

Západočeská univerzita v Plzni

Fakulta filozofická

Bakalářská práce

**Dialects and Developments in American English
with a practical analysis and glossary**

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Prohlašuji, že jsem práci zpracovala samostatně a použila jen uvedených pramenů a literatury.

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1 INTRODUCTION

As the topic of etymology and word formation is of great interest to the author of this thesis, as well as history and geography, the topic of dialects and their development proved to be an ideal topic for research. For the purposes of writing this paper, this work has been divided into two main parts.

The first one will be focused on the historical background of development of English together with the influence of other languages on English. This thesis will be dealing only with those languages which were in contact with American English on the North American continent during past 400 years. In the end of each subchapter, dedicated to each one of these languages, there will be a brief glossary containing words which American English borrowed from them.

The second main chapter will concentrate on the form of American English in modern times with attention paid to differences between American and British English and differences within American English itself. The first part of this chapter will be devoted to disparities between American and British English, which includes differences in spelling, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation or highly interesting borrowings from American to British English. The second part of this chapter deals with dialects and variations of American English. Two of the most important variations – African American Vernacular English and Hispanic American English – will be analysed in detail.

Another interesting feature of today's English, which is analysed in this thesis, is how English is changing due to mass media and social media. English is becoming (some may say it has already become) a global language, it is widely used at schools, during business and political negotiations and in other methods of international communication. It is

evident that language which is used all over the world, for example in news and the Internet cannot stay unaffected for a long time.

People who learn English as their second language have a tendency to use English words even when they are speaking their mother tongue. Moreover, this happens also in the opposite direction, when they are speaking English and modify some words or grammatical structures to make the language easier for them. In this way, “international English” originated. This international English is simpler and more understandable for those who learn English as their second language. Mainly military units (when their members are of different nationalities) or even civil pilots use this simple English to communicate among themselves. It is quicker and easier to say: “Say again!” instead of “What did you say?” With a little exaggeration, English could be considered as the kind of world language, that Esperanto was meant to become.

This vanishing of complicated features of language and its simplification is happening also within the U.S., which is being referred to as “the melting pot”. Immigrants coming to the U.S. influence the form of American English by introducing new words and by simplifying it. The term “melting pot” is used because the differences of two or more languages are melting and it happens in one place, in one pot. People from all of Europe have been coming to the U.S., as well as Africans and recently more and more people from Spanish speaking countries primarily. All these people and languages create an enormous complex of dialects, jargons, slangs and other ways of speaking. Since these people are in contact with each other, it is obvious that they influence each other and not only in the manner of speaking.

This process occurs on the international level (two different languages), on internal level (two dialects) and even when two people (they can even speak the same language) are in contact for certain period

of time. They introduce into their speech some words they learned from the other one after some time.

Languages gain and strengthen their positions through economy, business and politics. The more powerful the state is the more powerful the official language of that particular state is. The U.S. has become economic and political superpower over the past few decades. It successfully re-established the position of English language after disintegration of the British Empire. In 19th and in the first half of the 20th century has the English language extremely strong position all over the world. Large amount of states and people world-wide was under the influence of the British Empire at that time. The British culture and English language were introduced into these states. The English became the official language of large amount of colonial states. This strong position of English is now supported and maintained by the powerful position of the United States.

2 DEVELOPMENT OF AMERICAN ENGLISH

English is truly an international language. It is spoken by over 300 million people as their first language and approximately the same number of people uses English as their second language.¹

English is used all over the world, whether it is in politics and business, schools or in movies and songs.² Even for example Czech singers and music bands use English in their lyrics.

Like other languages in the world, English is still developing. In these days, this development is mainly connected with the globalization and interconnection of the whole world. Various terms from other languages penetrate into English and influence it. This happens to every language which comes into contact with another one. To understand why the American English is so different from the British one, it is necessary to know the historical background.

2.1 Historical background

The first English expedition to North American continent was led by Sir Walter Raleigh in 1584. The explorers established a small settlement near Roanoke Island but it was not successful.³ These colonists were mostly noblemen; they did not know how to make their own living.⁴

In 1607, another group of settlers arrived in Chesapeake Bay and established Jamestown and called that area Virginia. This was the first successful English settlement.⁵

The first group of puritans arrived to America on the Mayflower accompanied by other settlers. They landed at Cape Cod Bay and established a settlement, later called Plymouth. This group was extremely

¹ Viney, *The History of the English Language*, 1.

² *Ibid.*, 2.

³ Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*, 92.

⁴ Vorel, *American English*, 120.

⁵ Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*, 92.

mixed, but they had one common intention – they searched for religious freedom.⁶

The first twenty African slaves arrived to America in 1619. They were brought there to work on the sugar plantations. The ships from Europe sailed to the West African coast to exchange cheap goods for slaves.⁷ Then these ships sailed to America to sale the slaves in exchange for rum, sugar, molasses and other exotic goods and returned to England with this valuable load. This was called the Atlantic Triangle.⁸

This trade was extremely advantageous for Englishmen so it is not surprising that at the time of American Revolution the number of slaves increased to half a million and until the Civil War there were more than 4 million slaves in America.⁹

Many other people were coming from various parts of England to America during the 17th century. At that time, the centre of the settlement was New York and the “middle” Atlantic areas. So people who spoke different kinds of English and coming from different parts of England came to this area. They were living side by side and the linguistic disparities begin to disappear.¹⁰

Not only people from England were coming to America during the 17th and the 18th centuries. Other settlers were arriving from France, Germany, the Caribbean and Northern Ireland.¹¹

The people from Northern Ireland were called Scots-Irish. They were not the only immigrants from Ireland and Northern Ireland – people from these two countries had been migrating to America almost for two

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., 96.

⁸ Vorel, *American English*, 124.

⁹ Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*, 96.

¹⁰ Ibid., 92.

¹¹ Viney, *The History of the English Language*, 40.

centuries, but the major wave of immigration came during 1720's , when approximately 50 000 immigrants came to America.¹²

Another wave of immigration took place during the 19th century, when many people left Ireland, Germany, Italy and other European countries. Especially Jews were coming to America those days. In the second part of the 20th century were arriving people from Asia and Spanish-speaking countries. All these people and all these languages influenced the language brought to America by English settlers and jointly formed the American English.¹³

2.2 Influence of other languages

Even if the American English was in the contact with many different languages, they did not influence it as much as it could seem. Only few words – in comparison with the amount of English words – had penetrated into English. The principal reason for this is social. It is connected with the American Revolution, English settlers who were coming to America, wanted to become Americans and they wanted to preserve English language in America, not to invent some new international language. Despite this caution, some words and expressions from other languages broke into American English.¹⁴

2.2.1 Spanish

Christopher Columbus discovered American continents for Europeans under the auspices of the Catholics monarchs of Spain.¹⁵ This event started the Spanish colonization of the Americas. The Spanish settlers established the first European city in present-day United States, St. Augustine in Florida. It has been continuously inhabited since then. Later, in 1570, Spanish tried to establish another settlement in

¹² Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*, 93.

¹³ Viney, *The History of the English Language*, 40.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 39.

Chesapeake Bay, but it failed. Till the year 1600, they also reached northern New Mexico.¹⁶ Another well-known cities founded by Spaniards are: Santa Fe, San Antonio, Santa Cruz, San Diego, San Francisco, Los Angeles etc.¹⁷

In 1898, the United States won against Spain the Spanish-American war. Although the main issue was Cuban independence, it ended Spanish colonial era, because Spain had to transfer the ownership of its American colonies to the US.¹⁸

From this easily noticeable contact between these two languages is clear that there has to be some kind of influence. Here are some words which originate in Spanish and are commonly used in American English these days.

