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American English in the English Diaspora

It it is commonplace to say that English began in England. Only a historical hairsplitter would quibble about the West Germanic dialects on the continent, and DeCamp (1958) has argued that even the Old English dialects did not have their origin there. For a thousand years or so, very roughly, English remained primarily on the one island, and then on two. Travelers abroad, like pilgrims to the Holy Land, quite possibly conversed in English among themselves; but, given the *lingua franca* status of Latin, they seem little likely to have spread their language to speakers of other languages. It was a sweeping change, then, when in the age of exploration people like Cabot, Sir Humphrey Gilbert, John Smith and the Jamestown group, and the New England Puritans began carrying English to the Americas. Beginning somewhere around the end of the sixteenth century, English began spreading to all parts of the globe. The effects upon the language might be, *a priori*, expected to be very great.

Despite the proficient use of English by some speakers in almost all parts of the world today, there appear to be three large areas of native monolingual speakers: North America (the United States and Canada),Australia, and the British Isles. (There are, of course, areas like South Africa with a smaller number of monolingual English speakers.) The two first are what Kachru (1992) calls the second diaspora, the first being to Wales, Scotland, and Ireland.

Australia and pre-twentieth century North America share, with West Africa, the China Coast, Melanesia, and New Guinea, the special variety Pidgin English. (The Hawaiian Islands received it just after the turn of the nineteenth century, and the Caribbean and coastal South America very probably had it as early as the late seventeenth.) Although there are many differences, there is still a striking similarity between the various pidginized varieties of English, which have creolized in various places (Gullah of the United States, Kriol of Australia.) Along with pidginized varieties of Portuguese, French, and perhaps other European languages, these pidginized varieties had an astonishingly wide spread, with attestations in most cases within a century or so

after the spread of European colonialism began (McWhorter 1995). As has frequently been pointed out, the Tense/Modal/Aspect system of the pidgin/creole languages is so strikingly similar in languages with different lexical bases that many of the traditional notions of language diffusion have been challenged.

So impressive is this correspondence that Bickerton (1982) has denied the possibility of the spread of these forms by the European maritime activities—"by sailors," as he put it. He particularly considered that a generational spread in the Hawaiin Islands could not be explained by such transmission. Bickerton's bioprogram theory seems to have developed in the beginning primarily as an alternative to such widespread transmission. However, recently, under the influence of Goodman and others, Bickerton (1994) states that "Pacific Pidgin English [was] spoken by [Hawaiian] sailors in San Diego in the 1830s."

The early functions of Pidgin English in North America and in Australia (Sandefur and Sandefur, 1980; see also the map regularly printed in the newsletter *The Carrier Pidgin*) seem strikingly similar: A highly multilingual native population invaded, subjugated, and expelled from at least part of its territory by a European population—a more varied European population, it is true, in North America than in Australia, at least until after World War II (Horvath 1985:5). Perhaps because Manifest Destiny did not carry so completely from coast to coast in Australia as in what is now the United States, Australian Pidgin has remained a lively variety whereas American Indian Pidgin English and West African Pidgin English, the latter documented from Sarah Kemble Knight (1705) to Frederick Douglass (1855) and the former from at least as great a time span, are perhaps just a memory in the United States. Within the twentieth century, both varieties of pidgin became known only or primarily as "stereotyping" of minority populations in hundreds of travel accounts, local records, novels, and—in the case of AIPE—even comic strips and B-movies. Perhaps this is why the contributors to Machan and Scott (1992) hardly mention pidgin even in dealing with such pidgin-rich areas as New Guinea. Horvath (985:176) refers only to one phonological feature, which "Aboriginal English" shares with the "Ethnic Broad" variety of Australian English—primarily in the speech of Greeks and Italians.)

Eventually—and in mechanisms perhaps not wholly unrelated—the English of the United States (although not that of Canada) developed a markedly elaborate set of regional stigmata. Up until the 1960s,

dialectology in the United States meant study of those regional distributions. Most of the research and controversy of the last thirty-five years or so in American English has dealt with the attempt to recognize and to legitimize varieties which are basically social rather than regional in their distribution.

