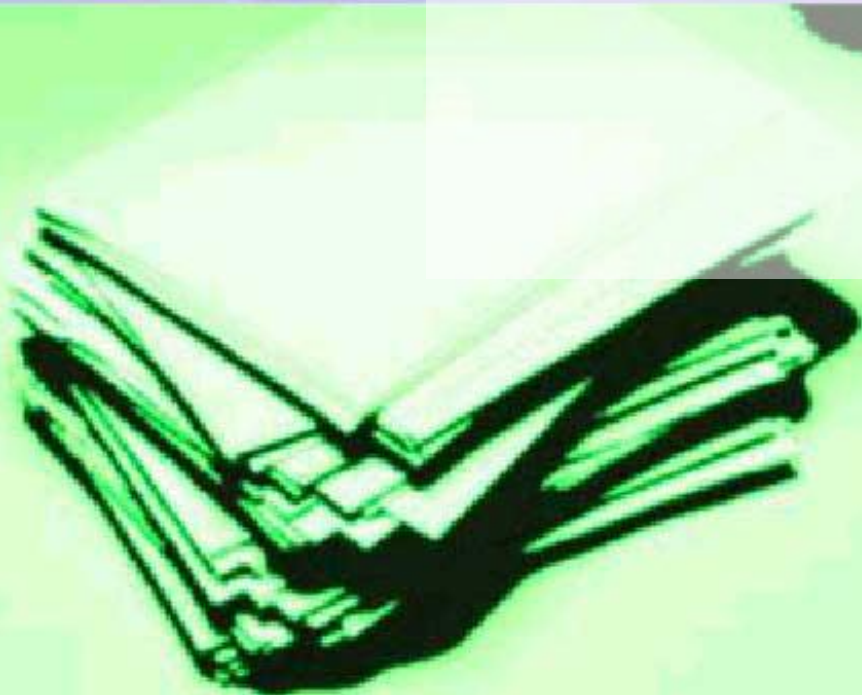




Dialects of English

Dr. C. George Boeree



DIALECT: GENERAL IDEA

The term **dialect** (from the Greek word *dialektos*, *Διάλεκτος*) is used in two distinct ways, even by linguists. One usage refers to a variety of a language that is a characteristic of a particular group of the language's speakers. The term is applied most often to regional speech patterns, but a dialect may also be defined by other factors, such as social class. A dialect that is associated with a particular social class is used in two distinct ways, even by linguists. One usage refers to a variety of a language that is a characteristic of a particular group of the language's speakers. The term is applied most often to regional speech patterns, but a dialect may also be defined by other factors, such as social class. A dialect that is associated with a particular social class can be termed a sociolect) is used in two distinct ways, even by linguists. One usage refers to a variety of a language that is a characteristic of a particular group of the language's speakers. The term is applied most often to regional speech patterns, but a dialect may also be defined by other factors, such as social class. A dialect that is associated with a particular social class can



DIALECT: GENERAL IDEA

- A dialect is distinguished by its vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation (phonology). A dialect is distinguished by its vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation (phonology, including prosody). Where a distinction can be made only in terms of pronunciation, the term accent is appropriate, not *dialect*. Other speech varieties include: standard languages. Other speech varieties include: standard languages, which are standardized for public performance (for example, a written standard); jargons. Other speech varieties include: standard languages, which are standardized for public performance (for example, a written standard); jargons, which are characterized



DIALECT: GENERAL IDEA

The particular speech patterns used by an individual are termed an idiolect.



Standard and non-standard dialect

A **standard dialect** (also known as a **standardized dialect** or "standard language") is a dialect that is supported by institutions. Such institutional support may include government recognition or designation; presentation as being the "correct" form of a language in schools; published grammars, dictionaries, and textbooks that set forth a "correct" spoken and written form; and an extensive formal literature that employs that dialect (prose, poetry, non-fiction, etc.). There may be multiple standard dialects associated with a single language. For example, Standard American English or "standard language") is a dialect that is supported by institutions. Such institutional support may include government recognition or designation; presentation as being the "correct" form of a language in schools; published grammars, dictionaries, and textbooks that set forth a "correct" spoken and written form; and an extensive formal literature that employs that dialect (prose, poetry, non-fiction, etc.). There may be multiple standard dialects associated with a single language. For example, Standard American



Standard and non-standard dialect

A nonstandard dialect A nonstandard dialect, like a standard dialect, has a complete vocabulary, grammar, and syntax, but is not the beneficiary of institutional support. An example of a nonstandard English dialect is Southern American English A nonstandard dialect, like a standard dialect, has a complete vocabulary, grammar, and syntax, but is not the beneficiary of institutional support. An example of a nonstandard English dialect is Southern American English or Newfoundland English A nonstandard dialect, like a standard dialect, has a complete vocabulary, grammar, and syntax, but is not the beneficiary of institutional support. An example of a nonstandard English dialect is Southern American English or Newfoundland



"Dialect" or "language"

There is no universally accepted criterion for distinguishing a *language* from a *dialect*. A number of rough measures exist, sometimes leading to contradictory results. Some linguists do not differentiate between languages and dialects, i.e. languages are dialects and vice versa. The distinction is therefore subjective and depends on the user's frame of reference. Note also that the terms are not always treated as mutually exclusive; there is not necessarily anything contradictory in the statement that "the *language* of the Pennsylvania Dutch of the Pennsylvania Dutch is a dialect of German". However, the term *dialect* always implies a relation between languages: if language X is called a dialect, this implies that the speaker considers X a dialect of some other language Y, which then usually is some standard language.



