

Varieties of American English

S. Gramley, WS 2009-10

Introduction

VarAmE: Semester plan

Oct 15	Introduction to the topic Assignment of presentations First language contacts	General reading Gramley/Pätzold 2004, chap.11
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Regional variation.

The origins and development of the major regional forms of English – in the U.S.A., the South (coastal and highlands), the Mid-Atlantic states, New England, and the North, and, in Canada the Maritimes, and Canada west of Quebec

Oct 22	Dialect geography	Kretzschmar 2004
Oct 29	Vocabulary: LA findings; present-day variation	Bailey 2004
Nov 05	Pronunciation: Three vowel systems (and shifts)	Pilch; Labov
Nov 12	Koiné; GenAm	Dillard; Wells

Ethnic variation

Pidgin and creole forms of American English, African-American Vernacular English, Chicano and Spanish-influenced English, and American Indian English

Nov 19	Pidgins and Creoles	Nichols 2004
Nov 26	AAVE	Labov 1998; Green 2004
Dec 04	AIPE and AIE	Dillard; Leap 1993
Dec 11	Chicano English and Spanish-influenced English	Fought 2003; Wiley 2004
Dec 18	Immigrant English	Molesky 1988

Social variation

Social differences in the use of English, concentrating especially on differences between American Standard English and non-standard features of General English in America

Jan 07	The process of standardization Webster, the grammar wars; the American vernacular	Quirk 1968: chap. 6; Heath 1980; Nunberg 1980
Jan 14	Class, education and grammar Gender and language change	Wolfram 2004 Labov 1972: chap. 8
Jan 21	Slang and adolescent language Cyberlanguage	Eckert 2004; Eble 2004
Jan 28	Attitudes towards correctness	Lippi-Green 2004
Feb 04	Final exam	

Literature

Allen, H.B. and M.D. Linn (eds.) (1986) *Dialect and Language Variation*.
Orlando: Academic Press.

Dillard, J.L. (1975) *All-American English*. N.Y.: Random House.

_____. (1980) *Perspectives on American English*. The Hague: Mouton.

Finegan, E. and J.R. Rickford (eds.) (2004) *Language in the USA. Themes for the Twenty-first Century*. Cambridge: CUP.

Contains:

Bailey

Ebel

Eckert

Green

Kretzschmar

Lippi-Green

Nichols

Wiley

Wolfram

Ferguson, D.A. and S.B. Heath (eds.) (1981) *Language in the USA*. Cambridge: CUP.

Fought, C. (2003) *Chicano English in Context*. London: Palgrave/Macmillan.

Glowka, A.W. and E.M. Lance (eds.) (1993) *Language Variation in North American English. Research and Teaching*. N.Y.: MLA.

- Gramley, S.E. and K.-M. Pätzold (2004) “English in America,” in: *A Survey of Modern English*, 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 250-265.
- Heath, S. (1981) “English in Our Language Heritage,” in: D.A. Ferguson and S.B. Heath (eds.) *Language in the USA*. Cambridge: CUP, 6-20.
N.Y.: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Labov, W. (1972) “The Study of Language in Its Social Context” in: *Sociolinguistic Patterns*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 183-259.
- _____. (1991) “The Three Dialects of English,” in: Penelope Eckert (ed.) *New Ways of Analyzing Sound Change*. San Diego: Academic Press, 1-44.
- _____. (1998) “Co-existent Systems in African-American Vernacular English,” in: S.S. Mufwene, J.R. Rickford, G. Bailey, J. Baugh *African-American English. Structure, History and Use*. London: Routledge, 110-153.
- Leap, W.L. (1993) *American Indian English*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press.
- Lippi-Green, R. (1997) *English with an Accent. Language, Ideology, and Discrimination in the United States*. London: Routledge.
- McKay, S.L. and S.C. Wong (eds.) (1988) *Language Diversity. Problem or Resource?* Cambridge: Newbury House.

