

# Historical Linguistics II

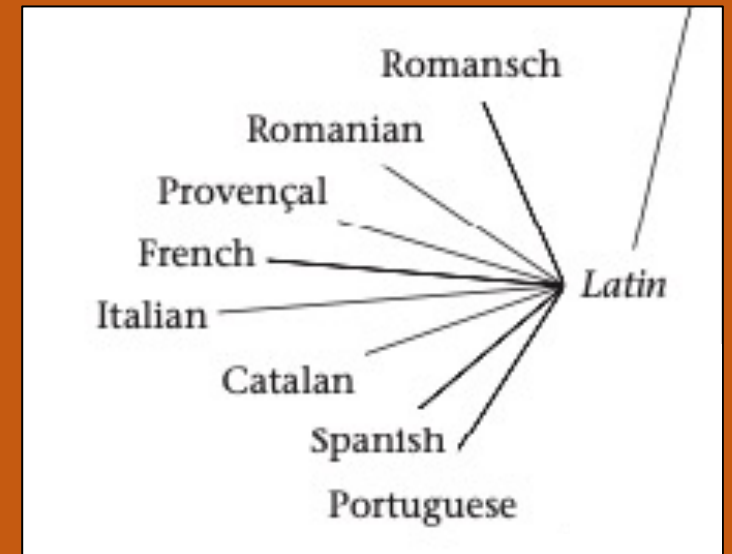
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Ling 301, Spring 2021

College of Staten Island

# Change through variation

- All languages change over time.
- We said last week that language change is driven by language variation.
- Often, a language will give rise to several different languages, like how Latin gave rise to Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, and other languages. This is shown as a branching node on the trees we saw last week.
- How do new varieties of a language arise?
- What are some contemporary language varieties?



Source: Language Files (2016), p. 534

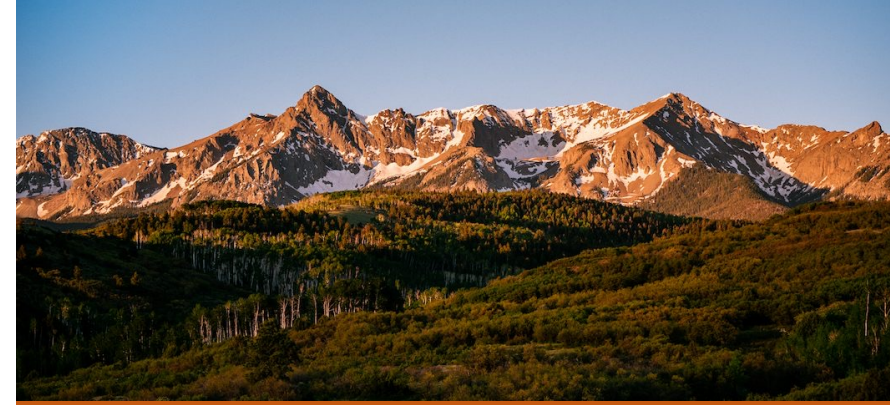
# How do new varieties arise?

- Think about how language is acquired.
- Children learn from their family, often their parents.
- Formal instruction often follows in school.
- The linguistic habits of one generation get amplified in the next, leading to the spread of certain features in a local area.
- Additionally, language contact, often through immigration, can lead to language change. See Andean Spanish as an example.



# How do new varieties arise?

- Language varieties are often tied to geographic areas. We call these **regional dialects**.
- Geographic areas are often separated by natural boundaries like mountains, rivers, or oceans.
- Latin gave rise to Spanish and Italian (and other languages).
- Spanish descended from the dialect of Latin spoken in what's now Spain, while Italian descended from the Latin dialect spoken in what's now Italy.
- This shows that different dialects of one language can eventually give rise to multiple languages.

