United States English[1]

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United States English has developed over the course of four centuries into a rich and varied set of dialects. From the time of the first permanent English colonies in North America to the present, the English language in the States has always been diverse: settlers from different parts of the British Isles, different classes, and even different trades brought different forms of their mother tongue with them. They interacted with people who were not native speakers of English and encountered conditions and influences unique to North America. Moreover, immigrants came from other parts of the world, bringing different forms of English and other languages into contact with American English. This chapter will introduce some of the major families of US English and a few key characteristics of each.

A **dialect** is a distinct form of a language with its own characteristics in phonology, grammar, syntax, and lexicon. Different dialects, unlike separate languages, are generally said to be mutually intelligible: speakers of American English and speakers of New Zealand English can usually understand each other. However, political divisions complicate the picture. "Chinese" is actually a language family that encompasses hundreds of different languages, many of which are not mutually comprehensible. They share a system of writing and originate in the nation-state of China, so the languages are often described as dialects. Similarly, some forms of German are mutually incomprehensible but are called dialects of one language due to their shared history and nation-state. Conversely, Norwegian, Danish, and Swedish are generally considered relatively mutually intelligible, but they named as different languages according to the countries where they are spoken rather than labeled dialects of one language.

Every form of a language is a dialect. In languages with standard dialects, **the standard is still a *dialect***: the most educated user of American English one can imagine, with the mid-Atlantic accent often considered neutral and a perfect grasp of grammar, syntax, and lexicon, is every bit as much a user of dialect as the user of Southern American English who drops every postvocalic 'r,' pronounces the/aɪ/ diphthong /a:/, uses non-standard forms of the past tense, and has vocabulary items unrecognized outside the South. As linguists, we seek not to judge the

[1] I am grateful for the encouragement to complete and share this chapter from a number of friends and colleagues, and particularly for detailed and helpful comments from Heide Estes.

intelligence or morals of these different dialect users based on their writing or speech; we seek to describe their language instead. Dialects are described using a **contrastive** process: elements of one dialect in a language that are not present in one or more other dialects of the same language are singled out as characteristics of that dialect.

Each dialect has its own group of speakers. Dialects may be common to a geographical region, a racial or ethnic group, an age range, a profession or hobby, or even to a gender or gender identity.[2] Such divisions may not be hard and fast: a speaker may migrate out of one area and continue to speak their dialect while living in another area, or they may develop a hybrid **idiolect** (the language variant used by a single individual) combining aspects of two or more regions. Members of one racial or ethnic group may adopt characteristics or even full dialects of another. Many speakers are **bi**- or tri-**dialectal**, speaking two or three different dialects, especially when a dialect is specific to a profession or hobby: one can speak Southern English at home but Gamer with friends, or Spanglish with relatives but Inland North at work. Dialects can be conceived in terms of probabilities. Most speakers of a dialect will have most of the characteristics; virtually no speaker has all of the observed characteristics.[3]

This chapter will examine four geographical dialect families and two sets of ethnic or racial dialects. For geographical dialect families, I follow distinctions made by Lee Pederson into Northern, Midlands, Southern, and Western.[4] These regions developed separate dialect families due to different settlement patterns. English speakers came to them at different times and from different starting points in the British Isles. They interacted with different native peoples, faced different environmental conditions, and maintained ties with different parts of the British Isles to varying extents. Contributions to English from Native American languages often named places,

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[2] While English usage does vary with gender, most differences are too small and unsystematic to be considered full dialects. Japanese has more distinctions, so some linguists speak of gendered dialects in Japanese. Others, however, judge the differences too minor to call these separate dialects.

[3] This chapter offers an introduction to dialect families, not a rigorous study of particular dialects. It may be that some speakers of Southern or Midland US English will have all the characteristics noted in *this* chapter; none will have all those noted in a more detailed study.

[4] Also following Pederson, I will not discuss General American, an umbrella term for features largely shared by Inland North and Western dialects. The very name conveys the sense that GA is a norm from which other dialects depart, so while GA is a useful construct for some purposes, to use it would work against one of the major ideas of this chapter: that US English is no one thing but has multiple rule-bound dialects.

animals, and plants; many of these originated as regional but spread beyond one set of dialects (such as "persimmon," from Virginian Algonquian, or "skunk" from Abenaki). The regional dialects are generally characterized as white or Anglo-American because of their dominant elements, but they have also been influenced by other varieties of English and even other languages, and they are spoken by non-white speakers as well. Regional dialects are not spoken by everyone in a given region: newcomers, speakers of a non-regional dialect, and even some long-time residents do not speak the local dialect for a variety of reasons. The ethnic or racial dialects are Black English and Spanglish, which have both influenced and been influenced by regional dialects.

Resources for the Study of American English

Many textbooks present American English in varying degrees of detail; I have used and cite some of these in this chapter, and I recommend items in the Works Cited at the end of the chapter as first stops if you want to study further American English or any of its dialects. Top journals in the field include *American Speech* and the *Journal of English Linguistics*. For the sound systems of US English dialects, see *The Atlas of North American English: Phonetics, Phonology, and Sound Change* by William Labov, Sharon Ash, and Charles Boberg. The interactive component of this work is available free online at http://www.atlas.mouton-content.com/ and includes maps and sound files as well as some background information. The full book itself is also available free online as a series of pdfs: it begins with http://www.atlas.mouton-content.com/AtlasofNorthAmericanEnglish_WdG-PartA.pdf and runs through part F (just substitute the letter for the part you want into the URL in place of "A"). The most important resource for lexicography is *The Dictionary of American Regional English* (*DARE*), available both in print and online.[5] Words in *DARE* are sometimes dated because it relies in part on a survey conducted from 1965–70, but it still conveys a wealth of information and continues to be updated. The online version has interactive maps, audio clips from the original survey, and search functions.

Northern

[5] *DARE* is fully available only to subscribers; as a USF student, you can get access through the library catalog when you are logged in through Canvas or to the library's website.

