Introduction

The English of the southern United States may be the most studied regional variety of any language. Though there has been no comprehensive bibliography on the topic since Michael Montgomery and James McMillan's (1989) admirable annotated compilation with over 3,500 entries, it is safe to say that the number of articles, monographs, and books on Southern English approaches or exceeds 4,000, with no abatement in sight. What is the allure of this variety of English? Perhaps its rich internal diversity, perhaps its distinctiveness among regional varieties in the United States, perhaps the folkloric appeal of southern culture in general. Whatever attracts so many to Southern English, Michael Montgomery stands in the vanguard of the myriad scholars who have explored the language and culture of the South. Michael is the quintessential linguist. As author, collaborator, corpus linguist, editor, field researcher, lexicographer, mentor, writer and recipient of grants, he has set a standard for leadership and achievement as a scholar. References in the ensuing chapters to over thirty of his works are not for honorific purposes; his imprint is found in virtually every research area within the study of Southern English.

Inspired by Michael Montgomery's life and work, the authors and editors of *English in the Southern United States* have undertaken the challenge of creating a volume to capture the past and present of Southern English, to bring our field of research to an even broader community, and to serve as a small platform for launching future research in southern studies. We have endeavored to enrich the climate of ongoing and future inquiry by exploring central themes, issues, and topics in the study of Southern English. Throughout the volume, previous and new data on iconic linguistic features and cultural origins of this diverse regional variety are investigated. Finally, an extensive bibliography provides an additional resource to facilitate further research. Since this is, then, both an up-to-date scholarly text and an introduction (and invitation) to the field, we have organized the contributions in chapters which stand independently but are also arranged in a sequence that might prove useful for instructional purposes.

John Algeo opens the volume with an outline of the principal cultural elements of the linguistic heredity of the southern United States. He first, however,

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cautions the reader that concepts such as *language*, *family*, and *descent* are use-
ful but limited metaphors, noting that "a language is not a thing," but rather
"a general abstract system (*langue*) embracing many such abstract systems
(*paroles*) that overlap in major ways" and that "Southern American English is not
a thing or a single entity." Thus, "no Hadrian's Wall divides Southern American
English from Midland American English." He then examines "multiple lines of
descent" in the linguistic heredity of the South, most prominently the "English
core," the "Scots-Irish stratum" and the "African stratum." Finally he explores
the notion of "choice" in the development and evolution of a language vari-
ety, from maintaining earlier forms to borrowing through language contact, to
outright innovation.

In chapter 2, Edgar Schneider follows in the spirit of Algeo's metaphorical
view of *language* and related terms, stating that it is "presumptuous to talk of
'Southern English' as a putatively homogeneous entity in itself." His title
"Shakespeare in the coves and hollows? . . . " evokes the pop-culture folk notion
that vernacular Southern English is essentially archaic and Elizabethan.
Schneider embarks on a detailed look at several iconic features of southern speech
in order to determine how archaic or innovative this variety actually is. Using his
own research and extensively incorporating the work of others, he acknowledges
that there is "some limited continuity of forms derived from British dialects,"
but he concurs with Bailey (1997b) that many of the oft-noted features of today's
Southern English have developed or rapidly increased in usage since the middle
to late nineteenth century.

In chapter 3, Laura Wright reinforces Algeo's suggestion of an English core
source for southern speech. There has been considerable investigation of and
focus on Scots-Irish elements in southern vernacular in the past fifteen years as
well, and many have postulated creole sources for various features of African-
American and, to a lesser degree, southern white vernaculars. Using data from
London court and prison archives, Wright's research finds Early Modern English
vernacular predecessors of some hallmark grammatical features of current
Southern vernacular, some of which have been previously attributed primar-
ily to external influences, such as West African creole or Scots-Irish, for example
a+verb+*ing* (as in *he was a making water against the wall*). Another interesting
example is her citations of some potential antecedents of adverbial *liketa* (as in
I liketa died = "nearly"), which is sometimes viewed as a new form. As she notes,
the earlier uses of *like to* (*liketa*) are not semantically and syntactically identical
with current usage in the South, but her data suggest the potential for historical
transmission. She concludes her chapter by examining how her investigated fea-
tures have advanced and declined in usage and have assumed new sociolinguistic
and ethnic identities, becoming "indexical of social properties such as region,
class, and race."

