

American Dialects¹

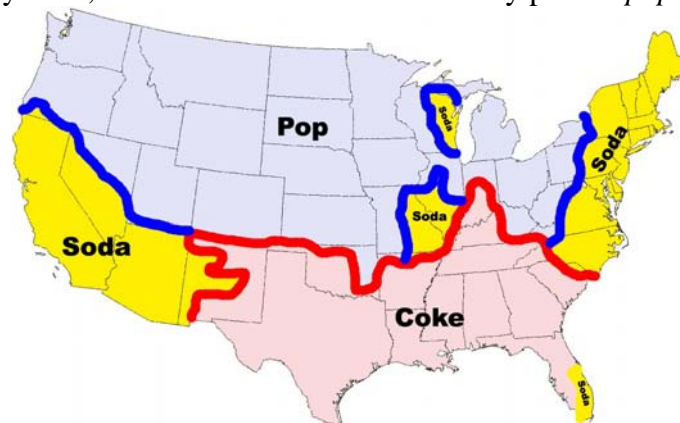
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Many people believe that that regional variation in the United States is disappearing, thanks to the insidiously pervasive influence of television and mainstream American culture. There is hope for those of us who relish linguistic and cultural diversity, though: recent research by Penn's William Labov and by Scott Golder and myself at Harvard has found that regional variation is alive and well, and along some dimensions is even increasing between the major urban centers.

Consider for instance the preferred cover term for sweetened carbonated beverages. As can be seen in the map below, Southerners generally refer to them as *coke*, regardless of whether or not the beverages in question are actually made by the Coca Cola company; West and East coasters (including coastal Florida, which consists largely of transplanted New Yorkers) and individuals in Hawaii and the St. Louis, Milwaukee, and Green Bay spheres of influence predominantly employ *soda*, and the remainder of the country prefers *pop*.

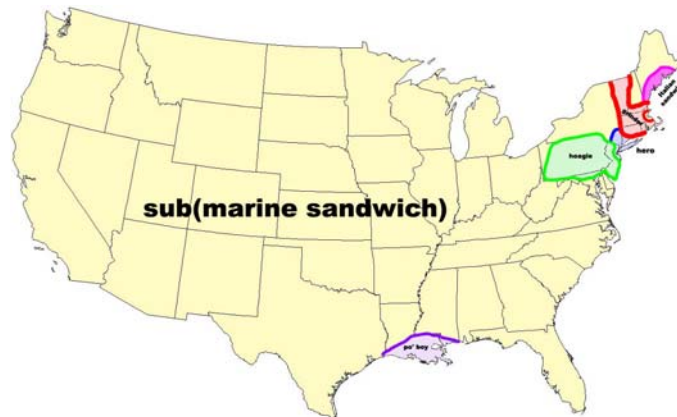


National television ads and shows generally employ *soda*, presumably thanks to the concentration of media outlets in soda areas New York and California, but this has had no effect on the robust regional patterns. (The three primary terms do appear to be undermining traditional local expressions such as *tonic* (Boston) and *cocola* (the South).)

Another deeply entrenched regionally-conditioned food product is the long sandwich made with cold cuts, whose unmarked form in the U.S. is *submarine sandwich* or just *sub*. Pennsylvanians (and New Jerseyites in the Philadelphia sphere of influence) call it a *hoagie*, New Yorkers call it a *hero*, western New Englanders call it a *grinder*, Mainers call it an *Italian sandwich*, and people in the New Orleans area call it a *po' boy*.

¹ The maps employed in this chapter were designed by Prof. Vaux on the basis of previously published materials (primarily William Labov's forthcoming *Atlas of North American English* and Frederick Cassidy's *Dictionary of American Regional English*) and his online survey of English dialects. Specific references are available on request by emailing the author at vaux@post.harvard.edu. Please note that all generalizations made here reflect statistical predominance, not absolute invariance. One can find individuals who say *soda* in the South, for example, but these are in the minority.

The examples adduced in this chapter are primarily lexical, due to the difficulty of conveying subtleties of pronunciation in a publication intended for non-linguists.