Some of the oldest continuous settlements in the United States are located in the Northeast of the country, and that region probably has the greatest density of dialects and some of the greatest diversity among dialects. Different dialects here had a great deal of time to separate, and difficult traveling conditions in the early American colonies meant that these communities were often more isolated than later European settlements in what became the United States. Moreover, English-speaking colonies in the north began during the Early Modern English period, the period of most rapid change in lexicon, and perhaps greatest variety in pronunciation, in the history of the language.

Northern dialects include Eastern New England, New York City (which itself encompasses multiple dialects), Inland North, Mid-Atlantic, and others. The area covers all of New England and eastern New York, northern Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware, and stretches as far south as the northern parts of Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio. It extends through the Midwest across northern Iowa as far as the Dakotas (Pederson 266). The dialect family originated with early seventeenth-century settlements in Massachusetts, and Pederson emphasizes that these settlements, founded in a deliberate break with England, sought separation from their original home in the way early Southern settlers did not (Pederson 264–5).

The **phonology** or sound system of the Northern dialect family includes a number of shared features. We can also refer to different sound systems associated with dialects as **accents**. Northern US has distinctive vowels. Many speakers, particularly in New England and New York City, distinguish “the three Marys”: “Mary” /meri/, “marry” /mæri/, and “merry” /mɛri/.[6] /aɪ/ and /oɪ/ diphthongs are pronounced as such throughout much of the area, as in “mile” and “oil.” Many speakers contrast /o/ and /ɔ/ in “hoarse” versus “horse” and “mourning” versus “morning.” The area also generally shares some consonant pronunciations: “greasy” takes an /s/ sound, “with” a /ð/.

A few particularly notable differences within the Northern region include: in New England, New York City, and New Jersey, the ‘o’ in “forest” and “orange” is usually the [ɑ] sound. Eastern New England and parts of western Pennsylvania exhibit what is often called the **low back merger** or the **cot/caught merger**: speakers do not distinguish /kɑt/ from /kɔt/ but tend

[6] See map at http://www.atlas.mouton-content.com/AtlasofNorthAmericanEnglish_WdG-PartB.pdf 56. To hear the difference, listen to samples at http://www.atlas.mouton-content.com/secure/generalmodules/anae/unit0031/genunstart.html.

to say both /kɑt/ (or something very close to that).[7] The rest of the area tends to retain two separate vowels for these and similar words ("tot" and "taught" or "taut," for instance), particularly among older speakers. Parts of New England and New York City can be non-rhotic, sometimes with linking and intrusive r. **Non-rhotic** means not pronouncing **postvocalic** r: that is, 'r' after a vowel when it does not precede another vowel.[8] A **linking r** occurs in some people's speech in this region: that is, an 'r' inserted at the end of words or between words, particularly when one word ends and the next begins with a vowel sound: "My mother-in-law*r* is out"; "They can sing 'alleluia*r*' until the cows come home." New England and parts of New York city sometimes use /a/ instead of /æ/ for words such as "dance," "bath," or "class" (fricative or nasal+fricative). New York is well known for more use than most Americans make of the **glottal stop** (the sound most of us make in "Batman": not really /bætmæn/ but /bæʔmæn/). New Yorkers introduce it in more places than many US speakers for 't': "bottle" as /bæʔəl/, even "glottal stop" as /glɑʔəl stɑp/. Outside New England and New York City, speakers of Northern US dialects are generally **rhotic** (pronouncing 'r' whatever its position in a word), use /o/ or /əʊ/ for "forest," "orange," and use /æ/ for words such as "dance," "bath," or "class."

Northern US dialects generally have little distinctive grammar or syntax. Some speakers use non-standard past tenses for verbs and so morphology is a little different: "waked" instead of "woke," "div" for "dive" and "driv" for "drive," and "et" for the past tense of "eat" (Pederson 268). "Hadn't ought" instead of "shouldn't" is a Northern usage (Pederson 267). "Used to" or "useta" with another modal can be found in some Northern dialects: "He useta couldn't do it" (Wolfram and Schilling 379)

Northern US does have some unique lexicon. Examples are plentiful; look in *The Dictionary of American Regional English* for more. Here are a few (from *DARE* unless otherwise indicated): "against" or "agin" for "next to"; "arctic" for a waterproof shoe or boot; "black-eyed

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[7] Go to http://www.atlas.mouton-content.com/secure/generalmodules/anae/unit0031/genunstart.html, The Map Locator, to hear; see http://www.atlas.mouton-content.com/AtlasofNorthAmericanEnglish_WdG-PartB.pdf 60–66 for detailed maps.

[8] In the US, old port cities tend to be non-rhotic. They maintained close ties with England, and when non-rhoticity became fashionable in England, these cities adopted it too: Boston, Norfolk, and Charleston, for instance. The English at the time of the colonies pronounced 'r' everywhere it was written, and thus so did the English-speaking settlers. For a map of rhotic and non-rhotic areas on the upper east coast, see Wolfram and Schilling Fig. 4.1, 125.

bean" for black-eyed pea; "to blare": to low (the sound cows make); "blue wasp" for a mud-dauber; "darning needle" for dragonfly; "pail" for "bucket." New England's seafaring roots appear in the phrases "lulling down" for wind abating and "breezing up" for the opposite (Wolfram and Schilling 102). A "rock maple" is the kind of maple tree that produces maple syrup, often known elsewhere as a sugar maple (Wolfram and Schilling 103). New England also has "rotary" for a traffic circle or roundabout (Wolfram and Schilling 110). A relatively small number of dialectal words seem to show Native American roots: "squantum" for a clambake in Massachusetts. Others became more pervasive: "hominy" entered English in New England from Native American influence but spread throughout the US and is no longer considered regional.

Predictions of the demise of Northern US English have been made in the past, and some of the smaller dialects in the family may die out. The family as a whole, however, remains alive with distinctive accents and vocabulary items.