- Alligator
 - distorted from Spanish *el ligarto*
 - meaning “lizard”
- Breeze
 - from Old Spanish *briza*
 - meaning “cold northeast wind”
- Cafeteria
 - from Mexican Spanish *cafeteria*
 - meaning “coffee store”
- Coyote
 - from Mexican Spanish *coyote*
- Mustang
 - from Mexican Spanish *mestengo*
 - meaning “animal that strays”
- Rumba
 - from Cuban Spanish *rumba*

¹⁶ Bourne, *Spain in America*

¹⁷ Wikipedia: *Timeline of the Colonization of North America*

¹⁸ *The World of 1898*

- meaning “spree, carousal”
- Sombrero
 - from Spanish *sombrero*, from *sombra* = shade
 - meaning “umbrella, parasol”
- Tornado
 - probably mangled from Spanish *tronada*
 - meaning “thunderstorm”^{19,20}

2.2.2 French

France began to colonize the Americas in the 16th century. It established colonies on the east side of the North American continent, in the Caribbean and also in South America. The first exploration was realized by Jacques Cartier in 1534, the goal was to explore the coast of Newfoundland and the St. Lawrence River.²¹

The main power of French colonization was concentrated in Canada, where were established cities Quebec and Montreal. In the area of present-day United States French settlers founded Detroit, St. Louis, New Orleans and other cities.²²

At the top of its prosperity, the territory of New France was extended from Newfoundland to the Rocky Mountains and from the Hudson Bay to the Gulf of Mexico. This era was ended by the French and Indian war, also called Anglo-French rivalry, which lasted from 1754 to 1763. This conflict resulted in cession of French territories in the North America to Britain and Spain by the Treaty of Paris.²³

However, in that time or today, French is an important world language and some French words are adopted by many other languages, not only English. The main areas of the English vocabulary influenced by

¹⁹ Vorel, *American English*, 122.

²⁰ Online Etymology Dictionary

²¹ Holbrook, *The French Founders of North America and Their Heritage*

²² Ibid.

²³ Cave, *The French and Indian War*, 5-6, 21-22.

French are: exotic animals, warfare and military, politics, diplomacy, arts, colour names, food and gastronomy and others.

- Alliance
 - from Old French *alliance*
 - meaning “bond, marriage, union”
- Bureau
 - from *bureau*
 - originally meaning “cloth covering for a desk”, another meaning “office; writing table”
 - ex. Federal Bureau of Investigation
- Beige
 - from dialectal French *beige*, Old French *bege*
 - meaning “yellowish-gray, brownish-gray”; “the natural colour of wool and cotton, not dyed”
- Captain
 - from Old French *capitaine*
 - meaning “leader”
- Cavalry
 - from Middle French *cavalerie*
 - meaning “mounted militia”
- Court
 - from Old French *cort* [Modern French *cour*]
 - meaning “king’s court, princely residence”
 - ex.: European Court of Justice
- Dolphin
 - from Old French *daulphin*
- Elephant
 - from Old French *oliphant*
- Embassy
 - from Middle French *embassee*
 - meaning “mission, charge, office of ambassador”

- today's meaning "official residence and retinue of an ambassador" is used since 1764
- Infantry
 - from French *infanterie*
 - meaning "foot soldiers, force composed of those too inexperienced or low in rank for cavalry"
- Lacrosse
 - from Canadian French *jeu de la crosse*
 - meaning "game of the hooked sticks"
 - ex. World Lacrosse Championship
- Lion
 - from Old French *lion*
- Pumpkin
 - from Middle French *pompon*
- Regime
 - from French *régime*
 - meaning "system of government or rule"
- Surrealism
 - from French *surréalisme*
 - meaning (sur- "beyond" + réalisme "realism")
- Terrace
 - from Middle French *terrace*
 - meaning "gallery, portico, balcony," later "flat, raised place for walking"^{24,25}

2.2.3 Dutch

As other European coastal countries, also the Netherlands tried to take advantage of the new discovered continent during the 17th century. Dutchmen established a colony called New Netherland in the north-eastern coast of the North America. They claimed the territory from Delmarva Peninsula to the Cape Cod, which is now parts of US states

²⁴ Vorel, *American English* 122.

²⁵ Online Etymology Dictionary

New York, New Jersey, Delaware and partly Connecticut and Pennsylvania. The capital was founded on the island of Manhattan. This region was explored by Henry Hudson in 1609 and the colony served as a link to the North American fur trade.²⁶

In 1664, the Duke of York and Albany and his army sailed to the New Amsterdam and threatened to attack. Because of a smaller number of its troops, New Amsterdam surrendered. This conflict led to the second Anglo-Dutch war during 1665 and 1667. It ended when the Dutch gave up the claim to the New Netherland and the English surrendered Suriname to them in exchange. In the Third Anglo-Dutch war [1673-1674] the Dutch tried to recapture this territory but they had to return it to the English at the treaty of Westminster.²⁷

Even that these two languages were not in the close contact for a long time, their mutual similarity allowed the words to smoothly pass from Dutch into English and these words are now used in English all over the world.

- Apartheid
 - from *apartheid*
 - meaning “separateness”
- Boss
 - from *baas*
 - meaning “a master”
- Bruin
 - from Middle Dutch *Bruin*
 - meaning “brown bear”
- Coleslaw
 - from *koolsla*
 - literally meaning “cabbage salad”

²⁶ *A Brief Outline of Dutch History and the Province of New Netherland*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

- Cookie
 - from *koekje*, or informal *koekie*
 - literally “little cake”
 - ex.: That’s the way the cookie crumbles.
- Santa Claus
 - from dialectal Dutch *Sante Klaas* or from Middle Dutch *Sinter Niklaas* [meaning St. Nicolas]
- Wagon
 - probably from Middle Dutch *wagen*, *waghen*
 - meaning “a wheel vehicle”^{28,29}

2.2.4 Native American languages

It is also important to mention the impact of Native American languages. English settlers were obviously in contact with Native Americans, and because America was completely new continent full of new things, places, animals and plants, they either created new words to name it from other English words [bluegrass] or they named places, cities and rivers using Native American languages [Massachusetts, Mississippi].³⁰

- moose
 - from and Algonquian language, probably Narragansett *moos* or Abenaki *moz*
 - probably from the word *moosu*, meaning “he strips off”
- raccoon
 - from Algonquian (Powhatan) *arakhun*, from *arakhunem*
 - meaning “he scratches with the hands”
- skunk
 - form a southern New England Algonquian language (probably Abenaki) *seganku*
- squash (gourd fruit)

²⁸ Vorel, *American English*, 122.

²⁹ Online Etymology Dictionary

³⁰ Viney, *The History of the English Language*, 40.

- shortened borrowing from Narraganset (Algonquian) *askutasquash*
- literally meaning "the things that may be eaten raw"
- o tomahawk
 - from Algonquian (probably Powhatan) *tamahack*
 - meaning "what is used in cutting"^{31,32}

2.2.5 Other languages

Other nations which tried to settle in the North America were Swedish, Scottish, Portuguese and Russians, but they were not as successful as the ones previously mentioned. That is the reason why there are not many words from these languages used in American English. Swedish colonists settled along the Delaware River during the 17th century and established their settlements that are now called Delaware, Pennsylvania and New Jersey. This colony was unfortunately for the Swedish located near the New Netherland and the Dutch conquered it so that the Swedish could not endanger their interests in the New World.³³

The only frequently used word in English originated in Swedish is ombudsman – literally meaning “commission man”, but it was not until 1959 this word was adopted by English so it has no relation to the Swedish colonization.^{34,35}

The Scottish also tried to claim a part of the New World, but their attempt was not successful. The first documented Scottish settlement in the North America was Nova Scotia founded in 1629. The area was defined as all land between Newfoundland and New England. But in the middle of two major colonists – England and France, this colony could not last. The Scottish were forced to abandon Nova Scotia after a peace

³¹ Vorel, *American English*, 122.

³² *Online Etymology Dictionary*

³³ *A Brief History of New Sweden in America*

³⁴ *List of English Words of Swedish Origin*

³⁵ *Online Etymology Dictionary*

negotiation between England and France following the Anglo-French war.³⁶

Here are few words English borrowed from the Scots language.

- glamour
 - from Scottish *gramarye*
 - meaning “magic, enchantment, spell”
- golf
 - from Scottish *gouf*
 - an alternation of Middle Dutch *colf*, *colve* meaning “stick, club, bat”
- gumption
 - from Scottish, possibly connected with Middle English *gome* meaning “attention, heed”
 - meaning “common sense, shrewdness”^{37,38}

Other languages which influenced American English through immigration and not through colonization are German, Italian and Yiddish. The first numerous groups of German immigrants came to the British colonies in the North America in 1670’s. They settled mainly in New York and Pennsylvania. During the 19th century another 8 million Germans came to America, motivated mostly by the land, religious freedom, political freedom or economic opportunities. Germans brought not only some new words but also introduced the Christmas tree tradition, built the first kindergartens in the United States and influenced the US cuisine.^{39,40}

As previously stated, many borrowed words from German concerned the food, the science and scholarships.