Confrontation between traditional regional terms and newer interlopers has created subtle variations in meaning in some areas. In the Boston sphere of influence, for instance, *grinder* is commonly relegated to hot subs, whereas *sub* is used for cold ones. Similarly in stores in the Northeast Kingdom (the northeastern quadrant of Vermont) *grinder* refers to large (12-inch) subs, whereas *hoagie* is used for their small (6-inch) counterpart. Many in the Philadelphia area divide up the sub domain in the same manner as Boston, but *hoagie* is used for the cold version and *steak sandwich* for the hot one.

In other cases the dialectal picture is so evenly distributed that there is no clear national standard, as with the terms for the machine out of which drinks water in schools and other public spaces.



The preferred term in the southeastern half of the U.S. is *water fountain*, whereas in the northwestern half it's *drinking fountain*. If you're in eastern Wisconsin or the Boston area, be sure to elicit *bubbler* from the locals.

The so-called “cot-caught merger” also bisects the country: in the West and in northern New England the words *cot* and *caught* are pronounced identically, whereas in the rest of the country each is pronounced differently.



These examples should suffice to show that regional variation is alive and well in the United States. But where did these differences come from, and how have they resisted the influence of the American media juggernaut? The second question has a relatively straightforward answer: humans are generally unaware of the properties of their language, and normally assume that they way the behave and speak is the way everyone else does and should behave and speak. You, for example, were probably unaware before reading this that a large swathe of the U.S. pronounced *cot* and *caught* differently than you do, and doesn't share your term for water fountains. Since humans are generally unaware of the idiosyncrasies of their own speech, it is to be expected that they would typically fail to notice that what is said on TV differs from their own forms.

Settlement patterns and the origins of the American dialects

The other question, involving the origins of the linguistic variation we find in the U.S., can be answered in part by considering the history of settlement of the country by speakers of English.

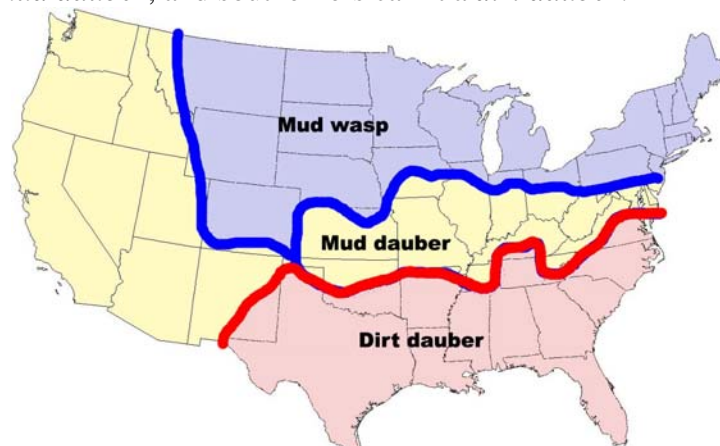
The continental United States were settled by three main waves of English speakers: Walter Raleigh brought settlers primarily from the southwest of England to the form the Chesapeake Bay Colony in 1607; Puritans from East Anglia came to the Massachusetts Bay in 1620; and Scots-Irish, Northern English, and Germans came to America through Philadelphia in large numbers beginning in the 18th century. Settlers then moved horizontally westward across the country from these three hearths, giving rise to the three main dialect areas in the United States, the South, the North, and the Midlands. The fourth area on the map, the West, contains a mixture of features imported from the other three.



The particular linguistic variables on which these dialect divisions are based can in many cases be connected to dialect differences in the areas of England from which the various settlers came. The original English-speaking settlers in New England, for example, came from East Anglia in the southeast of England, where in the seventeenth century (and still today) r's were only pronounced before vowels, and r's were (and still are) inserted inside certain vowel sequences, as in *draw[r]ing* and John F. Kennedy's famous *Cuba[r] and China*. The New England lengthening of a in words like *aunt* ("ahnt") and *bath* ("bahth") was also imported from the British dialect of East Anglia.



Other features cannot be connected to British antecedents so transparently, but nicely demonstrate the North/South/Midlands boundary. One of my favorite examples is the large wasplike critter that is usually seen when it stops by puddles to collect mud, which it then rolls into a ball and carries off to construct a nest; northerners call this a *mud wasp*, midlanders and westerners call it a *mud dauber*, and southerners call it a *dirt dauber*.