Midlands

The Midlands dialect region starts in western Pennsylvania and includes those parts of the Midwest that do not belong to the Northern region. These areas were settled by Europeans after the first waves of settlement from England. They often came from or through Pennsylvania, giving that state an influence on the Midlands dialect (Pederson 265). Where the North had been settled overwhelmingly by people from England, however, the Midwest attracted a broader range of Europeans: more Scots, Irish, and Welsh speakers brought a different set of dialects to the area, and German and Scandinavian settlers introduced yet another set of elements.

The phonology of the region varies; parts have had more influence from the North, parts from the South. The region tends to be strongly rhotic, pronouncing 'r' everywhere it would be written; intrusive 'r' appears only occasionally, particularly in parts of Western Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana. Midlands dialects have /θ/ in "with" as Northern does, but "greasy" is pronounced with /s/ in some places and /z/ in others (the latter from Southern influence). Midlands speakers do not generally have three Marys; they may have two ("marry" /mæri/; "Mary" and "merry" /mɛri/) or just one (/mɛri/). Many areas do not distinguish "hoarse" from "horse" and "morning" from "mourning."

Grammar, syntax, and morphology do not vary greatly from other regions, particularly because some usages have spread outside the original area. "Till" for "until" is Midlands but can

now be found outside; so too “I want off” for “I want to get off” (“this ride,” etc.). The Midlands has multiple distinctive second-person plural forms: “you-uns” (“yinz” in and around Pittsburgh), particularly in and around Appalachia; and “you guys,” also found in parts of the North.

Midlands lexicon is not terribly distinctive, but it has some usages not often found elsewhere: “ashamed” for “shy”; “backwoodser” for “hick”; “black betty” for liquor; “bucket,” as opposed to Northern “pail”; “chili beans” for “kidney beans”; “to feel good” for “to be a little bit drunk”; “pop” for a carbonated soft drink; and “spout” for a drainpipe that comes down from a roof. “Anymore” or “any more” for “now” or “currently” is common in negative usage such as “We rarely see her any more,” but its use in positive constructions is distinctively Midlands, derived from Scots-Irish immigrants: “They mostly eat vegetarian anymore” (Wolfram and Schilling 105). Words that entered English from Native American languages in the Midlands were less likely to spread throughout US English than those that entered earlier; “massasauga” for a kind of rattlesnake and “menominee” (or “menominee whitefish”) for a variety of fish are mostly found around the Great Lakes.

Midlands dialects are often perceived, both by their speakers and by outsiders, as neutral or even “General American.” Yet Midlands speech is not the absence of a dialect; it is the presence of a widely accepted dialect held to be close to a standard. Anyone who doubts that the Midlands have their own distinctive usages should go to a crowded space such as a park or mall and start asking what people call their carbonated beverages or whether “guys” includes men only, or men and women.

Southern

The Southern dialect region, like the Midlands, does not follow state borders neatly. To the north, it extends well into Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio. On the east, it is bounded by the Atlantic; on the west, it extends into Texas and Oklahoma. It is often broken into Upper South and South, with the Upper South being the Northern portion. The areas on the Atlantic Coast were largely settled by English colonists who maintained closer ties to England than New England did. Inland areas bordering on the Midwest were often settled from the Midwest, so they retain Northern and Midlands influence. The states that would become the Confederacy in the Civil War (1860–65) plus Kentucky, Missouri, and the part of Virginia that would split off and become West Virginia

during the Civil War, all brought large numbers of enslaved Africans to do labor. Through them, African languages had effects on English, primarily in lexicon.[9] Ongoing connections with British traders through the Civil War continued English influence on speech and particularly pronunciation.

Non-rhoticism is one of the most recognizable characteristics of most Southern dialects. Much of the Upper South remains rhotic, but in significant portions of the South, post-vocalic 'r' is not pronounced. Linking and intrusive r are not common in the region. Much of the South also has a 'z' sound for the 's' in "greasy." The South is one of the few areas where a notable number of speakers still distinguish between the /hw/ and /w/ sounds of *which* and *witch* or *whale* and *wail*.[10] In some areas, fricatives before nasals may become stops: "headn" for "heathen," "idn't" for "isn't," "sebm" for "seven" (Wolfram and Schilling 369).

Most of the distinction of Southern from other US dialects lies in its vowels. Southern tends to retain more vowel distinctions before 'r' than Midlands or Western English: as in New England and New York City, three Marys are common: "Mary" /meri/, "marry" /mæri/, and "merry" /mɛri/. The /o/-/ɔ/ distinction between "hoarse" and "horse," "mourning" and "morning" often appears as well. Two diphthongs are often monophthongized in much of the South: /aɪ/ often becomes /a:/, as when "I" is pronounced "ah"; /oi/ tends to be pronounced /ɔ:/, so "boil" sounds like "bawl." In some areas, /ɛ/ and /ɪ/ merge, called "the pin/pen merger"; they both tend to sound like "pin" to the ears of those from outside the area. Monophthongs in turn are sometimes diphthongized with a glide towards the center vowel: "ran" may be pronounced /ræən/, "frog" /frɔəg/, and so on. Even unpronounced 'r' often has an effect on the preceding vowel, causing the vowel to break or diphthongize: where Northern has "car" as /cær/, many Southern speakers say it more like /cæə/. For some speakers, /ɨ/ replaces /e/ in the final syllable of day names ("Sunday," "Monday," and so on). Southern US English also has some variation in prosody from the rest of the country. **Prosody** is the pattern of stress and pitch that give a language or dialect its own rhythms. The South has a tendency to shift the stress to the front of a

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[9] The extent of this influence is uncertain, but the contributions are real. Many are still in use and not limited to the United States such as "benne", "okra," and "mumbo jumbo." For more about their contributions to US English, see the section on Black English, below, particularly the Creole Origins Hypothesis and creole connections.

[10] See a map at http://www.atlas.mouton-content.com/AtlasofNorthAmericanEnglish_WdG-PartB.pdf 50; hear at http://www.atlas.mouton-content.com/secure/generalmodules/anae/unit0031/genunstart.html using The Map Locator.

word: INsurance rather than inSURance, DEtroit rather than deTROIT, POlice rather than poLICE. (Some ascribe this stress pattern to African American influence.)

