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Editors: Natalie Schilling (Georgetown), Derek Denis (Toronto), Raymond Hickey (Essen)

I The United States

1. Language change and the history of American English (Walt Wolfram)
2. The dialectology of Anglo-American English (Natalie Schilling)
3. The roots and development of New England English (James N. Stanford)
4. The history of the Midland-Northern boundary (Matthew J. Gordon)
5. The spread of English westwards (Valerie Fridland and Tyler Kendall)
6. American English in the city (Barbara Johnstone)
7. English in the southern United States (Becky Childs and Paul E. Reed)
8. Contact forms of American English (Cristopher Font-Santiago and Joseph Salmons)

African American English

9. The roots of African American English (Tracey L. Weldon)
10. The Great Migration and regional variation in the speech of African Americans (Charlie Farrington)
11. Urban African American English (Nicole Holliday)
12. A longitudinal panel survey of African American English (Patricia Cukor-Avila)

Latinx English

13. Puerto Rican English in Puerto Rico and in the continental United States (Rosa E. Guzzardo Tamargo)
14. The English of Americans of Mexican and Central American heritage (Erik R. Thomas)

II Canada

15. Anglophone settlement and the creation of Canadian English (Charles Boberg)
16. The open-class lexis of Canadian English: History, structure, and social correlations (Stefan Dollinger)

17. Ontario English: Loyalists and beyond (Derek Denis, Bridget Jankowski and Sali A. Tagliamonte)

18. The Prairies and the West of Canada (Alex D’ArCY and Nicole Rosen)

19. English in Newfoundland (Kirwin, William, rev. Sandra Clarke and Raymond Hickey)

20. Canadian Maritime English (Matt Hunt Gardner)

21. A (socio)linguistic aperçu of English as a minority language: the case of Quebec (Shana Poplack)

III The Caribbean

22. Early English-lexifier creole in the circum-Caribbean area (Norval Smith)

23. The Caribbean anglophone contact varieties: Creoles and koinés (Jeffrey P. Williams)

24. The development of English in Jamaica (Sylvia Kouwenberg)

25. The anglophone Caribbean Rim (Angela Bartens)

26. North American - Caribbean linguistic connections (Stephanie Hackert)
Language Change and the History of American English

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Abstract

This chapter covers the major changes in American English since its original establishment in North America. Both external changes in social and historical circumstances and internal linguistic mechanisms have driven change since the original founder effect that established the earliest regional and social varieties of North American English. We consider both the external historical circumstances, such as the earliest cultural centers in Boston, Philadelphia, Jamestown, Charleston, and New Orleans, to the effects of dialect divergence due to the Civil War, as well as different migratory periods and waves of movement and resettlement. For example, the earlier settlement was primarily from the east westward, a fact reflected in some of the major regional boundaries of American English, but this has shifted in later migrations, such as the great migration of African Americans from the South to the North and current movement of white populations southward. We also consider the effects of World Wars and some of the critical linguistic changes that emanated from that period, as well as current movements and the effect of the increase in global English.

Linguistic-based changes rooted in the internal linguistic system per se have also created differing regional clusters of American English, such as the systematic push-pull effects of vowel systems, the regularization of formerly irregular patterns, and the restructuring of paradigmatic patterns in American English varieties. For example, one of the major vocalic shifts is the Northern Cities Vowel Shift, which is centered in major Northern Cities such as Schenectady, Albany, Cleveland, Detroit, and Chicago, has followed a cascading path of diffusion from large major metropolitan areas to smaller urban areas as it bypasses rural areas in between. At the same time, Southern varieties, which accelerated after the Civil War, are currently receding, with the largest cities of the South leading this recession, as rural areas lag in the recession of traditional Southern features. At the same time, newer regional dialect areas are arising on the West Coast in regions such as Northern California, Seattle, Portland and other areas carve out regional identities. In the process, a host of social, interactional, and agentive factors intersect in the dynamics of language change in the US over the centuries, including social stratification, gender, ethnicity, social networks, style, and modes of social interaction and agency.

The resultant dynamics of dialect change in American society show (1) a core of once-remote varieties in historically isolated regions that are now endangered; (2) a stable nucleus of sustained language varieties that still reflect the founder effect; and (3) a series of currently developing varieties that underscore the centrality of newer cultural and regional areas in the United States.

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The dialectology of Anglo-American English

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Abstract

The study of the historical development of American English and its various dialects has been approached from a variety of angles, using an array of data sources and data collection methods, in the service of differing goals. This chapter presents an overview of dialectology illuminating the diachronic development of American English. The focus is on the major dialect geographic projects that form the backbone of American dialect study, from the Linguistic Atlas of the United States and Canada projects begun in the early 1930s (e.g. Kurath 1949) to the Dictionary of American Regional English (DARE) project launched in the early 1960s, to Labov, Ash and Boberg’s authoritative Atlas of North American English (2006) and beyond. Methods and perspectives are considered in light of their goals (e.g. obtaining data on historic forms, exploring recent and ongoing linguistic change), data collection methods (e.g. written and audio-recorded surveys, sociolinguistic interviews), target populations (e.g. linguistically conservative non-mobile older rural men vs. younger women, held to be the leaders of language change), sampling method (e.g. random, judgment), and linguistic features of focus (lexical, phonological, grammatical). Representations of geographic dialect variation are examined as well, from traditional hand-drawn maps based on seemingly clear-cut isoglosses to more nuanced depictions of dialect layers (e.g. Carver 1987) to computer-generated maps showing density of dialect forms (e.g. DARE’s dialect maps with U.S. states sized according to population density; dialect heat maps with density indicated by color saturation). Also discussed are data sources that predate the advent of American dialectological study and provide invaluable pre-20th-century depth (Schneider 2013). These data include written sources such as commentary from travelers and grammarians, official documents like trial proceedings (e.g. the Salem witchcraft trials; Rissanen 1997), and private correspondence by semi-literate writers (e.g. Irish emigrant letters; Montgomery 1995), as well as written transcripts and early audio recordings from projects that were not dialectological in origin but which have yielded important insight into the early development of American varieties such as Southern American English (e.g. Tennessee Civil War Veterans’ Questionnaires; Maynor 1993) and African American English (e.g. WPA ex-slave recordings and transcripts; Schneider 1989, 1997). Finally, the contribution of social dialectological studies beginning in the mid-1960s, which are in large part the outgrowth of ‘traditional’ dialect geographic studies, is noted as well, since in-depth surveys across social space in a given region have added immeasurably to our understanding of how dialect forms develop and diffuse across time and geographic space. Throughout, the chapter illustrates how different methods and data sources with their “complementary sources of error” (Labov 1972) can be fruitfully brought together to solve the difficult
problem of retracing historic pathways for inherently ephemeral spoken language forms.

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The roots and development of New England English

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Abstract

With its legendary regionalisms like “r-dropping,” fronted palm vowels, “broad-a” bath vowels, and other features, New England has played a key role in the historical development of English in North America. Historically, the six small states of New England (Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont) have had an outsized influence on American English, and their modern sociolinguistic and geographic boundaries still reflect colonial-era settlement patterns from centuries past. In studying these patterns, modern linguists have access to almost 90 years of fieldwork reports on regional New England dialect features: starting in the early 1930s with the Linguistic Atlas of New England (LANE, Kurath et al. 1939-43), then a generation later in work by Laferriere (1977) and in Carver’s (1987) analysis of 1960s field data in the Dictionary of American Regional English (DARE), and then more recent work in various parts of New England, including Nagy (2001), Nagy & Roberts (2004), Roberts (2006, 2007, 2106), The Atlas of North American English (ANAE, Labov, Ash & Boberg 2006), Boberg (2001, 2005, 2018), Dinkin (2005), Villard (2009), Nagy & Irwin (2010), Johnson (2010), Wood (2011, 2014), Stanford, Leddy-Cecere & Baclawski (2012), Stanford, Severance & Baclawski (2014), and others. A recent large-scale project based at Dartmouth (Stanford 2019) provides acoustic sociophonetic analyses of 993 New Englanders, using both in-person field interviews and online audio recordings. While many of these prior studies across New England have focused on phonological changes, regional grammatical patterns have also been examined (e.g. Wood 2014), as well as lexical variation and change (Carver 1987; Ravindranath 2011; Stanford 2019:126-37, 266-67) and the continuing influence of local Native American words on English (Stanford 2019:68-71). Using this wealth of intergenerational data from such prior work, the present chapter takes a historical perspective that traces the roots and development of New England English into the present time.

In the early 17th century, English speakers from southeastern England settled in the Massachusetts Bay area, and this region would become the major sociolinguistic “hub” of New England English. As the language of the colonizers, English soon became the dominant language of the region, while Native American communities suffered from European-imported disease, conflict, displacement, and genocide, and Indigenous languages dramatically receded. Within English, the influential early New England English settlements of eastern Massachusetts developed non-rhotic (“r-less”) speech, along with fronted palm vowels, “broad-a” bath vowels, and other features that mirrored pronunciation patterns that were becoming standard in southeastern England during this time. The eastern New England (ENE) settlements maintained relatively close connections with that English homeland across the Atlantic, unlike the more isolated and diverse settlements in western New England (WNE). As a result,
sharp lines of regional dialect contrast soon developed between ENE and WNE. This enduring east-west contrast is a classic example of the Founder Effect (Zelinsky 1973; Mufwene 1996; Wolfram & Schilling 2016:29), and LANE observed this pattern among speakers born as early as the 1840s (Johnson & Durian 2017). The 1990s telephone surveys (Telsur) of the ANAE reported on this overall ENE/WNE regional distinction in New England, as well as evidence that non-rhotic speech is receding. The ANAE and Johnson (2010) also reported on another subregional distinction that has an isogloss tracing back to colonial-era boundaries: modern Rhode Island speakers are more likely to have the low-back merger (merged lot/thought vowels) than speakers right across the border in eastern Massachusetts and much of northern New England.