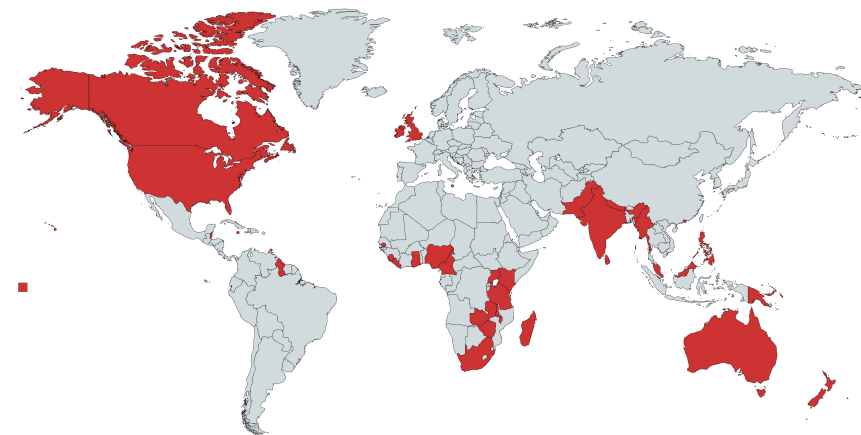


Spain and Italy with today's borders.



# How do new varieties arise?

- But not all separate dialects become different languages.
- There are many different dialects of English that we still consider varieties of one language, English.
- We wouldn't say that the English spoken in London is a different language than the English spoken in Minnesota, even though they might have different accents and some different words.
- Dialects have a very high **mutual intelligibility**. Languages have lower mutual intelligibility.



Countries where English is widely spoken, or has/had official status.



Sometimes you'll hear people claim that "American and English are two different languages," but they're joking (or wrong).

# What are some contemporary language varieties?

- *Language Files* gives an overview of 6 regional dialects spoken in the United States.

1. The North
2. New England
3. The South
4. Appalachia
5. The Midland
6. The West

As we'll see, these dialects differ in terms of accent, vocabulary, and what kind of syntactic expressions are allowed.

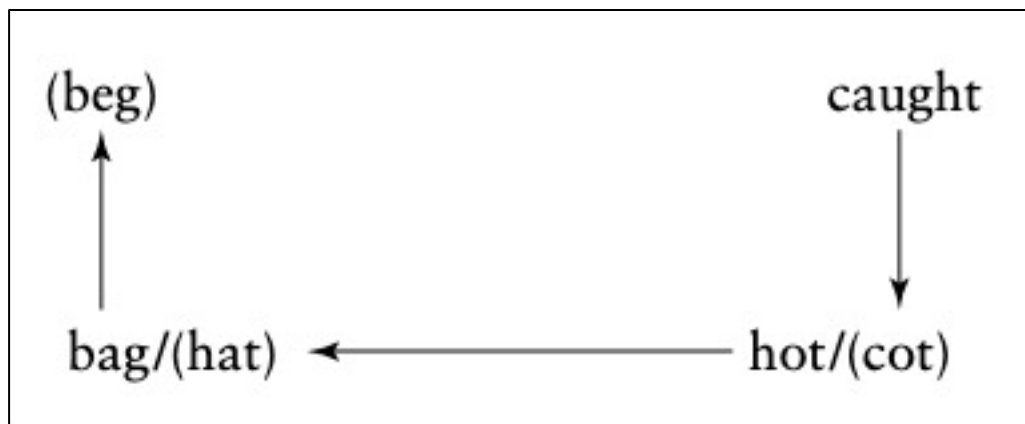


Source: *Language Files* (2016), p. 431

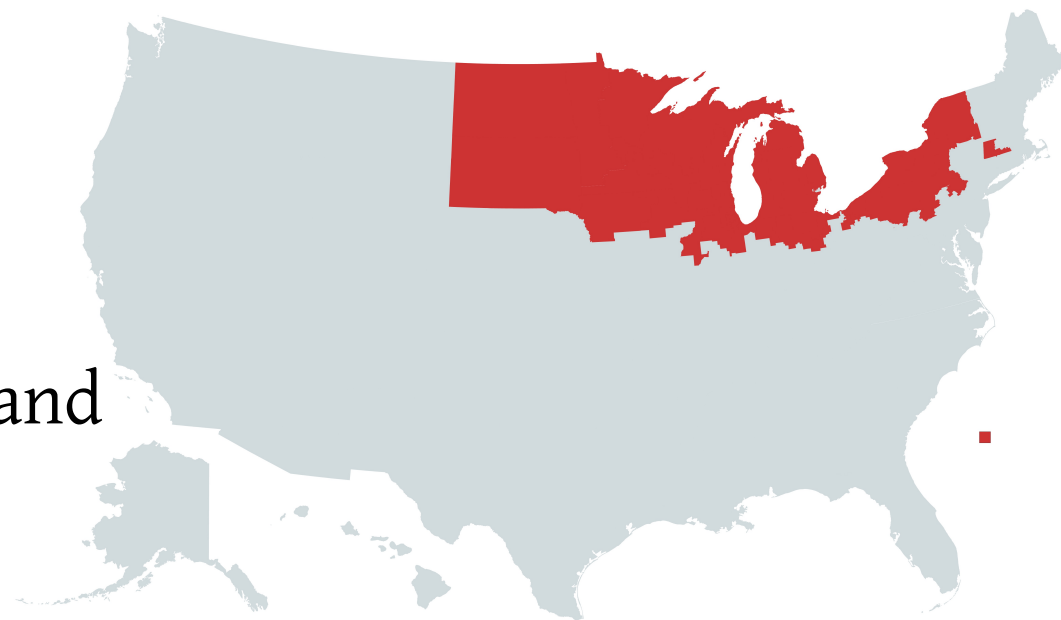
- They mention that NYC “is a distinct speech island,” with its own unique variety.