In addition to Pidgin English, early American and later Australian English share another peculiarity which has been difficult for conventional dialectologists to account for. Australian still varies most in terms not of regional but of social dialects: Broad, General, and Cultivated according to Horvath (1985). South Australian differs from that of other states "only in minor ways" (Gunn 1992: 208) Even in the North American colonies, early observers were struck by the uniformity of the English of colonists, so much so that a koiné—not too radical a suggestion in a highly complex, multidialectal and multilingual situation—has been suggested for the colonial period and the early nineteenth century. Beginning later than American English, Australian seems to have been strikingly uniform from the time of its importation from England (Horvath 1985: 17-21). It seems likely then, that regional varieties of American English as well as social varieties of Australian English would have come not from transplantation of regional varieties of British English but by development within the colonies and the United States as in Australia.

In the United States, varieties like Cajun English of Louisiana (with obvious influence from French), Chicano or Puerto Rican English (with obvious influence from Spanish), and Pennsylvania German-English (with obvious influence from German) most strikingly illustrate this point. A Yiddish-tinged variety ("Yinglish") is also well known to big city dwellers, especially in the Northeast.

The variety which has been central to perhaps most dialect research in the United States in the last thirty years, variously called Black English (Vernacular) or African-American Vernacular English, is both the most prominent and the most problematic of these "contact" dialects. Contact with West African languages analogous to that with French, German, Spanish, or Yiddish is virtually out of the question. Except for a few rare mentions in early advertisements for escaped slaves, there is no record of the use of West African languages either in the New York/New England area where slaves were prominent in the eighteenth century or on the Southern plantations where they were concentrated in the nineteenth.

On the other hand, records of pidgin- and creole-like speech on the part of slaves from West Africa are so superabundant that, in a striking paradox, their very number has been held as proof of their lack of accuracy. Cotton Mather in Massachusetts (1721) referred to the speech of "these Africans" and Frederick Douglass in 1855 referred to slaves newly transported to the Maryland plantation upon which he was enslaved as from "Guinea." Not noteworthy linguistic analysts nor polyglots, both Mather and Douglass characterized the Africans as adding an enclitic vowel to an English word, a familiar if somewhat trivial feature of Pidgin English.

Records of "Negro" speech are not lacking in the New York/ New England area, but the process—like its study—is concentrated in the South and in the groups of in-migrants who moved to Chicago after World War I, then to New York, Philadelphia, Detroit, Washington, and the inner parts of other cities—certainly including Los Angles within recent times. Out-migration from the rural South is certainly a major part of the story of the spread of Black English. From the conventional dialectologist's point of view, it has been the whole story. Pointing to a heavy concentration of the West African lexical forms first made widely available by Turner (1949) in the Georgia/ South Carolina Low Country ("Sea Islands"), conservative approaches to the history of American English have concluded that West African slaves elsewhere learned the dialect of their masters exactly—so exactly, in fact, that the data used to trace Southern U. S. dialects to their putative sources in British regional dialects are most easily elicited from Black speakers.

Against this formulation stands the folk typology which has from the beginning insisted that the influence went the other way around, that white Southerners spoke as they did at least partly because of the influence of slaves and ex-slaves who spoke a radically non-standard dialect. The slave owners and plantation novelists who wrote about the matter were almost unanimous in this. They are, of course, suspect of extreme and pernicious bias. But visitors from Europe, like Charles Dickens in the 1820s, reported very much the same.

Before influences like that of the Blacks on Southern American English, there is some indication that British regional forms had been very strikingly leveled. Eighteenth century comments like how the Americans spoke English of amazing uniformity abound. A kind of summary comes from Read (1937:99):

The cosmopolitan spirit engendered by the prevalence of many languages was an element in the pattern of colonial American culture and no doubt contributed to the breaking down of old loyalties, culminating in the American Revolution.