The Founder Effect has its limits, however, and recent studies show significant changes in progress that are shifting New England English patterns away from their colonial roots. Recent work (Stanford 2019) finds that many traditional New England dialect features are receding in current generations of speakers, including non-rhotic speech, fronted palm, “broad-a” bath, north/force distinction, mary/marry/merry distinctions, and other features. In northern New England, the traditional east-west line of contrast is now receding eastward among the older speakers, while those east-west contrasts are rapidly vanishing among younger speakers. Even in the metropolitan eastern Massachusetts hub, many such features are receding as well. Although some traditional neighborhoods like South Boston maintain strong traditional ENE features, the forces of gentrification and other demographic changes are also affecting these areas. This chapter also reports on ways in which African American speakers in some Boston communities are positioning themselves in relation to such features (Browne & Stanford 2018; Nesbitt & Stanford 2020). Finally, other regional New England features like nasal short-a (bat/ban contrast) and the low-back merger remain strong, and other new features are on the rise. The deep roots of New England English that were established centuries ago still have a significant influence on modern speech patterns. But now in the current generations of speakers, new branches, leaves, and flowers are rapidly emerging from those historical roots.

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The history of the Midland-Northern boundary

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Abstract

Dialectologists working in the mid-twentieth century established a tripartite division of US regional dialects into North, Midland, and South. This work documented the retention of traditional usages and focused on lexical variation. The boundaries between the regions reflected early settlement histories in the Eastern half of the country. Thus, the Northern region stems from the movement in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries of Yankees out of their New England colonial base and across upstate New York and the Great Lakes area. The Midland, on the other hand, grew out of Pennsylvania and represented a culturally distinct population from the earliest period of British settlement. Despite the grounding of this divide in centuries-old settlement and migration patterns, the boundary between the North and the Midland remains relevant to regional variation in American English today. For example, the Atlas of North American English (Labov, Ash, & Boberg, 2005) documents isoglosses that fall more or less precisely where the ones reported by Kurath (1949) and other dialectologists fell. What is especially remarkable about this confirmation of earlier findings is that the more recent studies are based on very different evidence as they typically examine phonological variation with an emphasis on active sound changes. In this way, the boundary between the North and the Midland continues to influence regional variation not just by preserving historical differences but also by shaping the dissemination of innovative usages.

This chapter reviews the history of this remarkably stable boundary in American dialectology. The colonial settlement of the two regions is sketched as are patterns in westward migration. I review the evidence that supported the traditional dialect boundary from the early linguistic atlas researchers. Turning to the current status of this dialectological divide, I consider the evolving picture of variation on both sides of the boundary. For example, several of the large cities of the Midland region are distinguished by local dialect forms that appear to be receding while broader supra-regional forms are on the rise. The North has generally been more linguistically homogenous especially at the phonological level. Of special relevance in this regard is the vowel pattern known as the Northern Cities Shift, which, until recently, was widespread across the region from New York to Minnesota. This shift figured prominently in the construction of the North/Midland divide in the Atlas of North American English. Nevertheless, in recent years several studies have documented speech communities moving away from these pronunciations. The chapter considers the implications of these developments for the future stability of the boundary between the North and the Midland.

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The spread of English westwards

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Abstract

This chapter examines from both a historical and contemporary perspective the development of several English varieties in the Western U.S. We will trace the early colonization of the Western US, paying particular attention to Nevada and Oregon, bordering states that differed in terms of the type of early migratory influences during the early koineization period, but which, as of late, have shared more similar in-migration. Originally inhabited by Native American tribes who spoke varied indigenous languages such as Athabascan, Kalapuyan, Paiute, Penutian, Shoshone and Washoe, both Oregon and Nevada gained much of their non-indigenous population during 19th century Westward expansion via the Oregon and California Trails. We also examine how the settlement of California was related to development of dialects in these two states.

Contemporary Oregon is part of the Pacific Northwest dialect region, and early colonization, often from Midland States, was centered on its rich natural resources such as lumber, fishing, fur and agriculture (Reed and Reed 1972). In contemporary speech, we find states such as Washington and Oregon have a number of notable dialect features such as pre-velar raising in the /ɛ/ and /æ/ vowel classes and a long-standing low back vowel merger (Becker (ed.) 2019, McClarty et al. 2016). Unlike Washington, however, Oregon also shows more participation in features associated with California speech, such as /æ/ retraction (Becker et al. 2016). Nevada served as an early Mormon outpost, with many early Latter Day Saint (LDS) arriving by way of Utah, but gained much of its population from California, as gold rush miners were attracted by the discovery of the Comstock lode (Bright 1967). The often competing interests between these groups resulted in the recall of LDS settlers to Utah after Nevada’s establishment as a state. As a result, many features of California English are shared by Nevadan varieties of English, such as a later onset for the low back merger /u/ and /o/ fronting and participation in the California Vowel Shift (Bright 1967, DeCamp 1953, 1959, Hinton et al. 1987, Moonwoman 1987, Reed and Reed 1972, Fridland and Kendall 2017). The proximity of Nevada, Oregon and California indeed seems to permeate the types of vowel features that have been located across these states in contemporary speech (Fridland and Kendall 2019).

For our contribution to the present volume, in addition to surveying early migratory patterns in these three states, we will expand upon prior work (Fridland and Kendall 2017) to more deeply explore contemporary Oregonian, California and Nevada speech to characterize what constitutes the varieties of English spoken in these states. Focusing on the vowel classes that defined a unique Western pattern in earlier work in the West (Fridland et al. 2016, 2017), we compare the realization of the low front and low back vowels as well as patterns of back vowel fronting among these
states, with particular attention to understudied dynamic and durational aspects that might demarcate micro-regional distinctions.

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American English in the city

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Abstract

American cities are sites of social contact and social segregation, linguistic convergence and divergence, standardization and colloquialization. The first English-speaking settlers brought their native dialects with them, laying the foundation for the urban dialects of the eastern part of the U.S. While many subsequent European immigrants adopted local whites' ways of speaking, others isolated themselves and developed distinctive styles. Residential and workplace segregation meant that the speech of urban African Americans, who may have first learned a dialect similar to that of southern whites, diverged from that of their white counterparts, while at the same time assimilating some relatively non-salient features of local white dialects. For all Americans, social and geographical mobility has led to standardization, but mobility also highlights differences among speakers and can lead to enhanced dialect awareness. In the early 21st century, some urban dialects have come to be ideologically linked with their cities’ identities, but what it means to speak like a local continues to shift, contracting as a result of centripetal standardizing forces and expanding as a result of centrifugal forces that lead to new combinations of indexicalities. This chapter explores these apparent paradoxes, through an overview of the variationist sociolinguistic literature on American cities and with a particular focus on Pittsburgh, a post-industrial city in the U.S. northeast.

References


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English in the Southern United States

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Abstract

This chapter considers the English of the Southern United States with a focus on the ways in which past and present settlement histories, social structures, and economic realities are reflected in the language of the region. Despite persisting ideas of geographic and social insularity, the American South is a large region that has and has always contained great diversity. We begin the chapter looking at early settlement patterns of the region examining early migration to this broad geographic region as well as movement within the region during this early period with a focus on the donor dialects brought to the South during this period and the ways in which they coalesce in the formation of Southern American English varieties. This discussion will include insights gained from early work on the various subregions that comprise the Southern United States acknowledging that the boundaries of what is considered to be the Southern United States are highly contested. Moving from the discussion of early work on subregions and settlement, the chapter then looks at recent sociolinguistic work that highlights the ways that the South continues to be a region with active population movements and settlement patterns, highlighting the ways in which modern settlement patterns are reshaping the ways in which Southern English, broadly constructed, is viewed.

Proceeding from a discussion of settlement practices (a more dialectological approach), the chapter then moves to more recent sociolinguistic work that has considered in tandem the complex social frameworks and linguistic variables that construct Southern American English. In this section we consider core social concepts that have been examined in sociolinguistic research on Southern American English, specifically we look at ethnicity, notions of rural and urban, gender, social structure and social alignment and the ways in which Southern English interacts with and impacts education in the South, and also how regional affiliation intersects and interacts with each of these concepts.

Looking at work on ethnicity across the regions of the South, research on African American, Native American and Latinx residents of the region has shown the ways in which language moves beyond reflecting only regional factors to indexing the complex intersection of different social groups within and across the region. Within each of these large and diverse ethnic groups, one can see how certain speech features have come to index membership and participation, as well as regional affiliation.