³⁶ Dobson, *Scottish Emigration to Colonial America*

³⁷ Online Etymology Dictionary

³⁸ *List of English Words of Scots Origin*

³⁹ Adams, *The German-Americans, Chapter One: Seven Million Germans Were Once “Foreigners”*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, Chapter Four: *Inequality: Incomes, Occupations, Social Structure*

- Ecology
 - from German *Ökologie*
- Hamburger
 - from German *hamburger*, meaning “native of Hamburg”
 - the food is probably named after the port Hamburg being important for immigrants
- Kindergarten
 - from German *kindergarten*
 - literally “children’s garden”
- Pretzel
 - from German *brezel*
- Semester
 - from German *semester*
- Seminar
 - from German *seminar*
 - meaning “a group of students working with a professor”^{41,42}

Although a large number of Italian immigrants came to the USA to work, to save money and then return to Italy, those who stayed there permanently, are forming the fourth largest European ethnic group in the USA. The greatest wave of immigration occurred between 1880 and 1920, when more than 4 million Italians arrived to America. The biggest group of Italian loanwords form music terms, others concern art and architecture, theatre, cuisine, clothes etc.^{43,44}

- a cappella
 - from Italian *alla cappella*
 - literally meaning “according to the chapel”
- al dente
 - from Italian *al dente*

⁴¹ Online Etymology Dictionary

⁴² *List of German Expressions in English*

⁴³ *The Story of Italian Immigration*

⁴⁴ O’Connor et al., *The Largest Ancestry Groups in the United States*

- literally meaning “to the tooth”
- broccoli
 - from Italian *broccolo*
 - meaning “cabbage sprout”
- espresso
 - from Italian *caffè espresso*
 - meaning “pressed out”
- lasagna
 - from Italian *lasagna*
- libretto
 - from Italian *libretto*, diminutive from *libro* (“book”)
- pianissimo
 - from Italian *pianissimo*
- pizza
 - from Italian *pizza*
 - meaning “cake, tart, pie”
- scenario
 - from Italian *scenario*
- umbrella
 - from Italian *ombrello*, diminutive of Latin *umbra*, meaning “shade, shadow”^{45,46,47}

The last significant group of immigrants is of Jewish origin. The Jews who lived in Central and Eastern Europe originally spoke Yiddish, a Germanic language which is heavily influenced by the Slavic languages. The Yiddish is written in the Hebrew alphabet and contains a significant base of words from Hebrew but also contains many words from Slavic languages.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Online Etymology Dictionary

⁴⁶ Vorel, *American English*, 122.

⁴⁷ *List of English Words of Italian origin*

⁴⁸ *List of English Words of Yiddish Origin*

Since Yiddish and German are two similar languages and both of them have a large base of speakers in the United States, it is difficult to differentiate which German words came to America via Yiddish and which via German speakers.⁴⁹

- Bagel
 - from Yiddish *beygl*, earlier from Middle German *bougl*
 - meaning “ring, bracelet”
- Chanukah
 - from Hebrew *Hanukkah*
 - meaning “consecration”
- Kosher
 - from Yiddish *kosher*, earlier from Hebrew *kasher*
 - meaning “fit, proper, lawful”
- Yarmulke
 - from Yiddish *yarmulke*
 - originally meaning “a skullcap worn by priests”^{50,51,52}

3 AMERICAN ENGLISH TODAY

3.1 Differences between AmE and BrE

In the second half of the 18th century, Americans were beginning to feel the national consciousness which resulted in the American Revolution and the American War of Independence (1775-1783). They wanted to differentiate from Britain in every way, to become independent.⁵³

Because of this, Americans wanted their language to be completely different from the British English. Some of them (e.g. Thomas Jefferson) even supported the idea that their variation of English was so different

⁴⁹ Vorel, *American English*, 123.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Online Etymology Dictionary

⁵² List of English Words of Yiddish Origin

⁵³ Viney, *The History of the English Language*, 43.

from the British one, that it should be called by a name other than English.⁵⁴

Also the idea of a standard being formed, recognized and written was encouraged. John Witherspoon wrote several papers which were published in the *Pennsylvania Journal* in 1781 on this topic. He mentioned his thought of finding some centre or standard of their own there.⁵⁵

Another enthusiast for the American English was teacher Noah Webster. He wrote a speller, a grammar and a reader for American schools. These three books were published under a title *A Grammatical Institute of the English Language* and they were the first books about the language published in the USA. They were really successful and were reissued under the title *The American Spelling Book*. But Webster's greatest work was *An American Dictionary of the English Language*. His motivation was to prove that American English do not have to copy the British English and that they both are on the same level. He wanted to demonstrate that American English is independent, as well as the United States itself.⁵⁶

He also fought for the unification of the thirteen colonies through the "national language". He supposed that unified standardized language with certain reforms of spelling would make a difference between the English orthography and the American one and would stimulate the national consciousness.⁵⁷

3.1.1 Spelling

Webster focused especially on American spelling and pronunciation. Even if the American and the English spellings differs only

⁵⁴ Baugh and Cable, *A History of the English Language*, 364.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 366.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 368.

a little, the differences are clearly noticeable at first sight. The major theme could be called “simplification”.^{58,59}

Examples follow in order from British to the American version: It could be leaving out the “u”: “*colour*” – “*color*”; “*honour*” – “*honor*”. As well as writing one consonant instead of two: “*waggon*” – “*wagon*”; “*traveller*” – “*traveler*”; “*programme*” – “*program*”; “*kilogramme*” – “*kilogram*”. Characteristic sign is also the inversion of the last two letters in words ending in –re: “*centre*” – “*center*”; “*theatre*” – “*theater*”; “*metre*” – “*meter*”. Shortening of the words is typical too: “*cheque*” – “*check*”; “*catalogue*” – “*catalog*”; even such words as “*through*” – “*thru*” which is informal, as well as “*high*” – “*hi*” and “*low*” – “*lo*”. Another characteristic feature is replacing “x” by “ct”: “*inflexion*” – “*inflection*”; “*connexion*” – “*connection*”. And typical is also using “s” instead of “c” and “z” instead of “s” according to the pronunciation: “*licence*” – “*license*”; “*offence*” – “*offense*”; “*paralyse*” – “*paralyze*”^{60,61,62}

3.1.2 Vocabulary

The main difference between American English and British English today is in vocabulary. There are thousands of words which are used differently in these two countries.⁶³

There are several categories in American versus British usage of words. The first category is when one word has different meaning in each variation of English: The word “*pants*” means “*trousers*” in America and “*underpants*” in Britain or the word “*chips*” means potato “*crisps*” in American English and “*French fries*” in British English. Here are more examples, American meanings are ordered first: “*pavement*” = “*road*”

⁵⁸ Ibid., 369.

⁵⁹ Vorel, *American English* 125.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Baugh and Cable, *A History of the English Language*, 369.

⁶² Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*, 307.

⁶³ Viney, *A History of the English Language*, 44.

surface” vs. *“sidewalk”*; *“nervy”* = *“bold”* vs. *“nervous”*; *“homely”* = *“ugly”* vs. *“domestic”*.^{64,65}

Another category is when two words denote one concept; one thing is called differently in American English and differently in British English. For instance, the bottom floor of the building is called *“the first floor”* in America and *“the ground floor”* in Britain. Here are other examples, Americanisms are put first. *“baggage”* vs. *“luggage”*; *“can”* vs. *“tin”*; *“candy”* vs. *“sweets”*; *“casket”* vs. *“coffin”*; *“elevator”* vs. *“lift”*; *“fall”* vs. *“autumn”*; *“soccer”* vs. *“football”*; *“gasoline”* vs. *“petrol”* and many others.⁶⁶

Some words can be used in both variations, but are used more frequently in one and are rather replaced by another word in the other. For example the words *“flat”* and *“apartment”* can be used in both – American and British English, but the former is preferred in Britain and the latter is more used in America. Other examples are *“shop”* vs. *“store”* and *“post”* vs. *“mail”*.⁶⁷

And some words (besides the basic meaning in the World Standard English) have an additional meaning, specific to either British or American English. For instance the word *“caravan”* has basic meaning *“group of travelers in a desert”* is using by both of these variations, but in British English it has an additional meaning *“vehicle towed by a car”*, Americans would say *“trailer”*.⁶⁸

3.1.3 Grammar

As well as the American spelling, the American grammar is also simplified as many as possible. Americans prefer to use “have” instead of

⁶⁴ Vorel, *American English*, 123.