Southern US English also has some distinctive grammar and morphology. The second person plural form "y'all" is found throughout the South and in areas with Southern influence. Substitution of "they" for existential "there" appears in both Southern and Black English: "They's a long line now" (Wolfram and Schilling 388). The deletion of copulas and auxiliaries is not uncommon: "The dog is big" may become "the dog big," and "she had done it" is often simply "she done it."[11] "Done" also appears in perfective *done*: "I done told you that already" takes the place of "I *did* tell you that already." Double modal auxiliaries are sometimes found: "We might could go" instead of "We could go." Nonstandard forms also appear: "ain't" can take the place of "am not," "are not," or "is not." *Fixing to* and its variants *fixta, finna*, etc. mean "about to" or "intend to": "It's fixin to rain" means it is about to rain, while "I was finna to come, but I got held up" means that the narrator planned to come (Wolfram and Schilling 379).

Southern also has its own lexical items. The "air potato" is actually a kind of yam (and an invasive species in several Southern states, including Florida). To "let alone" something is to stop doing it. "Varmint" for "small predator" is perhaps less common than it had been, but "sugar pea" (often known elsewhere as "garden pea" or "green pea") and "yam" for "sweet potato" are still common.[12] The "Judas bird" is called a "dickcissel" outside of the US South, and "lamp oil" is generally called "kerosene." "pallet" has long meant a thin mattress, but its use for a temporary bed made up on the floor is Southern. "Kinfolk" and "liketa" for almost are Elizabethan or earlier British English usages retained in Southern English. Again, Native American influence appears; "matchcote" for a fur or wool coat derives from Virginia Algonquian *matchkore* for a robe made of deerskin. "Moccasin" is another Native American-derived word that transcended regional dialect to become familiar to most US English speakers.

Like Northern dialects, Southern dialects have outlasted predictions of their demise. Many Southern speakers take pride in their linguistic differences from people living to the North

[11] An alternate analysis of the second example is possible, however; "done" may sometimes be a variant form of "did" here, so that the real equivalent is not "she had done it" but "she did it."
[12] A true yam is in the *dioscorea* family; its colors range from white to purple and may include orange. The sweet potatoes most of us eat most often and may call "yams" are from the *convolvulaceae* family.

and to the West. Others feel ambivalent; speakers of other dialects sometimes look down on Southern US English and its speakers. The dialect family continues to flourish, however.

Western

The West was the last part of the Continental United States to be settled by English speakers. That settlement occurred mostly after the Civil War and involved a mix of people. Southern parts of the West may have initially attracted more Southerners and northern portions, more northerners, but repeated waves of migration to the West led from all parts and mixtures of white, Latino/Latina, and African American settlers led to influence from all dialects of English as well as from Native American, Spanish, and African languages. Because of the confluence of many influences and the lateness of settlement, Western US English dialects as a family tend to stand out less than other families; it most resembles Midlands in many features. Dialects of specific areas within the West often exhibit more distinctiveness.

Western dialects tend to be rhotic. They also exhibit the low back merger (or cot/caught merger). Some speakers preserve the /hw/-/w/ distinction ("whale" versus "wail"), although others do not. Many speakers in the southern part of the region, from West Texas through New Mexico, Arizona, parts of Nevada, and Southern California, show some Southern features, particularly in vowels. The rest of the West tends more towards Midlands or Northern pronunciation.

Lexicon shows similar patterns: the southern parts of the West draw more upon Southern vocabulary and usage, and the northern parts, more on North and Midlands. Spanish and Native American languages contributed some words: "lariat" and "lasso" come from Spanish. "Peccary" came from a Cariban language (a language family in South America), possibly through Spanish; "posole" originated in Nahuatl and reached English through Mexican Spanish. Overall, grammar, morphology, and syntax are not distinct from those in other US dialect families.

Western US English is the youngest of the dialect families outlined in this chapter. It may become more distinctive as it continues to develop; however, in this age of widely shared media exposing speakers to a wide range of dialects, the future of Western US English is impossible to predict.

Latino/Latina English and Spanglish

Spanish settlement in the Americas dates back before English settlement. As of 2015, about 17% of the US population was Hispanic, and that number is expected to rise. The words “Latino,” “Latina,” “Latinx,” “Hispanic,” and “Spanish” are not interchangeable and should be used with care. People may have a strong preference for or against particular terms, and when possible, they should be asked what they prefer if labels are needed.[13] If more specific terms can be used, many people prefer to refer to their country or region of origin. (People with Puerto Rican connections living in or near New York may prefer “Nuyorican,” for instance.)

“Latino” refers to people from or descended from Latin America: Mexico, the Caribbean, Central America, and South America. It thus includes Brazil, whose language is not Spanish but Portuguese, but excludes Spain. “Latino” carries masculine gender grammatically, and “Latina” is the feminine equivalent. Some speakers feel that either excludes people of the opposite gender and prefer “Latin@,” which visually carries both the “o” and the “a.” There is some disagreement about how to pronounce it: some people read it the same as they would read “Latino/Latina,” including both full words. Some say it /latinaʊ/ (with the same vowel as “loud”). “Latinx” (/latinex/; plural, “Latinxs,” (/latinexes/) covers all genders: male, female, non-binary, etc. The Latin- root tends to be favored by people with Latin American roots.

“Hispanic” is associated both with Spain and with speaking Spanish. People from Spain and some people from Latin America prefer this term. The US Census bureau and many other organizations use it largely interchangeably with “Latino.” The term excludes Brazil (because Brazil’s main language is Portuguese) but includes Spain. Many Latinx people, however, avoid the term because they feel it connotes Spain and European ethnicity too strongly and downplays Latin American and non-white identity.