We look at the ways in which rural and urban areas in the South have distinguished themselves linguistically and the ways in which rural and urban identities and the interplay, and also the tension, between the two underlie the various notions of what it means to be Southern. As the urban South has grown, some traditional features, such as the Southern Vowel Shift, have become less prominent among urban speakers. Paradoxically, other features, including aspects of the Southern Shift, have
become relatively more frequent among rural speakers. What was previously a regional difference may have now become what Fridland (2012:187) calls an ‘ecological distinction’, highlighting the difference between the urban and rural South.

When considering gender, research on societal roles and expectations, and the recognition of different constructs of gender, have shown how both males and females as well as members of the LGBTQ community position themselves and their Southerness through their speech practices. Some long-standing differences, such as vowels, are reflected to a degree in Southern speech. However, other features show that gender and sexuality interact with other social features to lessen the expected gender difference.

Education has long been considered the great leveler of regional and social language variation, being inversely correlated with the presence of regional features. And, for many speakers in the South, this truism is a reality. However, education does not categorically influence all linguistic features equally, as certain productions and structures appear in the speech of speakers across the educational spectrum. These unaffected features and structures, at some level, index the complex interchange of regional identity and affiliation and education, where using certain features marks both education and Southernness.

As one can see, the interlinkage of regional affiliation and regional identity with the social concepts above is crucial to understanding linguistic variation in the South. Within the region, research has demonstrated that affiliation to particular areas in the South, whether local to a community level or broad to the region as a whole, can influence language from high-level discourse practices down to the phonetic implementation of a vowel. Thus, regional affiliation serves to undergird many of the characteristics of Southern US speech.

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Contact forms of American English

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A long tradition tends to treat language history from a perspective in which contact is at least implicitly the marked way of accounting for change, somehow a deviation from the social and structural factors at work within a language community, as observed by Hickey (2010) and others. While we reject a simple dichotomy between contact and non-contact change (Dorian 1993), this chapter starts from a very different position, assuming a profound role for language and dialect contact in the history of American English. Varieties of English spoken across the United States reflect chronic and profound contacts of every sort from the arrival of English in the western hemisphere to ongoing waves of refugees and immigrants speaking countless languages. The resulting pool of variation has driven the distinctly American patterns and shaped how they continue to develop today. In many cases, the most interesting insights come from how contact patterns and endogamous patterns fit together.

From this vantage point, we treat a broad set of patterns across major American dialect areas, with an eye on often overlooked and understudied features. While Salmons & Purnell (forthcoming) review familiar and mostly well-established cases of language contact in the U.S., we focus on possible contact effects in and from unexpected places in American English. After a brief look at lexical material, we draw data primarily from phonetics and phonology, syntax, and pragmatics. In some instances, the evidence for origins in contact is compelling, and in others it is not, but there is also a broad gray zone of uncertainty. For features with origins in contact, we probe the conclusion of Salmons & Purnell (forthcoming) that if a feature gets into a system by contact, it can take any possible path and trajectory later in history. A few examples follow to indicate the kinds of data and approaches we’ll explore in the full chapter.

Even non-linguists interested in American English often know examples of loanwords in American English from sources that non-specialists may find surprising, such as the many Dutch loans (van der Sijs 2009, 2011) or words for flora and fauna borrowed from Algonquian languages (many compiled in Cassidy & Hall 1985-2017). Fewer know the complex trajectories some words have taken, though, such as Gulf Coast lagniappe ‘something extra given for free with a purchase’, immediately from Louisiana French where it came from Spanish la ñapa and ultimately, apparently, from Quechua. Similarly, hooch ‘illegal or low quality hard liquor’ has made its way from Tlingit (Na-Dene, Alaska) into broad American usage (s.v. Cassidy & Hall 1985-2017).

In sound patterns, the Inland North region (e.g., Labov et al. 2006) is often defined by the Northern Cities Shift (NCS), a vowel chain shift centered in urban areas from central New York to the Great Lakes. The development of the NCS has been attributed to a combination of several waves of migration and settlement (Labov 2010) as well as sociodemographic changes (Van Herk 2008), starting in the late nineteenth century (Gordon & Streluff 2017) and continuing to the present day (McCarthy 2011). We evaluate here how language and dialect contact appear to
interact with other social and structural factors in the spread (and now retreat) of a sound change.

Less commonly considered in this context is the phonology of Native placenames, though names like Apalachicola and Ticonderoga figure prominently in the literature on metrical phonology (e.g. Halle & Vergnaud 1987). Beyond such reflections of settler colonialism, the (non-)integration of French and Spanish names in some regions is notable, as well as social and regional variation in names like Feinst[ai]n vs Feinst[i:]n or Schmidt with [ʃ] vs [s]. (We plan to gather some data on these issues.)

In syntax, clear contact origins of American features have proven more difficult to establish. We review first several examples of patterns that are not well known in the literature, but which are likely immigration-sourced and then some better-known ones, which are probably not directly from contact. The former type is illustrated by Yooper English (Michigan's Upper Peninsula) where constructions like 'let's go mall', lacking a preposition and determiner, are understood as Finnish-sourced (Remlinger 2017:51-52), but this may have ties to broader regional patterns of the type 'I drive truck'. Just to the west, in Minnesota's Iron Range — an area of broadly similar demographics —, other patterns are associated with immigration, such as copula deletion ('he late') and unusual word order patterns ('you play with five cards just') (Loss 2014:29). The latter type — where the case for contact origins is weak — includes Southern double modals of the 'might could', 'should oughta' type, which have been discussed as possibly connected to similar patterns in the British Isles (among many others, Nagle 1994, Fennell & Butters 1996.)

We conclude that English in the United States has been more broadly and more deeply shaped by contact than is sometimes widely appreciated. Striking is how regionally and socially variable these patterns prove, especially those beyond the lexicon. The resulting picture suggests a need to reorient our thinking about the history of American English.

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The Roots of African American English

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Abstract

The origins of African American English (AAE) have been the subject of debate among linguists for nearly a century now. Dialectologists in the early 1900's proposed that AAE descended from British English roots, similar to other American English varieties, including Southern American English, but retained certain features of 17th and 18th century British English that other American English varieties had since lost (see e.g., Krapp 1924, Kurath 1928). Such arguments formed the foundation of the Dialectologist (or Anglicist) Hypothesis.

This perspective was later challenged by researchers who observed the retention of African features in the language and culture of many Black Americans (see e.g., Herskovits (1941), Turner (1949), Dalby 1971, Dunn 1976, Van Sertima 1976, and Debose and Faracas 1993). Over time, a position known as the Creolist Hypothesis began to attribute such influence to a period of creolization in the history of AAE, noting a number of striking similarities between AAE and creole varieties with which it seemed to share a "deep structural relationship" (see e.g., Bailey 1965). From this perspective, AAE was said to have derived from a creole variety spoken by persons enslaved on the North American plantations, which, in turn, was said to have derived from a pidgin English that developed out of the contact between English and various West African languages brought together by the Atlantic slave trade (see also Stewart 1967, 1968, and Dillard 1972). Many supporters of the Creolist Hypothesis argued that Gullah, an African American variety spoken along the coasts of South Carolina and Georgia, represented a fairly direct descendant of the creole spoken on the North American plantations, which preserved much of its creole structure because of the geographical and social isolation of the Sea Islands.

In this paper, I provide an overview of the on-going debate over the origins and development of African American English, with a focus on some of the sociohistorical and linguistic evidence that has been brought to bear. In particular, I discuss the role of the copula as a hallmark feature in the origins debate, noting especially the significance of following grammatical environment on patterns of copula variability in AAE and Caribbean English Creoles. And I discuss some key features of the tense, mood, and aspect system, as they have been taken up by supporters of the Neo-Anglicist Hypothesis, which proposes that many of the distinctive features of African American English once thought to be retentions of an earlier creole are, in fact, 20th century phenomena brought about by modern-day patterns of isolation and segregation (see e.g., Dayton 1996, Labov 1998, Poplack 2000).

Finally, I consider how present-day dynamics between African American and European American varieties might require us to re-evaluate some of our earlier assumptions about the nature of language contact from both ecological and ethological
perspectives (see Whinnom 1971; Rickford 1987). And I discuss how future investigations of the African American linguistic trajectory might begin to shift the nature of this debate accordingly.

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Abstract

Over a half century of sociolinguistic work has addressed various aspects of the speech of African Americans, often called African American Language (AAL) or African American English (AAE). The current chapter focuses on the twentieth century development of AAL, using examples from the Corpus of Regional African American Language (CORAAL; Kendall & Farrington 2020), a publicly available corpus of conversational speech, with data from several African American communities, such as Atlanta, GA, Manhattan, NY, Princeville, NC, Rochester, NY, Valdosta, GA, and Washington D.C., to highlight regional sound patterns.

We begin by focusing on the Great Migration, the population movement of African Americans out of the rural South between 1915 and 1970, considered by many to be one of the most important historical and sociological population movements in North America (Tolnay 2003; Wilkerson 2010). When sociolinguists began publishing work on what is now called AAL, they were often funded by the U.S. Department of Education and showed that this non-mainstream variety of English exhibited overall systematicity. This work, which was done across non-Southern urban locales such as New York City (Labov et al. 1968), Detroit, Michigan (Shuy et al. 1967, Wolfram 1969) and Washington D.C. (Fasold 1972), overlooked variation across communities in favor of shared linguistic features. Importantly, the generation of speakers analyzed in this time period represent an important generational cohort in the development of AAL, the generation coming of age in this era at the height of the Great Migration. Viewing the research in this context can lead us to reframe and reinterpret results as cases of intra-ethnic dialect contact and new dialect formation.