- Molesky, J. (1988) "Understanding the American Linguistic Mosaic: A Historical Overview of Language Maintenance and Language Shift," in: S.L. McKay and S.C. Wong (eds.) *Language Diversity. Problem or Resource?* Cambridge: Newbury House, 29-68.
- Nunberg, G. (1980) "The Decline of Grammar," in: *Atlantic Monthly* (December), 31-46.
- Pilch, H. (1980) "The Rise of the American English Vowel Pattern," in: J.L. Dillard (ed.) *Perspectives on American English*. The Hague: Mouton, 37-70.
- Quirk, R. (1968) "What Is Standard English?" in: *The Use of English*, 2nd ed. London: Longman, 84-102.
- Wells, J.C. (1982) *Accents of English*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Williamson, J.V. and V.M. Burke (eds.) (1971) *A Various Language. Perspectives on American Dialects*. N.Y.: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

The Beginnings of English in North America

Grand Banks off coast of Nova Scotia

- since the late 16th and early 17th centuries
- fishing vessels (cod)
- traders for business with the Indians (cf. Mann 2005: 47ff)

Chesapeake Bay area

- fur traders

Ship crews

- often international (but European)
- where English was spoken on board, not the StE of England
- a mixture, possibly a leveling of varieties of regional English from England and Scotland
- English spoken as a foreign language among the non-native English-speaking crew
- nautical jargon: probably as many varieties as there were ships, each representing a different mix of English

Native American – English contact

All this notwithstanding, the early contacts of European sailors and traders with the Native Americans did leave behind two important traces. The first of these was disease, one of the most significant and tragic parts of what one author (Crosby 2003) calls the “Columbian Exchange.” The second was the English language, which some of the Native Americans learned well enough to serve as interpreters in negotiations with the European colonists. It is not impossible that these early nautical varieties of English had a linguistic impact on the mainland of North America, though it would hardly have been a permanent one. The English of the seafarers was probably used in the early days in North America, but the continued influence of nautical jargon can only be seen somewhat indirectly, according to Dillard (e.g. 1980: 407), in the use of American Indian Pidgin English (AIPE) and in the Pidgin English and later Creole English spoken by African slaves (for more on the latter there will be a later session). English was clearly around before colonization, but it was through the large number of settlers that the language became truly native to North America. Yet the language of these settlers shows evidence of contact with the Indians.

The Pilgrims and the Indians

The consequences of these two legacies can be seen quite concretely in the situation which the Pilgrim Separatists encountered when they arrived in Plymouth (Massachusetts) in 1620. Several years before their arrival an English expedition had landed there, taken a number of Indians as slaves, and left the smallpox behind to kill off over 90% of the Indian population, leaving the land empty for the arrival of the Pilgrims. In the words of William Bradford we learn:

... the good hand of God favored our beginnings. ... In sweeping away great multitudes of the natives by the smallpox, a little before we went thither, that he might make room for us there (Bradford 1638, 1792; cf. Mann 2005: 55ff.)

An anonymous pamphlet, *New England's First Fruits*. London, 1643, proclaimed:

Thus far hath the good hand of God favored our beginnings; see whether He hath not engaged us to wait upon His goodness for the future by such further remarkable passages of His providence to our plantation in such things as these: In sweeping away great multitudes of the natives by the smallpox a little before we went thither, that He might make room for us there. [There follow ... further points] (qtd. in Vaughan 1972: 65)

John Winthrop, the most prominent leader of the Puritan colony of Massachusetts Bay wrote to Sir Nathaniel Rich in England regarding the next great epidemic in New England in 1634: “For the natives, they are neere all dead of small Poxe, so as the Lord hathe cleared our title to this place, those who remain... .” (May 22, 1634, *WP*, III, 167; see: Bremer: 203). Wherever Europeans went in the Americas, the consequences of the spread of European diseases to which the native population had developed no immunity were similar: pestilence and death.