Latino English is often called Chicano English, further complicating the matter because “Chicano” (fem. “Chicana”) refers specifically to someone from Mexico. Many Latino English speakers do not have Mexican roots but may hail from any other Spanish-speaking country (or even Brazil). This section will use the term “Latino English” because it is a common description of a set of dialects, because the placement of “Latino” avoids the problem of gender (the word for English in Spanish is “inglés,” a masculine noun), and because it is the most common term for this form of the language in the databases used in this course. Latino English is a wide-ranging set of English dialects that have Spanish influence, but many speakers of Latino English

[13] This generalization holds true for other racial, ethnic, gender, and other identifiers as well.

are native English speakers, and some do not even speak Spanish. What follow are generalizations about Latino English indebted heavily to Wolfram and Schilling (188–96, where they primarily use the term "Chicano English"). As with other dialects, most speakers will have some of these characteristics but not all; virtually no one will have all. Latino English tends to be stigmatized, and thus many speakers are **bidialectal** (able to speak two dialects of the same language): they tend to use Latino English more with friends and family and Standard English more in formal situations. Latino English is spoken by people across all socioeconomic classes and levels of education.

Latino English phonology tends to be influenced by Spanish phonology and particularly its pure vowels. Most English dialects reduce unstressed vowels to schwas (the /ə/ sound); Latino English speakers often keep the distinct qualities of even unstressed vowels. For instance, *because* might be pronounced by a white Inland North speaker /bəkɔz/ or even /bəkəz/ (reducing even the stressed vowel to a schwa), but a Latino English speaker is likely to say /bikɔz/ (Schilling and Wolfram 191). British English speakers tend to have glide onsets for common vowels, as can be seen in the chart on Barber, Beal, and Shaw 11: "take" is /teɪk/, "go" is /gəʊ/, and vowels before 'r' very often have off-glides: "here" is /hɪə/. Many American English speakers have on-glides or off-glides as well, as when "Dan" is said /dæən/ (or even /dæjən/). Latino English speakers tend to keep the simple vowels: "go" as /go/, "take" as /tek/, "Dan" as /dæn/ or /dan/. The difference between long and short vowels may be split with a sound somewhere in between, particularly /ɪ/ and /i/: Wolfram and Schilling give the example of "fit" /fɪt/ and "fleece" /flis/ pronounced with a vowel somewhere between the two (191). However, varities of Latino English are affected by factors outside of Spanish. Speakers in Northern California may display parts or all of the Northern California Vowel Shift, while speakers around Chicago and Detroit may use the Northern Cities Shift, and speakers in the South may have the Southern Vowel Shift.

One of the most widely found characteristics of Latino English phonology is a more syllable-timed than stress-timed intonation. Many speakers of LME hold stressed vowels longer, but speakers using pure syllable timing would hold every syllable for the same length of time. Latino English speakers do not generally use pure syllable timing, but they tend to have less of a distinction between the length of stressed and unstressed syllables than white and black speakers do.

Grammar and lexicon of Latino English may vary even more than pronunciation; more work needs to be done in this area. Varieties tend to take on regional or other characteristics. Double negation is common, as it is in virtually all non-standard varieties of English. Influence from Black English grammar is common in urban areas, so Latino English speakers may avail themselves of the full range of Black English verb aspects mentioned below.

Some Latino English speakers may also be Spanglish speakers—if such a language variety exists. Even the existence and name of Spanglish are controversial. On one side, Ricardo Otheguy and Nancy Stern argue that "Spanglish" is a misnomer for informal varieties of Spanish spoken in the US that improperly divides US Spanish speakers from other speakers of Spanish who speak similar forms, and it gives English too much power and prominence when Spanish speakers should take pride in speaking a world language of their own. On the other, Ilan Stavans argues in multiple publications that Spanglish is a dynamic hybrid that speakers and scholars rightly celebrate. Many other scholars align with one camp or another or stake out a position in the middle. Some class Spanglish as its own proto-language or even language; others see it as a dialect of Spanish, English, or both. My inclusion of Spanglish in this chapter effectively suggests that it is a dialect of English, but to exclude it would suggest that it is not—or worse, that it does not merit study. I hope my brief treatment here will not shut down discussion but keep it alive: *is* Spanglish a language family, a dialect family, or just a name for a particular kind of code switching? If a dialect, of which language is it a dialect? (Can anything be a dialect of two different languages?)

Speakers of Spanglish tend to be Latinx or Hispanic. They have varying levels of comfort with Spanish and English; some may be fluent in both, while others are more fluent in one than in the other, or fluent in one but not the other. Not all Spanglish speakers are Latino English speakers, nor do all speak Spanish. Spanglish can be found all over the United States, often drawing to a greater or lesser extent on regional English dialects and local varieties of Spanish. Many but not all speakers are **bilingual** (able to speak two different languages). Most are **bidialectal** (able to speak two different dialects) or multidialectal.

Scholars agree that Spanglish relies heavily on **code switching**, moving between one language and another (or between two dialects in the same language) in the same conversation, lecture, written article, chapter, etc. Spanglish speakers usually follow the rules of the language to which individual words or phrases belong for grammar and morphology. "Estás ready?" has

its verb in Spanish and its adverb in English. The verb is conjugated according to Spanish rules: it has the second person present indicative ending, and the subject does not need to be stated. The adverb follows English rules: it needs no ending, and it appears after the verb as it would in English. Sometimes, however, an English word is simply turned into Spanish by being respelled according to Spanish rules and given endings that work for Spanish verbs or nouns: "parquear" is "to park," though Spanish already has its own verbs with the same meaning: "estacionar" or "aparcar." Sometimes, however, the grammar and syntax of English are used for Spanish words. Otheguy and Stern give the example of "llamada para atrás," based on English "call back," with which they contrast "te devuelvo la llamada" (literally: "I return to you the call"; 91).[14] Switches can only take place where the two languages have similar structures; "I gave him/to him the present" cannot be rendered in the following ways because these constructions' grammar violates the rules of Spanish, English, or both: "*I gave le un regalo; *Le I gave un regalo; *Him/to him di un regalo; *Di him/to him un regalo" (Rothman and Rell 524).