The topic of regional variation in the study of AAL has only been addressed, in earnest, within the last fifteen years (Wolfram & Kohn 2015; Yaeger-Dror & Thomas 2009), despite the fact that such variation has always been apparent to speakers and linguists (Wolfram 2007). These regional patterns are due to several factors including migration (where individuals were coming from as well as whether there was an African American community prior to migration), community location and demographics, as well as segregation (Thomas 2001). Using CORAAL, we focus on several vocalic and consonantal patterns, such as the African American Vowel System (Thomas 2007; Kohn 2014) and word final fricative deletion. The regional sound patterns are more predictable when taking into account migration, community segregation, and contact, giving us a richer picture of how AAL has developed as spread over the twentieth century.

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Urban African American English

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Abstract

African American English (AAE) is arguably the most well-studied variety of English in the United States, and much of the formative work on the variety took place in cities, setting the stage for the direction of sociolinguistics as a whole in late 20th and early 21st centuries. This chapter will provide an overview of the important early work on AAE in urban environments including Philadelphia, New York City, and Detroit, as well as some more recent studies in places such as Washington D.C. and Rochester, New York. Alongside a discussion of what we have learned about the variety from studies in these cities, the chapter will also explore the ways in which the methods of study and the variables themselves have evolved over time. In particular, it will chronicle how early studies focused on larger descriptions of morphosyntactic features employed by African American speakers, while more modern research has begun to also explore phonological and phonetic variation. The chapter will also include a discussion of the myth of homogeneity of AAE, and a resulting discussion of differences between sub-varieties of AAE that are conditioned not only by region, but also by finer-grained aspects of community and individual identity including class, age, gender, and racial identity itself. In the last decade especially, the focus on a wider scope of variables, as well as speakers who were previously overlooked, has allowed for a more detailed discussion of AAE not as a static variety, but as a flexible and evolving linguistic toolkit that speakers may use to construct and perform identities. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a discussion of the most recent studies that have advanced our understanding of what it means to be a speaker of AAE, and how the variety fits into the larger tapestry of variation in the United States.

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A longitudinal panel survey of African American English

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Abstract

Although most of the defining research on African American Vernacular English (AAVE) was conducted in the urban North (cf. Fasold, 1972; Labov, 1968; Wolfram, 1968) AAVE was a rural Southern variety for most of its history. As late as the beginning of World War II, most African Americans lived in the rural South, and even though the Great Migration brought a dramatic demographic shift in the African American population (Bailey and Maynor, 1987; Farrington this volume), substantial numbers of African Americans remain in the rural South today.

This chapter explores the history of rural AAVE both as the variety from which urban AAVE developed and as a variety that more recently has been influenced by urban innovations (Cukor-Avila and Bailey, 2015). It does so by examining linguistic features that have remained stable over its history and others that emerged during the course of the 20th century. The data for this analysis come from a panel survey that evolved out of a larger survey of a rural Texas community, “Springville,” which began in 1988 and is on-going. The larger survey was designed to document both the evolution of AAVE and to explore fundamental issues of language change. The oldest community member recorded in the survey was born in 1893 and the youngest in 2002, providing an apparent time perspective of more than a century. The Springville panel survey includes interviews over thirty-two years with nineteen African American residents (roughly a third of those in the larger survey) born between 1912 to 1996; many of them were interviewed multiple times per year in a variety of interview contexts (individual, peer group, site study, and recordings in which individual panelists were the fieldworkers), and with a wide range of interlocutors (44 total including the two fieldworkers) of different ages and ethnicities (Anglo, Latino, African American).

This chapter also discusses how the AAVE data from the Springville corpus contribute to the study of transmission and diffusion of linguistic features, age-grading, and language change over the lifespan.

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Puerto Rican English in Puerto Rico and in the continental United States

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Abstract

The development of Puerto Rican English in Puerto Rico (PR) and in the continental United States (US) is based on their social, economic, and political relations. In 1898, after being a Spanish colony for four centuries, PR was ceded to the US at the end of the Spanish-American War. The moment in which PR became a US territory marked the beginning of significant English influence on the Island. Since 1952, PR has been a self-governing US Commonwealth—it has authority over internal affairs while the US retains control over state-level affairs. Since 1917, Puerto Ricans are considered US citizens, although those living on the Island lack full citizenship rights (Duany, 2002).

A fierce debate revolves around PR’s political status, which, in turn, affects the language situation and policy on the Island. Among the three main political parties, one endorses PR as the 51st US state, another prefers that the Island remain a Commonwealth, and the other advocates for PR’s development as a free country. Recent referendums have obtained limited participation and have generated inconclusive results, demonstrating how divided Puerto Ricans are on this issue. PR’s official language tends to vary every time the political party in power changes. While the Commonwealth party defends Spanish as the sole official language in PR, the pro-statehood party favors Spanish and English as co-official languages (Nickels, 2005), as is currently the case.

English and Spanish coexist in the Island’s linguistic landscape (e.g., street signs, business names, product labels) and in many aspects of daily life (e.g., media outlets, entertainment; Bullock et al., 2016; Fayer, 1988, 2000; Fayer et al., 1998; Nickels, 2005; Santos, 1996; Schmidt, 2014; Torres González, 2002). Despite this, Puerto Ricans’ actual use of and proficiency in English varies greatly. According to current census data, slightly over half of the population speaks English at different levels of proficiency, while nearly half does not speak any English at home (US Census Bureau, 2014). Puerto Ricans with the highest levels of English proficiency tend to reside in the capital, San Juan, and its surrounding metropolitan municipalities (Schmidt, 2014), although there are pockets of proficient bilinguals in other areas of PR (Pousada, 2000, 2009). They often belong to higher social classes, and work in sectors such as banking, medicine, law, engineering, and tourism, in many cases, maintaining close working and professional ties with the US (Flores Pabón, 2010; Uber, 2000).

English is also present in the PR school system. It was the obligatory language of instruction during the early decades of the twentieth century. The language policy in schools changed frequently from one Education Commissioner to the next. Nowadays, English is a required second language course from kindergarten to twelfth grade in all public and private schools. While the quality of English courses may vary (Hermina,
all students in PR have some degree of exposure to English at school, and even in courses in which Spanish is the medium of instruction, the textbooks and assigned readings are often in English. There are also bilingual schools and English-immersion schools on the Island.

Most of the research related to English in PR has focused on the effect that the language contact situation has had on the inhabitants’ use of their first language, Spanish, in terms of pronunciation (e.g., use of retroflex /ɻ/, Dauphinais Civitello, 2018; Ramos-Pellicia, 2007), word order and morphosyntactic structures (Morales, 1981, 1988, 1989, 2000). To our knowledge, scarce linguistic research has been conducted on the specific characteristics of the Puerto Rican English in PR; several studies approach the topic from a second language acquisition perspective (e.g., Chan-Rodríguez, 1974; Kryston-Morales; 1997; Mahdavi Emamy, 2017; Santiago Pérez, 2017), and refer to transfer and interference from Spanish, occasionally equating it to a nonnative institutionalized variety of English, based on a distinct set lexicon and semantic particularities produced by literal translations from Spanish (Dayton & Blau, 1999; Schweers, 1999). The English spoken in Puerto Rico can certainly not be described as uniform; the different levels of English proficiency of Puerto Ricans in the Island lead to subtle subvarieties of English that merit further examination. There are, however, more studies on the lexical influence of English, regarding the use of English words and phrases with phonological and morphological adaptation (Anglicisms) or in unadapted form in otherwise Spanish discourse (Bullock et al., 2016; Cortés et al. 2005; Delgado, 1974; Echandy, 2013; Hernán, 2017; Holmquist, 2013; Villanueva Feliciano, 2009), as well as studies on the use of Spanish-English code-switching (Jiménez-Lugo, 2007; Nash, 1970, 1971; Vélez Avilés, 2018) and translanguaging in academic environments (Mazak & Herbas-Donoso, 2014; Mazak et al., 2016).

Despite the strong US influence and the presence of English on the Island, Puerto Ricans claim a separate culture from that of the US and a very strong Island-specific cultural identity (Duany, 2003). As a result of PR’s relations with the US, its inhabitants have developed linguistic attitudes towards Spanish and English. Therefore, another avenue of inquiry comprises Puerto Ricans’ ideologies and opinions regarding the language situation in PR, particularly the presence of English in the PR school system. A review of the research on this topic evinces a shift in Puerto Ricans’ approach to English. Earlier work reports Puerto Ricans’ strong rejection of English in defense of their Spanish proficiency and their Hispanic heritage (Algren, 1987; Alvar, 1986; Clachar, 1997a; López Laguerre, 1989; Rodríguez Bou, 1984; Schweers & Vélez, 1992), leading to covert resistance as students struggle to learn English (Pousada, 1999; Resnick, 1993). More recent studies document a possible attitudinal change involving acceptance of English and code-switching, and an expanded view of Puerto Rican identity as fluid and multifaceted (Domínguez Rosado, 2015; Guzzardo Tamargo et al., 2018; Guzzardo Tamargo & Vélez Avilés, 2017; López Hernández, 2007; Lugo, 2002; Mazak, 2012; Pérez-Casas, 2016). This change in attitudes is likely to bring about a modified acquisition of English, in turn, affecting the characteristics of Island Puerto Rican English.