Linguistic contact with the Indians

As for language, Bradford (speaking of his group in the third person) tells of the Pilgrims' contact with Native Americans on March 16, 1621:

But about the 16. of March a certain Indian came bouldly amongst them, and spoke to them in broken English, which they could well understand, but marveled at it. At length they understood by discourse with him, that he was not of these parts, but belonged to the eastrene parts, wher some English-ships came to ffish, with whom he was acquainted, and could name sundrie of them by their names, amongst whom he had got his language. (Bradford 1620-1651: Book XIII)

Squanto

The Indian mentioned was Samaset, and he provided the Pilgrims who had survived the first New England winter with information and names and, most importantly, introduced another Indian, Squanto (Tisquantum), to them. The latter spoke fluent English, having spent several years in England as a slave from 1605, but returning to America with Captain John Smith in 1612. He was recaptured and taken to England once again. His final return home in 1619 was only to find that his people (the Patuxet of the area where the Pilgrims had settled) had died in the smallpox epidemic. Squanto proved to be very helpful to the English, giving them advice on farming and fishing, so much so that he has become a mythological figure in American history, understood as a sign of friendship between Native Americans and Europeans. For the purposes of this book we can understand Squanto as a symbol of the words which have entered (American) English as a result of contact with Indians.

Colonial Virginia

In Virginia a further mythological Indian figure came on stage. This was Pocahontas (whose name may mean “little hellion”). She intervened when the leader of the colony, Captain John Smith, who had been captured by the Powhatans, was to be brained to death by throwing herself over his head. As his savior she counts as a figure of innocence and subjection to white-European power.

The circumstances in Virginia were again somewhat parallel. The colony at Jamestown was in poor condition by September 1607

“but now was all our provision spent, ... , all helps abandoned, each hour expecting the fury of the savages, when God, the patron of all good endeavors, in that desperate extremity so changed the hearts of the savages, that they brought such plenty of their fruits and provision as no man wanted [i.e. was in want].” (Smith 1612: chap. 2)

The Influence of Native American languages on English

- a great many Native American borrowings from the eastern Indians, many of them from the Algonquian language family, (e.g. the tribes of New England; also many of tribes farther south and west
- the very nature of the contact situation – Europeans in a strange environment with unfamiliar plants, animals, and native people – --> words for these things would have to come from one or the other of the two most important sources:

(a) word formation using elements native to English

(b) borrowing from the one or the other indigenous language

(a) gives us such

- compounds as *black walnut* (in contrast to what is now called the *English walnut*), *blackbird*, or *tableland*) and
- extensions of European English terms, i.e. new meanings of English words such as *yew*, *robin*, or *bluff*

(b) Leads to Anglicized borrowings from Indian languages (Marckwardt lists approximately 50 such items (1980: 30))

The Algonquian family includes Abenaki, Cree, Delaware, Massachuset, Narraganset and Ojibwa and more than 20 further languages (cf. Driver 1969: 43).

Borrowings from eastern American Indian languages

Among the borrowings we find the following early additions from the more easterly Algonquian language family:

animal names: *chipmunk* (< Ojibwa *ačitamō n̄ŋ*), *moose* (< Algonquian *moos*), *muskrat* (< Algonquian-Massachuset *musquash*), *opossum* (< Algonquian), *raccoon* (< Algonquian *raugroughcun / arocoun*), *skunk* (< Abenaki *segañk8*), *terrapin* (< Algonquian-Delaware *tó ʔpe w*), *woodchuck* (< the Algonquian *ockqutchaun*);

plant names: *hickory* (< Algonquian *pawcohiccora*), *persimmon* (< Algonquian *pessemmin*), *pecan* (< Algonquian-Ojibwa *paka n̄*), *squash* (< Narraganset *askútasquash*);

foods: *hominy* (< Algonquian *-homen*), *pemmican* (< Cree *pimihka n̄*), *pone* (< Algonquian *appone*), *succotash* (< Narraganet *msickquatash*);

words for aspects of native culture and society: *manitou* (< Ojibwa *manito ʔ*), *powwow* (< Narraganset / Massachuset *powwaw / pauwau*), *sachem* (< Narraganset *sâchim*), *papoose* (< Narraganset *papoòs*), *squaw* (< Massachuset *squa / ussqua*), *moccasin* (< Algonquian *mockasin*), *tomahawk* (< Algonquian *tomahack*), *wigwam* (< Abenaki *wikəwam*).

