigrated to America and Michigan. In 1873, this large, historical mine had been almost drained, which led to 659 people leaving Åtvidaberg parish. Out of these, 193 were heading for America, and another 151 people from Värna parish north of Åtvidaberg joined them. It was no coincidence that Åtvidaberg natives who came to America to find work in the mining industry came to the town of Ishpeming, Marquette county (which can be found on the map below), Michigan. The mining company, Cleveland Iron Company, that owned the mines in the UP had agents who recruited miners from the Bersbo and Åtvidaberg area. The miners who emigrated to Ishpeming then encouraged friends and family in Sweden to join them in Michigan (Kolsgård [www]).

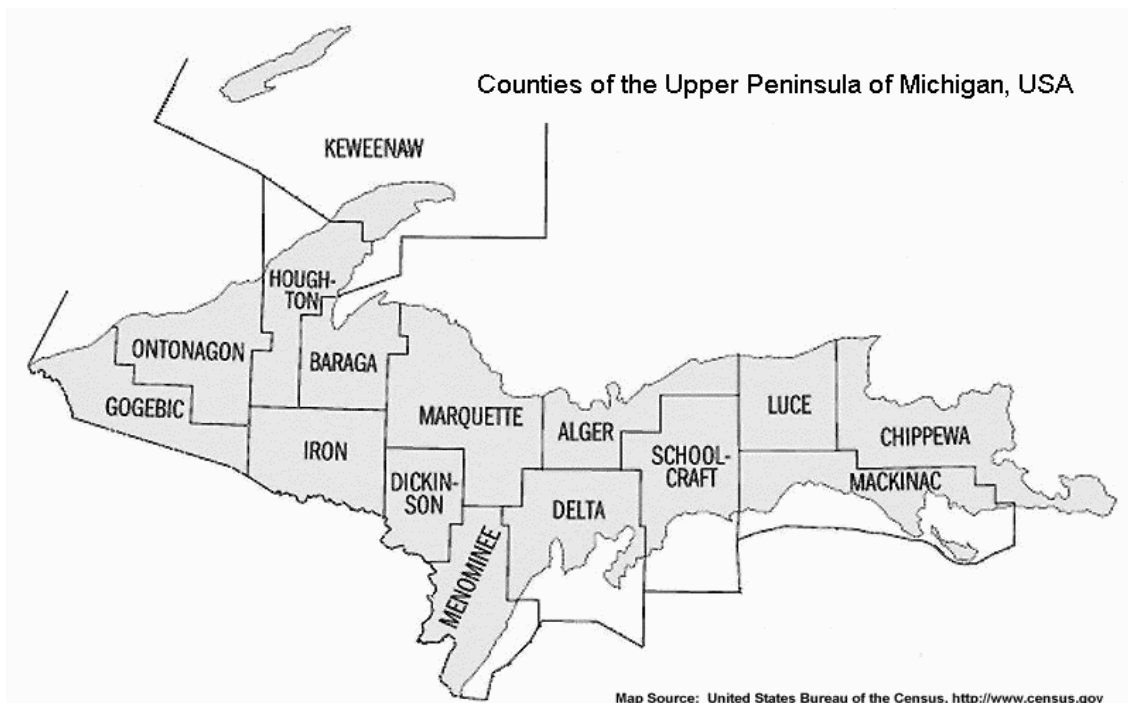


Figure 2: Counties of the Upper Peninsula (Source: <http://www.december.com/>)

It was mainly the smaller societies, and especially those that survived on their mining industries,

that took the hardest blows as sometimes whole communities emigrated to America. The majority of the Finns who came to Michigan, and Keweenaw Peninsula, were, as mentioned earlier, attracted by the copper mines. In the year 1900, there were as many as over 14,800 Finns living in the Upper Peninsula, and more than 5,600 of them resided in the Keweenaw area (Simon and Finney 2008 [www]).

3.2 Previous studies

The Yooper dialect and its origins have been researched before, especially by Dr. Kathryn Remlinger at Grand Valley State University, who has published several texts on the subject in the last years. One area of focus for Dr. Remlinger has been the effects that immigrants' languages, specifically Finnish, have had on the Yooper dialect. Articles written by Dr. Remlinger concerning this subject include *What it Means to be a Yooper: Identity, Language Attitudes and Variation in Michigan's Keweenaw Peninsula* (2006) and *The Intertwined Histories of Identity and Dialect in Michigan's Copper Country* (2007).

What it Means to be a Yooper: Identity, Language Attitudes and Variation in Michigan's Keweenaw Peninsula crosses critical discourse analysis with ethnodialectology to research the relationship between attitude, language variations and local identity, in this study specifically among the people of Keweenaw Peninsula, "Copper Country", in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Keweenaw Peninsula can be seen on the map on page 7, looking almost like a shark fin in the northwestern part of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. The study sets out to find what effects identity and language attitude have on language variation and how these factors, among others, affect the use and stability of a dialect. The method for carrying out the study involves conducting interviews with individuals from the Keweenaw Peninsula, speakers of the dialect. For analysis of the collected data, the main method is extensive textual analysis. The interviews mostly revolve around the interviewees' views on the term 'Yooper' and what they associate with it, as well as personal experiences concerning other people's perceptions of their dialect. Some discoveries made from the interviews were that being a Yooper is connected to the dialect, "sounding like a Yooper", as well as noting that identity, language use and language attitude intersect at certain points and in varying ways depending on situation. Some learn to tone down their dialect, which in the end means hiding, and possibly losing, their identities.

In Remlinger (2007), the focus lies on the historical aspects of the western Upper Peninsula region (also known as Copper Country for its mines) and its local dialect. Several research questions are presented, one of them being "How has history shaped the variety of English spoken in the Copper Country?" The study is based on transcripts from 75 interviews where most of the

interviewees have spent their whole lives in the Copper Country, and some interviewees spent their childhood there, left, and then returned at a later stage. Data from the interviews are supplemented with local documents which provide discourse on the dialect and the 'local spirit'. The history of the area is described, such as the time period when the mining industry in the region was at its height (~1840-1910) which attracted many immigrants. A section of the article is devoted to Finnish immigrants, their history in the area, and linguistic influences on the local dialect, since they have had a large influence on many aspects of society in the Copper Country area, both linguistically and historically. The term 'Yooper' is discussed in this article as well, offering different views on the subject, such as how local identity is connected to the term in question, and how Yoopers are interpreted through and perceived in the media.