Spanglish pronunciation varies widely depending on the variety or sometimes even the speaker. Speakers generally follow the rules of the dialect of Spanish they speak: examples include Mexican Spanish, Peruvian Coast Spanish, and Nuyorican. Speakers often follow the English dialect pronunciation of their social group or region. Whether a given morpheme has a Spanish or English pronunciation, however, does not always correspond to its language of origin. "Lonche" is from the English "lunch" but has been pronounced and respelled according to Spanish phonology. "Marketa" is the English "market" with an 'a' added to fit Spanish expectations: nouns do not generally end in a 't' sound. Yet the nouns in "el mouse" and "el parking" are pronounced more like English than like Spanish; sometimes the former is respelled "el maus" so that the vowel spelling more closely matches Spanish norms.

Perhaps the most studied aspect of Spanglish is its lexicon, which has been changing for centuries. Recent research shows Spanglish dates back to at least 1804 (Prieto). Usage varies widely by region, however. A number of words and phrases have become widespread (although spelling varies): "janguear" ("to hang out"), "ver un show" ("see a show"), "conflei" (for breakfast cereal, based on "cornflakes"). Others may only appear in particular regions, or begin

[14] In keeping with their general argument, Otheguy and Stern offer this example as "popular Spanish," not Spanglish, and note that as a world language, Spanish has different constructions in different countries.

in a specific area and then spread. “Pata sucia,” or “dirty feet,” referring to people who take off their shoes to dance (and then leave them off) appears to have originated in Miami.

Spanglish may be one of the fastest growing US dialects (if we take it to be a dialect). This short sketch passes over differences by region in the US, variation according to Spanish dialect, and distinctions among social speakers due to age and other variables.

Black English

Black English has received much attention among linguists, yet some key points remain unclear or controversial. Linguists do not even agree on a single name for it: the names “Black English” (BE), “African American English” (AAE), and “African American Language” (AAL) reflect both the race of a majority of speakers and the two terms currently in widely accepted use to identify the race. “African American English” treats the language variety as a dialect of English; “African American Language” makes no assumptions about its relation to English and can be used both by those who consider it a dialect of English and those who deem it a separate language. The latter term tends tends emphasize the complexity and systematic nature of African American language, its uniqueness, and its distance from all other forms of English in the US.[15] AAE and AAL are umbrella terms that cover both regional forms of BE and Gullah. Some linguists use “African American Vernacular English” (AAVE) as a more specific term, excluding Gullah.[16] Fewer linguists favor “Ebonics,” but it appears more frequently in use by specialists in non-linguistic fields and popular media. This chapter will use BE both because it is

[15] See Smitherman, *Word from the Mother*, esp. 1–5 and 15–18, about the legitimacy accorded “language” over “dialect” outside linguistic circles. Some scholars hyphenate “African-American,” particularly when the term is used as an adjective, as in “African-American English.” The use or lack of a hyphen is often a stylistic choice, sometimes made by a publisher rather than an individual; while MLA does not specify whether hyphens should be used in such compounds, *The Chicago Manual of Style* recommends omitting the hyphen unless required by the publisher (8.38 and 7.85, section 2, “proper nouns and adjectives relating to geography or nationality”). Different dictionaries and style guides vary; *The Oxford English Dictionary* uses the hyphen in its headword (“African-American”) but immediately notes “Forms: freq. unhyphenated.” Recent scholarly trends seem to be in favor of dropping hyphens here and in many other previously hyphenated words.

[16] The term “vernacular” comes from the Latin *vernaculus*, “native”; it has long been used for languages other than classical Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. In this sense, all of English is “vernacular.” It has also been used for more popular forms of the classical languages, so that vernacular Latin specified the kind of Latin spoken by people outside of literary milieux; and of non-classical language, including non-standard forms of English.

a legitimate term used frequently among linguists and because appears more often in databases we will use this semester than the other terms.

Speakers of BE are most often African Americans, but some whites, Latinxs, and Asians speak it as well, particularly in urban areas. Not all African Americans speak BE; linguists generally estimate that 80–90% of African Americans speak it at least some of the time, with higher rates among young people (Redd and Webb 3). Many speakers of BE are bi- or multidialectal. BE crosses geographic boundaries and can be found in both rural and urban settings.

The age and origins of BE are controversial. Many linguists trace BE's roots to the origins of the slave trade, when Africans were first forcibly brought to the United States and exposed to English. Others see discontinuity between the early history of English spoken by Africans and their descendants and contemporary BE. Linguists also disagree about the influence of African languages and the resulting development of BE. One hypothesis suggests that because Africans primarily came to the US as slaves, they mostly encountered less educated, lower-class speakers of English, not the most educated and powerful ones. This **English Origins Hypothesis** argues that features of BE arose from nonstandard features present in early white dialects of English, then spread and persisted.[17] Meanwhile, some of these features were lost from other nonstandard dialects, and BE grew distinct in other ways from them, making the origins difficult to trace.

The **Creole Origins Hypothesis** (or Creolist Hypothesis) suggests that BE grew out of a creole of African languages and English. A **pidgin** is a language used by groups that come into contact but have no common language, often in situations of exploration and colonization. Pidgins have simple grammar and limited morphology, usually based on the language from the group with more power, but with elements of the other language(s). Many pidgins arise for a specific situation and later die out, and they are rarely a native language for anyone. A **creole** is a more complex language that sometimes develops from a pidgin. It has its own grammar, morphology, and syntax, with elements borrowed from two or more other languages. Creoles do have native speakers. **Gullah** (also known as **Geechee** and **Sea Island Creole**) is a kind of

[17] The English Origins Hypothesis is also known as the Anglicist Hypothesis; more recent proponents' work is often called the Neo-Anglicist Hypothesis. For more details on possible origins for AAE, see Wolfram and Schilling 261–6.

African American Language and a creole spoken by the Gullah people, descendants of slaves who now live on islands and the coasts of South Carolina, Georgia, and northeastern Florida.