⁶⁵ Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*, 306.

⁶⁶ Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*, 309.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 308.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

“have got” in the sense of possession: “*I have got a car.*” is replaced by “*I have a car.*”⁶⁹

The simplification of verb tenses is also obvious. American English sometimes uses a simple past tense where British English would use a present perfect. Instead of “*I have just had lunch.*” Americans say “*I just had lunch.*” and the conjugation is influenced too: “*I dreamt*” is replaced by “*I dreamed*”.⁷⁰

Other differences concern the word order “*River Thames*” vs. “*Hudson River*” and the use of the article “*in the future*” in British English vs. “*in future*” in American English. Americans prefer collective nouns in the singular while British use also plural “*the government is*” vs. “*the government is/are*”.⁷¹

3.1.4 Pronunciation

Even if the pronunciation differs from person to person, there is certain standard in General American (GA) where several regular differences between GA and Received Pronunciation (RP) are clearly noticeable. The most obvious one is the pronunciation of the final *-r* in GA. And few words have individually different pronunciations, such as: schedule, tomato, nougat, missile, clerk and others.⁷²

Also many words are pronounced with [ɑ:] in RP and with [æ] in General American. Examples of such words are: advance, mask, passport, castle, rather, glass etc.⁷³

⁶⁹ Vorel, *American English*, 125.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*, 311.

⁷² Ibid., 307.

⁷³ Ibid.

3.2 Words and aspects from 17th century in American English and not in British English

The first successful English settlers came to the North America in 1607. At that time, the British spoke the variation of English, which is now known as the Middle English [the language of Shakespeare]. Since then, these two countries were developing separately and that is why its languages started to differentiate. This is the reason why we can find some words and other aspects of Shakespeare's English in the American one and not in the British one.⁷⁴

Especially the American pronunciation has more aspects of English speech from the 17th and 18th centuries than the current British pronunciation. It is the preservation of the /-r/ and the flat /a/ in such words as "fast"; "path" etc. as mentioned above. These two qualities were abandoned in England at the end of the 18th century. Also the pronunciation of "*neither*" and "*either*" is preserved from the times of early settlers, while in Britain is preferred pronunciation with the diphthong [aɪ].⁷⁵

The American sometimes use the "old-fashioned" "*gotten*" instead of "*got*" as the past participle of "*get*".⁷⁶

Some words or old uses of words which are no longer used in Britain are still preserved in America. American English still use "*mad*" in the sense of "*angry*", the third season of the year is "*fall*" while in British English it is "*autumn*", etc.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Baugh and Cable, *A History of the English Language*, 360.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

And even the phrase “*I guess*” was commonly used in Britain until the 17th century.⁷⁸

3.3 Borrowings from American English to British English

In these days, when all parts of the world are becoming interconnected, it comes about that some words are being adopted from American English into British English. And their number is increasing.⁷⁹

That goes for those words describing American things, such as: “*telephone*”; “*typewriter*”; “*prairie*”. Also some American political terms are now accepted by the General English. Examples of this are: “*caucus*”; “*graft*”; “*to stump*”. Other words are Americanisms at first sight: “*to lynch*”; “*blizzard*”; “*jazz*”; “*supermarket*”; “*teenager*”; “*fast food*”.^{80,81}

There are also some expressions and idioms which had been invented by English settlers and found their way into the British English. For example “*to face the music*” meaning “*to accept the unpleasant results of your actions*” or “*to kick the bucket*” means “*to die*”, “*hot under the collar*” means “*angry*” and others.⁸²

3.4 Influence of mass and social media on English

Since the technologies are developing at breakneck speed, it is evident that the communication has to develop too. With the advent of mobile phones and texting, many new abbreviations arose as a consequence of effort to insert as many information as possible into one text.⁸³ These abbreviations emerged usually from the phonetic transcription of a word, for example: “*thx*” for “*thanks*”. Typical is also substitution of one part of word by a numeral, for instance: “*2nite*” for “*tonight*”, “*B4N*” for “*bye for now*”, “*l8trs*” for “*laters*” (way of saying

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*, 397.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Viney, *The History of the English Language*, 44.

⁸² Ibid., 42.

⁸³ Dr. Curtis, *Mass media influence on Society*

goodbye) or “gr8” for “great”. These abbreviations are now testing traditional spelling and abbreviation systems that have been in place in English for centuries. Here is a small glossary of some other abbreviations used in English:

- omg = Oh my god
- kl = cool
- bin = been
- wot = what
- lk = like
- K = okay
- w/e = whatever
- j/k = just kidding
- tdy = today
- rly = really?
- tho = though
- ppl = people
- tbh = to be honest
- XOXO = hugs and kisses
- btw = by the way
- imho = in my humble opinion
- idk = I don't know ⁸⁴

The way of living is speeding up; people do not have much time to talk with each other. It is much quicker and simpler to write a few letters and then do something else. People want to make their life easy; it is in the human nature. All inventions were invented to make life easier. The internet connection in every household has brought this shortening and abbreviating onto new level. People spend their leisure time in front of

⁸⁴ *The Largest List of Chat Acronyms & Text Shorthand*

computers and laptops instead of going out and talking to people in reality.⁸⁵

The communication through the internet has its own specifics. Most people do not use diacritical marks. Why is it so? It is simpler and quicker that way. Also punctuation marks are sometimes omitted, especially when people write only one sentence. It is again because of the simplicity. Another reason why people use abbreviations are multiplayer online games. Players have to quickly discuss the strategy and there is no time for long sentences. Abbreviations typical for online games are: “*BRB*” for “*be right back*”, “*AFK*” for “*away from keyboard*” or “*OT*” for “*off topic*”.⁸⁶

However, this kind of communication definitely changes the way how people write and even how they speak. The most common abbreviations are sometimes used as acronyms. The phrase: “*Lol, it was so fun.*” is completely ordinary in these days and can be seen and heard in speech of many young people. The word “*lol*” is very interesting example of how abbreviation changed its function and started to be used as an interjection. The original meaning is “laughing out loud” but the transferred meaning can be synonymous to the interjection “*hahaha*”.⁸⁷

This form of communication is spreading very quickly; it has something to do with the quickness of transporting information. When people see that other people use these abbreviations, they start to adapt to it and eventually start to use it too.⁸⁸

3.5 Dialects

As the American population was spreading over the country and other people from different parts of the world were coming, one important consequence occurred. The dialectal disparities of British people settled

⁸⁵ Dr. Curtis, *Mass Media Influence on Society*

⁸⁶ *Glossary of Online Gaming Acronyms, Abbreviations and Slang*

⁸⁷ Morgan, *Why Did LOL Infiltrate the Language?*

⁸⁸ Dr. Curtis, *Mass Media Influence on Society*

in America began to vanish, because they were living on the new continent and stopped to be in touch with other speakers of their dialect. Certain features of these dialects lasted only in areas highly populated by people from one part of the United Kingdom, such as in New England mentioned above. Also the immigrants from other countries started to use English language and this mixture created the American English, which now shows a high degree of uniformity, definitely with the comparison to the speech of the United Kingdom.⁸⁹

Nevertheless there are some linguistic differences among certain parts of the America, reflecting the movement of the settlers to the west. Settlers from New England migrated along the Great Lakes in the north part of the country, settlers from the middle of the east coast spread through the centre of the country until the west coast and settlers from the south moved along the coast.⁹⁰

These three – Northern, Midland and Southern dialects, sometimes also called New England dialect, General American and the Southern dialect – are the basic ones, which can be found in most of the books and publications on this topic. Sometimes there is a fourth – Western – dialect added to them. This thesis prefers the division according to *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language* by David Crystal.⁹¹

The Northern and Southern dialects developed from early English settlements in New England and Virginia in the seventeenth century, while the Midland emerged from secondary settlements. The first two mentioned were showing a high level of cultural and linguistic distinction.⁹²

⁸⁹ Baugh and Cable, *A History of the English Language*, 356.

⁹⁰ Viney, *The History of the English Language*, 48.

⁹¹ Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*, 94.

⁹² Pederson, *Dialects*, 264.