"Dialect" or "language"

Language varieties are often called *dialects* rather than *languages*:

- if they have no standard or codified form,
- if the speakers of the given language do not have a state of their own,
- if they are rarely or never used in writing (outside reported speech),
- if they lack prestige with respect to some other, often standardised, variety.



"Dialect" or "language"

Anthropological linguists Anthropological linguists define dialect as the specific form of a language used by a speech community. [citation needed] In other words, the difference between language and dialect is the difference between the abstract or general and the concrete and particular. From this perspective, everyone speaks a dialect. Those who identify a particular dialect as the "standard" or "proper" version of a language are in fact using these terms to express a social distinction. Often, the standard language is close to the sociolect of the elite class.



"Dialect" or "language"

The status The status of language is not solely determined by linguistic criteria, but it is also the result of a historical and political development. Romansh The status of language is not solely determined by linguistic criteria, but it is also the result of a historical and political development. Romansh came to be a written language, and therefore it is recognized as a language, even though it is very close to the Lombardic alpine dialects. An opposite example is the case of Chinese The status of language is not solely determined by linguistic criteria, but it is also the result of a historical and political development. Romansh came to be a written language, and therefore it is recognized as a language, even though it is very close to



THE DIALECTS OF BRITISH ENGLISH

Southern

Southern English engages in r-dropping, that is, r's are not pronounced after vowels, unless followed by another vowel. Instead, vowels are lengthened or have an /r/ off-glide, so fire becomes /faɪr/, far becomes /fɑːr/, and so on.

- regular use of "broad a" (/ɑː/), where GA (General American) would use /æ/.
- "long o" is pronounced /u/, where GA uses /ou/.
- final unstressed i is pronounced /ɪ/, where GA uses /i:).
- t between vowels retained as /t/ (or a glottal stop, in its variants), where GA changes it to /d/.

The English of well-bred Londoners, especially graduates of the public schools (e.g. Eton and Harrow) and "Oxbridge" universities, was the origin of "the Queen's English," also known as **Received Pronunciation** (RP), BBC, or "posh."

THE DIALECTS OF BRITISH ENGLISH

- **Cockney**

Originally the dialect of the working class of East End London.



THE DIALECTS OF BRITISH ENGLISH

Besides the accent, it includes a large number of slang words, including the famous rhyming slang:



THE DIALECTS OF BRITISH ENGLISH

- have a butchers -- take a look [from butcher's hook = look]
- north and south -- mouth
- plates -- feet [from plates of meat = feet]
- boat race -- face
- skin and blister -- sister
- trouble -- wife [from trouble and strife = wife]
- dustbin lids -- kids / children
- whistle -- suit [from whistle and flute = suit]
- oily rag -- fag = cigarette
- jam jar -- car
- mince pies -- eyes
- pen and ink -- stink
- porkies -- lies [from pork pies = lies]
- titter -- hat [from tit for tat = hat]
- apples and pears -- stairs
- Jimmy -- urinate [from Jimmy Riddle = piddle]
- Bertie Woofter -- gay man [from Bertie Woofter = poofter]
- China -- mate / friend [from China plate = mate]
- Khyber -- buttocks [from Khyber Pass = ass]
- rabbit and pork -- talk
- tea leaf -- thief
- taters -- cold [from potato mold = cold]
- dog and bone -- phone
- loaf -- head [from loaf of bread = head]



THE DIALECTS OF BRITISH ENGLISH

- initial h is dropped, so house becomes /aus/ (or even /a:s/).
- /th/ and /dh/ become /f/ and /v/ respectively: think > /fɪŋk/, brother > /brœv'/.
■ t between vowels becomes a glottal stop: water > /woʔi/.
- diphthongs change, sometimes dramatically: time > /toim/, brave > /braiv/, etc.
- brown bread -- dead
- elbows and knees -- trees
- gold watch -- Scotch
- pride and joy -- boy
- current bun -- Sun
- dicky -- shirt [from dicky dirt = shirt]
- pots and pans -- hands
- jugs -- ears [from jugs of beers = ears]
- ones and twos -- shoes
- daisies -- boots [from daisy roots = boots]
- bird -- prison [from bird lime = time, as in doing time]

(from Kryss Katsiavriades at <http://www.kryssstal.com/cockney.html>)



THE DIALECTS OF BRITISH ENGLISH

Estuary

English

From London down the Thames and into Essex, Sussex, and even Kent, a new working and middle class dialect has evolved and is rapidly become "the" southern dialect. It combines some of the characteristics of Cockney with RP, but makes much less use of Cockney slang.



THE DIALECTS OF BRITISH ENGLISH

East Anglian

This dialect is very similar to the Southern:

- t between vowels usually becomes a glottal stop.
- /ai/ becomes /oi/: time > /toim/.
- RP yu becomes u: after n, t, d... as in American English.