Another linguist who has studied the Yooper dialect is Beth Simon, whose article "Saying Ya to the Yoopers (Michigan's Upper Peninsula)" (2006) has been published in Wolfram's *American Voices: How Dialects Differ from Coast to Coast*. This article focuses on the dialect of the western part of the Upper Peninsula, and, like Dr. Kathryn Remlinger, the Keweenaw Peninsula in particular, and its history and specific dialect features. It is quite humorously written, and for example brings up some common dialect features that can be used to mock the speakers of the Yooper dialect, such as the sentence-ending *eh*, or typically Yooper lexical items, many of them seen in a glossary on page 134 of Simon's article. For example:

Eh: A word that ends practically every sentence in the UP (example: "Say ya to da UP, Eh!")

Sisu: The quality possessed by Yoopers which enables them to endure and even enjoy Yooperland winters.

Snow cow: Moose (or mother-in-law).

(Simon 2006:134)

As is visible here, previous studies focus more on the dialect's historical and linguistic background than the dialect itself in terms of frequencies of its most prominent features, which this study aims to display as clearly as is possible with the material at hand.

3.3 Common features of the Yooper dialect

A prominent feature of the Yooper dialect is the unique stress (Remlinger 2007: 7). Take the word *movie* ([mo:vi]), for example. In General American English, the stress would be quite even on the entire word with slight emphasis on the first syllable (*movie*), in Yooper the stress lies quite heavily on the first syllable. In this case, it lies on *mo-vie*, with the vowel sound ([o:]) elongated, i.e. [mo:vi]. As the stress lies on the first part of the word, and with no "pause" between the two syllables, it makes the second vowel sound (*movie*, [i]) weaker, almost turning into a schwa ([ə]).

Another example of this is the word *flowers*. Here the stress lies on the first vowel sound, *flo-wers* ([o:]), and once again the second part of the word weakens. Whereas General American English would have the diphthong [aʊ], Yooper has the [o:]. The second part of the diphthong [aʊ] in GAE, the [ʊ], turns into a schwa, [ə], in this case, leaving [fl'o:ərs]. This feature, stress on the first syllable, is also an influence that came from Finnish, spoken by the miners who emigrated from Finland to mainly the western parts of the Upper Peninsula in the 19th century (Remlinger 2007: 7).

The Yooper *r* sound, [ɹ], is known as a retroflex consonant sound and is a feature that is more common in the British isles, mainly in Ireland and Cornwall in the south-west of England (Johansson & Rönnedal 1993: 73), than in North America. While the *r* in GAE, [ɹ], is articulated by placing the tongue in the center of the mouth, the Yooper dialect pronounces it by placing the tongue further back, making it sound more prominent than in GAE. For example, in one of the video clips, the word *arm* appears. In GAE, this would be pronounced [ɑ:m], with the emphasis on the first phoneme, the [ɑ], whereas in the clip the emphasis lands on the *r*, making it [ɑ:ɹm]. This feature may originally come from Cornish miners, who arrived in the Upper Peninsula in the 1800s. As there have also been many Irish immigrants in this area, this particular feature appears to have had influences from several different accents, which in turn makes it more probable for the feature to appear early in the local dialect.

Another feature in Yooper that is quite prominent, although not unique for the area, is the pronunciation of the dental fricative *th* ([ð]), both the voiced and voiceless in words such as *this* and *them* (voiced) and *thin* and *both* (voiceless). Instead of the common [ð] (as in [ðɪs], *this*) and [θ] ([θɪn], *thin*), the fricatives have been replaced with the alveolar plosives [d] and [t]. This means that the previous examples *this* and *thin* would simply be pronounced [dɪs] and [tɪn], and is a feature that occurs frequently in the recorded data used in this study. The origin of this feature is, according to Simon (2006: 132) the fact that first-generation Finnish immigrants would, perhaps consciously, substitute the *th* with *d* or *t*. Furthermore, this feature may also come from Swedish immigrants, as the voiceless dental fricative does not exist in the Swedish language, therefore making it difficult for Swedes to pronounce it. It is today still one of the phonemes that Swedes learning English struggle with. The origins of this feature could also be traced to the earlier mentioned Native American tribe Ojibwa, which, like Swedish and Finnish, does not have the *th*-sounds. An excellent example of this particular sound is featured in Simon's 2006 article, and is part of a glossary of typical Yooper words called *Da Yooper Glossary*. The word featured in this glossary is *Finglish*:

Finglish: The official language of Da UP. Examples: Dese, Dem, Dose, and De

Udders (and De Udders ain't on De Cow!). (Simon 2006: 134)

The Yooper dialect contains several distinctive dialectal expressions and lexical features,

some more common than others. Simon has an excellent example of this in her 2006 article, quoting a humorous poem named *Da Yooper Creation Story* (original author unknown):

In da beginning dere was nuttin, see.

Den on da first day God created da UP, eh?

On da second day He created da partidge, da deer, da bear, da fish, an da ducks ya know.

On da third day He said, "Let dere be YOOPERS to roam da UP."

On da fourth day He created da udder world down below and on da fifth day He said, "Let dere be TROLLS to live in da world down below."

On da sixth day He created DA BRIDGE so da TROLLS would have a way to get to Heaven, see.

God saw it was good and on da seventh day He went huntin!! (Simon 2006: 132)

This is of course not a serious piece of poetry, but it is valuable when studying the Yooper dialect as it captures many of the features that makes Yooper so distinct. Also, the exaggerating of these features is helpful here since it makes them clearer and easier to point out.