The "cosmopolitan spirit" in early America can fairly readily be typified by the denominations and terminology of that part of American culture which has become, in the twentieth century, all too much a part of the international scene: its money. Although references to pounds, shillings, and pence can be found in the colonial and even in the early national period, by the time of the Jefferson administration sweeping changes were brought about. Jefferson, at least, apparently did not think of the early United States as a little bit of England. Keeping the term *dollar*, current in English but deriving from Low German, Jefferson's administration modeled the U.S. currency on the Spanish "pieces of eight" with units called bits corresponding to pesetas. (*Bit*, for 12'1/2 cents, in othe expressions *two bits, four bits, six bits* is perhaps becoming obsolete in the United States.) A kind of nod to French influence can be seen in '*dime*; the *half dime* later became a *nickel*.

Somewhat later, baseball, the sport rather pretentiously labeled America's "national pastime," departed radically from the British games of cricket, rounders, etc. Like the American colonies and the early states in general, this game remained close to the Atlantic coast for a long time. The terminology, like that of many phases of American life, was English-derived, true enough, but rather maritime in distribution than British regional. From having a batter *on deck* and the next one *in the hold* (later *hole*), to the term *strike* from striking the flag at sea and *foul* from lines (ropes) running foul at sea, to an *around the [Cape] horn* double play and a California-derived favorite player (Joe DiMaggio) being styled the *Yankee clipper* or a New Yorker (Lou Gehrig) being called *Larruping* (from maritime *lee rope* according to M. Dillard 1980), baseball illustrates the Cextreme importance of maritime activity and language on the United States. Even the urging of a pitcher in difficulty to *bear down* has a very probably maritime origin. The alternate term for *manager* (of a team), *skipper* has even more obvious maritime connections.

Everyone knows that Port of New York dialect, popularly miscalled Brooklynese, has forms like /bəyd/ and /shəyt/. Not everyone knows that a waterfront section of New Orleans has the same feature, along with a *y'all* that no Brooklynite would be caught dead saying. Berger

(1980) makes an excellent case for the distribution having developed in the New Orleans-to-New York cotton trade before the Civil War. The same diphthong can be heard in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, along the North Carolina coast of the U. S., and in Liberia, in all of which the maritime factor seems overwhelmingly evident.

In vocabulary, the influence of the maritime nature of the early American colonies extends far inland. At sea a worker was a *hand;* the same usage developed on land and extended to the cattle trade in *(cow)hand.* The railroads also adopted a number of sea terms: *to ship* (goods by rail), *freight, bill of lading, (rail)way, to run* (a train), *trip, fare, passenger, berth, cabin, caboose* (Chase 1942). One of the amusing bits in the BBC's *Story of English* is the wonder expressed that American English deviated from British English in the matter of railroad terminology. The simple explanation seems to be that, in this domain at least, American English adapted the international terminology of the sea rather than the localized terms which British English took on. Even the linguistically, as artistically, marvelous Chinua Achebe, before he came to the United States, misused American English railroad terminology in his novel *A Man of the People,* making an American say *asleep on the switch* instead of *at the switch.*

Vestiges of the maritime environment of the English-speaking American colonies remain in these domains, but the major way in which the language practices of the sea transferred to the North American colonies was on the frontier. The Maritime Pidgin English which had been around a long time when the westward expansion really got under way was, as James Fenimore Cooper long ago (1846) recorded, the frontier lingua franca. Krapp (1925) established that fact by citations of Pidgin English, then strangely—one is tempted to say obtusely—took Cooper to task for reporting an unattested language variety. Other writers, like the painter George Catlin (1832-1839), reported it almost grudgingly, reporting primarily the disruptive influence of the "blasting frontier" on the native American cultures. Disruptive or not, Pidgin English and practices deriving from the maritime trade were historically of great importance on the frontier. Brunvand (1980) details the relationships between sailors' and cowboys' folklore.