Puerto Ricans’ US citizenship and the Island’s proximity to the US have brought about a fluid bidirectional migration, which fluctuates depending on the living conditions in PR and the U.S. economy. Nearly five million Puerto Ricans have relocated to the US Mainland, representing almost 2% of the US population and almost 10% of the Latino population (Román, 2018). Migration from PR to the US began early
in the twentieth century and has been steadily increasing. A large portion of Puerto Ricans have settled in New York City, particularly in East Harlem, but Puerto Rican communities have also grown in other US cities, mostly in the Northeast and the Midwest (Duany, 2002, 2017). More recently, the Island’s economic crisis, severe debt, and natural disasters have led to more Puerto Rican migration, especially to Florida (Duany, 2017). Moreover, beginning around the 1960s thousands of Stateside Puerto Ricans have returned to the Island and maintain a steady circulation, reinforcing Spanish-English bilingualism among them (Duany, 2011, 2017; Kerkhof, 2001).

Research on Puerto Rican English in the continental US, as a result of several waves of migration from PR to the Mainland, primarily addresses bilingual practices, such as code-switching (Poplack, 1980, 1987; Zentella, 1982, 1997). Some studies also document the shift from Spanish to English with each successive generation, influenced by further contact with other speech communities in the US. The English used by immigrants and that used by later generations who are born and raised in the US by Puerto Rican families displays a clear change (Shousterman, 2015; Torres, 2010). Additionally, studies reveal the influence of return migrants on both language use and language attitudes in PR (Clachar, 1997b, 2007; Pousada, 1994).

In sum, Puerto Rican English, both in the Island and the Mainland, represents a rich and dynamic combination of different varieties, based on Puerto Ricans’ experiences with English, their different levels of proficiency in English, and their language attitudes towards English, which are, in turn, influenced by the complex relation between PR and the US, and Puerto Rican’s status in PR, where Spanish in the majority language and English is a second or foreign language, and in the US, where English is the majority language. Although the research presented spans different topics related to language, there is still need for more systematic and precise descriptions of the specific traits of Puerto Rican English.

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The English of Americans of Mexican and Central American heritage

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Abstract

The English of Americans with ancestry from Middle America, especially Mexico, represents a classic example of a subordinate immigrant group who learned the language of the dominant group. In fact, it probably constitutes the case with the longest continuous span of scholarly study, beginning with Lynn (1940) and marked by several book-length overviews (Peñalosa 1980; Penfield and Ornstein-Galicia 1985; Fought 2003; Thomas 2019). Its parallels with other instances of immigrant language shift around the world, except as outlined in Thomas (2019), are little explored, however. In general, it follows the model of interference (Thomason and Kaufman 1988) or source language influence (Van Coetsem 1988) in which a group that shifts its language retains considerable phonological/phonetic and morphosyntactic influence from its heritage language in its realization of the target language.

The development of English by Mexican and Central American groups, however, is not as simple as the transfer of linguistic features. In different communities, a variety of outcomes is possible. The proportion of the population with a Middle American heritage can play a large role; greater proportions allow stronger substrate effects. The local social ecology can influence the outcome, as a history of ethnic conflict engenders a greater need to express ethnic identity and language is a crucial exponent of identity. Cross-regional solidarity can also enter the picture. The degree of contact with African Americans affects a number of variables. However, the influences of Spanish language maintenance and of dialectal differences in Spanish are not yet clear.

Most of the variables associated with the English of these groups have a direct or indirect derivation from Spanish. Descriptions of their speech often focus on such features as confusion of /tʃ/ and /ʃ/, devoicing of /z/, and failure to distinguish certain vowels (mainly fleece/kit, goose/foot, and dress/trap). These descriptions largely pertain to the speech of second-language learners of English, however. Individuals who speak English as a first language tend to have a different set of features, one that still shows Spanish influence but in ways that, usually, are not easily represented orthographically and thus not targeted by teachers. Thus, speakers with a Middle American heritage who grew up in the United States in areas with a large Latino contingent nearly always make all the contrastive vowel distinctions that Anglos make, but they ordinarily show less fronting of the goose vowel and little if any fronting of the goat diphthong, and they often lack the raising of the trap vowel that typifies U.S. Anglo varieties. They make a relatively clean distinction of /tʃ/ and /ʃ/, but they may lack the velarization that U.S. Anglos exhibit in syllable-onset /l/. They commonly show some prosodic influence from Spanish. Except for negative concord, morphosyntactic features are less studied and less can be said about them. Where people of Mexican
and Central American heritage form only a small contingent of the population, their speech tends to differ in subtler ways from the matrix dialects.

The picture as a whole, however, shows that U.S. natives with a Middle American background have developed distinctive and durable varieties of English. These new dialects are not uniform, instead encompassing a mosaic of varieties that are shaped by local social conditions. Some individuals aiming to assimilate to Anglo culture reject them entirely. Nevertheless, the ethnic dialects serve their speakers by providing a vehicle for expressing their identity, just as any dialect can. These ethnolects seem likely to persist in the U.S. and should provide linguists with a template for the development of immigrant-based ethnolects in other parts of the world.

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Anglophone settlement and the creation of Canadian English.

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Abstract

In the broadest terms, my chapter will introduce the section on Canada, including the individual chapters on specific regions that follow it, by bringing together elements of my own monograph on Canadian English (*The English Language in Canada*, 2010, CUP) that highlight five themes:

1. the current status of the English language in Canada;
2. the history of English-speaking settlement that led up to this current status;
3. the main lexical and phonological features of Standard Canadian English that resulted from (2);
4. the main regional differences in these features across Canada; and
5. the most important previous studies of Canadian English.

The discussion in (1) will rely on data published by Statistics Canada. That in (2) will cite historical government reports on immigration and population, to trace the main sources of Canada's English-speaking population at different periods of its history and in different regions of the country. In particular, the contributions of pre-Loyalist and Loyalist immigration will be considered, followed by those of 19th-century immigration from Britain and early 20th-century immigration from Britain, Europe and the United States, as well as internal migration from eastern to western Canada. That in (3) will highlight the combination of British, American and unique Canadian wordstocks in the Canadian vocabulary and describe the most important features of Canadian English pronunciation in a comparative perspective, especially highlighting the Low-Back Merger, Canadian Raising and the Canadian Vowel Shift (now known as the Low-Back-Merger Shift). That in (4) will briefly motivate the division of Canadian English into 6 major regions (BC, the Prairies, Ontario, Quebec, the Maritimes and Newfoundland), citing lexical and phonological features associated with each (e.g., the relative advancement of the /ahr/ of START and the nucleus of raised /aw/ in MOUTH). That in (5) will briefly review the history of research on Canadian English, beginning with the earliest studies (Ahrend, Ayearst, Geikie, Lighthall, McLay, McLean, Munroe) and what they can tell us about early 20th-century speech, then progressing through the major surveys of mid-century (Avis, Gregg 1957, Hamilton, Scargill & Warkentyne) and the work on Canadian Raising (Joos, Chambers), to the sociolinguistic surveys and sociophonetic studies of the late 20th century (Gregg 1992, Woods, Clarke et al, Boberg).

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The open-class lexis of Canadian English: History, structure, and social correlations

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Abstract

Chaque mot a son histoire – ‘every word has its own history’ – is probably the reason why words are the Cinderella in English sociolinguistics: barely studied, often belittled, simply overlooked. Jules Gilliéron’s famous dictum (or Hugo Schuchardt’s, see Campbell 2004: 212-13), which expresses the idea that open class vocabulary has very little system, lots of idiosyncrasy, seems to lie behind this sociolinguistic neglect of vocabulary (Dollinger In press). This chapter looks at the open class of words in Canadian English from historical, structural and social points of view, all of which will be couched in the history of the discipline in Canada. It attempts to give a reasonably comprehensive overview of the available work, organized along three domains.

The historical angle puts at its centre the evolution of Canadian English words, dates in real-time the various phases in which Canadian identities – local, super-regional and national – may have become conceivable entities and social constructs. Anchoring around Dollinger (2008) and Reuter (2017), both older and newer work on the history of Canadian English is comprehensively reviewed. The account will critically review the dating of phases in Canada in Schneider’s (2007: 238-50) famous model, highlighting a number of obvious mismatches for the Canadian context.

The structural angle offers an analysis of terms that have originated or “distinctively characteristic of Canadian usage” (Avis 1967: xiii), which is rooted in analyses of DCHP-1 and DCHP-2, the latter of which within a six-tier typology of Canadianisms (Dollinger and Fee 2017: Introduction). These findings are based on 12000+ lexical items of the open class order. It will be shown, among other things, that multiplex items have since the 1600s, i.e. over the course of the development of Canadian English, formed the most distinct element of Canadian open-class lexis, followed by borrowings. Since the second half of the 20th century, however, multiplex compound nouns seem to have lost some of their vitality and productivity, giving rise to new, apparently more “urban” formation patterns, such as neologisms, blends, clippings and the like.