American Indian Pidgin English (AIPE)

Many of words just listed (*moccasin, squaw, papoose, tomahawk*) which came from Algonquian languages were, according to Dillard, transmitted to both Europeans and to non-Algonquian-speaking Indians by way of a **lingua franca**, specifically American Indian Pidgin English (1973: 149). AIPE itself is the earliest variety of Pidgin English to appear in British North America always, Dillard maintains, about ten years after the first African slaves appeared in the area in question. This hardly seems to be justified for some of the New England examples quoted above, where contact was more likely to have been nautical. According to one source AIPE, whatever its ultimate source or sources, must have been widespread in use and continued to be used for some three hundred years:

An East Coast variety of Pidgin English was transmitted by White traders and runaway slaves to Indians elsewhere on the continent, so that the form of the pidgin was quite uniform throughout the period of its use, roughly 1600-1900. (Taylor 1981: 180)

Documentation of AIPE is sporadic and uneven, yet its (one-time) existence seems clear enough as attested in both non-fictional reports and in fictional presentations.

Features of AIPE

Phonology:

- /ð/ → /d/ *dat, dey, den*, etc.; /θ/ → /t/ *tump* < *thump*; /f/ → /p/ *Philipp* < *Philip*; /r/ → /l/ *locks* < *rock*
- Loss of final vowels (*ver* < *very*); /l/ (*Engismon* < *Englishman*); unstressed initial syllables (*'fendant* < *defendant*)

Morphology:

- no plural {s} in nouns (*two Hed* < *two heads*)
- *me* as subject (*me be so strong*)
- widespread loss of verb endings (*me be*); past marker *been* (*Me been sick*); occasional use of transitive suffix *'em, um, 'im, him* (*you catch um Jeremiah Offscow*)

Features of AIPE

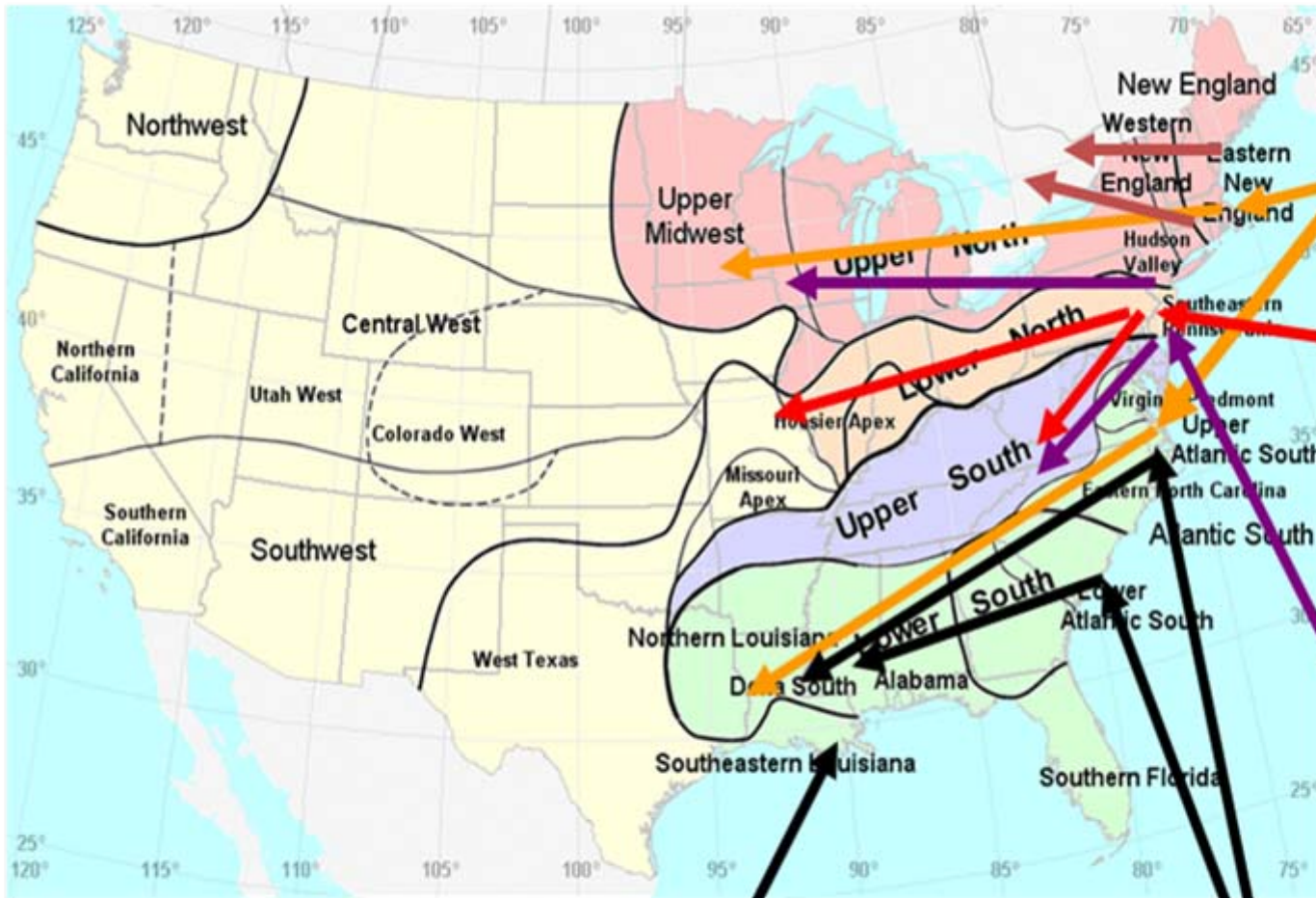
Syntax:

- absence of articles (*we fling in water, big fish come*); zero copula (*Englishman much foole*) and subject (*suppose cross* “if he is cross”)
- possession via juxtaposition (*white man mouth*)
- *as* for *than* (*stronger as I was before*)
- reduplication of verb for continued action (*travel-travel*)
- manner and time adverbs before (subject and) verb (*quick you catch um...strong you hold um, safe you ging um; he then cheat him*)
- negation with *no* instead of *not* (*he no run away*)

Lexis:

- *broder* “sibling of the same sex”
- *heap, much* “very”
- *medicine* “magic, something incomprehensible”
- *savvy* “know”
- *suppose* “if”
- *all one* “like, as, the same as”

(Leechman and Hall 1981: 121-123)



settlement from Southern England (from early 17th century on)

settlement from the Northern England, Scotland, and Ulster (late 17th)

settlement from Germany (late 17th)

later: some slaves from the French colonies (esp. Haiti) (late 18th century)

slaves from the Caribbean (and in some cases directly from Africa (from 1619 on; westward movement in the 19th)

Further references:

- Bradford, W. (1638, 1792ff) "New England's First Fruits," In: *Massachusetts Historical Society, Collections*. Cambridge, 242-248.
- _____. (1620-1651 [1912]) *The History of Plymouth Plantation*. 2 vols. W.C. Ford (ed.) Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society.
- Bremer, F.J. (2003) *John Winthrop, America's Forgotten Foundin Father*. N.Y.: OUP.
- Crosby, A.W. (2003) *The Columbian Exchange. Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492*. rev. ed. Westport: Praeger.
- Dillard, J.L. (1973) *Black English*. N.Y.: Vintage.
- Driver, H.E. (1969) *Indians of North America*, 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago.
- Leechman, D. and R.A. Hall, Jr. (1980 [1955]) "American Indian Pidgin English: Attestations and Grammatical Peculiarities" In: J.L. Dillard (ed.) *Perspectives on American English*. The Hague: Mouton, 417-425 [originally in: *American Speech* (1955), 163-171].
- Mann, C. (2005) *1491. New Revelations of the Americas before Columbus*. N.Y.: Vintage.
- Marckwardt, A.H. (1980) *American English*. 2nd ed. (revised by J.L. Dillard) N.Y.: OUP.
- Smith, J. (1612) *General History of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles*.
- Taylor, A.R. (1981) "Indian lingua francas" In: C.A. Ferguson and S.B. Heath (eds.) *Language in the USA*. Cambridge. CUP, 175-195.
- Vaughan, A.T. (ed.) (1972) *The Puritan Tradition in America, 1620-1730*. rev. ed. Hanover, NH: UP of New England.

Homework reading:

Chapter 11 in Gramley / Pätzold (2004)