# The North

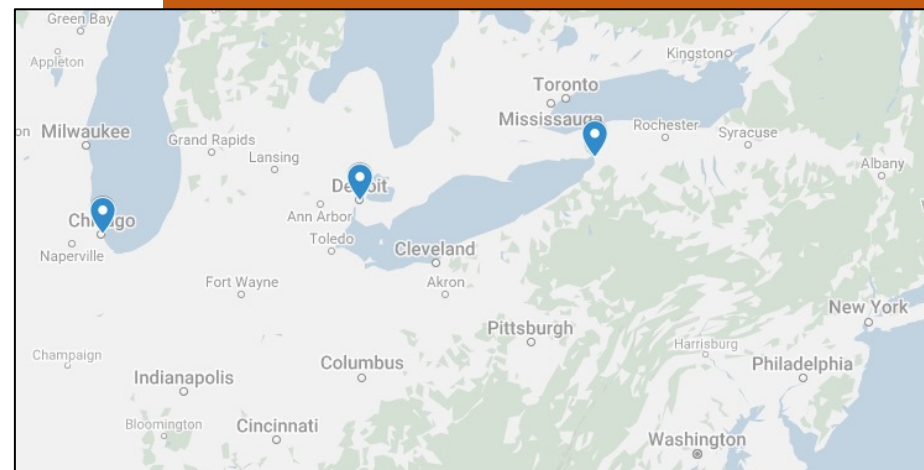
- Northern Cities Shift: vowels [æ], [ɑ] and [ɔ] are higher and more front, with pronunciations changing as below:



- You can hear it for yourself here:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9UoJ1-ZGb1w>



Approximate map of the regional dialect identified as The North.