THE DIALECTS OF BRITISH ENGLISH

East

Midlands

The dialect of the East Midlands, once filled with interesting variations from county to county, is now predominantly RP. R's are dropped, but h's are pronounced. The only signs that differentiate it from RP:

- ou > u: (so go becomes /gu:/).
- RP yu; becomes u: after n, t, d... as in American English.

The West Country

- r's are not dropped.
- initial s often becomes z (singer > zinger).
- initial f often becomes v (finger > vinger).
- vowels are lengthened.

THE DIALECTS OF BRITISH ENGLISH

West

Midlands

This is the dialect of Ozzie Osbourne! While pronunciation is not that different from RP, some of the vocabulary is:

- are > am
- am, are (with a continuous sense) > bin
- is not > ay
- are not > bay

Brummie is the version of West Midlands spoken in Birmingham.



THE DIALECTS OF BRITISH ENGLISH

Lancashire

This dialect, spoken north and east of Liverpool, has the southern habit of dropping r's. Other features:

- /œ/ > /u/, as in luck (/luk/).
- /ou/ > /oi/, as in hole (/hoil/)
- **Scouse** is the very distinctive Liverpool accent, a version of the Lancashire dialect, that the Beatles made famous.
- the tongue is drawn back.
- /th/ and /dh/ > /t/ and /d/ respectively.
- final k sounds like the Arabic q.
- for is pronounced to rhyme with fur.



THE DIALECTS OF BRITISH ENGLISH

Yorkshire

The Yorkshire dialect is known for its sing-song quality, a little like Swedish, and retains its r's.

- /œ/ > /u/, as in luck (/luk/).
- the is reduced to t'.
- initial h is dropped.
- was > were.
- still use thou (pronounced /tha/) and thee.
- aught and naught (pronounced /aut/ or /out/ and /naut/ or /nout/) are used for anything and nothing.

THE DIALECTS OF BRITISH ENGLISH

Northern

The Northern dialect closely resembles the southern-most Scottish dialects. It retains many old Scandinavian words, such as *bairn* for child, and not only keeps its r's, but often rolls them. The most outstanding version is **Geordie**, the dialect of the Newcastle area.

- -er > /æ/, so father > /fædhæ/.
- /ou/ > /o:/', so that boat sounds like each letter is pronounced.
- talk > /ta:k/
- work > /work/
- book > /bu:k/
- my > me
- me > us
- our > wor
- you plural > youse



THE DIALECTS OF BRITISH ENGLISH

Wales

- Welsh English is characterized by a sing-song quality and lightly rolled r's. It has been strongly influenced by the Welsh language, although it is increasingly influenced today by standard English, due to the large number of English people vacationing and retiring there.



THE DIALECTS OF BRITISH ENGLISH

Scotland

Scotland actually has more variation in dialects than England! The variations do have a few things in common, though, besides a large particularly Scottish vocabulary:

- rolled r's.
- "pure" vowels (/e:/ rather than /ei/, /o:/ rather than /ou/)
- /u:/ is often fronted to /ö/ or /ü/, e.g. boot, good, muin (moon), poor...

THE DIALECTS OF BRITISH ENGLISH

There are several "layers" of Scottish English. Most people today speak standard English with little more than the changes just mentioned, plus a few particular words that they themselves view as normal English, such as to jag (to prick) and burn (brook). In rural areas, many older words and grammatical forms, as well as further phonetic variations, still survive, but are being rapidly replaced with more standard forms. But when a Scotsman (or woman) wants to show his pride in his heritage, he may resort to quite a few traditional variations in his speech. First, the phonetics:



THE DIALECTS OF BRITISH ENGLISH

- /oi/, /ai/, and final /ei/ > /'i/, e.g. oil, wife, tide...
- final /ai/ > /i/, e.g. ee (eye), dee (die), lee (lie)...
- /ou/ > /e/, e.g. ake (oak), bate (boat), hame (home), stane (stone), gae (go)...
- /au/ > /u/, e.g. about, house, cow, now... (often spelled oo or u)
- /o/ > /a:/, e.g. saut (salt), law, aw (all)...
- /ou/ > /a:/, e.g. auld (old), cauld (cold), snaw (snow)...
- /æ/ > /a/, e.g. man, lad, sat...
- also: pronounce the ch's and gh's that are silent in standard English: nicht, licht, loch...




THE DIALECTS OF BRITISH ENGLISH

Plus, the grammar:

- Present tense: often, all forms follow the third person singular (they wis, instead of they were).
- Past tense (weak verbs): -it after plosives (big > biggit); -t after n, l, r, and all other unvoiced consonants (ken > kent); -ed after vowels and all other voiced consonants (luv > luv ed).
- Past tense (strong verbs): come > cam, gang > gaed and many more.
- On the other hand, many verbs that are strong in standard English are weak in Scottish English: sell > selit, tell > tellt, mak > makkit, see > seed, etc.
- Past participle is usually the same as the past (except for many strong verbs, as in standard English)
- Present participle: -in (ken > kennin)
- The negative of many auxiliary verbs is formed with -na: am > amna, hae (have) > hinna, dae (do) > dinna, can > canna, etc.
- Irregular plurals: ee > een (eyes), shae > shuin (shoes), coo > kye (cows).
- Common diminutives in -ie: lass > lassie, hoose > hoosie...
- Common adjective ending: -lik (= -ish)
- Demonstratives come in four pairs (singular/plural): this/thir, that/thae, thon/thon, yon/yon.
- Relative pronouns: tha or at.
- Interrogative pronouns: hoo, wha, whan, whase, whaur, whatna, whit.
- Each or every is ilka; each one is ilk ane.
- Numbers: ane, twa, three, fower, five, sax, seeven, aucht, nine, ten, aleeven, twal...


