

Chapter 9. English beyond England

During the Middle Ages, English was spoken in parts of Scotland, Wales, and Ireland. However, the main history of English outside of England begins after 1500. From about this time in the other countries of the British Isles the number of speakers of English – and increasingly English like that spoken within the borders of England – began to grow. Also in the sixteenth century, Britons and Irish began to colonise North America and the Caribbean a process that would continue elsewhere in the world into the nineteenth century.

This chapter will look at the development of English outside England. We will begin with Scotland, in part because it brings us the furthest back in history, and in part because the history of English in Scotland has been intensely studied, making it a useful model which we can use to analyse English elsewhere in the world.

The history of English in Scotland begins with a northern variety of Middle English which evolved into what is known today as *Scots*, a form of language with claims to being a separate language from English. In addition to Scots, a Scottish variety of English is spoken today in Scotland. Separating the two is not always easy. The following materials give some clues about how this remarkable situation came about.

The Development of English in Scotland

1. English Spellings in Early Scots Poetry (15th century)

<u>Scots</u>	<u>Hybrid</u>	<u>English</u>
<i>maist</i>		<i>moste</i>
<i>fra</i>		<i>frome</i>
<i>twa</i>		<i>twane</i>
<i>se</i>		<i>-n</i> in verbal inflexions, e.g. <i>seyn</i> ‘to see’
<i>quba</i>	<i>qubo</i>	<i>who</i>
<i>-is</i> , e.g. <i>keipis</i>	<i>-ith</i> , e.g. <i>keipith</i>	<i>-eth</i> , e.g. <i>keepeth</i>

2. Some Features of Scots Writing in the Sixteenth Century

- Spellings such as *tuke* ‘took’ and *fit* ‘foot’ represent their development of Northern Middle English [o:] to [ø:], which became [y:] in Scots. In English [o:] became [u:], and later [u].
- The use of *v* to represent *w* in words like *vrit* ‘write’.
- Spellings such as *hame* ‘home’, *bald* ‘hold’, represent the Northern Middle English failure of [a:] to become [o:], which occurred in the south in the 13th century.
- The Old English aspirated *hw* has not become *w* as in the South; it is spelt *qub* (southern *wh*), reflecting the stronger initial *b* sound; e.g. *qubilk* ‘which’. This word indicates that the southern palatalised *ç* of Old English *hwelç* is not present.
- The spelling *ch* is used for southern *gh* in *brycht* ‘bright’, *thocht* ‘thought’. The sound still existed in “good” southern pronunciation in the sixteenth century.
- A vowel followed by *i* is a noticeable feature of Scots spelling and probably indicates a long vowel: *maist* ‘most’, *eschaip* ‘escape’, *sleip* ‘sleep’, *boilsum* ‘wholesome’, *cleir* ‘clear’, *feildis* ‘fields’, *sueit* ‘sweet’, etc.
- The original Old English participle ending *-and*, e.g. *valkand* ‘walking’.
- The *-is* verb ending (corresponding to Modern English *-s*) is used for the second and third person singular and plural. So *you succedis*, *he succedis*, *they succedis*.

3. The Complaynt of Scotland (circa 1549)

The solist ande attentiu laubirs that I tuke to vrit thir passagis befor rehersit, gart al my body becum imbecile ande veye, ande my spreit becum sopit in sadnes, throucht the lang conteneuatioune of studie, quhilk did fatigat my rason, ande gart al my membrs becum impotent. Than, til eschaip the euyll accidentis that succedis fra the onnatural dais sleip, as caterris, hede-
 5 my spreitis valkand fra dulnes. Than, to exsecute this purpose, I past to the greene hoilsum feildis, situat maist comodiusly fra distemptit ayr ande corruptit infectione, to resau the suetit fragrant smel of tendir gyrrsis ande of hoilsum balmy flouris maist odoreferant. Besyde the fut of ane litil montane, there ran ane fresche reueir as cleir as berial, quhar I beheld the pretty fische vantounly stertland vitht there rede vermeil fynnis, ande there skalis lyik the brycht siluyr.