People coming to the south of the country – to the colonies of Virginia and Carolinas – paid attention to the Old World traditions. They came mainly from west parts of England, such as Somerset and Gloucestershire. The accent characteristic for this part of England include the “Zummerzet” voicing of “s” sounds and strongly pronounced “r” after vowels. In America, this accent, or at least an echo of it, can still be heard in some isolated valleys and islands in Virginia and Carolinas. It is said to be the closest accent to the Shakespearean English which can be heard these days.⁹³

On the contrary, the people arriving to the north part of the country, around Plymouth, were mostly coming from east part of England, where loss of an “r” after vowels is the dominant attribute, as well as in present-day Received Pronunciation. This feature persisted in the speech of people from New England up to the present.⁹⁴

The Massachusetts colonists had innovative spirit and revolutionary beliefs which led them out of England. They wanted to change the source culture. This social distinctiveness resulted in the basic regional division of American speech to southern and northern.⁹⁵

. The Midland dialect originated in Pennsylvania in the eighteen century; but now it seems that it lost most of its distinctiveness and is more likely a mixture of the southern and northern dialects.⁹⁶ According to *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language* the midland dialect covers very large area, from southern New Jersey and Pennsylvania and northern Delaware, downwards to the Virginia,

⁹³ Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*, 93.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Pederson, *Dialects*, 264.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

Carolinas and Georgia and spreading westward to the west part of the United States.⁹⁷

In some publications, the area west of the Mississippi river is characterized by the Western dialect, which has developed in the nineteenth century. This area includes Missouri, Iowa, Minnesota, Dakotas, Nebraska and Kansas. Except for Missouri, which combines all three major American English dialects, these states combine the features of Northern and Midland dialect.⁹⁸

However, this division is not sufficient because of frequent north-south movements within the country and arrival of many immigrants from various parts of the world. Thus, many mixed dialect areas can be found within these four dialects.⁹⁹

There are many other divisions and subdivisions of American English dialects, which are more detailed. According to *A history of the English Language* by Albert C. Baugh and Thomas Cable, there are 6 major dialects of English in the United States. These categories are: Eastern New England, New York City, Upper North, Lower North, Upper South and Lower South and are depicted on the map 1 [appendix 1]. This publication focuses predominantly on the phonological aspect of dialects.¹⁰⁰

3.5.1 Eastern New England

This area is defined by the Connecticut River and by Green Mountains in the west. Even in this relatively small area not all features of the dialect are uniform. However, characteristic features for Eastern New England dialect are: the retention of a rounded vowel in such words as

⁹⁷ Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*, 30.

⁹⁸ Pederson, *Dialects*, 266.

⁹⁹ Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*, 94.

¹⁰⁰ Baugh and Cable, *A History of the English Language*, 379.

“*hot*” and “*top*”; the use of the broad “*a*” in words like “*fast*”, “*past*”; the loss of the “*r*” in words like “*car*”, “*hard*”.¹⁰¹

3.5.2 New York City

This dialect is sometimes considered as a part of the Eastern New England dialect, but there are some significant differences between these two. It covers the area of New York City and its adjacent counties, which means it is small from a geographical point of view. However, the City of New York is the most densely populated city in the United States. It is also one of the most important cities in the world historically, culturally and economically. Many immigrants have come to this city looking for a better life. As well as a large number of people who commute to work there from surrounding areas. From the cultural point of view the City of New York is also important, for instance the Broadway theatre or Metropolitan Opera House is located there and many actors and other public figures live there.¹⁰²

This city is extensively diverse and for this reason this dialect is difficult to analyse. Except some regional features, which characterize this area, it is important to embrace social varieties easily observable in this city. For example the term: “*Brooklynese*” is used to refer to speech of working-class of New York City.¹⁰³

However, some features generally observable in the City of New York are following. The words “*cot*” and “*caught*” are pronounced differently: [kɑt], [kɔt] because the “*o*” in words like “*cot*” and “*top*” is unrounded in most cases. Another characteristic feature is pronunciation of “*curl*” like “*coil*” or “*third*” like “*thoid*”. However, cultivated New Yorkers

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Labov et al., *The Atlas of North American English*

¹⁰³ Ibid.

pronounce “*curl*” and “*coil*” differently, it could be considered as an indicator of social class.¹⁰⁴

3.5.3 Upper North

The area of Western New England, north part of the state New York and the basin of the Great Lakes can be summarized as the Upper North and has its own characteristic pronunciation which originates from the original settlements and is connected with the spread of the population westward. As well as in the eastern New England, the pronunciation of word pairs such as *mourning/morning* and *hoarse/horse* is diverse. The former is pronounced with [ɔ], the latter is pronounced with [ɒ]. Other features shared with eastern New England are [ð] in “*with*”, [s] in “*grease*” and “*greasy*” and [u] in “*roots*”.¹⁰⁵

3.5.4 Lower North

Also this dialect preserves the “*r*” in all positions and the pronunciation of “*a*” in words like “*fast*”, “*ask*”, “*grass*” is typically [æ]. Within this dialect, there are two subareas.¹⁰⁶

One of them is called Middle Atlantic and consists of the eastern third of Pennsylvania below the Northern-Midland line, the southern part of New Jersey, the northern part of Delaware and the contiguous parts of Maryland. Characteristic feature in pronunciation in this area is the unrounded vowel in “*forest*” and “*hot*”, as well as the [ɛ] in “*care*”, “*Mary*”, “*merry*” and combination of [ɔ] and [ɒ] before “*r*” in words like “*four*” and “*forty*”.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Baugh and Cable, *A History of the English Language*, 358.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

The other one can be found in western Pennsylvania and its derivatives occur in Ohio, Illinois and Indiana. Unlike the Middle Atlantic subarea, the pronunciation of “*cot*” and “*caught*” is merged here.¹⁰⁸

3.5.5 Upper South

This dialect can be heard in all parts of West Virginia (except the southern and eastern parts, there is strong influence of Virginia speech), the mountain regions of Virginia and North Carolina and also in the majority of territory of Kentucky and Tennessee. It has no unique features; it combines attributes of Lower North or Lower South, however, the configuration of characteristics is peculiar to the Upper South. For instance, the “*r*” sounds as in the Lower North, but for example [aɪ] sounds like [aɛ] or [aə] in the southern part as well as in the Lower South.¹⁰⁹

3.5.6 Lower South

Since this dialect area is very vast, it is evident that some differences can be found between certain parts of it. The Piedmont Region of Virginia and the low country near the coast of South Carolina are the central areas of this dialect.¹¹⁰

In many districts can be heard features of Eastern New England dialect, such as loss of “*r*” before consonants in words like “*car*” and “*hard*”. However, unlike the Eastern New England dialect, the omission of “*r*” is applied even before a word beginning with a vowel, for instance in “*far away*” [fɑ: ə'we]. Another contrast with Eastern New England dialect

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 359.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

is absence of the rounded vowel in words like “*top*” and “*hot*” or the broad “*a*” in “*grass*” and “*dance*”.¹¹¹

The Southern drawl is typical by the diphthongization or double diphthongization of stressed vowels and slower pronunciation. For instance the word “*out*” is pronounced with [æ] in the beginning instead of usual [aʊ]. The word “*yes*” is pronounced as [jɛɪs] or [jɛjəs], “*class*” becomes [klæɪs] or [klæjəs]. For this dialect is also characteristic the weakened articulation of final consonant groups, it means that words “*last*”, “*kept*”, “*find*” are pronounced as [lasʹ], [kepʹ], [finʹ].¹¹²

Not only the pronunciation divides the United States, many differences in vocabulary can be noticed through the whole country. There was a survey, called *Harvard Dialect Survey*, realized in 2003 by Professor Bert Vaux from Harvard University and Mr. Scott Golder. The survey consisted of 122 questions and was focused on phonological differences as well as on lexical variations.¹¹³

From this survey results, for example, that the rubber-soled shoes worn in gym class or for athletic activities are called “*sneakers*” in the south Florida and the Northeast coast (area of Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine). This comprises 45% of respondents. Other large group (41%) of respondents calls these shoes “*tennis shoes*” and this term can be heard all over the rest of the country. The third most numerous answer was “*gymshoes*” (5%) and it can be heard in the speech of people around the Lake Michigan.¹¹⁴