Continuing the explorations of linguistic and cultural ancestry, Salikoko
Mufwene in chapter 4 examines various positions on the sociohistorical relation-
ship between African-American Vernacular English and the vernacular English

of southern whites, a sometimes contentious topic of debate over the last three decades. While acknowledging limited creole influence on the speech of the South, he discounts the notion of an early discrete creole-influenced African–American vernacular interacting with a similarly discrete early white koiné. He proposes alternatively that the numerous commonalities between the two vernaculars "can be explained primarily by their common, coextensive histories of over 200 years during which their speakers interacted regularly with each other," while many of their differences "can be attributed to the divergence that resulted from the widespread institutionalization of segregation in the late nineteenth century."

Patricia Cukor-Avila examines in chapter 5 characteristic grammatical features of African–American Vernacular English (AAVE) and Southern White Vernacular English (SWVE) investigated in previous research, and incorporates new data from recorded interviews with African Americans and whites between 1907 and 1982 in an ongoing ethnolinguistic study of rural Texas speech. Comparing the results of this research with other studies, she maintains that the relationship between grammars of the vernacular speech of African Americans and whites is one of both shared and unique features that have changed over time, reflecting historical periods in which the respective populations have been in closer or more distant social proximity. She notes that "because both vernaculars are changing over time as reflexes of their sociohistorical context, making generalizations about the relationship between AAVE and SWVE grammars is difficult at best." Her chapter nonetheless captures important generalizations about similarities and divergent features within these varieties.

In chapter 6 Cynthia Bernstein examines three core grammatical features of southern speech evident to the linguist and the non-linguist alike: pronominal *yall*, modal auxiliary combinations such as *might could*, and inchoative *fixin to* (= "about to"), with considerable attention to the body of relevant research. She chooses these three features since "their use is spread widely among regional and social dialects in the South," and they "are not associated with one particular variety of Southern English." Her discussion of *yall* ranges from theories of its origin to its several linguistic functions. She selects *might could* as a canonical example of the "double modal" or "multiple modal" auxiliaries common in the southern United States (and found to varying degrees in northern British English and Scots vernaculars as well) and examines their history, meaning, structure, and use. Her discussion of *fixin to* (*I was just fixin to leave*) centers on evidence for its grammaticalization as a "quasi-modal." Finally, to put these features in the broader grammatical context of Southern English, she revisits Wolfram and Schilling-Estes' (1998) outline of its principal grammatical traits.

Chapters 7 and 8 deal exclusively with phonology. George Dorrill, noting Michael Montgomery's (1989a) statement that "the South is the most distinct speech region in the United States," points to the difficulty in identifying a set of phonological features that delimit southern speech, even with the salience of phonology to the identity of Southern English. He ascribes this difficulty to

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extensive regional and sociolinguistic variation as well as continuing phonological evolution and innovation. Nonetheless, his survey of early and more recent dialectal investigations and specific phonological features recurrent in them establishes a core repertoire of sounds of the South. Crawford Feagin then elaborately examines research on perhaps the most widespread of ongoing current southern phonological innovations: the "Southern Shift" first identified by William Labov and his colleagues three decades ago. Feagin compares and contrasts findings of the major studies, by herself and others, on this fascinating change in progress and argues that "the combination of vowel shifting and diphthongization [in the South] results in an extremely complex phonology," distinguishing this region from the rest of the country. She also maintains that ongoing contact between southern and non-southern varieties "suggests a coming homogenization and consolidation in the South." Southern phonology will nonetheless remain distinctive (though perhaps less so than previously) since other regions are undergoing their own phonological evolution.

In chapter 9, Walt Wolfram explores the nature of dialect enclaves, areas in which "a speech community has been historically disconnected from the wider socio-spatial, dominant population groups in the region." Four such enclaves in the South are selected for this study, each of which has been investigated separately by Wolfram and his colleagues from the mid 1970s to the present. His purpose here is not so much to elucidate comprehensively various linguistic features of each of the enclave communities (though many of these features are discussed), but rather to "understand the kinds of general sociolinguistic principles that might account for their dialect maintenance and development." Similarly to Schneider's (in this volume) and Bailey's (1997b) emphasis on innovation in the South, he stresses that enclave dialects are not to be seen as insular repositories of "traditional dialect features." Instead, there is no rule: the Chesapeake Bay dialect "seems to be intensifying among younger speakers" in the face of increased external exposure, while the Outer Banks dialect of North Carolina seems to be waning. Thus, in looking at language varieties "it is necessary to recognize the unique social and linguistic circumstances that characterize each speech community and their effect on language change and maintenance within that community."