Finally, a sociolinguistic assessment of the open class lexis will be attempted. While some lexical items, especially intensifiers (so, much, very) and general extenders (and stuff, things) have received great attention (e.g. D’Arcy 2015), it is fair to say that beyond these few items – some of theme not open class - a dearth of lexical studies exist in the social framework (but see, e.g., Boberg 2005, Chambers 2008, Dollinger 2012, Denis 2015, Jankowski & Tagliamonte 2019). As a result, any general assessment will be tentative and necessarily heuristic, focussing on a number of representative Canadian items such as parkade ‘car park’, garburator ‘in-sink disposal’, gong show
‘chaos’, *double double* ‘two servings of milk and sugar’, or, in these (post)-Covid-19 times, *caremongering* ‘showing public concern for others, esp. essential workers’. A (long) list of desiderata in the social study of open class items, together with some recommendations will round off this overview.

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Ontario English: Loyalists and beyond

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Abstract

A remarkable characteristic of Canadian English is its generally uniform dialect (Priestly 1951, Chambers 2006, Boberg 2010); from the western border of the primarily French speaking province of Quebec to the Pacific Ocean, Canadian English is relatively homogeneous lexically, phonologically, and grammatically. The province of Ontario, and Ontario English, is centrally important to this homogeneity. Although English-speaking settlers had been present in eastern parts of the country (Newfoundland, parts of the Maritimes) prior to United Empire Loyalist settlement in Ontario, this early Ontario speech community is the antecedent of the contemporary homogeneous CanE (Bloomfield 1948, Chambers 2004). These early English-speaking Ontario settlers were British-aligned, American refugees fleeing the American Revolutionary War. These Loyalists and their descendants spread westward, bringing their dialect with them. The result over time was parallel transmission of the same source dialect across several thousand kilometers. However, a caveat of all observations of CanE homogeneity is its limited scope: CanE “is remarkably homogenous across the vast expanse of the country. Except for Newfoundland, urban, middle-class Canadians speak with much the same accent in Vancouver, and Ottawa, Edmonton and Windsor, Winnipeg and Fredericton” (Chambers 2010: 19, our emphasis). Across this expanse, 18th and 19th century immigration of a newer layer of settlers from across the British Isles and Europe resulted in dialectal diversity throughout the vast non-urban areas of the country, particularly Ontario. This chapter exposes the consistent dialectal diversity that has been present in the province since English-speaking settlement. As a Settler Colonial English (Denis and D’Arcy 2018), its nature is not a result of contact with the many different Indigenous languages, already present for millennia in different parts of the province. Rather, dialect differentiation within Ontario stems from the transplantation of distinct Scots, Irish and English dialects from across the British Isles.

In this chapter, we demonstrate dialectal variation in Ontario by way of an analysis of general extenders in data from early Ontario English. General extenders are clause-final pragmatic markers that serve a core set-extending function as in (1).

(1) a. And the second one helped my mother around the house, and gardening and all the rest of it. (D-9, 1907) 
b. Of course you always had hay if you had a cow and horses and so on. (N-23, 1898) 
c. Oh well I’d be like plowing or the likes of that, I was about eighteen or something like that. (E-01, 1891) 
d. We might get, um, lemonade or something of that nature. (B-01, 1901)
e. I could play two games, one after another when some of them were pretty well pooped out you know and that sort of thing. (T-01, 1904)
f. here had to be a guy there to show the cable off the road, to keep it back. To try to get it behind stumps and trees and stuff. (PS-25, 1911)
g. The girls learn to sew and bake and all that sort of stuff. (OV-15, 1899)

Due to their high degree of surface variability and regional differences, general extenders are an optimal feature to investigate dialect diversity (Tagliamonte 2015; Denis and D’Arcy 2019). The data we consider come from multiple historical recordings of Ontario English put together from a variety of sources. These include the Farm Work and Farm Life Since 1890 Oral Histories which include data from Niagara Region, Eastern Ontario, Dufferin County, and Temiskaming Shores (Denis 2016), a number of archival sources compiled in the Ontario Dialects Project (Tagliamonte 2008-present; Tagliamonte and Denis 2014), which includes materials from the Linguistic Survey of the Ottawa Valley (Pringle and Padolsky 1983) and other recordings from elsewhere in the province (e.g., Belleville, Parry Sound, Kirkland Lake, Cobalt). All of these data were recorded in the 1970s and 1980s, often with elderly speakers born in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, giving us insight into an early stage of the language in each community. A critical comparison is that some of these communities, e.g., Niagara, Eastern Ontario, and Belleville were first settled by Loyalists; while others, e.g., Dufferin County, Ottawa Valley, and Parry Sound were settled later and mostly by settlers who came directly from different areas of the British Isles, particularly northern varieties from Scotland and Ireland.

We intend to present a picture of dialect diversity within the province of Ontario, rooted in variegated settlement histories (cf. Tagliamonte and Denis 2014). By using historical corpora, we can turn back the clock (Tagliamonte 2006, 2014) and explore the state of the CanE at an early stage.

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The Prairies and the West of Canada

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Abstract

The western region of Canada is beginning to emerge as one of rich linguistic variation. Lexical differences have long been acknowledged (e.g., bunny hug, gitch, jam buster), but distinctions in other areas of synchronic grammar are less frequently reported. More recent work uncovering nuanced differences in the realizations of key vowel sets, however, suggests that the area from the west coast (British Columbia) through the Prairies (Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba) is not wholly monolithic. Indeed, the Atlas of North American English (ANAE; Labov, Ash & Boberg 2006) proposed that the province of British Columbia constituted one of three Canadian dialect areas, though the Prairies were subsumed within the Inland region, an area that included Ontario. The subsequent Phonetics of Canadian English project (PCE; Boberg 2008, 2010) partitioned off Ontario and proposed a large bipartite dialect region, the West, consisting of British Columbia on the one hand and the Prairies on the other. In this chapter we first review the predictions of settler colonialism in the context of westward expansion (cf., Denis & D’Arcy 2018) and the well-entrenched rhetoric of widespread dialectological homogeneity in the literature on Canadian English (e.g., Priestly 1951; Chambers 2004). As part of this discussion, we raise established differences within the West and discuss why they are limited to lexicon. We then discuss contemporary descriptions of western dialects, concentrating on evidence from sociophonetics. We first review the features of the West in general (Boberg 2008, 2010), before turning to details from more specific locales. For this part of the discussion, although we include discussion of the full Prairie region, we concentrate on the peripheries of the West: the south coast of British Columbia (e.g., Pappas & Jeffrey 2013; Roeder et al. 2018) and the south east of Manitoba (e.g., Onosson et al. 2019). These areas are maximally separated from each other within the western region, representing the boundaries of British Columbia and the Prairies respectively, thus providing an ideal baseline for illustrating both ongoing entrenchment of urban Canadian dialect similarities and emergent dialect differentiation. Much of the work upon which we report reveals that variation is primarily ethnic, within a variety, rather than regional, across varieties (Onosson et al 2019; Rosen 2019; Rosen et al 2019; Rosen & Skriver 2015). We therefore round out the discussion by touching on perceptual studies that illustrate how listeners are able to cue into these differences to identify the ethnicity of talkers (e.g., Wong & Babel 2017). We conclude the chapter by highlighting the pervasive and ongoing effects of settler colonialism in dialectological outcomes, while also highlighting the gains to be made by exploring diversity within local varieties.

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English in Newfoundland

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Abstract

The chapter on Newfoundland English by William Kirwin (1925-2016) in the first edition of the Cambridge History of the English Language (2001) was a seminal study of English in this province of Canada, examining the regional inputs from South-West England and South-East Ireland (Hickey 2002) and considering the resultant variety of vernacular Newfoundland English.

Taking this study as a point of departure, the present chapter will re-assess Kirwin’s achievement in identifying the dialectal input to Newfoundland and offer a consideration of the sociolinguistic status of the early English-speakers on the island and the development of independent forms of English with the advent of permanent settlement there. The geographical distribution of settlers will also represent a focus of the chapter with the concentration of speakers in the capital St John’s and on the surrounding parts of the Avalon Peninsula.

Features from all linguistic levels – pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary – will be scrutinised. Pronunciation traits of Newfoundland English include alveolar fricative [t] for /t/ (also shared with Cape Breton, Nova Scotia), monophthongal realisations of mid vowels, unrounded /ɒ/ and alveolar / velarised /l/ (depending on input variety). Morphosyntactic features in particular from South-East Irish English are salient in Newfoundland English and their continuity in the latter variety will be considered, this section resting on the essential research by Clarke (2004, 2008b, 2010, 2012). For the examination of vocabulary the Dictionary of Newfoundland English (Story, Kirwin and Widdowson 1998-9 [1990]) will be consulted with a view to determining the probable British/Irish sources of Newfoundland-specific lexis, independent developments in this part of Canada notwithstanding.