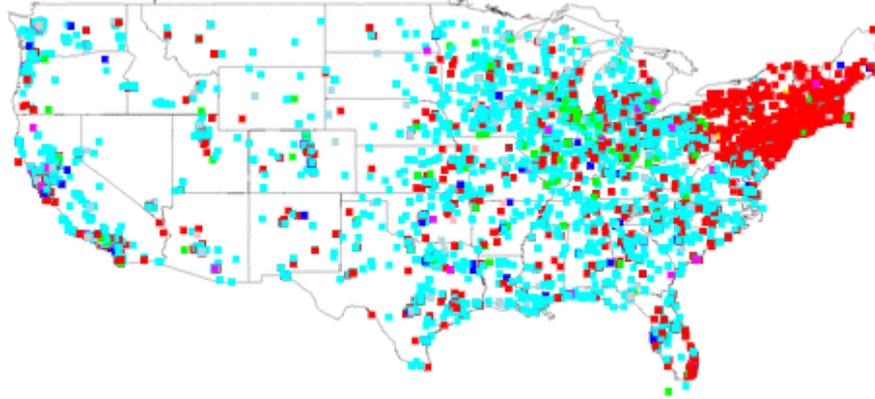
¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Vaux, *Dialect Maps of Harvard Survey*

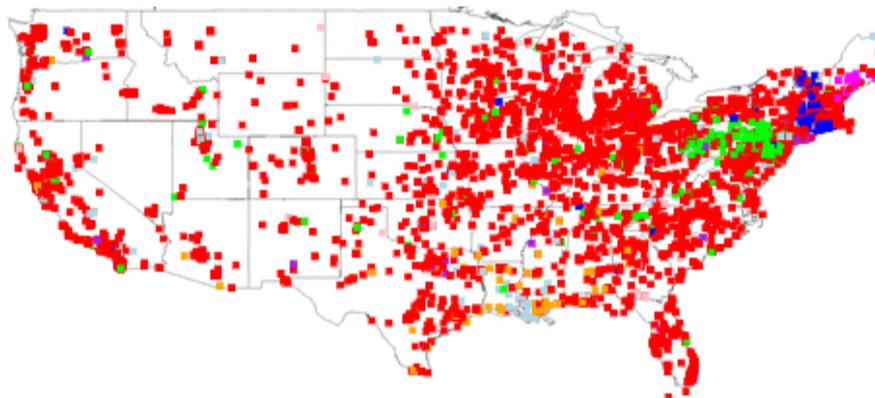
¹¹⁴ 73. What is your *general* term for the rubber-soled shoes worn in gym class, for athletic activities, etc.?

On the map below, the red colour stands for “sneakers”, the turquoise colour stands for “tennis shoes” and green stands for “gymshoes”.¹¹⁵



Map 2: Geographic distribution of designations for rubber-soled shoes.¹¹⁶

Another question in the survey was: “What do you call the long sandwich that contains cold cuts, lettuce, and so on?” The absolute majority of Americans calls it “sub” (77%), but the word “hoagie” is predominantly used in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and southern part of New York. The word “sub” is represented by the red colour, “hoagie” by the green colour on the map below.¹¹⁷



Map 3: Geographic distribution of designations for long sandwich.¹¹⁸

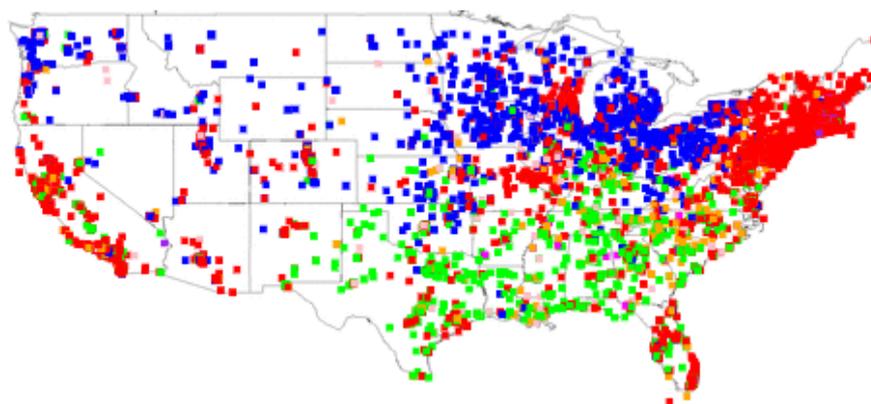
¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ 64. What do you call the long sandwich that contains cold cuts, lettuce, and so on?

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

The best known example of lexical variety is the generic term for sweetened carbonated beverage. The Northeast of the country calls it “soda”; on the map below is it represented by red colour. Around the Great Lakes (Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio) and in western part of Pennsylvania this beverage is called “pop”, on the map it is depicted by blue colour. People in the South call this drink “coke”, which is represented by the green on the map below.¹¹⁹



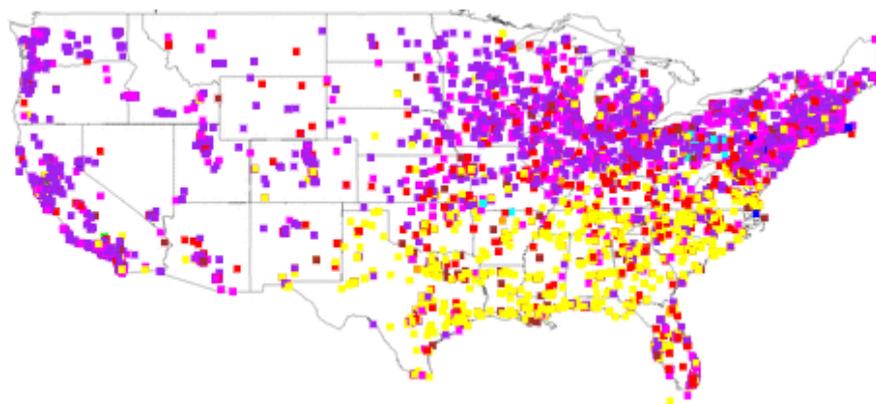
Map 4: Geographic distribution of designations for sweetened carbonated beverage.¹²⁰

Another well-known example is the combination of words used for addressing a group of two or more people. It is not surprising that people in the South say “y’all” and people in the Northeast and around the Great Lakes say “you guys” or “you”. The addressing “you guys” also predominates in the west of the US. Some people also say “you all”, however it is not typical for only one region. On the map below is “y’all” represented by yellow colour, “you” by pink colour and “you guys” by purple colour.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ 105. What is your generic term for a sweetened carbonated beverage?

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ 50. What word(s) do you use to address a group of two or more people?



Map 5: Geographic distribution of designations for addressing a group of two or more people.¹²²

Among other interesting examples belongs the designation of the drink made with milk and ice cream. Almost every person in the USA calls it “*milkshake*” or just “*shake*” but people living in Massachusetts, New Hampshire and adjacent areas of neighbouring states call it “*frappe*”.¹²³

Interesting is also the name of “*the thing from which you might drink water in a school*”. Said in a simplified way, the west (plus Michigan) calls it “*drinking fountain*” and the east calls it “*water fountain*”. However, surprising is the fact that in Wisconsin, Massachusetts and Rhode Island people call it “*bubblers*”.¹²⁴

Third point of view, important for distinguishing dialects of American English, is grammar. Grammatical structure of American dialects is not completely different from General American; however, there are some typical features which may facilitate analysing of these dialects and are crucial for their characteristics.

The Lower South dialect is definitely the most dissimilar to General American, and is caused by the strong influence of African American English. One of two the most typical grammatical feature of the Lower

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ 63. What do you call the drink made with milk and ice cream?

¹²⁴ 103. What do you call the thing from which you might drink water in a school?

South dialect is the use of plural personal pronoun “y’all”, mentioned above in this thesis. The other one is the use of “ain’t”. It is used not only for “isn’t/wasn’t”, but also for “haven’t”, for example: “You ain’t seen nuthin yet”.¹²⁵

The using of so-called “*positive anymore*” is typical for Midland area of the United States and it means “*nowadays*”. An example of this is: “*It’s real hard to find a good job anymore.*” This feature is of Scots-Irish origin and can be also found in Northern Ireland in these days. The distribution of this feature is depicted on the map 6 [appendix 2].¹²⁶

3.6 African American Vernacular English

In 1619, first twenty Africans were brought to America and sold as slaves. As a result of this, a highly distinctive form of English came into existence in the islands of West Indies, which is another summarizing title for the islands of the Antilles and the Bahama archipelago, and the southern part of the mainland.¹²⁷ This kind of English was spoken by the incoming black population. As a safety measure, the people speaking different languages were brought together in the ships to avoid rebellion. This measure resulted in the growth of several pidgin forms of communication; the dominant one was the pidgin between the slaves and the sailors, who spoke English in most cases. The Oxford dictionary defines the word pidgin as: “*A grammatically simplified form of a language, typically English, Dutch, or Portuguese, some elements of which are taken from local languages, used for communication between people not sharing a common language.*”¹²⁸ This Pidgin English strengthened its position when the slaves started to communicate by it with the new landowners and also among themselves. Their children used the pidgin as a mother tongue and that is how the first black Creole

¹²⁵ North American English Dialects, 7.