While many of the chapters in this volume discuss conservative and innovative forms in varieties of Southern English, Jan Tillery and Guy Bailey in chapter 10 focus almost exclusively on linguistic innovation in the South. Presenting evidence from a variety of research projects of their own, oftentimes with various colleagues, and from other research studies, they compile a formidable body of support for the claim of Bailey (1997b) that innovation, not conservatism as is often suggested in the popular culture, is responsible for the distinctiveness of southern speech. Indeed, they state, Southern English "is not a conservative dialect bound to its past, but rather a dynamic, innovative variety that has experienced rapid, fundamental change over the last century and a quarter," much of whose change "coincides with two major periods of urbanization . . . and with the dialect contact that resulted from urbanization."

Connie Eble in chapter 11 leads the reader into the world of Louisiana English, exotic (along with its Louisiana French counterparts) in the popular culture and a target of considerable linguistic research as well. Although dialects of French have received more scholarly attention than have their English neighbors, she notes that "the Englishes that developed in the formerly French-speaking regions of Louisiana offer patterns of dialect variation almost as difficult to distinguish as do French varieties." Grounding her discussion in the historical setting of French and English in Louisiana, Eble presents central features of Cajun English and New Orleans English and flavors her discussion with references to popular handbooks, pamphlets, and glossaries (some electronic). It becomes apparent in her blend of linguistic research and pop-culture treatments how closely language is linked to social and regional identity in Louisiana.

Barbara Johnstone closes the volume with a portrait of southern speech in discourse, that is, "southern style." From politeness, to conditional syntax and indirectness ("negative politeness"), to verbal artistry in oratory and everyday discourse, to story telling/narrative, she analyzes rhetorical foundations of southern speech. She then looks at how these strategies are put to use. Her chapter concludes with a detailed discussion of the importance of work still to be done since "some southerners continue to orient to and use language differently from people elsewhere, and some people from elsewhere continue to draw on stereotyped notions of what southern speech means as they evaluate and interact with southerners and the South." Will features of southern style accommodate to increased contact with other varieties or will southern style persist and evolve as a response to maintain "localness" in the face of outside forces?

It will surely be fascinating – to the cultural anthropologist, the historian, the linguist, the sociologist, and anyone else who as profession or avocation watches the evolution of communities – to follow the future paths of English in the southern United States, a region where for so many people speech is at the core of their southern identity. The authors and editors invite and encourage new exploration and new explorers of Southern English, and we thank Michael Montgomery for bringing us to this task.

1   The origins of Southern American English

JOHN ALGEO

1   Introduction

The origins of Southern American English can be found on the islands off the shore of the Netherlands and in northern Germany and southern Denmark (where English speakers dwelled before they crossed the channel to invade the British Isles) or, to go back a bit further, on grassy plains somewhere in mid Eurasia (where the Proto-Indo-European-speaking peoples had their Urheimat) and, even before that, perhaps in the Great Rift Valley of East Africa (where *Homo sapiens* may have originated). That is, Southern American English has the same origins as all other dialects of English, all Indo-European languages, and maybe all human languages.

To be sure, such answers to the question "What are the origins of Southern American English?" go deeper into origins than the question normally asks for. But it is important to keep in mind that, when we talk about the "origins" of anything, our talk is always relative to other things and times. To ask about the "origins" of a speechway like Southern presumes that it popped into existence at some point as a departure from another speechway.

But all language is always changing, so every *état de langue* is at every moment a departure from what it used to be. Southern did not depart from "general" American, much less early Modern English or Proto-Germanic or Proto-Indo-European or Proto-Human. Like the galaxies of the cosmos, all languages are flying apart from one another, and there is no center. To compare language to the expanding universe is, however, a metaphor, and we need to be wary of metaphor.

2   Metaphors of origin

Most talk about languages and their history – like talk about everything else – uses metaphor. Much of our discourse is necessarily metaphorical. Metaphor can be enlightening, but it also "darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge" when we forget its limitations. We discuss the history of languages with metaphors that have severe limitations, and the only practical way to deal with those limitations is to be aware of them.