General historians, as distinguished from language historians, are divided on relevant issues. Perhaps the strongest case for the "little bit of England" theory of American culture is made by Fischer (1989), who frequently cites, from secondary sources, American regional dialect forms which supposedly come from British regional dialects. (In fact,

"speech ways" is the first of his "ways" in which American regional cultures are held to be transplantations of British regional cultures.) As in most such cases, the British dialect sources are those identified at the earliest in the nineteenth century. The very great mobility of the American population, particularly of the non-slave population, is downplayed in such an approach.

Fischer (1989:261) cites a nineteenth-century American traveler in England who wrote of one speaker of the Sussex dialect that "but for his misplaced h's . . . he might have been a Southern or Western American." The letter, cited from a 1927 publication, may have been fairly late in the nineteenth century; the author is not identified. By even the middle nineteenth century, there should have been a great deal of variety included in "Southern or Western" American dialect. The evidence seems less than impressive.

Fischer following the tradition, traces the Appalachian dialect—like other Appalachian culture traits—to Scotch-Irish, or to "the 'northern' or 'Northumbrian' English that was spoken in the lowlands of Scotland, in the North of Ireland, and in the border counties of English in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century" (1989:654). Admittedly revisionist historians Jordan and Kaups (1989:34) tend rather to cite "the European hardscrabble periphery" which would include not only Scotch-Irish but "Welsh, Alpine Swiss, Salzburger, and Finnish settlers of colonial America." Jordan and Kaups (1989:85) state

> Attempts by some scholars to identify the pioneer stock as Scotch-Irish are misguided, for the backwoods culture reflected the sort of blending that perhaps only intermarriage—can produce.

The history of American English, left largely unwritten until just recently, has generally been predicated on the notion that British regional dialects came to this country and, in an extreme version equivalent to the general history of Fischer, reformed themselves as regional dialects in North America. That is apparently the historical thesis which the Linguistic Atlas of the United States and Canada was testing. The only counter thesis was that essentially of Mencken (1919), with a hint from Stephen Graham (1914), who saw the influence—almost totally in vocabulary—of the immigrant languages, primarily of the nineteenth century and after, spoken by great numbers of Americans and by their ancestors. Essentially naive linguistically

for all his great talent and energy, Mencken hardly considered grammatical or phonological matters. He twitted the professors of his time for knowing more about languages like Sanskrit than about the speech of those around them—essentially for being limited to the reconstructive tradition. When he discovered the dialect geographers of the American Dialect Society, he accepted them enthusiastically—not recognizing that their principles and methods derived essentially from Germanic philology, which would have been one of the disciplines which he derided. With the edition of McDavid and Maurer (1963), Mencken's *American Language* had turned into something very like a work of dialect geography, an aim of which seemed to be the quasi-geneological tracing of American dialect forms to their British dialect sources, with very little attention to what came between.

It cannot be denied that some forms which can be used as indices of regional dialect in the United States are also characteristic of regional dialects of England, in the twentieth century. What does not seem to have been proved is that these British-derived regional forms came over as such in the colonial period and were the primary instruments in forming American dialects. No treatment familiar to me takes into account any kind of periodicity in dealing with American dialects and their purported origin in British *regional* dialects.

Another criticism is that regional factors have been so strongly stressed that other (social) factors were virtually eliminated from consideration in the early formulations cited by Fischer. The editors of LAMSAS point out that the aim of the original Atlas grid was for "evenness in areal sampling" rather than "evenness in population sampling"—and that the two cannot correspond (quoted in Frazer, 1995:177). R. I. McDavid, after Kurath the single greatest influence on the picture of American regional distribution, admitted the skewing of the population sample (also quoted by Frazer, 1995:178) on the grounds of providing a body of stable local folk evidence, from which one may work backward comparatively. The LAMSAS group apparently admit that there was an unfortunate near-exclusion of African Americans from the database" (Frazer 1995:178). Apparently, African Americans do not count among those from whom one may "work backward."