THE DIALECTS OF BRITISH ENGLISH



And finally, the many unique words: lass, bairn (child), kirk (church), big (build), bonny, greet (weep), ingle (household fire), aye (yes), hame (home)... As you can see, Scottish English in its original glory is as near to being different language as one can get, rather than simply another dialect of English. See Clive P L Young's Scots Haunbuik at http://www.electricscotland.com/tourist/sh_gram.htm for more detail.



There are also several urban dialects, particularly in Glasgow and Edinburgh. The thick dialect of the working class of Edinburgh can be heard in the movie *Trainspotting*.



In the Highlands, especially the Western Islands, English is often people's second language, the first being Scottish Gaelic. Highland English is pronounced in a lilting fashion with pure vowels. It is, actually, one of the prettiest varieties of English one may ever hear.

THE DIALECTS OF BRITISH ENGLISH

English was imposed upon the Irish, but they have made it their own and have contributed some of our finest literature. Irish English is strongly influenced by Irish Gaelic:

- r after vowels is retained
- "pure" vowels (/e:/ rather than /ei/, /o:/ rather than /ou/)
- /th/ and /dh/ > /t/ and /d/ respectively.



THE DIALECTS OF BRITISH ENGLISH

The sentence structure of Irish English often borrows from the Gaelic:

- Use of *be* or *do* in place of *usually*:
 - I *do* write... (I *usually* write)
- Use of *after* for the progressive perfect and pluperfect:
 - I was *after* getting married (I had just gotten married)
- Use of progressive beyond what is possible in standard English:
 - I was *thinking* it was in the drawer
- Use of the present or past for perfect and pluperfect:
 - She's dead these ten years (she has been dead...)
- Use of *let you be* and *don't be* as the imperative:
 - *Don't be* troubling yourself
- Use of *it is* and *it was* at the beginning of a sentence:
 - *it was* John has the good looks in the family
 - *Is it* marrying her you want?



THE DIALECTS OF BRITISH ENGLISH

- Substitute *and* for *when* or *as*:
 - It only struck me *and* you going out of the door
- Substitute the infinitive verb for *that* or *if*:
 - Imagine such a thing *to be* seen here!
- Drop *if*, *that*, or *whether*:
 - Tell me did you see them
- Statements phrased as rhetorical questions:
 - Isn't he the fine-looking fellow?
- Extra uses of the definite article:
 - He was sick with *the* jaundice
- Unusual use of prepositions:
 - Sure there's no daylight *in* it at all now

As with the English of the Scottish Highlands, the English of the west coast of Ireland, where Gaelic is still spoken, is lilting, with pure vowels. It, too, is particularly pretty.



AUSTRALIAN ENGLISH

Australian English is predominantly British English, and especially from the London area. R's are dropped after vowels, but are often inserted between two words ending and beginning with vowels.

The vowels reflect a strong "Cockney" influence: The long a (/ei/) tends towards a long i (/ai/), so pay sounds like pie to an American ear. The long i (/ai/), in turn, tends towards oi, so cry sounds like croy. Ow sounds like it starts with a short a (/æ/). Other vowels are less dramatically shifted.

Even some rhyming slang has survived into Australian English: Butcher's means look (butcher's hook); hit and miss means piss; loaf means head (loaf of bread); Noah's ark means shark; Richard the third means turd, and so on.

Like American English has absorbed numerous American Indian words, Australian English has absorbed many Aboriginal words:

- billibong -- watering hole
- coolabah -- a type of tree
- corroboree -- a ceremony
- nulla-nulla -- a club
- wallaby -- small kangaroo
- wombat -- a small marsupial
- woomera -- a weapon
- wurley -- a simple shelter
- ...not to mention such ubiquitous words as kangaroo, boomerang, and koala!

AUSTRALIAN ENGLISH

Aborigine and colonialist myths blended easily, and there are a number of fearsome creatures. For example, the bunyip lives near bilibongs and eats children. Also living in bilibongs is the mindi, a hairy snake. A yowie is the Australian version of Sasquatch. And the min-min light is their version of a will-o-the-wisp.

Many common words refer to the traditions of the bushman or bushie -- the early explorers and settlers of the outback (wilderness). You can find many of these in Australia's national song, *Waltzing Matilda*.