First of all, the usage of alveolar plosives ([d] and [t]) instead of dental fricatives ([ð] and [θ]) becomes quite obvious, especially in the phrase "da udder world", "the other world", speaking of Michigan's Lower Peninsula. Also, in the opening sentence, there is the word *nuttin*, meaning nothing. This is an example of the typical way of replacing the *-ing* ending in words such as *doing*, *going* and nothing with *-een*, or in this case *-in* (*do-een*, *go-een* and *nuttin*).

There are two typical dialectal expressions, also known as question particles, on the first and second line: "(...), see" and "(...), eh?". The second one, "eh", is a particularly common feature of the Yooper dialect, but not unique. The same characteristic appears quite often in Canadian English as well, and is one of the most well-known features of Canadian English (Tottie 2002: 184). This way of ending sentences is used as an invitation to agreeing, or when expecting to receive some indication of understanding. Oddly enough, Simon uses the phrase *hey* ("You're coming to dinner, hey") when discussing this feature (Simon 2006: 133), not *eh*, which is somewhat strange since *eh* can clearly be found in the poem quoted on the page before (2006: 132). She also compares it to "the sentence-ending Canadian *eh*" (2006: 133). Furthermore, this is the only time this phrase (*hey*), and not *eh*, has turned up when researching this feature.

Both Simon (2006) and Remlinger (2007) discuss the use of the word *ya* (or *yah*) which is, just like *eh*, a common occurrence in the Yooper dialect. *Ya*, meaning *yes* or *yeah*, is most likely an influence of Swedish or German as these two languages both contain the word *ja*, which means *yes* (Remlinger 2007: 8).

Another grammatical feature that is quite distinct in the Yooper dialect is the way that articles such as *the* (definite) and *a/an* (indefinite) are sometimes excluded from speech. This

feature originally comes from the Finnish language, where definite and indefinite articles do not exist in the same way as in English and many other Indo-European languages (Simon 2006: 133).

4. Material and Methods

The raw data used for this study mainly consists of recordings of Yooper natives, taken from video clips filmed by a family member in 2006, 2007 and 2009 in Ishpeming and Marquette, MI, and their surroundings, as well as in and around Tuscon, AZ (where two of the Yooper natives featured in the video, Bob and Maxine, have a vacation house). The combined length of the clips is roughly 200 minutes, of which around 80 minutes of raw material can be found. The informants have given their permission for the recordings to be used and published in this study. There are four main informants, presented in this study by their actual first names: two males, Bob and Paul, and two females, Maxine and Sue. Bob was born in 1939 in the Ishpeming/Negaunee area, but is not of Swedish descent. His family is French-Canadian/Native American/Finnish. The second informant, Paul, born in 1932, was born and raised in Ishpeming. His grandfather was Swedish, and emigrated from Bersbo, Åtvidaberg, in 1873 with his wife. Paul's father Thomas was born in Ishpeming in 1898 and married a Swede, Ida. Paul grew up hearing Swedish from his grandparents, but did not understand any. Paul has the strongest dialect of the four, possibly due to his upbringing hearing his grandparents speak. The third informant, Sue, born in 1938, is married to Paul, and is of French-Canadian descent. The last informant, Maxine, born in 1940, was born and raised in Negaunee. She is married to Bob. Maxine's mother Edna was born in Ishpeming in 1918 and later married a Finn, and her grandmother Edla, who was born in 1876, emigrated from Bersbo, Åtvidaberg, to Ishpeming in 1897. There she met and married a Norwegian man.

Table 1: Information about informants

Name	Birthplace, year	Ancestry	Occupation
Paul	Ishpeming, 1932	Swedish	Psychiatric aide, retired
Bob	Ishp./Negaunee, 1939	French-Canadian/Native American/Finnish	Teacher, retired
Sue	Ishp./Negaunee, 1938	French-Canadian	Unknown, retired
Maxine	Negaunee, 1940	Swedish/Norwegian/Finnish	Nurse, retired

These video clips were not recorded specifically for linguistic studies, which may have both advantages and disadvantages. A benefit in this case is that the people speaking in the clips are not aware that their dialect will be analyzed further on, which makes it more spontaneous. If the people in question would have known this, the data gathered would most likely differ from what has now been found, as any tension or nervousness would make the data less natural and somewhat

distorted, making it more difficult to analyze correctly. A disadvantage, however, may be that since there is no script or previously decided-upon text that each informant reads from, there are no specific points of reference in each person's speech that are identical to the next person's, something that is often useful when studying and comparing dialects.

A number of common lexical items with clear dialectal influences were chosen from the recordings, and then used to display where these specific dialect features typically appear. These simple words were then used as templates for analysis and comparison, to go back to and compare with other words and expressions found, and for discovering patterns within the dialect.

In addition to using recordings of the four main informants as material, The International Dialects of English Archive, or the IDEA, is also an excellent source of data. This archive has recorded audio, as well as transcripts of these recordings, of people speaking their dialects (both scripted and unscripted). One recording is of a 27-year old actor from Ishpeming, who will henceforth in this study be known as the 'sample speaker'. Though it is stated that he has previously made an effort to remove his Yooper accent (International Dialects of English Archive [www]), and that he may therefore be consciously somewhat exaggerating an accent that normally does not exist in his speech, this is not something that noticeably affects the quality of the recorded material. This recording will be used as a point of comparison to the four main informants, as there is an age difference that might be helpful to see if there are any clear differences in the dialect between generations. It will also be used to back up any findings to make sure that a feature is not a one-time occurrence or a part of a sociolect but something that can be considered a general feature in the Yooper dialect. The recordings used in this study are a reading of the text *Comma Gets a Cure* and a recording of the individual speaking freely of Ishpeming and his upbringing there (IDEA [www]).

There are some limitations and issues that need to be taken into consideration when analysing the results of the study. The most apparent limitation is probably the difficulty of finding a sufficient amount of data. There are a number of Youtube clips that claim to contain the Yooper dialect, however it is seldom clear whether it is an authentic Yooper native speaking, or if the person in question is only imitating the dialect. Of course, an imitation may contain the most prominent features of the dialect, but it is not genuine and may be exaggerated, which makes it unreliable as material for analysis. This is connected to another limitation, which is that the amount of data that actually exists and is accessible online is not particularly representative of the Yooper community in general, as, for example, the most popular and easily accessed Yooper-related clips on Youtube are exaggerations and/or not possible to trace to any part of the peninsula in particular, which is needed in the case of this study. Despite these limitations, this study makes use of authentic recordings, and the objective is to hopefully bring something new to the table.