The reconstructive nature of the Linguistic Atlas of the United States and Canada project has been rather openly admitted, although hardly stressed, for some time. The assumptions are obvious:

(1) Intermediate developments (between colonial, British-derived forms and American regions at the time of the Atlas fieldwork) are likely to be of minor importance. Even the widely admitted mobility of the American population—particularly its white population—is to be left out of the formulation.

(2) Both early British English and contemporary American English variation patterns are assumed to be more basically regional than social in nature—so much so, as a matter of fact, that social factors need hardly be , taken into account.

An embarrassing study like Pickford (1956) must, obviously be explained away in some manner.

Just how certain it is that an American form which resembles a British form must derive from that British form, without any direct evidence of transmission, may perhaps be subject to question. Algeo (1993) points out that regional *leave* for more generalized *let* (Leave us face it!) should not be derived, even in the Pennsylvania area, from the influence of German lassen because the dialectal use of *leave* in that sense is attested in Middle English. OED II, however, calls it "chiefly U.S." and gives no attestation earlier than 1840, from the *Southern Literary Messenger*. On the face of it, it would seem quite possible that the usage had existed in England as a development from the OED's sense b., with object and infinitive (attested as early as 1526), had perhaps been brought to the colonies by dialect speakers but then leveled out, and then had re-developed from German "interference" in the Pennsylvana, where a "Pennsylvania German English" dialect with many striking Germanisms is known to exist and to have existed much more strongly in the past. The presence of German in that area is easy to document. Presence of the relevant English dialect is perhaps not so easy.

Another strikingly problematic American form is the Southern *you all*. No one would deny that it has regional implications. In Portsmouth, Ohio, it is identified with the Kentuckians who live just across the Ohio River, whereas the vernacular Ohio form is held to be *you uns* (*y'uns*). The latter, especially, alternates with *You guys*, which is less of a solidarity form than either of the other two and more widespread among American English varieties. Edwards (1974) claimed the Southern form for African influence, and he has been followed by Lipski (1994). Lipski reports

that Montgomery has traced the form rather to a Scots-Irish *ye aw;* however, Lipski points out that Montgomery does not deal with

> . . . differences in *y'all* usage between black and white speakers, attestations of *y'all* outside the United States, and the general African-creole dimension which many have suggested . . .

Perhaps nowhere, however, has there been more bitter controversy than in the case of O.K. Dalby (1972) suggested that this most characteristic Americanism was actually derived from African sources, challenging the accepted derivation established by Allen Walker Read from *oll korrect*, from the eye dialect fashions of the nineteenth century. All are agreed, however, that there is no British origin for the expression.

An admittedly revisionist view of the history of American English would go something like this. A standardized variety of English—sometimes called Chancery Standard (Smith 1992:56) formed the basis of the language carried with the English explorers and later emigrants who went out from the islands, to America among other places. A lower class form, analogous in many ways to this variety but not identical, went with the penal colonies to Australia. Both of these represent something quite normal in migration situations—the leveling of dialects. Just as early, in the maritime trade, there developed another kind of leveling—the leveling of languages. Quite similar to, and perhaps related to Portuguese Pidgin and Pidgin French, Pidgin English began a worldwide spread, especially to coastal and insular areas. (The issue as to whether the traditional relexification or Bickertonian bioprogram is responsible does not really affect the historical picture; by some process, Pidgin English approximates language universals more closely than do other varieties of English.) Those who came to the North American colonies, like the Pilgrims who had been in Holland for a substantial period, must have been exposed to the maritime varieties to some degree. Further leveling took place in the first generation in the colonies, and the influence of maritime usage remained strong.

