

## Language in Society

### Chapter 10

#### DIALECTS

**Idiolect:** *unique characteristics of the language of an individual speaker. English may consist of more than 450 million idiolects (one representing each person in the US).*

**Dialect:** *a variety of a language whose grammar differs in systematic ways from other varieties. These differences may be lexical, phonological, syntactic, and semantic. Dialects are **mutually intelligible** forms of a language. **Every** group, regardless of region or racial origin, speaks a dialect, just as each individual speaks an idiolect.*

**US:** Bostonians, New Yorkers, Blacks in Chicago, Blacks in LA, etc.  
**Spanish:** ?  
**French:** ?

The problem is to determine if two speech communities speak two **dialects** or two **languages**.

*Usually when dialects become mutually unintelligible (that is, when the speakers of one dialect group can no longer understand the speakers of another dialect group) these **dialects** become different **languages**.*

### REGIONAL DIALECTS

*It is s a dialect spoken in a specific geographic area that may arise from, and is reinforced by, that area's integrity.*

**Example:** A Boston dialect is maintained because large numbers of Bostonians and their descendents remain in the Boston area.

*Dialectal differences tend to increase proportionately to the degree of communicative isolation of the groups. Diversity develops when people are separated geographically and socially.*

**Example:** Italy

## ACCENTS

*In this chapter, **accents** refer to the **regional phonological** or phonetic distinctions that are heard. It refers to the characteristics of speech that convey information about the speaker's dialect. By hearing someone's accent, you can probably guess from which region they are from.*

**Example:** Bostonian, southern, Midwestern drawl, French, Spanish, Indian, etc.

*If you noticed, accent also refers to someone who does not speak a language variety ("dialect") natively. In this case, the phonological differences are **interferences** from their L1.*

p. 448 – Calvin & Hobbs

## DIALECTS OF ENGLISH

In the US, around the time of the American Revolution (1775-1783), there were three dialects of English and they were all different from **each other** and from the English spoken in **England**:

- Northern dialect (New English & around the Hudson River)
- Midland dialect (Pennsylvania)
- Southern dialect

Immigrating **Germans** affected the southeastern section.

Immigrating **Welsh** affected western Philadelphia.

Immigrating **Germans & Scotch-Irish** the Midlands area of Pennsylvania.

1950's and on:

Immigrating Spanish speaking immigrants (Cubans, Puerto Ricans, Central Americans, Mexicans) and immigrants from the Pacific Rim (Japan, China, Korea, Samoa, Malaysia, Vietnam, etc) and immigrants from Russia and Armenia are all contributing to the varieties of American English.

**Phonological Differences:**

**Lexical Differences:**

**Syntactic Differences:**

## Banned Languages:

**Japan:** Korean languages were banned in Japan (1910-1945 when Japan occupied Korea). In retaliation, Japanese motives and songs were banned in Korea.

**In France,** the official academy of scholars (who determine what usage constitutes the official French language) forbid the use of “Franglais”. Examples: *le parking, le weekend, le hotdog* it also forbid hundreds of local village dialects (*patois*).

- Langue d’oc a language from the region of l’Occitanie in France.

- In the region of Brittany, in opposition to this “French” movement, Breton was used in the schools. (Breton is a Celtic language...not Romance).

## US:

-Cajun English and French were banned in southern Louisiana until 20 years ago.

-American Indian languages were banned in federal and state schools on reservations.

There is no official language in the US. However, there have been many movements to establish English as an official language by amending the Constitution. It has already been passed in California (1986), Colorado, Florida and Arizona (1988), and Alabama (1990).

## Revival of Languages:

*This happens when the attempts to **ban** certain languages and dialects are countered by the efforts on the part of certain peoples to **preserve** their language and culture.*

French in Quebec

Gaelic or Irish in Ireland and Northern Ireland

Hebrew in Israel

**African American English:** *historical discrimination against African Americans has created social isolation and therefore dialect differences are intensified. Nowadays, blacks are embracing their dialects as a means of positive identification.*

### Phonology:

- r-deletion: delete /r/ everywhere except before a vowel. **Sore vs. saw**
- l-deletion: **help vs. hep**
- simplification of consonant clusters at the end of words and when one of the two consonants is an alveolar: **pass vs. passed**

- loss of interdental fricatives: /θ/ changes to /f/ **Ruth [ruf], Think [fink]**  
/ð/ changes to /v/ **brother [brover]**  
initial /ð/ changes to /d/ **this [dis]**

### Syntactic

- Double negatives
- Deletion of the verb ‘to be’
- Habitual ‘be’: John be happy for “John is always happy”.

**Latino (Hispanic) English:** *spoken by native Spanish speakers or their descendants. There is not one homogeneous Latino dialect because of Puerto Rican, Cuban, Guatemalan, and El Salvadoran origins.* **Chicano English:** *spoken by Mexican Americans in the Southwest and California.*

**Bilingual** Latinos may insert a Spanish word or phrase into a single sentence or move back and forth between Spanish and English (**code-switching**). However, this is a **universal** language-contact phenomenon that reflects the grammars of both languages working simultaneously. Therefore, there is a misconception that bilingual Latinos speak a “broken” English. Code-switching, however, follows all the syntactic rules of that language.

### Phonological Variables of Chicano English:

- Chicano speakers may substitute the Spanish vowel system /i, e, u, o, a/ for the English /i, I, e, ε, æ, u, υ, o, ɔ, a, ʌ/
- Alternation of ch / č / and sh / š/ **show** = /čo/ and **check** = /šək/
- Devoicing of consonants /z/
- Substitution of /t/ for /θ/ and /d/ for /ð/
- Word final consonant cluster simplification
- Prosodic aspects of speech (stress and intonation)

### Syntactic Variables of Chicano English:

- Use of double negatives
- *More* to mean *more often*
- *Out from* to mean *away from*

**Lingua Francas:** *a language common to speakers of diverse language that can be used for communication and commerce.*

- *English is the lingua franca of international airline pilots.*
- *French was the lingua franca of diplomacy*
- *English has been called the lingua franca of the whole world.*
- *Latin was the lingua franca of the Roman Empire*
- *Yiddish is the lingua franca among the Jews.*

Trade purposes:

- *Swahili is the lingua franca of East Africa*
- *Hausa is the lingua franca of Nigeria.*
- *Hindi is the lingua franca of India.*
- *Urdu is the lingua franca of Pakistan.*

**Pidgins:** *is a simple but rule-governed language developed for communication among speakers of mutually unintelligible languages, often based on one of those languages. Pidgins are not devoid of grammar. The phonological system is also rule-governed. However, pidgins are not good at expressing fine distinctions of meaning due to their lack of vocabularies. Therefore we have **lexical** items that bear a **heavy semantic** burden. *There are many pidgins that exist in the world.**

**Creoles:** *is a language that begins as a **pidgin** and eventually becomes the first language of a speech community through its being learned by children. The term is Portuguese originally meaning: “a white man of European descent born and raised in a tropical or semitropical colony. *Creoles often rose on slave plantations.**

p. 492: #2, #5