- 1 *solist* 'careful, studious' *vrit* 'write' *thir* 'those' *gart* 'caused'
 2 *imbecille* 'feeble' *veye* 'weary' *spreit* (also l. 6) 'spirit' *sopit in sadnes* 'sunk in earnestness'
 4 *til* 'to' *hede-verkis* 'headaches'
 5 *valkand* 'waking' *hoilsoum* 'wholesome'
 7 *gyrrsis* 'grasses' *fut* 'foot'
 8 *berial* 'beryl, fine crystal'
 9 *vantounly stertland* 'rushing freely to and fro'

4. Number of Scots and English/Anglicised Scots Books Printed in Edinburgh: 1560-1625

	<u>Scots</u>	<u>English</u>
1560	18	0
1570	43	12
1580	35	5
1590	10	13
1600	18	38
1610	7	25
1620	3	47
1625	2	21

5. Scale of Differentiation between Scots and English

(1 & 5 = different vocabulary, 2 & 4 = different pronunciation, 3 = shared feature)

	<u>Scots</u>		<u>English</u>	
1	2	3	4	5
bairn	mair	before	more	child
lass	stane		stone	girl
kirk	hame	name	home	church
chaft	dee	see	die	jaw
gowpen	heid	tie	head	double handful
ken	hoose	tide	house	know
bide	loose (noun)	young	louse (noun)	remain
kenspeckle	louse (adj)	winter	loose (adj)	conspicuous
low	yaize (verb)	of	use (verb)	flame
cowp	yis (noun)	is	use (noun)	capsize
shauchle	auld	some	old	shuffle
pit the haims on	barra	he	barrow	do in
tummle wulkies	—	they	—	turn somersaults
no (adv)	—	*	—	not (adv.)
-na (adv)	—	†	—	-n't (adv)

* Most of the inflexional system, word-order, grammar.

† Pronunciation system.

6. Robert Garioch, 'I'm Neutral'

Last nicht in Scotland Street I met a man
that gruppit my lapel – a kinna foreign
cratur he seemed; he tellt me, There's a war on
atween the Lang-nebs and the Big-heid Clan

gripped

Long-necks; Big-head

I wasna fasht, I took him for a moron
naething byordinar, but he said, Ye're wan
of thae lang-nebbit folk, and if I can
I'm gaunnae pash ye down and rype your sporrان.

disturbed

out of the ordinary; one

those

steal; wallet

Says he, I'll get a medal for this job;
we're watchan ye, we ken fine what ye're at,
ye're with us or agin us, shut your gob.
He gied a clout that knockit aff my hat,
bawlan, A fecht! Come on, the Big-heid Mob!
Aweill, I caa'd him owre, and that was that.

know

mouth (English and Scots)

gave a blow

fight

Oh well; knocked

Is there any sense in which Scots is more entitled to the designation of a language than any of the regional dialects of English in England. This is not an easy question, particularly for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. On one hand, Scots fulfilled the criteria usually assumed to be constitutive of a language.

1. It was a national language whose use coincided with the political boundaries of the Scottish kingdom.
2. It had developed a literary/written standard.
3. The court at Edinburgh and the University of St Andrews provided a norm of written (and presumably also of spoken) Scots.
4. There are several statements extant indicating that some users considered Scots an independent language.
5. Scots has many more words, expressions, and pronunciations which are strongly differentiated from Standard English than any other English dialect can claim.
6. Scots itself has dialect varieties distributed within its national borders, a situation to which only England as a whole can be compared.

On the other hand, the weight of these criteria is diminished by the increasing convergence of Scots with English in the course of history; and there are other factors which argue against independent language status.

1. The reciprocal intelligibility of Scots and English was not seriously endangered even when the two were furthest apart (in spite of the remarks made above).
2. Structural differences were most marked in phonology, orthography and – in some texts – in lexis, but much less so in inflexion and syntax.
3. Educated speakers remained conscious of the common descent of Scots and northern English, and of the close historical relationship between Scots and English in general.

It can therefore be argued that Scots is and has always been a subsystem of English, whose incipient separation from early Modern English was slowed down by political, economic, and cultural factors in the sixteenth century and finally blocked by the adoption of English as the written (and, later, the spoken) language of higher prestige.

American English

Much of what is to be said about the English of the United States also applies to Canada. However, Canada does have some distinct national characteristics, which will be dealt with later in the chapter. American English has its beginnings in the English of sixteenth-century Britain. A common notion is that American English reflects an older state of the language than the English currently spoken in Britain. In comparison with British Standard English and received pronunciation, the following American features appear to be archaisms.