- billy -- tin pot for making tea
- cooe -- call used in the outback
- dingo -- native dog
- jackeroo -- young station hand
- joey -- young kangaroo
- jumbuck -- sheep
- matilda -- backpack
- never-never -- the far outback
- squatter -- rancher
- station -- ranch
- swagman -- bushman or tramp
- tucker -- food

AUSTRALIAN ENGLISH

Colorful expressions also abound:

- Like a greasespot -- hot and sweaty
- Like a stunned mullet -- in a daze
- Like a dog's breakfast -- a mess
- Up a gumtree -- in trouble
- Mad as a gumtree full of galahs -- insane
- Happy as a bastard on Fathers' Day -- very happy
- Dry as a dead dingo's donger -- very dry indeed



AUSTRALIAN ENGLISH

Another characteristic of Australian English is abbreviated words, often ending in -y, -ie, or -o:

- aussie -- Australian
- chalky -- teacher
- chewie -- chewing gum
- chockie -- chocolate
- coldie -- a cold beer
- cossie -- swimming costume (swimsuit)
- footy -- football (Australian rules, of course)
- frenchie -- condom
- frostie -- a cold beer
- garbo -- garbage man
- lavvy -- lavatory



AUSTRALIAN ENGLISH

- lippie -- lipstick
- lollies -- sweets
- mossie -- mosquito
- mushies -- mushrooms
- oldies -- one's parents
- rellies -- one's relatives
- sammie -- sandwich
- sickie -- sick day
- smoko -- cigarette break
- sunnies -- sunglasses

And, of course, there are those peculiarly Australian words and expressions, such as g'day (guhday to American ears), crikey, fair dinkum, no worries, Oz, Pavlova, and Vegemite!



NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand English is heard by Americans as "Ozzie Light." The characteristics of Australian English are there to some degree, but not as intensely. The effect for Americans is uncertainty as to whether the person is from England or Australia. One clue is that New Zealand English sound "flatter" (less modulated) than either Australian or British English and more like western American English.



SOUTH AFRICA

South African English is close to RP but often with a Dutch influence. English as spoken by Afrikaaners is more clearly influenced by Dutch pronunciation. Just like Australian and American English, there are numerous words adopted from the surrounding African languages, especially for native species of animals and plants. As spoken by black South Africans for whom it is not their first language, it often reflects the pronunciation of their Bantu languages, with purer vowels. Listen, for example, to Nelson Mandela or Bishop Tutu.



SOUTH AFRICA

Here are some examples:

- i - as in bit is pronounced 'uh'
- long /a:/ in words like 'past', 'dance'
- t in middle of words pronounced as d's ('pretty' becomes '/pridi:/')
- donga - ditch, from Xhosa
- dagga - marijuana, from Xhoixhoi (?)
- kak - bullshit, from Afrikaans
- fundi - expert, from Xhosa and Zulu
umfundi (student).





Dialects also varies slightly from east to west:
In Natal (in western South Africa), /ai/ is pronounced /a:/, so that why is pronounced /wa:/.

On top of all this, the dialects of the ethnic group referred to in South Africa as "Coloured" (i.e. of mixed racial backgrounds) have a dialect quite distinct from the dialects of "white" South Africans.

Alan also suggests that South African has a "flatter" (less modulated) sound, similar to that of New Zealand as contrasted with Australian English

CANADA

Canadian English is generally similar to northern and western American English. The one outstanding characteristic is called Canadian rising:

- /ai/ and /au/ become /œi/ and /œu/, respectively.
- Americans can listen to the newscaster Peter Jennings -- one of the best voices on the telly! -- for these sounds.

One unusual characteristic found in much Canadian casual speech is the use of sentence final "eh?" even in declarative sentences.

Most Canadians retain r's after vowels, but in the Maritimes, they drop their r's, just like their New England neighbors to the south.

Newfoundland has a very different dialect, called Newfie, that seems to be strongly influenced by Irish immigrants:

- /th/ and /dh/ > /t/ and /d/ respectively.
- am, is, are > be's
- I like, we like, etc. > I likes, we likes, etc.

American English

American English derives from 17th century British English. Virginia and Massachusetts, the “original” colonies, were settled mostly by people from the south of England, especially London. The mid Atlantic area -- Pennsylvania in particular -- was settled by people from the north and west of England and by the Scots-Irish (descendents of Scottish people who settled in Northern Ireland). These sources resulted in three dialect areas -- northern, southern, and midland. Over time, further dialects would develop.

The Boston area and the Richmond and Charleston areas maintained strong commercial -- and cultural -- ties to England, and looked to London for guidance as to what was “class” and what was not. So, as the London dialect of the upper classes changed, so did the dialects of the upper class Americans in these areas. For example, in the late 1700’s and early 1800’s, r-dropping spread from London to much of southern England, and to places like Boston and Virginia. New Yorkers, who looked to Boston for the latest fashion trends, adopted it early, and in the south, it spread to wherever the plantation system was. On the other hand, in Pennsylvania, the Scots-Irish, and the Germans as well, kept their heavy r’s.