5. Results

After studying the material of speakers from Ishpeming and Negaunee of Marquette county, a number of discoveries were made regarding specific and distinct differences between the Yooper dialect and General American English (GAE). The first aspect of the Yooper dialect that will be examined closer is vowel sounds.

5.1 Vowel sounds

The chosen words from the research videos have been placed in the left column of the table below, with the specific vowel sounds underlined. The underlined parts have then been written phonetically in the other two columns to display how the pronunciation differs between the Yooper dialect and GAE.

The words in the left column of the table were, as mentioned earlier, chosen as they contain particular vowel sounds that differ from GAE and are prominent enough to state that they are specific features belonging to the Yooper dialect.

Table 2: Vowel sounds, comparison between Yooper and GAE

	Yooper	General American English
I. <u>movie</u>	[o:]	[u:]
II. <u>home</u> , <u>goes</u>	[o:]	[oo]
III. <u>hour</u>	[oo]/[əo]	[aʊ]
IV. <u>lot</u>	[ā]	[ɑ]
V. <u>all</u>	[ɑ]	[ɔ]
VI. <u>you</u>	[u]	[u:]
VII. <u>accent</u>	[ɛ:]	[a]
VIII. <u>inside</u>	[əi]	[aɪ]

This section will discuss how vowel sounds in the Yooper dialect differ from GAE, and highlight every part with examples taken from the material at hand. The first section deals with the [o:] and its different counterparts in GAE, and then move on to explore other vowels.

I. The particular pronunciation of the vowels is one of the more prominent features of the Yooper dialect, and there is one phoneme in particular that stands out, the [o:], as in the words *movie* ([mo:vi]) and *flowers* ([fl'o:ərs]).

This vowel is also mentioned by Simon (2006: 132), who points out that Professor Bergvall of the Michigan Technological University "notes that outsiders identify UP vowels as "Canadian", especially the <o>, which, on the UP, is produced with the lips tightly rounded". Bergvall also states that this dialectal feature can be found in the speech of the native American tribe Ojibwa which has

long resided in the UP area. It is not restricted to the Yooper dialect but can be heard elsewhere in the north as well. Furthermore, one could argue that this vowel sound could also have been influenced by German, brought to the area by immigrant miners from Germany in the middle of the 19th century. In the German language the vowel *o* is in some instances pronounced [o:], for example in the words *Boot* ([bo:t]), *wohnen* (['vo:nən]), and *Zoo* ([tso:]). [o:] is also relatable to the Swedish vowel *å*, which, together with the German *o*, would be the most accurate description of the vowel sound [o:] in the case of the Yooper dialect (Korlén 1979: 76). One example of this, taken from the informants, is:

1. What's the name of that Swedish movie [mo:vi]?

This is uttered by Sue, in a discussion with her husband Paul and some Swedish relatives, at their cabin outside Ishpeming. The existence of the [o:] in this instance may have a connection to the unique stress of the Yooper dialect, where it lies on the first syllable, making the vowel longer.

II. Some examples of where [o:] is used instead of [oʊ] are:

2. We'll have to ask (xx), eh, Fay, how frequently her brother goes [go:z] out there. Yeah.
(Maxine, unknown topic)
3. Hear that sharp little sound? (...) I don't [do:n] know [no:], maybe he's calling his friends.
(Sue, at her and Paul's cabin in the woods, speaking of a bird's call)
4. Oh, this is so [so:] much better than home [ho:m].
(Paul, on a trip to Marquette)
5. It's where all the artists from (uh, um) Upper Michigan, couple of places in Wisconsin, and (uh, uh) and in northern Lower Michigan go [go:], and they all bring their art and it's a culmination of (um) like a festival and art show [ʃo:].

(Sample speaker, talking about an annual event in Marquette (IDEA [www]))

When comparing the words containing this feature, one thing that is noticeable is that most of them are verbs (*goes, don't, know, go*). There are a couple of nouns as well (*home, show*), but they do not appear as frequently as verbs. The [o:] also seems to be more common in short words, consisting of one or two syllables, and only appearing in the middle or at the end of these words.

III. The [oʊ] (also represented as [əʊ]) in words like *hour, out* and *surrounded* is a vowel sound that many might associate with Canadian English, and is known as *Canadian raising* (Chambers 2008: 97). In this case though, the origin of this feature in the Yooper dialect is most likely not Canadian, which one might consider. It is however a typical feature of Swedish as well as other Scandinavian languages, and differs from GAE where this vowel sound is known as a mid-low, back rounded vowel which means that when pronounced, the tongue is placed between the

back and the center of the mouth. In the case of the [ou]/[əu] in Yooper, this is, according to Simon (2006: 133), due to a lack of offglide on diphthongs as well as "centralization of the diphthongs". This means that the tongue starts the sound (in this case the [ou]/[əu] in *hour*, *out*, *surrounded*) in the center of the mouth, making it a mid, central vowel, such as what is used in Swedish. This particular feature has also been found in other areas where many Scandinavians settled, such as Wisconsin and Minnesota. Examples 6-8 below are from the first-hand material, and Example 9 is from the Dialects Archive:

6. He's got his cheeks full. Ooh, he go again! He can't believe his good luck here with all the... Hear that sharp little sound [sound]? (...) He'll have all that cleaned up in an hour [houɹ].
(Sue, watching some chipmunks gathering sunflower seeds in her and Paul's yard)
7. We'll have to ask (xx), eh, Fay, how frequently her brother goes out [out] there.
(Maxine, unknown topic)
8. Walk back, to see Tuscon. You can see it's in a valley, surrounded [suɹɔʊndəd] by the mountains [moontənz].
(Maxine, on a walk in the mountains in Arizona)
9. My parents wanted me to go to (uh, um) Northern Michigan University, which is right in Marquette, and it's 'bout [bouʔ] I don't know about [əbuʔ] fifteen, twenty minutes away from my house.
(Sample speaker, talking about his upbringing in Ishpeming (IDEA [www]))

Looking at these examples, the [ou] seems to always appear at the beginning, in the first or second syllable, of the word. This seemingly occurs regardless of how long the word is, e. g. *out* versus *mountains*.