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With languages, a pervasive metaphor is reification, by which we treat an abstraction as though it were a physical thing. A language is not a thing; it has no shape, weight, size, or color. A language is a personal abstract system in the mind, brain, tongue, and ears of each user. Or, more accurately, a language is a general abstract system (*langue*) embracing many such personal abstract systems (*paroles*) that overlap one another in major ways.

Each personal system is constantly changing throughout the lifetime of its user; and consequently each general system is constantly changing as well. The reality is an ever adapting, fluctuating, fuzzy, messy pattern of behavior more or less shared by a great many persons at any one time, whose history we try to relate as though it were instead a thing with a clear outline and identity, like a pyramid or a canyon.

Southern American English is not a thing or a single entity. Lee Pederson (2001) has analyzed what is here called "Southern" into eighteen subvarieties on four hierarchical levels:

Southern
  Coastal
    Atlantic
    Gulf
  Interior
    Piedmont
    Gulf Plains
      eastern
      central
      western
  Delta
    upper
      Arkansas River basin
      Yazoo River basin
      Red River basin
    lower
      Atchafalaya River basin
      Lower Mississippi River basin
South Midland
  highlands
    eastern: Virginia, Kentucky, east Tennessee, Georgia Blue Ridge
    central: middle Tennessee, upper Alabama Cumberlands
    western: Missouri and Arkansas Ozarks
  piney woods
    Georgia and Alabama wire grass
    Florida and Alabama sand hills and pine flats
    Mississippi and Louisiana piney woods
    east Texas pine flats   (Pederson 2001)

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Each of these subvarieties (which could be further subdivided right down to the momentary existence of their speakers' idiolects) has its own characteristic features of phonology, vocabulary, and grammar; and each of those characteristics has its own origin and history. When we look at language systems in this way, we catch a glimpse of the Buddhist principle of *anatman*, namely that nothing has a separate, whole identity. Does an abstraction have an origin in the way a thing does?

Another metaphor of language history is that of the "family." We talk of "relatedness," "sister languages," "descent," "parent languages," and so on. Such metaphors not only reify languages, but they also treat them as personal entities with a life span, distinct boundaries separating them, and clearly definable relationships with one another. Languages are not persons that spawn one another, but a system that alters so much over time that we find it useful to define boundaries between its stages and to give distinct names to the stages we have defined.

A closely related metaphor is that of the language tree, which is useful on a gross level but cannot easily diagram some important language connections. For example, languages not only develop out of one another, but also affect one another in various other ways. In a typical language tree diagram, English is shown to be a development of the West Germanic branch of Proto-Germanic. But Latin has been a major influence on English vocabulary, either directly or through French, by both its native Italic word-stock and its borrowings from Greek. Moreover, French and Norse have significantly affected English grammar. And over the course of time, a variety of causes have radically changed the typological structure of English from dominantly inflectional to dominantly isolating. None of that is shown by a tree diagram, which treats each language system as though it were an independent and stabile entity.

But that's not the way a language is. The boundaries, both diachronic and synchronic, between one speechway and another are, to a considerable extent, arbitrary. No Hadrian's Wall divides Southern American English from Midland American English, or early Modern English from late Modern. One speechway flows into another, chronologically, spatially, socially, and in every other way. It is for our convenience and our interest that we create the divisions we draw between speechways.

For geographical, historical, cultural, and other reasons, we recognize a regional dialect of English in America we call "Southern." That dialect has some features of lexis and grammar that, in their sum, are different from the sum of contrasting features in other dialects. It is therefore reasonable to ask about the origins of those features and their sum. And that, in fact, is what we mean when we ask, "What are the origins of Southern American English?" But in answering that question, we need to keep in mind that Southern American English is not a thing with clearly defined boundaries, but is instead a generalized pattern of a large number of personal abstract mental systems and associated behavior that are ill defined and ever changing.

We cannot escape metaphors in talking about language origins. But we can be aware of them, and we can vary them. One variation is to think of the origins of a language as comparable to the origins of a human personality, the product of heredity, environment, and choice.

3   The heredity of Southern American English

The heredity of Southern American English involves neither two parents, as the family metaphor suggests, nor a single ancestor, as the language tree depicts. It includes multiple lines of descent.