American English

On the other hand, vocabulary in America was much more open to change than back in the old country. From the Indians, we got the names for many North American animals and plants, and thousands of place names. Here is a partial list (from an exhaustive list compiled by Mark Rosenfelder (<http://www.zompist.com/indianwd.html>)):

- abalone -- Costanoan aulun
- bayou -- Choctaw bayuk
- caribou -- Algonquian
- caucus -- Algonquian caucuasus 'counselor'
- chipmunk -- Algonquian chitmunk
- hickory -- Algonquian pawcohiccora
- high muckamuck -- Chinook hiu muckamuck
- hogan -- Navajo hogan
- hominy -- Algonquian
- how [greeting] -- Dakota háo, Omaha hau
- moccasin -- Natick mohkussin

American English

- moose -- Natick moos
- mugwump -- Natick mugquomp 'captain'
- muskrat -- Natick musquash + 'rat'
- opossum -- Powhatan aposoum
- papoose -- Algonquian papoos
- pecan -- Algonquian paccan
- persimmon -- Cree pasiminan 'dried fruit'
- potlatch -- Nootka patshatl
- powwow -- Algonquian
- raccoon -- Algonquian arathkone
- sachem -- Narraganset sâchim
- sasquatch -- Halkomelem sesqec
- skunk -- Massachuset squnck
- sockeye [salmon] -- Salish sukkegh, or Northern Straits Salish seqey'
- squash -- Massachuset asko:o:tasquash
- squaw -- Massachuset squa
- succotash -- Narraganset msíckquatash
- tepee -- Dakota thipi
- terrapin -- Algonquian *toolepeiwa
- toboggan -- Micmac toba:kan
- tomahawk -- Algonquian tamahaac
- totem -- Ojibwa ninto:te:m
- wampum -- Algonquian wampumpeage
- wapiti -- Shawnee wapiti 'white rump'
- wickiup -- Fox wikipapi
- wigwam -- Abnaki wikewam
- woodchuck -- Algonquian otchek



American English

The slave trade brought many new words from the Caribbean:

- barbecue -- Carib barbricot
- caiman -- Carib acayuman
- canoe -- Caribbean
- cassava -- Taino caçábi
- chigger -- Cariban chigo
- guava -- Caribbean
- hammock -- Taino
- hurricane -- Carib huracan 'his one leg'
- iguana -- Arawak iwana
- maize -- Carib mahiz
- mangrove -- Taino mangle
- papaya -- Carib
- pawpaw -- Carib (same source as papaya)
- potato -- Taino batata
- savannah -- Taino zabana
- tobacco -- Arawak tzibatl

American English

From the Indians of Mexico, we adopted many other words, some through Spanish and others directly:

- avocado -- Nahuatl ahuacatl
- chile, chili -- Nahuatl chilli
- chocolate -- Aztec xocolatl
- cigar -- Maya sik'ar 'smoke'
- cocoa, cacao -- Nahuatl cacahuatl
- coyote -- Nahuatl cóyotl
- guacamole -- Nahuatl ahuaca-molli 'avocado sauce'
- mescal -- Nahuatl mexcalli
- mesquite -- Nahuatl mizquitl
- mole -- Nahuatl -molli 'sauce'
- ocelot -- Nahuatl ocelotl
- peyote -- Nahuatl peyotl
- shack -- Nahuatl xacalli 'thatched cabin'
- shark -- Maya xoc
- tamale -- Nahuatl tamalli
- tomato -- Nahuatl tomatl

American English

From slaves, we got another set of words, all the way from Africa:

- goober -- Bantu -guba
- gumbo -- Bantu -gombo 'okra'
- okra -- Ashante nkru
- yam -- Fulani nyami 'to eat'

Speaking of slaves, southern speech in particular was influenced by slave speech habits, which in turn were based in part on original African languages and in part on the creoles which spread from the African coast and the West Indies. When southerners say “I done lost it,” they are using a slave creole construction.



American English

More willing immigrants added to other dialects. The Germans and the Irish had a huge impact on the colonies and early states. The dialects of central Pennsylvania, Minnesota, and the Dakotas were strongly influenced by the Germans, while the city dialects of the north were influenced by the Irish.

New York City became the door to the United States in the 1800's, and we see the impact of other immigrants, such as Jews and Italians: words such as spaghetti, pasta, pizza, nosh, schlemiel, yenta; expressions such as watsamatta and I should live so long. The absence of the th sounds in the original Dutch of NYC, as well as in Italian and Yiddish and the English dialect of the Irish, led to the distinctive dese and dose of New York -- only now starting to diminish.