IV. Another vowel sound that is a major feature in the Yooper dialect is the [ä], as in *lot*, or *office*. In GAE, this is pronounced as [ɑ]. This difference, or shift, between the two dialects is known as the cot-caught merger (where the vowels in cot ([ɑ]) and caught ([ɔ]) merge and are both pronounced as [ɑ]), and can mainly be found in the northern parts of the USA. The <o>, [ä], here is pronounced central and open instead of in the back as is the case with the GAE [ɑ], meaning the mouth is more open and less rounded than in the GAE pronunciation.

10. But captain, uh, David McClintock [mɔklintäk] is from Marquette. Yeah, and his brother was Bob's, uh, supertendent up in Republic where he, he taught school, ya.
(Maxine, at the Marquette Maritime Museum)
11. Walk back, to see Tuscon [tusän]. You can see it's in a valley, surrounded by the mountains.
(Maxine, on a walk in the mountains in Arizona)
12. Karl's daughter just died not [nät] too long [läŋ] ago.

(Maxine, showing family gravestones at the Ishpeming cemetery)

13. The letter implied that the animal could be suffering from a rare form of foot and mouth disease, which was surprising, because normally you would only expect to see it in a dog [däg] or a goat.

(Sample speaker, reading from *Comma Gets a Cure* (IDEA [www]))

As opposed to the examples in III, in these examples the feature, [ä], seems to appear mostly in the middle or at the end of words. Furthermore, the majority of the words containing [ä] are proper nouns or common nouns, such as *McClintock*, *Tuscon*, and *dog*.

V. The vowel sound [ɔ] merging into [ɑ] is another feature typical for the cot-caught merger, just as [ä]/[ɑ]. This shift is another example of how the vowels change by the mouth opening up more and the vowels being pronounced with the lips less rounded than when speaking GAE. Examples of this particular vowel feature can be found below.

14. Just after Christmas, I'd say they send somebody different, that's all [ɑ].

(Bob, unknown topic)

15. Karl's daughter just died not too long ago. She's buried over there, she doesn't have a stone yet. S. Dahl [dɑ].

(Maxine, showing family gravestones at the Ishpeming cemetery)

VI. The [u:] in words such as *you*, *too* and *do* is also involved in a common vowel feature of Yooper, becoming the sound [u]. This change means that the vowel is pronounced further towards the back of the mouth than the [u:], as shown in the examples below.

16. You just stand here, they'll get used [usəd] to us. And then they'll come, come back.

(Bob, feeding quails in his and Maxine's back yard in Tuscon)

17. Karl's daughter just died not too [tu] long ago.

(Maxine, showing family gravestones at the Ishpeming cemetery)

18. When she got there, there was a woman with a goose [gus] waiting for her.

(Sample speaker, reading from *Comma Gets a Cure* (IDEA [www]))

In these instances, it is not the position of the feature, [u], that the examples have in common, but rather the placement of the words. They all appear close to the end of their respective sentences.

VII. The <a> in *happy/accent/imagine* matches the <a> that is in *take/lake*, so both the short as well as the long <a> (eg. comparing *happy* [ɑ] and *lake* [ɑ] they are pronounced differently in GAE, but similarly in Yooper) are pronounced in the same way, although the long <a> is slightly drawn-out:

19. You stand [stɛ:nd] right there, and I'll take your picture.

(Maxine, at Windy Point outside of Tuscon)

20. It's still a pretty clean lake [lɛ:k], yeah. (...) It's a big lake.

(Sue, at the lake by their forest cabin outside of Ishpeming)

21. (...) so she was very happy [hɛ:pi] to start a new job at a superb private practice [prɛ:ktis] in North Square near the Duke Street Tower.

(Sample speaker, reading from *Comma Gets a Cure* (IDEA [www]))

22. Pasties [pɛ:stis] are (uh, um) a delicacy (xxx) lot of the Finnish people (uh, uh, uh, uh, um) started pasties there that's where kind of the (uh), the accent [ɛ:ksənt] comes from is the (uh) the Finnish folks and the other (uh, uh, um) folks (uh, uh, uh, um) from Scandinavia also brought a different a unique accent up there.

(Sample speaker, talking about traditional foods in the Upper Peninsula (IDEA [www]))

When looking at these examples, it becomes apparent that the [ɛ:] is most likely to appear at the beginning of words, such as in *happy*, *pasties*, and *accent*. Furthermore, the most prominent word class for the feature to appear in here is once again nouns, for example *lake* and *practice*.

VIII. In the Yooper dialect, the i in words such as time and inside is a distinctive diphthong that may best be described as a diphthong that has been inverted. That means that the schwa in this case, [ə], comes first: [əi]. When pronouncing this, the mouth is not as open as with the GAE sound, [aɪ], and is a mid-centralized to front-closed vowel sound instead of beginning with a front-open vowel as in GAE. In Example 26 below, the sample speaker's pronunciation of “fair” is quite similar to his dialectal pronunciation of the next word, “price”.

23. Did you know that he died [dəid] the same year as my mother?

(Maxine, showing family gravestones at the Ishpeming cemetery)

24. Look at their smiles [sməiləs]. Look at their nice [nəis] smiles.

(Maxine, showing family pictures)

25. In no time [təim], the goose began to tire [təiə], so Sarah was able to hold onto Comma and give her a relaxing bath.

(Sample speaker, reading from *Comma Gets a Cure* (IDEA [www]))

26. I can't imagine paying so much, but Mrs. Harrison-a millionaire lawyer-thought it was a fair price [pɹəis] for a cure.