¹²⁶ Labov et al., *The Atlas of the North American English*, 294.

¹²⁷ Viney, *The History of the English Language*, 40.

¹²⁸ Oxford Dictionary, *Definition of Pidgin in English*

speech in the region was created. As an example of an English-based Creole we can mention the Gullah dialect spoken by African Americans along the coast of South Carolina and Georgia and the adjacent islands.^{129,130}

Until the Civil War, when the slavery was abolished, there were more than 4 million Africans in America and they played a huge role in influencing the American English.¹³¹

This variety of English is spoken by many African American in the south and in cities in the north. It cannot be considered as a dialect itself, since it is not marked by geographic area and neither is it spoken by all African Americans – for instance, many middle-class African Americans do not speak this way. Therefore there are different opinions on how to call this variety of English. It is obvious that simple “African American English” is not sufficient for reasons mentioned above. That is why the word “vernacular” is usually added to this definition. The term “vernacular” refers to nonstandard traits of any language, for example the term “white vernacular” refers to nonstandard features in speech of white people.¹³²

There are some features of African American Vernacular English (frequently abbreviated AAVE) which can be found also in the nonstandard speech of white southerners. However, some other morphological and phonological features can be found merely in AAVE.¹³³

Among characteristic phonological attributes of AAVE belongs for example the reduction of final consonants: “*lis*” instead “*list*”. This is a common feature in the Lower South dialect, as well as the loss of “*r*” after

¹²⁹ Baugh and Cable, *A History of the English Language*, 383,

¹³⁰ Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*, 96.

¹³¹ Viney, *The History of the English Language*, 40.

¹³² Baugh and Cable, *A History of the English Language*, 382.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 384.

vowels: “ca” instead “car”, “fo” instead “four” which is also characteristic for AAVE. These losses usually occur before another word beginning with a consonant. Reduction before a vowel is also typical for AAVE: “lif’ up” instead “lift up”. AAVE also reduces a word-final single consonant after a vowel, for example the word “man” is pronounced as “ma” and with nasalized [æ] or the word “boot” is pronounced as “boo”. As well as in other varieties of English, the –ing suffix (e.g. *singing*) is pronounced like [ɪn] in AAVE.¹³⁴

Another distinction from Standard English comprises both voiced and voiceless “th”. The word “that” is pronounced as “dat” instead of [ð] in the beginning; “thin” is pronounced as “tin” instead of [θ]; and [θ] in words like “nothing” and “mouth” is pronounced as [f]: [nuf’n] and [mouf].¹³⁵

The grammatical structure of AAVE is very interesting in how it systematically differs from Standard English. For instance the verb “to be” is omitted when functioning both as the linking verb and the helping verb. The phrase “*He is tall.*” is in AAVE transformed to “*He tall.*” or “*They are running.*” is shortened as “*They runnin’.*” This structure of sentence indicates that “*They are running right now.*”¹³⁶

However there is another systematic feature of AAVE - the category of so-called verbal aspect, which is used when speaker wants to express the regularity of an action that may occur repeatedly, although there is not the condition of continuity. For example “*They be runnin’.*” means “*They are usually running.*” or “*They usually run.*” so it is important to differentiate these two types of sentences.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

The use of “*done*” in AAVE emphasizes the completed nature of an action: for example when the speaker says “*He done did it.*” he means “*He has already done it.*”¹³⁸

For AAVE is also typical the omission of suffix –s indicating the third person singular in present tense: “*He talk.*” for “*He talks.*” in Standard English.¹³⁹

3.7 Hispanic American English

Hispanic American English has one thing in common with African American Vernacular English – it is a social and ethnic variety. However, unlike the AAVE, it is also a geographical variety.¹⁴⁰ The designation Hispanic American English can sometimes be considered as obsolete, the word “Latino” is becoming more popular in recent years, however the term “Hispanic” is more used in the east of USA and “Latino” in the west.¹⁴¹

The alternative to these two terms is the word “Chicano”.¹⁴² Chicano English (CE) is a variation of English strongly influenced by Spanish, however many of its features cannot be found in Spanish language. On one hand, many of its speakers can speak only one of these languages. On the other hand, many of its speakers are fluently bilingual.¹⁴³ The one thing they all have in common is that they are native speakers of English.¹⁴⁴

The Chicano English originated from the contact between Mexican Spanish and American English and it developed into an independent, systematic and rule-governed language. No matter how the Mexican

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 385.

¹⁴¹ “Chicano English”

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Baugh and Cable, *A History of the English Language*, 385.

¹⁴⁵ Barrón and San Román, *Teachers Guide To Supporting Mexican American Standard English Learner*, 8.

Spanish is similar to the Spanish in Spain, it is influenced by Uto-Aztecan languages [especially Náhuatl], particularly concerning vowel reduction and vocabulary. That is the reason why the Chicano English cannot be designated as English influenced by Spanish.¹⁴⁵

Going hand in hand with the growing Mexican community in the USA, the number of Chicano speakers in the USA will be constantly rising. By now, they already form the largest non-Anglo ethnic group in the United States. The largest number of Chicano speakers can be found in the southwest of the U.S. along the frontier with Mexico.^{146,147}

The phonology of Chicano English is strongly influenced by Mexican Spanish. As a result of this, the general public often confuses CE with Spanish accent.¹⁴⁸

Chicano English speakers do not pronounce the final consonant in final consonant clusters; they reduce it to a single sound. This occurs when both consonant sounds are voiced: “*mind*” is pronounced as “*mine*” and also when both consonant sounds are voiceless: “*worst*” is pronounced as “*worse*” or “*strict*” is pronounced as “*strick*”. Neither two-consonant sequences such as *-ft*, *-sk*, *-sp* or *-pt* are allowed: “*lef*” is used for “*left*”, “*ris*” for “*risk*”, “*gras*” for “*grasp*”, “*slep*” for “*slept*”. Chicano English also tends to vary consonant clusters even if the final consonant is not clustered. For example the word “*least*” is realized as [lis], “*night*” is realized as [naj] etc. Thus, many words not homophonous in Mainstream English are homophonous in Chicano English – word pairs like find/fine, fuzz/fuss, and pen/pin.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 7.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ “Chicano English”

¹⁴⁸ Barrón and San Román, *Teachers Guide To Supporting Mexican American Standard English Learner*, 9

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. 10-15.

Typical feature for Chicano English is merging of the “*ch*” and “*sh*” sounds. However, Chicanos from Texas manifest this feature of speech more than Californianos. Merging these two sounds can be found in words like “*teacher*”- it is pronounced as “*teasher*” or “*shame*” which is pronounced as “*chame*”.¹⁵⁰

The stress in Chicano English is usually placed on the first syllable of the word and is elongated. The word “*today*” is pronounced as “*tooday*”, “*resist*” as “*reesist*” and “*decide*” as “*deecide*”.¹⁵¹

Several Chicano English syntactic features are identical with other language varieties, especially with AAVE. For instance, the suffix –s indicating the plural number is reduced when forming a separate syllable: “*five cent*” instead of “*five cents*” or “*kiss-ditch*” instead of “*kisses-ditches*”.¹⁵²

In Standard English is obligatory to use the negative word “*not*” with “*until*”. In Chicano English, “*until*” can stand alone as the negative element. “*He’ll be home until seven o’clock.*” is used instead of “*He won’t be home until seven o’clock.*”¹⁵³

The linking verb “*to be*” is predominantly omitted. “*This is a school.*” is replaced by “*This a school.*”¹⁵⁴

Multiple negation is used ordinarily in Chicano English. For instance: “*I don’t know no stories.*”¹⁵⁵

The so called “regularization” is also characteristic for Chicano English. It is process of regularizing irregularities that are typical for Standard English. This feature can be found in AAVE and other non-

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 13.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 16.