1. Archaic Features of American English

<u>American English</u>	<u>Standard British English</u>	
Post-vocalic [r]	<i>car</i> [kɑr]	<i>car</i> [kəə]
Flat <i>a</i> before <i>s, th, st, sp, sk</i>	<i>bath</i> [bæθ]	<i>bath</i> [bɑθ]
No diphthongisation in <i>either, neither</i>	<i>either</i> [iðər]	<i>either</i> [aiðər]
Use of <i>gotten</i> rather than <i>got</i>	<i>I have gotten ready</i>	<i>I have got ready</i>
Retention of old vocabulary	<i>Fall</i>	<i>Autumn</i>
Retention of old idioms	<i>I guess</i>	<i>I suppose</i>

However, American English possesses many innovations, especially in vocabulary:

2. Early American Innovations in Vocabulary

New Species: *moose, raccoon, skunk, opossum, chipmunk, bullfrog, groundhog*
New Circumstances: *presidential, caucus, congressman, squatter, prairie, popcorn*
Native American Borrowings: *wigwam, tomahawk, canoe, toboggan, moccasin*
Borrowings from French: *chowder, caribou, bureau, bayou, levee*
Borrowings from Dutch: *coleslaw, cookie, stoop, boss*

Exercise

Complete the following table showing present-day differences between British English and American English by inserting the American English form (see Baugh and Cable §253).

<u>British</u>	<u>American</u>
little finger	pinkie (also Scots and Scottish English)
nappy	diaper
rubber	eraser
swimming costume	bathing suit
autumn	
bonnet (of a car)	
boot (of a car)	
dustbin	
lift	
lorry	
luggage	
petrol	
railway	
windscreen	

Many words in the contemporary English of Britain and elsewhere in the world are of American origin.

3. Some American Words Adopted in Britain and Elsewhere

advocate, antagonize, backtrack, blizzard, bonanza, bootleg, cocktail, commuter, godfather, ice cream, immigrant, jazz, placate, racketeer, sidetrack, telephone, typewriter

The adoption of such 'Americanisms' has at times offended people in Britain. Often new words have been dubbed 'Americanisms' even if they are not American in origin. Attitudes seem to be more of a personal nature than an historical one, as the following two quotations illustrate.

4. William Archer, 'America and the English Language' (1898)

We are apt in England to class as an 'Americanisms' every unfamiliar or too familiar locution which we do not happen to like. ... But there can be no rational doubt, I think, that the English language has gained, and is gaining, enormously by its expansion over the American continent. The prime function of a language, after all, is to interpret the 'form and pressure' of life — the experience, knowledge, thought, emotion, and aspiration of the race which employs it. This being so, the more taproots a language sends down into the soil of life and the more varied the strata of human experience from which it draws its nourishment, whether of vocabulary or idiom, the more perfect will be its potentialities as a medium of expression.... The English language is no mere historic monument, like Westminster Abbey, to be religiously preserved as a relic of the past, and revered as the burial-place of a bygone breed of giants; it is a living organism, ceaselessly busied, like any other organism, in the process of assimilation and excretion. It has before it, we may fairly hope, a future still greater than its glorious past. And the greatness of that future will greatly depend on the harmonious interplay of spiritual forces throughout the American Republic and the British Empire.

5. Anthony Burgess, 'Ameringlish Isn't Britglish', *New York Times Magazine*, 9 September (1973)

American Speech seems to me to have difficulty in achieving a mode of converse which shall strike a mean between heavy formality and folkiness—there is a tendency for it to be either brutally and sentimentally colloquial or pentagonally grandiloquent.

In the United States, different reasons for differentiation between British English and American English were expressed. By far the most important figure is Noah Webster.

6. Noah Webster, *Dissertations on the English Language* (1789)

As an independent nation, our honor requires us to have a system of our own, in language as well as government. Great Britain, whose children we are, should no longer be *our* standard; for the taste of her writers is already corrupted, and her language on the decline. But if it were not so, she is at too great a distance to be our model, and to instruct us in the principles of our own tongue.

Webster's dictionary has been considered authoritative in the United States and is responsible for some of the following spelling differences.

7. Differences between American and British Spellings

<u>American</u>	<u>British</u>
color	colour
traveler, traveling	traveller, travelling
center	centre
defense	defence
tire	tyre
music, logic	musick, logick, etc. (early 18th century)
program	programme
fetus	foetus
maneuver	manoeuvre
hemophilia	haemophilia
skeptical	sceptical

American English dialects are difficult to characterise in terms of isoglosses; the problems are similar to those faced in Middle English (see pages 51-53). However, broad dialect regions, each admittedly containing considerable diversity, can be identified, as shown below.