3.1   *The English core*

The first origins of Southern American English are in the initial colonial settlement by British immigrants. The first permanent English-speaking settlement in America was in Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607, so American English began with Southern. The colony never thrived, partly because its land was marshy and thus unhealthful and partly because its leading settlers were of an English class unaccustomed to the rigors of pioneering, so it was more of a curtain-raiser than a first act. Yet Jamestown is notable as the place where the economically important crop of tobacco was first cultivated, the first African slaves were imported, and the first representative government was established. All of those features were to be characteristic of the American South, and the last one of America as a whole.

The first settlers of the American colonies had a variety of origins (Bailyn 1986a,b). David Hackett Fischer (whose views on cultural continuity have not gone unchallenged) has proposed a colonial settlement of America from Britain in four major waves, of which that occurring in 1642–75 brought immigrants from southern and western England, consisting principally of gentry and their servants. The early settlement of the American South was therefore unlike that of most of the other early colonies, where the immigrants were preponderantly middle or independent working class. The early period of the Virginia settlement coincided with the English Civil War and Puritan Commonwealth, when younger sons, whose traditional careers in the army or clergy were closed to them by the Puritan government of England, flocked to the New World to seek their fortunes. Yet by far the bulk of the early Virginia settlers were indentured servants: rural, male, and illiterate. The "ancestral connection to southern and southwestern England" has accordingly been called "the Cavalier myth of the Old Dominion's origin" (Montgomery 2001: 110).

Fischer (1989: 256–64), citing a variety of studies, attributes practically all Virginia linguistic characteristics to the dialects of the south and west of England. Moreover, because of the gentry's associations with the motherland, a firmer connection was maintained with England than was the case in other colonies, so linguistic influence was also maintained. For example, [r]-dropping in America,

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probably introduced from England during the colonial period, is most widespread in the coastal South, where it is typical of the regional speech. Elsewhere in the United States it is confined to smaller areas centered on major port cities (Boston and New York). The rest of the coastal South (the Carolinas and Georgia), having been settled from Virginia or on land at one time associated with the Virginia colony, shares the characteristic.

3.2   *The Scots-Irish stratum*

But Southern American English is not derived solely from one wave of settlement. Another wave identified by Fischer (1989) lasted longer than any of the others (1717–75) and consisted of more immigrants, especially from northern England, Scotland, and northern Ireland (the Scots-Irish). They came in family groups in search of economic improvement. They came to all the colonies, but settled notably the Appalachian region of the western South. Their immigration was part, albeit the major part, of a more general Celtic cultural migration.

Michael Montgomery, who has spent a decade in pursuing the "transatlantic comparison of English and Scots in Scotland and Ulster on the one hand with English in America (especially in the American South and Appalachia) on the other" (2001: 117), has traced the overall history of the Scots-Irish migration and summarized the scholarly study of it in his chapter in *The Cambridge History of the English Language*. He cites (2001: 89) Stephen Thernstrom (1980) as identifying five British linguistic profiles in addition to English proper: "Lowland Scottish, Highland Scottish, Irish, Scots-Irish (Protestants from Ulster mainly of Lowland Scottish background), and Welsh." The largest and most influential of these groups during the early period, however, were the Scots-Irish, who settled the inland South (Montgomery 2001: 91):

> In America the great majority of Scotch-Irish landed in Delaware or Pennsylvania and soon headed to frontier areas, reaching the interior of Virginia in the 1730s and the Carolinas in the 1750s. They and their descendants settled and were culturally dominant in much of the interior or upper south – the Carolinas, Georgia, Tennessee, and Kentucky – within two generations.

Various linguistic features, such as the Southern double modals (*might could*, *might would*; cf. Bernstein in this volume), have been traced to Scots-Irish influence, but the principal domain of that influence was vocabulary (Montgomery 2001: 127):

> Comparisons of Appalachian or Upper South vocabulary (as labeled by *DARE*) with Ulster and Scottish works reveal more extensive connections: *airish* "chilly, cool," *back* "to endorse a document, letter," *back-set* "a setback or reversal (in health)," *bad man* "the devil," *barefooted* "undiluted," *beal* "suppurate, fester," *biddable* "obedient, docile," *bonny-clabber* "curdled sour milk," *brickle* "brittle," *cadgy* "lively, aroused," *chancy*