Scholars who favor the BE creole hypothesis find support in features common to one or more African languages that are not usually found in English but can be found in BE such as the absence of an explicit copula in linking constructions. Some of these features are also found in English-based creoles in parts of Africa, the Caribbean, and in Canada, where many African Americans were brought in the nineteenth century. In this model, BE originated in a creole slaves used to communicate among themselves and with whites: slaves brought elements from multiple African languages themselves and joined them with English. This creole spread among Caribbean and US plantations as slaves were moved, sold, and moved again. Then, in a process called **decreolization**, most forms of BE became less of a creole and grew to be more like Southern US English as the latter developed; only Gullah remains a full creole. Historical support can be difficult to find: the earliest speech of slaves was rarely recorded in any form, so there is little positive evidence for the creole phase of the theory. Records increase later in time: African Americans begin writing their own accounts in the late eighteenth century, and by the latter half of the nineteenth century, audio recording devices were being used. However, both writing and audio recording tended to be formal situations in the days before ball-point pens, computers, and portable recording devices. It is difficult to tell whether the lack of evidence for such a creole in these early records arises from writers and speakers consciously being as formal as possible (and thus deliberately suppressing features they knew to be nonstandard), or because the writers and speakers simply did not speak a creole.

Another hypothesis is the **Substrate Hypothesis** (or the similar creole connection hypothesis). In this model, no full creole developed in the US and then decreolized, but BE kept some features of African languages: a linguistic **substrate**, that is, a foundation that contributed to a new language or dialect in a contact language situation. In this hypothesis, there was no one widespread creole throughout the Caribbean and US South; instead, contacts between developing creoles in West Africa and the Caribbean influenced the language of the Africans being brought over as slaves and informed the language they acquired when they reached the US. In this model too, both African languages and developing regional forms of US English contributed to BE. Gullah developed concurrently as a full creole, as it remains today.

Research into the historical development of BE continues fruitfully. Most scholars today do not argue for a single origin; they side more heavily with the English origins hypothesis but allow for some creole connections (Van Herk), or they argue for creole origins with some early English influence (Rickford), or they offer the substrate hypothesis, which itself includes contributions from Africa, the Caribbean, and varieties of US English (Wolfram and Schilling). Aside from Gullah, BE today is not a creole, whether it had roots in a creole or a creole-like formation process or not. The rest of this section will focus primarily on the BE of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. BE has often been derided as slang or the result of ignorance or laziness. I acknowledge these misconceptions here to reject them explicitly: like all dialects, BE is rule-bound. Indeed, BE has some rules so distinct from standard US English that study of them helps shed light both on BE and standard US English, for our understanding of language comes through a contrastive process. BE has a highly complex system of tense and aspect that includes features lacking in standard US and British English.

Though it is not regionally restricted, BE has close ties to the dialect of the US South. Like Southern English, BE is non-rhotic. Some BE speakers go a step further and omit some occurrences of 'r' between vowels: "Carolina" may be pronounced /cæəla:nə/.[18] Linking and intrusive r do not appear. 'l' is sometimes also omitted **medially** (in the middle of a word): /hep/ for "help." Speakers tend to simplify consonant clusters, especially at the ends of words: stops may be omitted as in the pronunciation "des" for "desk" and "pas" for "past" or "passed." This is also found among some Appalachian and Southeastern speakers. In BE, such simplification is especially common when the consonants in question are either all voiced or all voiceless; when one is voiced and one unvoiced, they are more likely to be retained, as in "bank" (Redd and Webb 26). Plurals for nouns with simplified endings may then add -es instead of -s for clarity: "desses" for "desks" (Wolfram and Schilling 368).[19] Final /ŋ/ is often replaced with the nasal /n/: "sayin," "eatin." The tendency to reduce consonantal clusters is widespread in US English across regional dialects, especially before a word beginning with a consonant ("The des tipped over," "He pas the other car"); BE has a stronger tendency than most US Englishes and is more likely to

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[18] This r-deletion can also be found in some other dialects in the US South family.

[19] Sometimes the -es is even added to unsimplified forms, producing plurals such as "deskes," but this is found more in Southeastern and Appalachian speech than in AAE (Wolfram and Schilling 368).

simplify before a word beginning with a vowel (“The des over there,” “He pas Aisha house”).[20] Interdental fricatives (θ and ð) are often replaced with stops (particularly in Gullah). At the starts of words, these fricatives may become /t/ or /d/: “think” may be pronounced “tink” and “them,” “dem.” Later in words, “th” may become /t/ or /d/ or, especially along the Eastern Seabord /f/ and /v/: “mouf” for “mouth,” “wiv” for “with” (Wolfram and Schilling 118). The vowels are often close to Southern as well. Diphthongs tend to be simplified: /aɪ/>/a:/ (“I” becomes “ah”), /oi/>/ɔ/ (“oil” becomes “awl”). Some speakers have the pin-pen merger. Some diphthongization of monophthongs occurs. The prosody tends to be that of the US South, with some displacement of stress to the front of the word where other dialects would stress later in the word (UMbrella instead of umBRELLa, for instance; some linguists view this as a feature of BE that has spread to the Southern US English dialect family). Gullah has a prosody not found elsewhere in US English; its rhythms sound sing-song to outsiders, like that of some Caribbean islands or Wales.

BE morphology includes deletion of endings on nouns and verbs where the context makes them clear. Thus, possessives and plurals may be unmarked: “Nate dog” for standard “Nate’s dog”; “two dog” for “two dogs.” Where context does not make the endings clear, however, possessives and plurals tend to be marked: “Not Mark dog, Nate’s” (the dog belongs to Nate; Nate is not the name of the dog); “The dogs chase me” (not just one dog). Verb endings are frequently truncated. Here it can be difficult to separate phonology and morphology; does “She walks” become “she walk” because a three-consonant cluster has been simplified to two in speech, or because the verbal ending has been deleted? Again, truncation tends to be restricted to settings where context makes the tense and number clear; speakers know these categories and the rules shared by standard English, but sometimes they apply a different rule. BE relies less on endings and more on context than SAE (Redd and Webb 28).

Grammar and syntax are particularly noteworthy where verbs are concerned.[21] As in Southern English, double modals may be used: “He thought she might could fix his phone.” BE allows for copula deletion in certain circumstances, which most English does not. BE copula deletion affects only forms of the verb “to be,” not other linking verbs such as “seem” or “feel.”