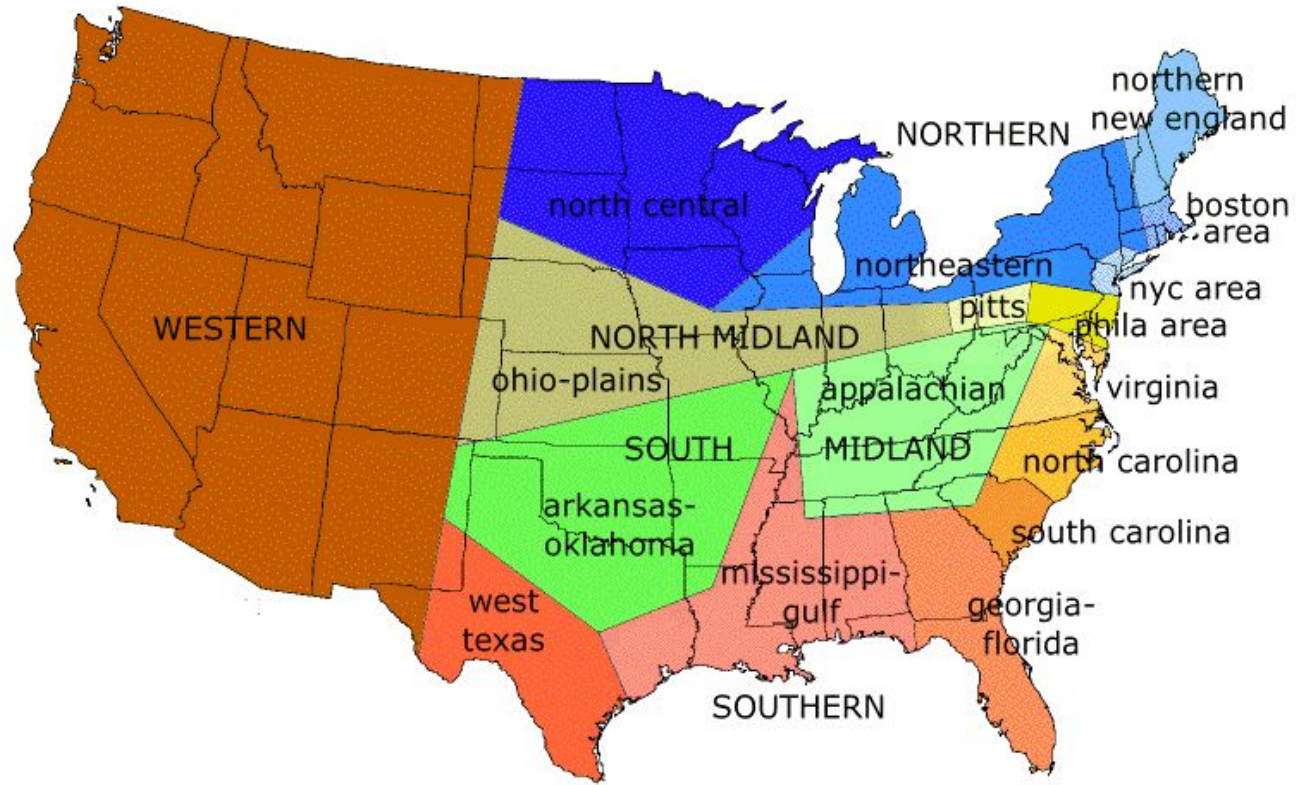
American English

There is also a western dialect, which developed in the late 1800's. It is literally a blend of all the dialects, although it is most influenced by the northern midland dialect. Although there are certainly differences between the dialects of, say, Seattle, San Francisco, Phoenix, and Denver, they are far less distinct than, for example, the differences between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh!

Out west, there were also the influences of non-English speaking people, notably the original Spanish speaking populations and the immigrant Chinese (mostly Cantonese). Although they did not influence pronunciation or syntax, they provided a huge number of words. In the domain of food alone, we find tacos, tamales, frijoles, and burritos, chow mein, lo mein, fu yung, and chop suey. Many words from Mexico were actually already adopted from Mexican Indian languages: tomato and coyote spring to mind.



American English



American English

The dialects of the United States (with approximate areas):

Northern

- Northern New England (Maine and New Hampshire)
- Boston area (eastern Massachusetts, Rhode Island)
- Northeastern (Connecticut, western Massachusetts, Vermont, upstate New York, lower Michigan, northern Illinois)
- New York City area (including most of Long Island and northern New Jersey)
- North central (upper Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, the Dakotas)

Northern midland

- Philadelphia area (inc. eastern Pennsylvania, southern New Jersey, Delaware, and the Baltimore area)
- Pittsburgh area (western Pennsylvania)
- Ohio-Plains (Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, Nebraska, Kansas...)

Southern midland

- Appalachia (western Virginia, West Virginia, eastern Kentucky, eastern Tennessee)
- Arkansas-Oklahoma

Southern

- Virginia (eastern)
- North Carolina (eastern)
- South Carolina
- Georgia-Florida
- Mississippi-Gulf (including Alabama, Louisiana, eastern Texas, western Tennessee, western Kentucky)
- West Texas

Western (Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, Colorado, Utah, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, California)



American English

Southern and south midland:

- "drawl" [lengthening, fronting, and raising vowels]
- /ai/ > /æ:/ in find, mind
- /oi/ > /o/ in boil, oil
- /u:/ > /yu:/ in due, tuesday
- au/ > /æu/ in out, doubt
- /e/ > /ei/ in bed, head
- /e/ > /i/ in pen, ten
- greasy > greazy
- carry > tote
- dragged > drug
- you > you all, y'all

Southern:

- help, bulb, wolf > /hep/, /bœb/, /wuf/

Southern vs south midland:

- drop r's -- strong, sometimes retroflex, r's
- wash: /wa:sh/ -- /wosh/, /worsh/
- think: /think/ -- /theingk/
- egg: /eg/ -- /eig/
- moon: /mu:n/ -- /mü:n/
- snake doctor -- snake feeder
- snap beans -- green beans
- goobers -- peanuts

American English

Northern vs north midland:

- fog, hog: /fag/, /hag/ -- /fɒg/, /hɒg/
- roof: /ruf/, /huf/ -- /ru:f/, /hu:f/
- cow, house: /kau/, /haus/ -- /kæu/, /hæus/
- wash: /wa:sh/ -- /wɒsh/, /wɔ:sh/
- darning needle -- snake feeder
- pail -- bucket
- teeter-totter -- see-saw
- fire-fly -- lightning-bug

Eastern New England, Boston area, NYC area

- drop r's
- insert transitional r's, as in law'r'n awdah

Eastern New England, Boston area, Virginia area

- /æ/ frequently becomes /a/, e.g. in aunt, dance, glass
- Mary-marry-merry (/eɪr/-/æər/-/er/) distinctions preserved only in r-less areas, rapidly disappearing from American speech

American English

NYC and north midland, and spreading rapidly

- loss of voiceless w: which > /wic/
- loss of voiceless y: human > /yum'n/

A simplified way of differentiating the dialects is based on the words for two American favorites: the submarine sandwich and the soft drink:

Submarine sandwich

- New York: hero
- Philadelphia: hoagy
- Boston: grinder
- Southern: poor-boy
- Soft drink

Boston: tonic

- Northern and North Midland, east of the Susquehanna: soda
- Northern and North Midland, west of the Susquehanna: pop
- South and South Midland: cold drink

(not to mention soda pop and soda water, and even coke in Rhode Island!)

American English

The old cities of the eastern US each have their own peculiarities. New York is famous for its addition of central off-glides: pier becomes /pi:ʔ/, pair becomes /peʔ/, poor becomes /poʔ/. The aw (/o/) sound is raised and has a central off-glide as well: ball and coffee approach /buʔl/ and /cuʔfi:ʔ/. And her becomes /həʔ/!



American English

I live in south-central Pennsylvania, which is a great location for hearing various eastern accents. There are actually five in Pennsylvania: In the northern tier, near upstate New York, the accent is Northern. In Pittsburgh and the surrounding area they say /stil/ and /mil/ instead of steel and meal. In the south, near West Virginia, you hear Appalachian, and people still say you'uns and refer to their grandparents as Mammaw and Pappy!. And, in the center of the state is what is called the Susquehanna accent, which is a variation on the Philadelphia area dialect, with a lot of German and Scots-Irish influences. And we can't forget the Philadelphia accent itself:

- /i/ often becomes /i:/, as in attitude and gratitude
- /i:ɡ/ > /ig/, as in the Philadelphia Eagles, pronounced /ig'lz/
- /eɪɡ/ > /eg/, so plague is pronounced /pleɡ/
- /u:r/ > /or/, so sure sounds the same as shore
- /aʊl/ > /al/, e.g. owl
- /aʊr/ > /ar/, so our sounds like are
- mayor > /meɪr/
- /æ/ > /iæ/, so Ann sounds like Ian
- very and ferry become /vɔəri:/ and /fɔəri:/
- /st/ > /sht/ at the beginning of words, so street is /shtri:t/
- I is always "dark," that is, pronounced in the back of the throat

(See <http://www.citypaper.net/articles/081497/article008.shtml> for more.)



American English

In the Lancaster area (part of the Susquehanna dialect), the Pennsylvania German influence is obvious in some of the words and sentence structure: We red up the room, outen the light, and throw the cow over the fence some hay. We say that the peanut butter is all, the road is slippy, and I read that wunst (once). A slide is a sliding board, sneakers are all Keds, vacuum cleaners are sweepers, little pieces are snibbles, and if you are looking a bit disheveled, you are furhuddled. And at any local restaurant, they will ask you: Can I get you coffee awhile?

Dialects typically vary in their status. In the colonial and revolutionary times, a Boston, New York, or Virginia accent marked you as a gentleman or lady. In the early part of the 1900's, the accent of suburban New York was tops: Listen to the recordings of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, for example. Unlike "General American" (the radio and television reporter's accent), FDR dropped his r's and drawled his vowels luxuriously.



American English

General American is a rather innocuous blend of Northern and Northern Midland dialect, with none of the peculiar words or pronunciations of any particular area. Today, the Western dialect has established itself, via the entertainment industry, as equal. Even Southern and Southern Midland English, long scorned by Northerners, have reestablished their status, especially after the presidencies of Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton.

Two dialects are still seen as being substandard by many Americans: Appalachian and Black English. Unlike other dialects, they have considerable grammatical differences that make them sound to the mainstream as simply horrible English.

In Appalachia, for example, they say us'ns and you'ns. Both Appalachian dialect and Black English speakers often double negatives (he ain't got none), double comparatives and superlatives (more bigger, most biggest, gooder, bestest), over-regularize the past tense (stoled or stealed), and over-regularize plurals (mouses, sheeps, childrens).

Although the prejudice against people from Appalachia is real enough, the long tradition of prejudice against black Americans has been very difficult to eliminate, and that includes the disrespect accorded Black English. Despite some attempts to consider it another language (the Ebonics movement), it is in fact a variation on the Southern dialect, with input from Gullah and other slave creoles, plus the constant creation of slang, especially in northern urban areas ("the Ghetto").