(Sample speaker, reading from *Comma Gets a Cure* (IDEA [www]))

As in several of other cases with the Yooper dialect's vowel features, the [əi] appears here in shorter words, consisting of one or two syllables. The frequency of this vowel pronunciation in the informants' speech as well as the other vowels can be seen in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Appearances of vowel sounds in recorded data

<i>Vowels</i> (<i>Y/GAE</i>)	Bob		Maxine		Paul		Sue		Sample sp.	
	<i>Yooper</i>	<i>GAE</i>	<i>Yooper</i>	<i>GAE</i>	<i>Yooper</i>	<i>GAE</i>	<i>Yooper</i>	<i>GAE</i>	<i>Yooper</i>	<i>GAE</i>
[o:]/[u:]			2				1		4	2
[o:]/[oo]	2		4	1	9		4	2	19	5
[oo]/[ao]	4	1	3				2		7	3
[ä]/[a]	5		4				1		22	2
[a]/[ə]	3		4		1		3		7	1
[u]/[u:]	5		10	1	2	1			19	4
[ɛ:]/[a]	6	1	6	2	5	1	4	1	54	8
[əi]/[ai]	5		3	1			2		40	11
<i>Total number:</i>	30	2	36	5	17	2	17	3	172	36
	(94%)	(6%)	(88%)	(12%)	(89%)	(11%)	(85%)	(15%)	(83%)	(17%)

This table is designed to show how frequently some of the vowel sounds from Table 2 are pronounced in Yooper compared to GAE in the filmed first-hand material. These were chosen for their frequent appearances (for example the [o:]), and for their distinct dialectal pronunciation. They may seem few, but there are distinguishable patterns here, as the table shows for example how frequently each informant uses Yooper pronunciation, thus giving a hint to how strong their accent is. By comparing the frequency (by using percentages) of dialect sounds in the speech of the informants, this might also give us some indication of how common each vowel sound is in the Yooper dialect, and maybe discern a pattern for the Ishpeming dialect in particular since all informants are from the Ishpeming or Negaunee area.

When looking at the frequencies of dialectal pronunciation of the different vowel sounds in Table 3, there are some differences both between Bob, Maxine, Paul, and Sue themselves, as well as between the four informants and the sample speaker. Converting the numbers in the tables into percentages, it is easier to look at these differences. For example: Bob pronounces 32 vowels in total, 30 in the Yooper dialect, and 2 in GAE. This means that the frequency of dialectal pronunciation of vowels in Bob's speech is $30/32 \approx 94\%$, quite a high percentage. From this can be concluded, with the limited sample that is available, that Bob has quite a strong accent. The calculations for all five informants are presented in Figure 3, together with the sample speaker's results:

Figure 3: Frequency of Dialectal Vowel Pronunciation

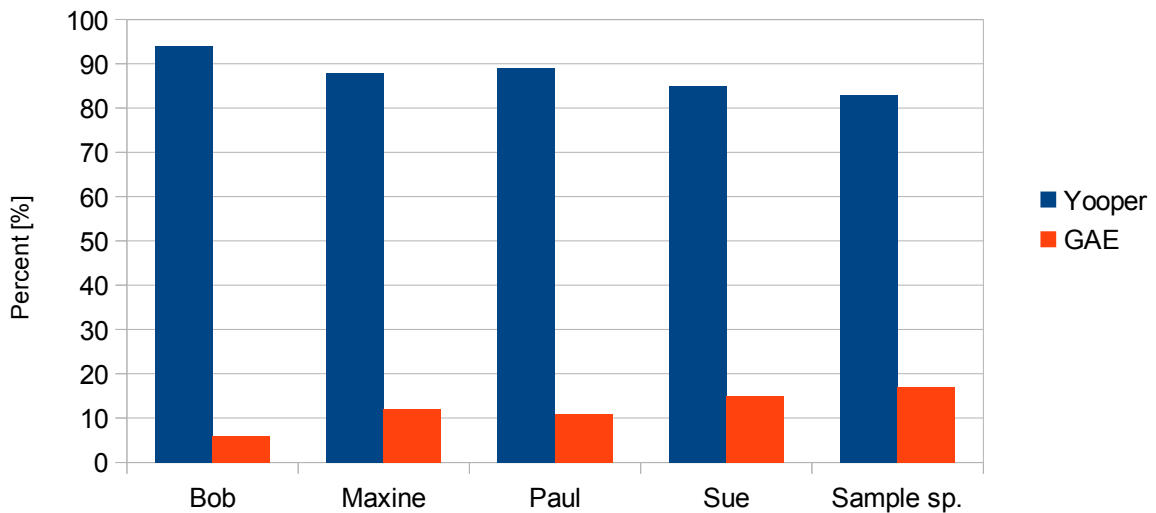


Figure 3 shows that Bob has the strongest accent out of the informants going by the frequency of using dialectal pronunciation of the chosen vowels. Maxine and Paul, both with Swedish ancestry, are around 90% which is also fairly high, whereas Sue is at 85%, a little lower than the others. However, the lowest score belongs to the sample speaker, who pronounced his vowels dialectally in 83% of the instances. This poses the question whether the sample speaker scored the lowest because he is of another generation, or if it might be because of his conscious efforts to remove his accent. We also do not know his heritage, which may also play a part in how strong his accent is.

5.2 Pronunciation of consonants

Consonant sounds in the Yooper dialect are not quite as easily distinguishable dialect features as the vowel sounds are. Nevertheless, there are some features that stand out, such as the pronunciation of the *r* sound ([ɹ]), and the change of *th* ([ð],[θ]) to *d* or *t*. Below are examples from the material, showing some different instances where these dialect-specific features appear.

[ɹ]: The <ɹ> sound in Yooper, [ɹ], is a feature that might have come from immigrants from Ireland and Cornwall, and differs from its GAE equivalent in that it is a retroflex consonant sound instead of alveolar. This means that the [ɹ] is articulated between the alveolar ridge and the hard palate, further back in the mouth compared to the [r], where the tongue touches or is close to the alveolar ridge.