[20] For statistical comparison of the reduction of consonant clusters across a variety of social dialects, see Wolfram and Schilling 203–6, esp. Table 6.2 on 206; thanks to Heide Estes for this point.

[21] The particulars in this paragraph and the next two come primarily from Mufwene 299–305 and Wolfram and Schilling 255–7.

It occurs only in places where the copula could be contracted (thus "She sick" is allowed, but the copula cannot be deleted in "She *was* sick"). Deletion is most common before the future marker *gon* and with the progressive: "Diane gon come," "John talkin." The frequency varies with the conjugation of *to be*; deletion occurs most frequently with "are" and never with "am," even where "am" could be contracted (Mufwene 300).

BE also has more complicated aspect markers than other dialects of English. **Habitual** or **invariant be** use the verb "be," unconjugated, to mark a habitual action or condition. "She angry" means "she is angry"; "She be angry" means "She's always or repeatedly angry." Wolfram and Schilling write that habitual be is most often used in the be + verb+ing construction: "She be making good money" (378). BE constructs past and past perfect with "done": "Tanya done left" ("Tanya has left"), "Mark done read that book before he seen the movie" ("Mark had read that book before he saw the movie"). "Done" to mark past perfect is known as **completive done**: it adds emphasis either to the fact that the action has been completed or to the lexical verb itself ("I done told you not to mess up," Wolfram and Schilling 378). **Remote time** or **distant past been** uses "bin" or "been" to signal a more distant past: "Tasha bin done gone" ("Tasha had been gone [a long time]"); "Mark been done read that book" ("Mark read that book [ages ago]"). This form of "been" can be combined with other auxiliaries: "We had BEEN married when this lil' one came along"; "They coulda BEEN ended that war" (survey respondents, qtd. in Rickford and Rickford 119).[22] This brief survey only touches on the range of tenses and aspects in Black English; for a good summary, see Redd and Webb 31–35.

Multiple negation is common: "Don't never," "Ain't seen no." Negation in BE may use "ain't" or "ain" for "isn't" or "am not," which is found in other US English dialects: "He ain't here," "I ain goin." BE also uses "ain't" where other dialects would use "didn't" or "don't": "She ain finish her homework." "Don't" or "don" may negate imperatives or habitual constructions: "Don lose my book"; "Marcus don eat meat." (Gullah sometimes uses "ain duhz" or "ain does" instead of "don" in such constructions.) "Not" can be used without a verb ("She not here," with copula deletion), but the full range of negated auxiliaries are also used in BE: "hadn't," "can't," etc. Negative inversion, where a negative subject is placed after a negated verb, also appears: "Ain nothin gonna stop me," "Don nobody take my lunch."

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[22] This paragraph does not exhaust tense and aspect in AAE; see DeBose for more.

BE also has its own constructions for questions. In many dialects of English, questions are formed by inversion of subject and verb, but BE does not require inversion. Other dialects' "Why don't you ask him?" may be BE "Why you don't ask him?" On the other hand, indirect questions in most dialects do not use inversion: the question "Where did you go?" would be reported "I asked Juan where he went," with the verb "did" before "the subject" in the direct question but the verb "went" after its subject "Juan" in the indirect or reported question. In BE, inversion may appear in the indirect question, even when it requires an auxiliary: "I asked Juan where did he go" is not a direct question but an indirect question, yet "did" is introduced just as in the direct question to maintain a subject-main verb inversion.[23]

BE shares much lexicon with Southern US English, but it adds much of its own. Even more than regional dialects, BE has contributed to wider English lexicons, both standard and non-standard. "Jazz" and other genres of music take their names as well as their origins from African American musicians. "To take care of business" for being active and effective and "the dozens" for an exchange of insults originated in BE but have become mainstream. Less formal terms such as "get in one's face" for an in-person confrontation, "chump change" for a small amount of money, and "boo" for a boyfriend or girlfriend are in many dialects now. Other words have not necessarily entered the mainstream: "kitchen" for the hair at the nape of the neck, "bad mouth" as a noun for a curse or disparaging gossip. "Come" as an auxiliary verb expresses indignation: "Don't come telling me all those lies" (Green 22), not primarily motion, as in other US dialects ("Don't come running to me when things go wrong"), though the latter is also found in BE.

BE has become the most studied dialect family of US English. This brief survey covers primarily features shared throughout regional variants of BE. Just as Spanglish has regional variants and regional dialect families contain multiple dialects, the term "BE" describes a large family of dialects. Urban and rural BE differ; BE in the South differs from BE in Northern cities and in California. BE usages also vary by age. BE is a vibrant, dynamic dialect with a large number and wide range of speakers.

Conclusions

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[23] The direct question would be "I asked Juan, 'Where did you go?'"

English in the United States is a rich and varied set of dialects; some are so distinct from the US standard that they have claims to being separate languages (Spanglish and Black English). All dialects are systematic and rule-bound. At the same time, “dialects” are a rough classification. No speaker will have all features of a dialect, and many speakers will use some of their dialect’s features all of the time and others only in certain circumstances. Dialects also change more rapidly than standard forms of language, and features may vary between generations as well as between individuals.

This chapter has provided only an introduction to various dialect families; we have only touched the surface. For further study, see the works in the bibliography below and consult their notes and bibliographies, and see the databases recommended for linguistic study in this course.

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For book in pdf form, use the following:

Title page, contents, and Part A, Introduction and Methods: http://www.atlas.mouton-content.com/AtlasofNorthAmericanEnglish_WdG-PartA.pdf

Part B: Mergers and Contrasts: http://www.atlas.mouton-content.com/AtlasofNorthAmericanEnglish_WdG-PartB.pdf

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Part E: Regional Patterns: http://www.atlas.mouton-content.com/AtlasofNorthAmericanEnglish_WdG-PartE.pdf

Part F: Other Views of Regional Differences; Index: http://www.atlas.mouton-content.com/AtlasofNorthAmericanEnglish_WdG-PartF.pdf

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