Exercise

Each of the words below has regional variants of pronunciation that distinguish the major American dialects. Refer to Baugh and Cable §250 to fill in as much of the chart as possible with the relevant phonetic transcriptions, leaving blank the pronunciations in regions that are not discussed. What are the main features of General American? Which of the American dialects does your own speech most closely correspond to? In what features, if any, does it diverge from the dialect of the area where you live?

	Eastern New England	New York City	Upper North	Lower North	Upper South	Lower South	Your Pronunciation
hot							
fast							
car							
cot							
caught							
curl							
hoarse							
horse							
with							
grease (verb)							
greasy							
roots							
forest							
care							
I							
out							
yes							
kept							
Tuesday							
pen							

One of the most interesting American varieties of English is that spoken by many African-Americans. This variety of English is variously called Black American English or African-American English. Sometimes the word 'Vernacular' is appended to either of these variants to indicate that it is not a learned written language. More recently, the term 'Ebonics' has grown in popularity. Here the term Black American English, the shortest term which specifies that the language variety is American, will be used. Black American English is of interest because of the difficulties in understanding its origins and history, the complexities of its social and political implications, and the fact that its grammar is strongly differentiated from Standard English.

Black American English has its origins in the transportation of slaves in the sixteenth century. The slave ships sailed from Bristol with trinkets and cheap cotton goods to be exchanged in West Africa for a cargo of slaves who were taken on the notorious Middle Passage to the Caribbean and the southern United States. The ships then returned home with sugar or tobacco. It was in the terrible holds of the slave ships that the captured Africans began to use English as a means of communication with each other and with their white overseers.

8. The Route of the Slave Trade

There are numerous differences between the phonology of Black American English and that of other General American. Some examples are given below.

Description	Standard English	Black American English
1. Reduction of final consonant clusters	<i>list</i> [lɪst]	lis' [lɪs]
2. Plural formation after changes in (1)	<i>lists</i> [lɪsts]	lisses [lɪsəs]
3. Loss of postvocalic liquids	<i>four</i> [fɔr], <i>fool</i> [fu]	fɔ' [fɔ], fu' [fu]
4. Loss of postvocalic final stops	<i>boot</i> [bu]	boo' [bu]
5. Initial [d] for [ɔ]	<i>the, they, that</i> [ð]	de, dey, dat [d]
6. Initial [t] for [θ]	<i>thought</i> [θɔt]	though' [tɔt] or [to]
7. Medial [f] for [θ]	<i>nothing</i> [nʌθɪŋ]	nuf'n [nʌfɪn]
8. Final [f] for [θ]	<i>mouth</i> [mauθ]	mouf [mauf]
9. [ɪn] for the <i>-ing</i> suffix [ɪŋ]	<i>singing</i> [sɪŋɪŋ]	singin' [sɪŋɪn]

Exercise

Each of the following sentences contains words that illustrate features of Black American English pronunciation from the list above. Write down each word that illustrates a feature, and after it in parentheses give the number of the feature. For nonstandard pronunciations that are not described in the list, circle the words, taking care not to mark pronunciations that everyone uses.

1. Dey thought I was a ghos'.
2. I'm tellin ne truf abou' i'. I don' have one.
3. I hate to take one o' your shoes off an' hit you wif i'.
4. I ma kill you if you mess wi' dese beans.
5. I tink some'm goin' on out dere.
6. We have geography tes' one day. Den we ha' spellin tes' one day.
7. We have tes'es jus' bou' everyday bu' we don' have homework jus' bou' everyday.
8. Yeah, de am'ulance had to take her away didn' i'.
9. You ain' got nof'n bu' fifty cen'.
10. I was a-walkin' aroun' wif 'em.
11. I tought you say you don' wear no shir's that go a' way down to here.
12. I bet you if you bump your head up against de ting you'a put a den' in i'.
13. She don' wan' nobody in her house so she a'ways comin' in our house.

There are also many differences in morphology and syntax. Some examples are given below.