# The North



roly-poly



pop



parkway  
or tree lawn

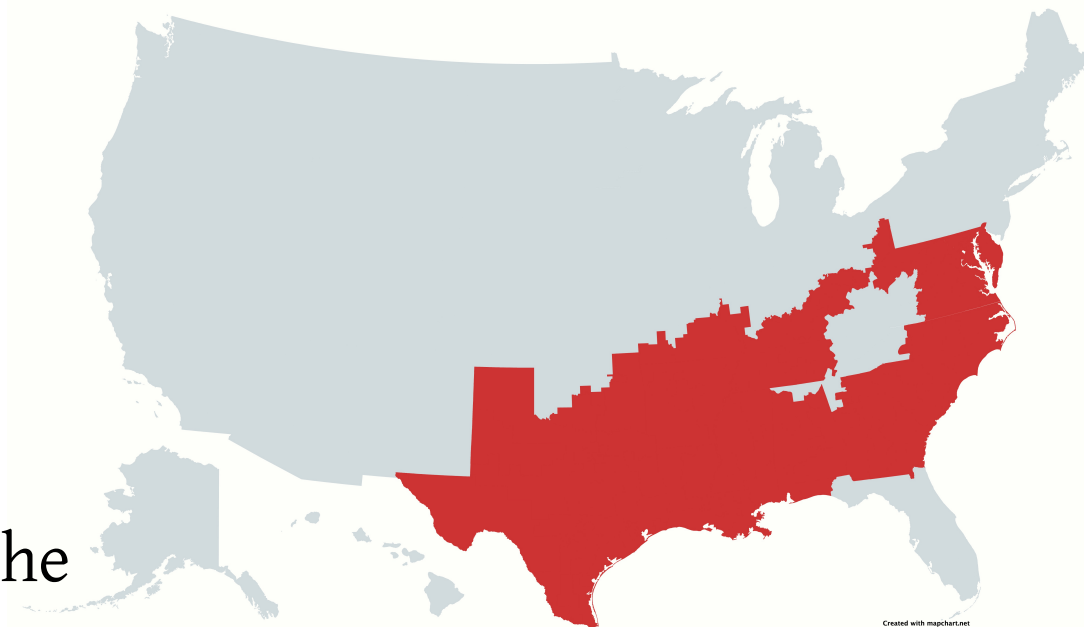


sneakers



# The South

- [ɛ] and [ɪ] are often diphthongized.  
*led* [lɛɪd], *net* [nɛɪt]
- [ɛ] pronounced as [ɪ] before [n]. This is the “pin/pen merger.”  
*pin* [pɪn], *pen* [pɪn]
- [aʊ] pronounced as [æʊ]  
*house* [hæʊs]
- [aɪ] often pronounced as [ɑ:]  
*wide* [wa:d], *my* [ma:]
- You “cut on” the lights and “mash the button” on a machine.
- Y’all is a commonplace second-person plural pronoun.



Approximate map of the regional dialect identified as The South.

# The South



rolly-polly



coke



curb strip  
or devil's strip



buggy

# The South

- Wolfram (2006) shows that the South has multiple subdialects within it.
- We mentioned that [aɪ] often pronounced as [ɑ:].  
“It’s hah tahd on the sound sahd.”  
[its ha: ta:d an ðə sæʊnd sa:d]
- But in North Carolina’s Outer Banks, [aɪ] is often pronounced as [ɔɪ].  
“It’s hoi toid on the saned soid.”  
[its hɔɪ tɔɪd an ðə seɪnd sɔɪd]
- Hear the Outer Banks accent here:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jgi9wYsR5fo>



The Outer Banks are the chain of islands that jut into the Atlantic Ocean, a few miles from the mainland of North Carolina.



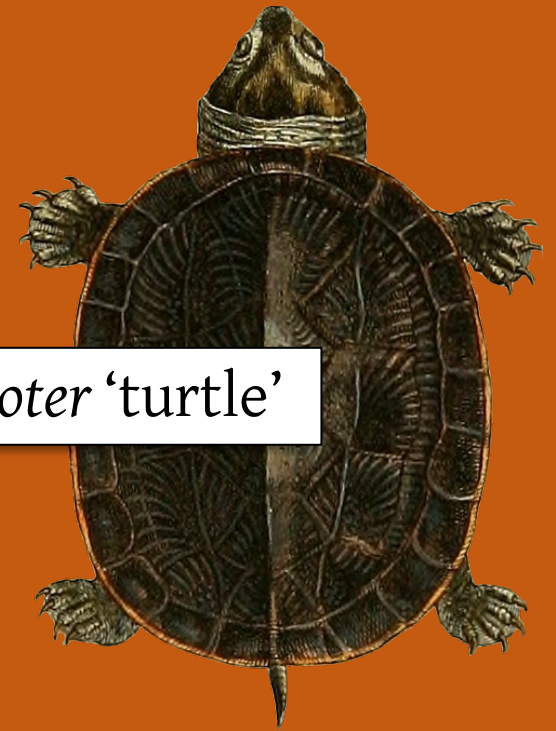
# Outer Banks Dialect

- What is a *woodser*?
- What's a *dingbatter*?
- What's *mommucked* mean?
- What's a *pizer*?
- What word does *pizer* come from?
- What's *slickcam*?
- What does *whopperjawed* mean?
- What's *drime* mean?