27. But captain (uh) David McClintock is from Marquette [mɑɹ'kɛt].”

(Maxine, at the Marquette Maritime Museum)

28. Karl's [kɑ:ɹls] daughter just died not too long ago.

(Maxine, showing family gravestones at the Ishpeming cemetery)

29. Notice a bit cooler [ku:ləɪ]!

(Bob, at Mount Lemmon Ski Valley in Tuscon)

30. I can't imagine paying so much, but Mrs. Harrison-a millionaire lawyer-thought it was a fair [fæ:ɪ] price [pɪəɪs] for a cure [kjə:ɪ].

(Sample speaker, reading from *Comma Gets a Cure* (IDEA [www]))

Comparing these examples, it seems that the [ɪ] becomes more prominent when placed at the end of a syllable. In the case of the sample speaker, however, the [ɪ] is quite strong in all instances, but that may be ascribed to the fact that he is slightly exaggerating his dialect. What is also interesting here is that most of the words featuring the [ɪ] here are either proper or common nouns: *Marquette*, *Karl's*, *price*, and *cure*.

[d],[t]/[ð],[θ]: The pronunciation of the dental fricatives [ð] and [θ] as the alveolar stops [d] and [t], respectively, is a very common feature in the Yooper dialect, and something that is believed to have come from the Finnish immigrants that first arrived in the 19th century. (Simon 2006: 132) This feature is not something that is unique for Yooper alone, but it is a pronounced part of the dialect and something that occurs often in daily speech.

31. Where's the bunny? Is he there [dæɪə] too?

(Maxine, while feeding quails in her and Bob's back yard in Tuscon)

32. People in Upper Michigan are quite huge 'cause they like fatty foods and everything is made with [wɪt] lard like pasties.

(Sample speaker, talking about traditional foods in the Upper Peninsula (IDEA [www]))

33. I wanted to go to Western because it was basically the furthest [fə:ɪdəst] you could get away from [laughs] from Upper Michigan and still be in the same state without having to pay out-of-state tuition.

(Sample speaker, talking about growing up in the Upper Peninsula (IDEA [www]))

In the case of the sample speaker, as he has consciously tried to remove his dialect before, the [d]/[t] might be sounds that are harder to bring back into speaking. However, as he becomes more relaxed and excited about what he is speaking of, he starts to speak faster and the dialectal features start becoming more apparent, though this change may possibly happen subconsciously.

Table 4: Appearances of the [ɹ] as a Yooper feature as well as [d],[t]/[ð],[θ]

Vowels (Y/GAE)	Bob		Maxine		Paul		Sue		Sample sp.	
	Yooper	GAE	Yooper	GAE	Yooper	GAE	Yooper	GAE	Yooper	GAE
[ɹ]/[r]	49	3	62	5	4	2	7	0	147	22
[d],[t]/[ð],[θ]	15	6	17	5	3	2	2	2	38	53
Total number:	64	9	79	10	7	4	9	2	185	75
	(88%)	(12%)	(89%)	(11%)	(64%)	(36%)	(82%)	(18%)	(71%)	(29%)

Figure 4: Frequency of Dialectal Consonant Pronunciation

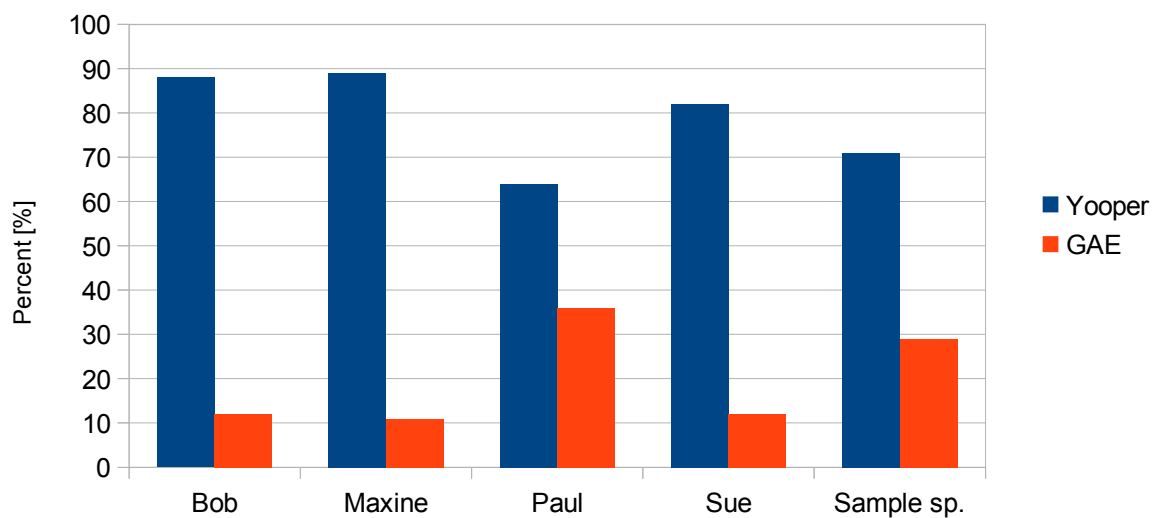


Figure 4 shows that the frequencies vary greatly between the informants. Bob and Maxine statistically have the strongest accents with pronunciation frequencies of 88% and 89%, respectively. Then there is a major drop to 64% in Paul's case, which must be looked at with some reserve, especially considering the low number of instances available for analysis. This also concerns Sue's result, as although her dialectal pronunciation frequency is at 82%, the amount of material might not be enough to draw any conclusions from. Both Paul and Sue, but especially Paul, have strong accents in real life, which further shows that the material, when there is such a small amount of it, cannot always be reliable. When looking at the sample speaker, however, there is a larger number of instances where the selected consonants appear in the recordings, which gives a more reliable result. Here the table above shows that his dialectal pronunciation frequency is at 71%, which is quite low compared to the others' results (with the exception of Paul's) which are in the 80 percent range. There are a few factors to look at when analyzing this result; perhaps this low

result comes from his efforts to remove his accent (as discussed in the vowel sounds section). As previously mentioned, it might also be more difficult to "pick up" the dialectal consonant sounds again than the vowel sounds, as it is stated that the informant exaggerated his accent slightly when speaking during the recording (IDEA [www]). It must also be taken into consideration that the prominent consonant pronunciation as seen in Bob's and Maxine's recordings might not exist to that extent anymore. It may simply be something that differs between generations.