1. Omission of the *-s* possessive suffix 'So you got *teacher* pencil in your pocket.'
2. *Mines* for *mine*. 'I am tell my mother dat you trow *mines* up dere on ne roof.'
3. *Ain't* for *didn't* in negation. 'I *ain'* ha' my play clothes on.'
4. Double negative. 'You *ain'* got *no* cash money'.
5. Absence of *be* in structures containing:
 - a. Predicate adjective. 'He crazy anyway.'
 - b. Predicate nominative. 'She a nurse.'
 - c. Predicate phrase of place or time. 'We on tape.'
 - d. Verb + *-ing*. 'He just fell like he gettin' cripple up from arthritis.'
6. Invariant *be* in structures containing:
 - a. Predicate adjective. 'They sometimes *be* incomplete and things like that.'
 - b. Predicate nominative. 'He sometimes *be* a operator doctor.'
 - c. Predicate phrase of place or time. 'That's why I wonder why I don't see him—he usually *be* round.'
 - d. Verb + *-ing*. 'Well, sometime she *be* fighting in school and out on the playground.'
7. *I'm gonna* reduced to *I manna*, *I mon*, or *I ma*. 'I ma tell you another story about a...white man.'

Exercise

Indicate the grammatical features of Black American English illustrated in the sentences by supplying numbers which refer to the list above. Then write the Standard English version of each nonstandard sentence.

1. An' ain' nobody in ne house gave me not'n'.
2. Dey sellin' everything on fourteen stree'.
3. I know he wild.
4. You didn' win none.
5. So he wen' upstairs' an' he ain' see nothin'.
6. We doin' all dat ol' stuff.
7. I mo make up one.
8. If I go in Miss Barbara house she gon be tryin' to make me get ou'.
9. Boot always comin, over my house to eat, to ax for food.
10. You out the game.

Varieties of English Around the World

North America

Apart from the United States, Canada is the only English-speaking nation in North America. Pockets of English speakers can be found along the Caribbean coast of Central and South America (English is the national language of Guyana), but these varieties of English naturally group with the Caribbean region, discussed separately below.

Canadian English

1. British English and US English Pronunciations

- (a) 'Canadian Raising': [au] > [əu] before voiceless consonants: *house*, *loud* have [əu], but *houses*, *loud* have [au]
- (b) 58% say use British pronunciations of *progress* ([ˈprɒɡres] as opposed to [ˈpræɡres])
- (c) 75% of the population pronounce *schedule*, *tomato*, and *missile* as [skɛdʒul], [tomeito], and [mɪsəl] as opposed to [ʃɛdʒul], [tɒmɒto], and [mɪsəl]

2. British and US English Spellings

<u>British</u>	<u>Canadian</u>	<u>American</u>
colour	colour	color
theatre	theatre	theater
aluminium	aluminum	aluminum
tyre centre	tire centre	tire center

3. British and US English Vocabulary

<u>British</u>	<u>Canadian</u>	<u>American</u>
tap	tap	faucet
braces	braces	suspenders
porridge	porridge	oatmeal
petrol	gas	gas
lorry	truck	truck
spanner	wrench	wrench
<z> = zed	zed (75%), zee (25%)	<z> = zee

4. Distinctive Vocabulary: *kerosene*, *chesterfield* (*sofa*), *face-off*, *blue-line*, *puck*

The Caribbean

The remnants of former slave populations preserve Pidgin English in areas of the Caribbean coast which now form part of Spanish-speaking countries. Here is an example from Nicaragua.

1. Miskito English (Miskito Coast, Nicaragua)

A no wahn a ting to du wid yu bika yu kom lang taym an yu no kom luk fu Titi. Hu iz dis, Pap? (I want nothing to do with you because you have not come for a long time to see Titi. Who is this?)

However, Jamaican English dominates the region. Jamaica was captured by the British in 1655 from the Spanish. Jamaican Pidgin English was the result of contact between British settlers – many from the west of England, Ireland, and Scotland by way of Barbados, as well as from London – and the West Africans whom they imported as slaves to the sugar plantations. Since the slaves were brought from the Gold Coast, Nigeria, the Congo, and Anglola, they were linguistically diverse. Jamaican English is no longer a pidgin; it has now become a first language and is therefore best described as a *creole*. An example is given in the passage below.

1. Louise Bennett, 'Jamaica Elevante'

We tun Independent Nation
In de Commonwealth of Nations,
An we get congratulation
From de folks of high careers;
We got Consuls an Ambassadors,
An Ministers an Senators
Dah-rub shoulder an dip mout
Eena heavy world affairs.

2. Edward Braithwaite (poet) 'The State of English in the Carribean'

We are at the stage Chaucer was in his time. That's my assessment of it. Chaucer had just started to gel English, French, and Latin. We are doing the same thing with our creole concepts, our Standard English, our American, and our modernism.