New regional varieties developed in the colonies and the early United States. Contact with native Americans led to the spread of the maritime Pidgin English as a strategy for communication in a contact situation, the borrowing of many individual vocabulary items, and the formation of a larger number of phrasal collocations. British writers early became aware of this development and scoffed at the Americans for their use of wigwam words. But probably the first distinctive regional variety was that formed by contact with Dutch in

the Hudson valley. As the Dutch language itself became less widely spoken, Dutch loanwords into English increased. The principle is the same as the way in which Norman French loanwords came into English as the English language reasserted its dominance on the islands. If the French had remained dominant in England, the French dialect which would have developed would possibly been analogous to the English of the Hudson valley. One of the first discovered accounts of regional differences in American English (Smyth 1784:I, 278-9, quoted in Heath 1980) concerns the difficulty of a Southerner in understanding someone from New Jersey, where a special variety of Dutch was spoken into the twentieth century (Prince 1910).

Other contact patterns are equally broad and obvious. In Pennsylvania and Ohio, contact with German produced the variety which today is known as Pennsylvania German English. Contact with Spanish in the Southwest spread a large amount of cattle-ranching, among other, vocabulary, and imperfect language shift produced the variety sometimes called Spanglish. Contact with French in Louisiana, especially in the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, produced what is called Cajun English, originally rather more widespread than what is now the state of Louisiana. A term like *lagniappe,* not derivable from the Louisiana Indian languages (*pace* Carver 1992:148) most probably derives from Quechua and is spread, in one form or another, through several of the islands of the Caribbean—in English and in Spanish.

West African slaves imported into the colonies were mixed so that their languages, like Wolof, lasted a very short time, but they contributed a variety of Pidgin English which was recognized as early as the late seventeenth century, well attested in the eighteenth and nineteenth, and reported by no less than Frederick Douglass from around 1820. Creolization took place somewhere between 1780 and 1820 in the Georgia and South Carolina Low Country or Sea Islands—and creole-like varieties, or at least "Negro" varieties greatly different from the other dialects around them, are widely reported from places like Virginia and New York City in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Some of these seem to pre-date Gullah, and it is possible that Gullah was a fairly late development.

Southern dialects, especially those of the prestigious plantation owners, were strongly influenced by the Black variety. "Folksy" influence from immigration from the British Isles in the nineteenth century, some of it from Celtic or Scotch-Irish sources, make Southern

a quite recognizable—and stereotypable—dialect by the middle of the nineteenth century.

West African terms like *mojo* (*hand*), having to do especially with rootwork conjure, remained in the Black culture well after slavery. Black religious terminology also differed somewhat even from that of the evangelical denominations of the South. Musical terminology, especially the disguised sexual vocabulary of blues lyrics (Dillard 1977:76-7), must have been around all along, although it first came to public attention in blues and jazz lyrics after the invention of electrical recording and the production of "race records." Jazz aficionados, then later teenage follows and rock and roll fans, spread vocabulary like the special meaning of *cool* to general American slang and then to the world.

Nineteenth century migration brought hordes of Europeans speaking languages other than English into the northern cities. Jewish immigrants speaking Yiddish strongly influenced the dialect of cities like New York; the term "Yinglish" is in use. Later immigrants like the Italians, striving to sound as "native" as possible, imitated Yiddish interference patterns like the raising of the /æ/ vowel—and actually raised it to a higher level than had the Jewish speakers. (Horvath [1985:176] reports a different strategy for "sounding Australian"—the use of the G[eneral] variety; a different time frame and different social relations would seem to offer at least a partial explanation for the difference in strategies.) Familiarity with foreign terms, especially Yiddish and Italian food terms, distinguished eastern city dwellers from those in the rest of the country until after World War II, when commerical spread made most of the terms generally known.

Pidgin English on the frontier paved the way in communication with the native Americans, mixing with native American contact varieties along the way—especially Mobilian Jargon in the southeast and Chinook Jargon on the west coast. The further west the standard language was carried, the further the grammatical and particularly phonological leveling process was carried out. There is still no real agreement on geographical distribution of the dialects of the western states.

Vocabulary is another matter. Traditional geographic treatments of western dialect do not emphasize vocabulary, even though the basis of most of their formulations is word geography, because some of western vocabulary violates cherished regulations about settlement patterns. The many borrowings from Spanish, French, and contact languages (*lagniappe, vamoose, savvy*) the English terminology of cattle herding (*bulldog, estring, break the string, stinker*, and many others, many of which have extended

into very different domains); of gambling games like faro and poker; of other "frontier vices" moved basically from west to east.