5.3 Lexical items and dialectal expressions

As previously mentioned, there are many typically Yooper lexical items and expressions (such as *Finglish* above). One of the most famous and most tightly associated with Yooper is the *eh*. In one of the video clips analyzed for this study, there is an example of Maxine using this feature twice within five seconds. She is talking about a chipmunk, first saying "It's very quick, *eh*" followed by "very industrious, *eh*". This type of sentence-ender, is, as explained earlier, a typically Canadian feature.

Another common lexical unit in the Yooper dialect is the word *ya*, and it occurs quite often in the videos, especially when Maxine speaks. Some transcribed examples of Maxine's speech are:

34. But captain, uh, David McClintock is from Marquette. Yeah, and his brother was Bob's, uh, super[in]tendent up in Republic where he, he taught school, **ya**.

(At the Marquette Maritime Museum)

35. You know, he died the same year as my mother. '94. **Ya**. Also '94. (...) **Ya**.

(Showing family gravestones at the Ishpeming cemetery)

In the first example, *ya* is used as a way of "enforcing" the statement, and in the second it is used in the same way as "yeah" in the first example, expressing the affirmative. These examples show that the expression *ya* can be used in more than one environment, but it is unclear if its meaning differs from the affirmative *yeah*.

As previously mentioned, another common grammatical feature in Yooper is the exclusion of definite as well as indefinite articles from speech. For example, in the case of the sample speaker, there are several occasions where the article is left out. At the end of the third line from the top of the transcript, he says "it's nice place to grow up", and again later on the sixth line "it's very friendly and nice place". This is common in Finnish, which, as stated above, has no articles, unlike the Indo-European languages English and Swedish among many more (Simon 2006: 133). Furthermore, the expression in Example 1 above, "he taught school" may also fall under this particular feature. Without any further information, for example specifying location or the subjects of his teaching, such as "he taught *at the school*" / "he taught *at [name of school] school*", or "he

taught [*high*] school *students*”, the statement becomes quite general.

6. Discussion and conclusion

This thesis set out to answer the following questions: What are the main features of the Yooper dialect, how frequently do these features appear in locals' speech, and, as the informants in the material are of different generations, will the age factor play a role when comparing the results?

As the results show, the features that mainly seem to separate the Yooper dialect from other dialects in its geographical dialect area (see 2.3), are the different vowel sounds. Whereas the vowels in the North are considered to belong to either the Northern Cities Shift or the cot-caught merger, the Yooper vowels instead appear to be closer to Canadian raising. This is mentioned in 5.1, section III, although the actual influence of Canadian English may be discussed. As pointed out in 5.1, some vowel sounds that are often connected to Canadian raising seem to appear in parts of the northern United States where Scandinavian immigrants settled, such as in Michigan.

Another feature, which has been discussed by Remlinger (2007: 7), that stands out in the Yooper dialect is the stress, something that seems connected to the vowel sounds (see 5.1, section II). As the Finnish language has lingered in the Upper Peninsula, due to the immigrants' reluctance and difficulties to adapt, stress is one of several dialect features in Yooper that are believed to have come from Finnish. As Simon (2006: 132) states (see 3.3), the feature of substituting the *th*-sound ([ð] or [θ]) with [d] or [t] (as discussed in 5.2), is another remnant of the Finnish immigrants' speech that has been integrated into the Yooper dialect. Furthermore, when looking at the text examples that Simon (2006: 132ff) uses to illustrate Yooper, *Da Yooper Glossary* and *Da Yooper Creation Story*, the use of alveolar explosives appears quite frequently, something that can also be seen in Figure 4 in this study.

As the five informants for this study are native to the area of focus (Marquette County), their recordings together with previous research are sufficient enough to bring forth further illustrations of some of the main features of the Yooper dialect, such as the prominent vowel sounds. This study also shows frequencies that highlight which features are the most common in the Yooper dialect. The number of occurrences may not be quite high enough to properly analyze and draw any definite conclusions from, but high enough to be able to show patterns that correspond with the informants' background information as well as among them, meaning that the percentages found in the results, such as in dialectal vowel sounds, are similar enough between the informants that they can be regarded as credible results. Furthermore, what is interesting is how the frequencies in the sample speaker's dialect show a difference compared to the other four, older, informants. The feature of

age-grading (see 2.2) is highly relevant when looking at the results here, as not only are the informants of different generations, but the results seem to differ accordingly. This may very well occur due to age-grading. The sample speaker explicitly states that he put a conscious effort into removing his accent which coincides with the idea or general theory of age-grading, where, as people become adults, they become more conscious of their accents and make more of an effort to tone them down. Age-grading also indicates that an accent tends to return as a person ages, and at around 70 the accent is back to the level it was as a young child. As there are no old recordings of the other four informants, it cannot be decided whether this applies to them, if their accents have become stronger than when they were younger, but it can be speculated that this is the case. However, seeing as they have spent their lives in an area where most of the inhabitants seem to be acquainted with each other, there may not have been a question of prestige involved when they were younger and therefore may their accents very well have stayed more or less the same during their lives. In any case, age-grading may explain why their accents are stronger than the sample speaker's. It might also simply be a question of belonging to different generations, as a dialect changes naturally with time.

We cannot be completely sure of the representative state of these findings for the entire Yooper dialect, but the patterns of the findings show, as mentioned earlier, interesting similarities. It would be intriguing to see how the results from this paper correspond with a larger study. There are also some features that could be interesting to research further, such as the vowel sounds. These differ so much from General American English that it would be intriguing to take a closer look and try to find out what influences may be behind these unique features that seem to come from a mixture of several different dialects and languages, which probably is to be expected of an area with such a rich history of immigration.

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