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Canadian Maritime English: Choosing from multiple shelves

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Abstract

This chapter sketches a broad summary of descriptive dialectological and variationist sociolinguistic work on the English language in Canada’s Maritime provinces, with a focus on the particular features that set Canadian Maritime English apart from inland “mainstream” Canadian English. This ranges from the early dialect surveys completed as an adjunct to The Linguistic Atlas of New England to my own fieldwork completed in 2010. This will show the important influence of early New England and black Loyalists as well as Scottish and Irish (Newfoundland) immigrants to the incidence of certain speech features and also the patterning of diachronic change. This chapter aims further to provide a unified account of how young speakers from across Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island blend traditional speech features from the various input populations with region-external/anglo-versal vernacular forms to craft a new East Coast identity untethered to a specific heritage other than “Maritimer”. These young speakers adopt features “off the shelf” (Milroy 2007) as needed, and often employ them innovatively. But young speakers have additional “shelves” they must choose from in order to satisfy the requirements of being a modern Maritimer. Young speakers must adopt region-external novel changes and overtly aim to command inland Canadian norms in order to maintain and/or raise social status. This push-and-pull of sounding both local and non-local results in a form of fluid bidialectalism that offers a unique window for studying language variation, change, and identity. This chapter draws specifically (but not exclusively) on quantitative and qualitative data collected by the author for Gardner (2010, 2017) and over 2,500 surveys completed as part of an ongoing class project at Saint Mary’s University in Halifax, N.S. This chapter will also make reference to linguistic representations of the new East Coast identity via linguistic artefacts, The Trailer Park Boys, YouTube music videos, etc.

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A (socio)linguistic aperçu of English as a minority language: the case of Quebec

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Abstract

The unparalleled success of Quebec’s “language laws” (Bill 101; 1977) has fundamentally altered the relationship of English and French in the province. In its unfamiliar role of minority language, English is now subject to discourse typical of other minority situations, which characterizes it as threatened and distinctive, purportedly due to intense contact and convergence with French. Both popular and academic support for these claims comes almost entirely from catalogues of “gallicisms” (e.g. autoroute, vernissage): incorporations from French held to be incomprehensible outside of the province.

Contrasting speaker perceptions with actual usage, this chapter offers an empirical assessment of the impact of French on Quebec English, as instantiated in borrowing, code-switching and grammatical convergence. The approach adopted is variationist and comparative. Findings are based on systematic quantitative analysis of a large corpus of informal conversations recorded amongst 164 Anglophones born and raised in Montreal or Quebec City. Participants were further divided among those who acquired English prior to the passage of Bill 101, and those who acquired it after 1977, when French became the sole official language of Quebec. To the extent that minority status plays a role, influence from French should be greatest among the youth of Quebec City, where anglophones constitute a tiny minority (2% vs. 15% in Montreal).

Analysis of speaker perceptions with respect to the role of French in their discourse reveals a high level of agreement with the reigning ideology. Most participants not only claim to speak French, but also characterize themselves as bilingual, with young Quebec City speakers, as expected, in the lead on both measures. More of the latter also report having learned French through daily exposure, consistent with the ubiquitous nature of that language in the city. A strong majority, regardless of age, year of acquisition or place of residence, concurred that French had influenced English, pinpointing the lexicon as the single most important area of influence.

Such attitudes are consistent with both the received wisdom and prevailing hypotheses based on language status and the ratio of francophones to anglophones at the local and provincial levels. But systematic quantitative analysis shows that they bear little resemblance to the actual use these same speakers make of French in their spontaneous English speech. French-origin words, whether borrowed or code-switched, are vanishingly rare, constituting less than 0.1% of the total lexicon for all participants. More tellingly, when compared to a monolingual mainstream Canadian English benchmark, the behaviour of a number of morphosyntactic variables also fails
to support claims of influence from French at the core grammatical level, despite the occasional superficial resemblance.

These results highlight the gulf, especially prevalent in minority-language situations, between language ideology and language use, and enjoin analysts to go beyond the surface in assessing minority-language linguistic structure.

Selected references


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Early English-lexifier creole in the circum-Caribbean area

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Abstract

Section 1
My discussion of the form of early English-based Creole in the Caribbean (more precisely in the circum-Caribbean area) will be based on three theses.

1. All creole varieties in this area have an ultimate common origin
2. The early removal of English linguistic influence provides us with better evidence on what the original creole looked like
3. It wasn’t an inability to learn English that gave rise to the creole(s) but the necessity to create a linguistic code that the oppressors could not understand. What Jourdain (2008) terms a “language of resistance.”

We have basically two causes of “distancing” that gave rise to the situation in (2).

4. i. The English(-speakers) ceased to rule the plantation colony after a short period;
    ii. The slaves fled from the colony, to become maroons.

In both cases the English-speaking rulers and their slaves “parted company.”
In the case of Surinam, all creole languages spoken there fall under (4 i). In the case of Jamaica, the maroon creoles fall under (4 ii). In Smith (2017: 252–253) I identify Krio (Sierra Leone) as a transported version of the original Western Maroon Creole of Jamaica. I follow Bilby (1983, 1992) and Harris (1995) for the status of the Maroon Spirit Language of the Eastern Maroons as derived from their former creole language.

Section 2
Most circum-Caribbean creole languages did not follow the two paths mentioned in (4), but remained under English/British control (sometimes unofficially) until comparatively modern times. This led to about 350 years of continuous English influence.

Colonization in the circum-Caribbean area in the early 17th century rapidly resulted in economies based on plantations. The relationships between the various English-based creoles mirrored the expansion of English colonization. This began in the 1620s on Barbados and St Kitts in the Caribbean. On St Kitts colonization started in 1624 and on Barbados (much larger) in 1627.

The further process involved mostly expansion by island-hopping starting from Barbados and St Kitts: from St Kitts to Nevis, Montserrat, and Antigua by 1632; from
Barbados, St Kitts, Nevis, and Montserrat to Surinam in 1651; from Barbados and St Kitts to Jamaica in 1655; from Barbados to Carolina in 1670; and so on.

What is sometimes not realised is that the clock of creolization did not start ticking anew every time a new colony was founded. So when Jamaica was colonized from Barbados and St. Kitts, slaves from these two places were brought to Jamaica. We shouldn’t calculate the development of creole on Jamaica from 1655, but from the 1620s when Barbados and St. Kitts were colonized. This follows from thesis (1) above.

References


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The Caribbean anglophone contact varieties: creoles and koinés

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Abstract

In a region with a total land mass of less than 10% of the state of Texas, the insular Caribbean hosts approximately 60 different varieties of English (Williams 2012). The question for historical linguists and sociolinguistics interested in change and variation is how did we arrive at a place of immense linguistic diversity that is typically obscured by the use of macro-terms like ‘Caribbean’ or ‘West Indian?’ While we might feel comfortable in our use of the phrases such as ‘English in the Caribbean,’ ‘Caribbean Englishes,’ and ‘English varieties’ in discussing the Anglophone linguistic landscape of the Antillean Caribbean and its near insular neighbors in the Atlantic, we have yet to fully define and delimit what bundle of linguistic structures distinctively portrays the Anglophone Caribbean. And more importantly for this volume, what are the historical trends and trajectories that give rise to an enormous amount of sociolinguistic variation?

This chapter will examine the contemporary sociolinguistic landscape of the Anglophone Caribbean. Instead of focusing on the isolation of these island environments, I adopt a connectionist analysis such as that elucidated by Rainbird (2007) for island archaeology in which islands form part of larger maritime environments. Maritime communities such as those we find in the Caribbean region are linked to each other via known seaways that traverse the textured seascape (Rainbird 2007, 47). This is not to say that isolation cannot form a part of the social and cultural, and implicit linguistic history of islands; however, the intervening bodies of water served equally as conduits to diffusion, when and where conditions permitted. Instead of assuming a priori that each island was a world unto itself, this chapter reconstructs the contact histories that conjoin islands within the Caribbean area to fully understand the spatial distribution of sociolinguistic features.

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The development of English in Jamaica

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Abstract

This chapter surveys both the myriad ways in which English has been and is present in Jamaica, and its ambiguous status as an entirely Jamaican language for some, an entirely foreign language for others. Its presence in modern times encompasses at least four forms:

To begin, there is Jamaican English (JE), a variety with characteristics (phonological, lexical, semantic, syntactic) which distinguish it from other Englishes, both within the Caribbean and elsewhere, but which has not been codified as a separate standard variety. Secondly, English is the primary lexifier of Jamaican Creole (JC), which co-exists with JE in a complex relationship which involves blurred boundaries, intermediate varieties constituting a Creole Continuum, and some aspects of diglossia. Thirdly, there is Rasta Talk (RT), perhaps best described as a lexicon embedded in JC or any of the intermediate varieties of the Creole Continuum, which is the product of conscious manipulation of English and English-based forms. Finally, English is present through daily (traditional and non-traditional) media-driven exposure to non-Jamaican, chiefly North American varieties, a situation which contributes to the perception of English as a foreign language.

In this chapter I will argue that although JE has emerged as a distinct, indigenous variety over more than three hundred years in Jamaica, its modern sociopolitical status bears the hallmarks of its development out of the colonial language of a ruling elite. For very many Jamaicans, it is a language with which they have little daily interaction, which is not learned until their entry into formal education, and which is largely perceived as foreign. Despite its indigenized characteristics, JE is the native language of a minority only, and the lack of meaningful access to JE for large segments of the population has resulted in the situation where even students at the tertiary level often have a relationship with English which remains utilitarian, lacks emotional connection, and is marked by anxiety over their technical competencies in the language.

Despite its low status in the diglossic relationship with JE, JC derives covert status from its functions as the language of family and community and its role as the medium of cultural expression. Predictions made around the time of independence that JC would gradually merge with JE and disappear from the linguistic landscape have turned out to be spectacularly wrong. Instead, JC has begun to penetrate contexts previously reserved for JE and is increasingly seen as acceptable in those contexts. Furthermore, it has become a language of international currency in certain subcultures. Nevertheless, standard language ideology pervades the society and informs attitudes towards language in situations ranging from primary school classrooms to government pandemic press briefings, where JE continues to be seen as the only suitable variety. Additionally, new research reveals how standard language
ideology results in differentiated views of varieties of JC within the creole continuum, with clear evidence of hidden bias towards varieties closer to the acrolectal end.