The theory which makes variation in American English a reflection of British regional dialect patterns, the "little bit of England" theory of American dialects—and perhaps even of American culture—cannot handle such developments. Neither can it handle that history of Black/African American English which traces the variety to the seventeenth century and links it to Jamaican and even to Sranan Tongo and West African Pidgin English. That must be why Carver (1992:151) concludes his "Development of American English" article with the unsupported statement . . . much later, its social varieties." Carver shows exemplary care in dating (primarily British) settlement patterns. He browses through the *Dictionary of Americanisms* for dated examples of the "fertile coining of Americanisms" in the nineteenth century (150). But about the social varieties, especially Black English, he offers no chronology at all, except the unsupported claim that social varieties developed "much later." And there is one passing reference (147) to the transmission, "since World War II" of "the early Afro-American subculture—the product of social isolation and an almost forgotten African heritage."

My own approach, called "Marxist" by Fischer 1989, is rather different. Algeo (1993) takes me to task for beginning my *History of American English* with the Basques. The reason is rather simple: Looking through early records, I find an amazing prominence of the Basques, particularly in dealing with the native Americans. (Compare Jordan and Kaups [1989:247-53] on the importance of Finns in the material culture of the American "backwoods frontier.") This archetypical minority represents seems to be reflected in non-Basque American terminology only in the one word *gazoney*, a pejorative term having apparently come from the Basque for 'man'—recorded in several dictionaries of slang and labeled "Maritime Use" by Wentworth and Flexner (1975)—having a specialized use in a geographically restricted police and criminal terminology. It is thus about as rare as *cade* 'pet lamb,' which figures rather prominently in Kurath (1972); apparently *cade* is a British regional term which occurs in a narrow geographical area in the North American colonies. Cade, gazoney—would never have heard either of them, or even seen them in print, if I hadn't studied the history of American English.

From other experiences of colonial languages, it appears that the cases of Australian and American English are by no means unusual. Leveling of dialect differences in the "daughter" countries is about as

widely reported as the conventional ambivalence in which visitors to the colonies report both quaint retention of archaisms and astonishing innovations—in other words, differences. These are standard considerations in the language history of the last century or so. What seems to have been left out of the formulation is language contact, and especially contact languages.

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David Simpson

Global English, Local Language: The Currency of American Speech

Our conference appears to have reached a major conclusion before it began: the success of American English. Of course, American English is a success both in its demographic scope and in its expressive idiosyncrasies, the things that make it different from other kinds of English. But what is it that we recognize as American English in the late twentieth century? What are its relations to other kinds of English? What does it contribute to global English? What are the forms of its dissemination? What roads has it taken and not taken, and why? And what is its relation to American literature and other literatures, and to the cultures behind them? What kinds of English are being spoken and taught around the world, and why?

We have lived, at least since the 18th century, with an immense respect for the power of language, a conviction about its centrality to mind and society that runs more or less unbroken from Herder and Fichte to Derrida and beyond. The origins of our exemplary arguments for the power of language—we might call it the 'strong determination' theory, according to which what we speak makes us what we are in some essential way—lie in the efforts at state formation and in the consolidating nationalisms of the 18th and 19th centuries. When Fichte spoke of the beauties of German, he had in mind a group of speakers yet to become a nation. Concerns about a national language in the United States after 1776 had a related emphasis—on the question of how a common language might or might not consolidate a new nation into a true society, one balancing common customs and laws with the diversity and flexibility deemed appropriate to a liberal-democratic ethic, all of this complicated by the fact that the language—English—was already spoken elsewhere and by a different nation and culture.[1] Marshall McLuhan told us, with some conviction, that fixing the language had been an essential prerequisite for fixing a nation: "there cannot be nationalism when there has not first been an experience of a vernacular in printed form . . . nationalism depends upon or derives from the 'fixed point of