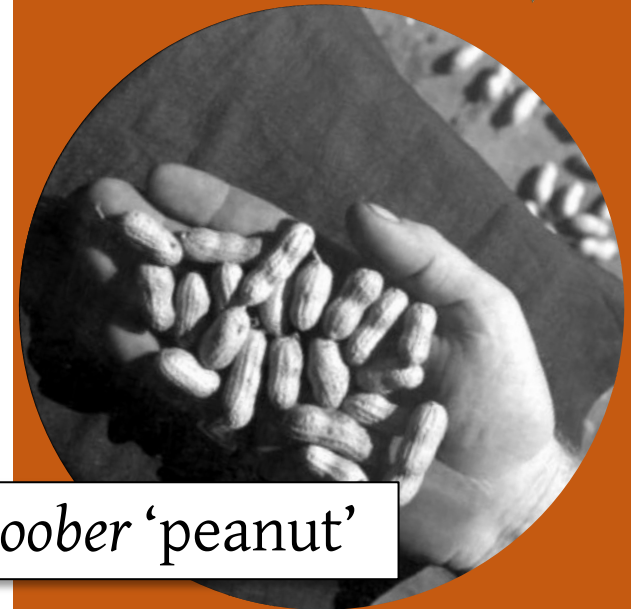


# The South

- How did the Southern dialect(s) develop?
- **Founder effect** – the people who moved to a given area left an imprint on the speech of the region.
- In the pre-Civil War South, aristocrats were educated in England, where they learned to drop the [ɹ] at the end of syllables.
- Other words were borrowed from African languages spoken by enslaved people, like those shown at right.



*cooter* 'turtle'



*goober* 'peanut'

# What dialect do you speak?

- Take the following quiz:

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/upshot/dialect-quiz-map.html>

- Your answers to 25 questions will reveal what regional dialect(s) your speech most closely resembles.
- It may not work if you have an ad blocker turned on, so you may need to temporarily disable your ad blocker.

## How Y'all, Youse and You Guys Talk

By JOSH KATZ and WILSON ANDREWS DEC. 21, 2013

What does the way you speak say about where you're from? Answer all the questions below to see your personal dialect map.

### YOUR LAST ANSWER

How would you address a group of two or more people?

you guys



Least similar Most similar

### QUESTION 2 OF 25

What do you call the small gray bug that curls up into a ball when it's touched?

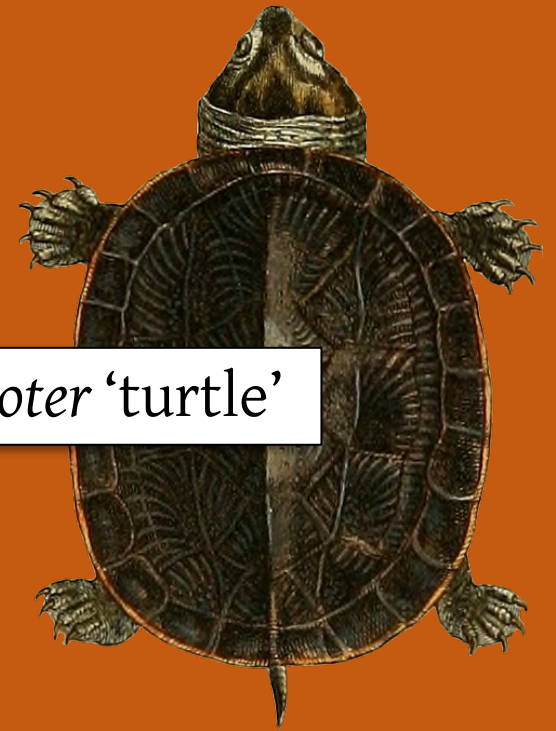
- ☐ pill bug
- ☐ doodle bug
- ☐ potato bug
- ☐ roly poly
- ☐ sow bug
- ☐ basketball bug
- ☐ twiddle bug
- ☐ roll-up bug
- ☐ wood louse
- ☐ millipede
- ☐ centipede
- ☐ I know what this creature is, but have no word for it
- ☐ I have no idea what this creature is
- ☐ other

Next »



# Takeaways

- Language varieties are influenced by many factors, including founder effect and language contact.
- Varieties are often informed by geography, giving rise to regional dialects.
- Dialects may eventually become languages in their own right.
- It can be hard to draw a firm line between languages and dialects, but mutual intelligibility is one useful metric.
- The US has many regional dialects, each of which have their own sub-dialects.



*cooter* 'turtle'



*goober* 'peanut'

# Course evaluations

Course evaluations are now open! Please take some time to fill out the evaluation for this class:

<https://csi.mce.cc/>

# For next week...

- Quiz #6 will be sent out tomorrow and due next week.
- Next week, we'll be reviewing for the final exam. Please bring at least two questions pertaining to Syntax and/or Historical Linguistics.