¹⁵² Ibid., 21.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 22.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 24.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 25.

standard varieties of English as well. This regularization relates to the form of verb in third person in singular. In Standard English the suffix –s is always added to the verb; however in Chicano English this suffix is not used. For example “*He jump.*” is used instead of “*He jumps.*”¹⁵⁶

The indefinite article is always regular in Chicano English. The form “*an*” is never used, only “*a*”. For instance: “*A girl opened a umbrella when it began to rain.*”¹⁵⁷

These are not the only typical features which can be found in Chicano English; however they are the most interesting ones.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 33,34.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 35.

4 CONCLUSION

This thesis should provide a general overview concerning dialects of American English, including two most widespread varieties used by non-Anglo ethnic groups – African American Vernacular English and Hispanic American English. This thesis also gives a summary of the historical background, which is important for understanding why the American English is so different from the British one and how other languages have influenced it. It describes certain principal influences that other languages have had on the American form of English, and points to those effects in modern English. In general, this thesis should serve as a brief description of dialects and language variations in the United States, including practical examples, and may hopefully even raise some questions for further research.

Not only the historical aspect of the English language is discussed in this thesis; it is also devoted to current issues of the language – including the influence of mass media – as well. As the study of language in general is important in our constantly changing world, this topic needs to be taken into consideration whether it concerns English or any other language in the world.

An additional feature of this thesis is the analysis of modern changes in English, including a typical feature of writing trends - abbreviating and shortening. Not only does this work provide a brief list of some of these modern abbreviations, it analyses an increasing trend in the language toward shortenings, abbreviations and acronyms, especially in using language online through social media, chat, etc. This does not apply only to English; it is typical, e.g., for Czech and French languages as well. As the author of this thesis is a Czech native speaker and studies French as the third language, it is possible to observe this feature in these two languages as well as in English. However, different approach can be seen in Czech and French. On one hand Czechs accept English words –

and abbreviations – in their language quite easily. Taken to extremes, we could say that the Czech language might eventually lose its originality due to this trend of accepting Anglicisms and Americanisms. Frenchmen generally, on the other hand, are opposed to the English influence by coining and using new French equivalents for English words, such as: “savoir-faire” for “know-how” or abbreviation “MDR” which stands for “mort de rire” instead of using English abbreviation “LOL”. This aversion to English words has resulted especially from long-lasting Anglo-French historical conflicts.

Another aspect that is amply discussed by linguists throughout the world – and is also analysed in this thesis – is the question of where the evolution of languages will be heading. The United States are often referred to as “the melting pot”. There are two principal theories whether this tendency will continue. Some people advocate the view that English speaking people will try to maintain their national consciousness and will defend their manner of speaking as the feature of their culture. However, the author of this thesis holds the view that disappearing of regional attributes will continue, thanks to the interconnection of today’s world.

It is the author’s hope that this work will provide all who read it with useful information on American English, its dialects and language variations, and has hopefully set down some ideas that could be taken and used for further analysis.

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6 ABSTRACT

This bachelor's thesis deals with the development of American English from the very beginning, and also with its contemporary form, with a focus on dialects and language variations. The first chapter is devoted to the historical development of the English language in the present United States and the influence of foreign languages with which English has come into contact during its existence on the North American continent. The second chapter includes the differences between American and British English on the lexical, syntactic and phonetic levels. Differences among various dialects of American English are displayed on these levels as well. This thesis is accompanied by maps showing the distribution of certain dialectal phenomena.

7 RESUMÉ

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá vývojem Americké angličtiny od samého počátku, a také její dnešní podobou, se zaměřením na nářečí a jazykové variace. První kapitola se věnuje historickému vývoji anglického jazyka v dnešních Spojených státech a vlivu cizích jazyků, se kterými přišla angličtina do styku během své existence na Severoamerickém kontinentu. Druhá kapitola zahrnuje rozdíly mezi Americkou a Britskou angličtinou - a to na úrovni lexikální, syntaktické i fonetické. Na těchto úrovních jsou také zobrazeny rozdíly mezi různými nářečími Americké angličtiny. Pro lepší představu je práce doplněna o mapy zachycující rozšíření určitých nářečních jevů.

8 GLOSSARY

- Under the auspices = pod záštitou
- Cession = postoupení
- Impact = vliv, dopad
- To endanger = ohrozit
- Loanword = výpůjčka, přejaté slovo
- National consciousness = národnostní uvědomění
- To denote = označovat
- Diacritical mark = diakritické znaménko
- Punctuation mark = interpunkční znaménko
- Retention = zachování
- To merge = splývat
- Vernacular = nářečí
- Pidgin English = lámaná angličtina
- Stress = důraz
- Consonant cluster = shluk souhlásek

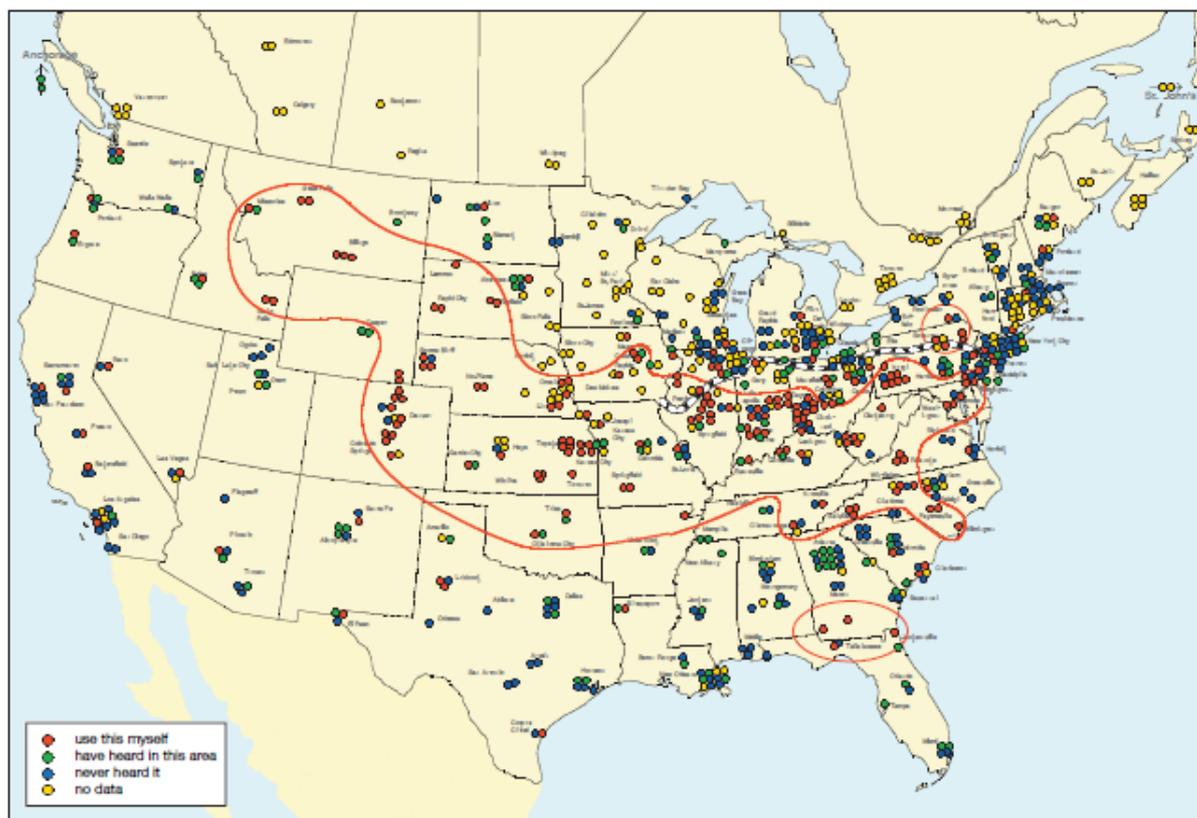
9 APPENDICES

Appendix 1:



Map 5: Geographic distribution of six major dialects in the USA according to *A History of the English Language* by Albert C. Baugh and Thomas Cable

Appendix 2:



Map 6: Geographic distribution of positive anymore according to *The Atlas of North American English* by William Labov et al.