The belief that English does not “belong” has resulted in the emergence of new linguistic practices among rastafarians, who seek to reject English, a language which they consider to be deceptive and manipulative. Novel word formation patterns have emerged from their communal corrective actions, including replacive I-prefixation and phono-semantic matching, the latter a type of folk reanalysis, with antonym substitution of word parts which do not have actual morphological status.

This chapter will survey the language situation and varieties outlined in the preceding, consider the historical context from which it emerged, and attempt to account for the development of the creole continuum, addressing the question whether it resulted from variable access to English language models in the hierarchical slave society, or from post-independence socioeconomic differentiation. It will also consider JC’s current status as a transnational language with considerable prestige not only or perhaps even primarily in diasporic Jamaican communities, but in other diasporic Caribbean communities and in non-Caribbean descended populations.

Throughout, I will draw on research carried out at The UWI which reveals the complex, ambiguous status of English in Jamaica, and which shows that despite its distinctive local form, it lacks the functional range that would truly make it an indigenous language in the sense of Schneider’s dynamic model.

References


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The anglophone Caribbean Rim

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Abstract

This contribution deals with the implantation of English in the Caribbean Rim reaching from the Sea Islands over Belize to Guyana and Suriname, as well as ensuing language contacts and linguistic varieties, and their current sociolinguistic status.

The starting point is a (socio)historical overview. As far as the Central American region is concerned, the Miskito Coast of present day Nicaragua was settled by the English during the 1630s, becoming one of the first colonies in the Americas (Holm, 1978: 5). English Puritans settled the islands of San Andrés and Old Providence (Colombian since 1822) in 1631, but the colonies were short lived. Over the following centuries, an intricate pattern of colonization, both during and after English/British rule, emerged in the Central American region in which San Andrés and Old Providence are included (Bartens, 2013: 102). For example, during its short existence until 1641, the Puritan colony of Old Providence traded with the Miskito Coast and it seems likely that the first African group to be incorporated by the Nicaraguan Miskito nation was constituted by African slaves who fled from the island as a result of Spanish conquest (Holm, 1978: 178-180). In 1787, a forced exodus of the British and their slaves from the Miskito Coast to Belize took place for the same reason (Escure, 2013: 92). San Andrés, colonized for a second time from Jamaica and other Caribbean Islands around 1730 (and, to a lesser degree, Old Providence), served as a springboard for the colonization of the Nicaraguan Corn Islands by 1810, and Pearl Lagoon, Nicaragua, as well as Bocas de Toro, Panama, during the early 19th century. Back and forth migrations in the region have led to a high amount of similarity and intelligibility between the Western Caribbean varieties (Bartens, 2013: 102). These include the varieties of Limón, Costa Rica. While Limonese Creole is usually cited as an offshoot of Jamaican (Farquharson, 2013: 81), the historical influence of colonization through Jamaica goes far beyond San Andrés and Limón (see Parsons, 1954: 6). The present day Anglophone population of the Bay Islands migrated from the Cayman Islands in the mid-19th century (Graham, 1997: xi).

The English initiated the settlement of the northern part of the Anglophone Rim, essentially consisting of the Sea Islands and adjacent coastal areas of what are now the United States, with the foundation of the South Carolina Colony in 1670 by bringing in small cohorts of whites settlers and their slaves from Barbados. Subsequently, migration to the area occurred from other parts of the Anglophone Caribbean, the British Isles, and Africa (Klein, 2013: 140). British planters and their African origin slaves from the Leeward Islands and Barbados migrated to the then Dutch colonies Essequibo, Demerara, and Berbice towards the end of the 18th century (cf. Devonish and Thompson, 2013: 49), and the three separate colonies were united as British Guiana in 1831. Surinam was first settled by the English in 1651, but effectively
administrated by the Dutch only from 1668. An important milestone was also constituted by the arrival of Jews with their Portuguese Creole–speaking slaves from Cayenne in 1665 (and ultimately northeastern Brazil; Veenstra, 2012: 292). Migration to both countries of the southern Anglophone Rim has continued to the present, not only from other parts of the Caribbean and the colonial metropoles, but also Asia: the British Raj in the case of Guyana (from 1838 onwards; Rioopnarine, 2011) and Java, Indonesia (from 1890 onwards; van der Kroef, 1951).

After discussing the settlement history of the Anglophone Caribbean Rim, we turn to the language contacts, which have shaped the linguistic outcomes in the area. Input from certain British dialectal regions dominated in specific areas, e.g., Scotland and Ireland in the case of San Andrés and Old Providence. Scottish is important also for, e.g., the more acrolectal varieties of Bay Islands English. The same applies to certain African languages such as the Akan cluster (and, more widely, Gbe languages) which dominated in certain early slave populations both numerically and culturally (cf. the Founder Principle; Mufwene, 1996). Language contacts with Amerindian languages have largely been restricted to lexical borrowings in restricted semantic areas, e.g., *ishili* ‘a lizard species’, *wowla* ‘boa constrictor, a snake’ from Miskito by Miskito Coast and San Andrés Creole as well as local varieties of English (cf. Holm, 1983: 14; Bartens, 2009: 306) or Sranan *pagara* ‘basket’ (Grant, 2012: 258). This is highly region-specific vocabulary, which may surface in local Englishes as well as the creoles.

Finally, we shall turn to the linguistic outcomes of the spread of English to the Caribbean Rim and the current use of distinct varieties, which are intrinsically intertwined. All areas belonging to the Caribbean Rim present a creole continuum pace Bickerton (1975), either as a result of the fact that variation has existed since the beginning of English/British colonization (D’Costa & Lalla, 1989: 5-6), or recent reinforcement (formal and informal). Scenarios obviously vary in the countries or regions where Spanish or Dutch is the official language and main language of schooling, i.e., all Central American countries (with the exception of Belize), San Andrés and Old Providence, and Surinam. In addition, speakers are frequently unable to draw a neat border between local varieties of Standard English and Creole. By consequence, we need to consider the following English-lexifier creoles alongside with English: Gullah/Geechee and Afroseminole (United States, Mexico), Belizean Creole, Bay Islands English/Creole (Honduras), Miskito Coast and Rama Cay Creole (Nicaragua), Limonese Creole (Costa Rica), Colon Creole and smaller varieties of Panama, San Andrés and Providence Creole (Colombia), Sranan, Saramaccan, and Nengee (Suriname), Creolese (Guyana).

We will give a brief overview of the present sociolinguistic situation of the pertinent geographical areas. Likewise, we shall present some examples of contrasting linguistic structures (English – Creole) to illustrate the concept of the creole continuum. This is also crucial for such Anglophone varieties as the ones of the Bay Islands in the case of which it is actually questionable whether we speak of one or two speech communities (Graham, 1997: 331). Albeit being varieties of English in their own right in the sense of World Englishes (cf. Kachru, Kachru & Nelson, Eds. 2006; Mauranen 2018), the Anglophone Caribbean Rim varieties go beyond EFL and language contact phenomena for their intrinsic connection and blending into Caribbean Creole Englishes.

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North American – Caribbean linguistic connections

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Abstract

This chapter deals with the interrelationships between forms of American English and Caribbean English and creoles, both past and present. Almost from its earliest days of settlement, there have been close demographic and socioeconomic links between the North American mainland and what was to become the anglophone Caribbean. The Bahamas, for example, became part of a Carolinian colony in 1670; between 1783 and 1785, thousands of loyalists and their slaves flocked to the archipelago in the wake of the American Revolution, taking along not only non-standard dialects of English but also creolized forms of the language as they had emerged earlier in the coastal areas of Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia (cf. Hackert & Huber 2007). In other colonies, such as Jamaica or Trinidad and Tobago, American linguistic influence is more limited historically and involves the presence of U.S. troops during World War II, occasional visits or migration for work or education, and, even more recently, tourism and the importation of TV programs and commercials (cf. Winer 1993: 48-9). During the present age of globalization, American English has extended its range and impact considerably, worldwide as well as in the Caribbean (cf., e.g., Schneider 2006: 67; Mair 2013: 261). At the same time, individual Caribbean creoles such as a Jamaican have also influenced the development of English in North America, by way of the coming-into-being of diaspora communities in, e.g., New York or Toronto (cf. Hinrichs 2014), the global success of cultural forms and practices such as reggae, dancehall, or Rastafarianism, and the use of “Cyber-Jamaican” on the web (cf., e.g., Moll 2015). All of these developments have turned Jamaican Creole into one of a handful of “super-central varieties” of English that have acquired the potential to influence other varieties and speakers outside of their traditional territorial bases (Mair 2013: 261-2). In sum, forms of American English have not only contributed to the formation of varieties of English in the Caribbean and have long exerted “epicentral” influence, in the sense of a regionally dominant model influencing linguistic developments in neighboring areas (cf. Peters 2009: 108), but recently, and crucially influenced by postcolonial patterns of migration and the globalization of pop culture and communication, the flow of linguistic resources has become a two-way street.

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