Another such example is the small freshwater lobster-like critter, which is a *crayfish* in the North, a *crawdad* in the Midlands, and a *crawfish* or *mudbug* in the South.

The North breaks into two main areas, the Northeast and the Inland North. The Northeast (and its crony, southeast coastal Florida) are roughly the home of *sneakers*; the rest of the country uses *tennis shoes* or *gym shoes* as the generic term for athletic shoes.

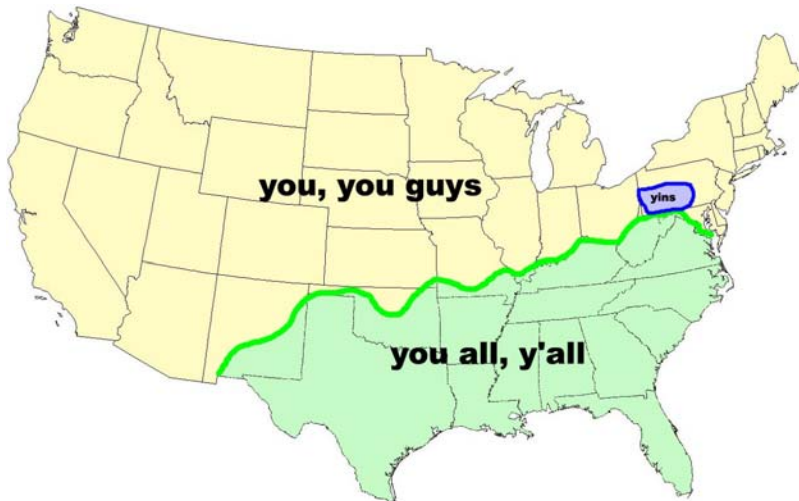


The Inland North is most famous for *pop* and for the so-called “Rust Belt Vowel Shift”, a change in the pronunciation of most of the American vowels that produces what is perceived by most Americans as “Midwestern”, even though it is also found in eastern Rust Belt cities such as Rochester, Syracuse, and Utica.

The Midlands region is home not only to *mud dauber*, but also to the oft-noted regionalisms *warsh* and the *needs X-ed* construction, as in *the car needs warshed*. The Midlands and the South together are home to *catty-corner* in the sense of ‘diagonally across from’, which in the North is normally *kitty-corner*. (My personal favorite expression for this concept is *kitty wampus*, which is used by a handful of individuals in the Upper Midwest.)



The South is home to the “pin-pen merger” (i and e are pronounced identically before m, n, and ng), preservation of the contrast in pronunciation between w and hw (as in *witch* and *which* respectively), use of *y’all* to address a group of individuals, multiple modal constructions (as in *I might could do that*), *nekkid* for ‘naked’, and *commode* for ‘toilet’.



The inland part of the South is called the Deep South, and features gems such as *rolling* for the act of covering a house and/or its front yard in toilet paper, which in the rest of country is generally called *tp'ing* or *toilet papering*. (It's *wrapping* in the Houston area.)



American dialects you have to hear

Since, as we have just seen, regional variation is alive and well in the U.S., where should one go to hear the most satisfying range of dialects? Here are some of my favorites, which also provide a representative sample of the main dialect groups in the country. (If you get to one of these locales and are having trouble finding a really juicy local accent, try a police station, lowbrow bar, or farm.)

The Northeast

No linguistic tour of the Northeast would be complete without visiting the two main linguistic spheres of influence in the area, Boston and New York City. Though locals would probably die rather than admitting it, the two actually share a large number of linguistic features, such as pronouncing *can* 'is able' differently than *can* 'container', wearing *sneakers* and drinking *soda*, having no word for the *roly poly/potato bug/sow bug/doodlebug* (though the critter itself is just as rampant in the Northeast as anywhere else in the country), and pronouncing *route* to rhyme with *moot* and never with *out*.

Perhaps the most striking feature shared by these two areas is the behavior of r: it deletes when not followed by a vowel (*drawer* is pronounced *draw*), and conversely gets inserted when between certain vowels (*drawing* comes out as *drawring*). Because these dialects don't allow r to follow a vowel within a syllable, they end up preserving vowel contrasts that were neutralized before r in other dialects, as in the "3 Maries" (*Mary*, *marry*, and *merry* are each pronounced differently, whereas in most of the country all three are homophonous). Similarly *mirror* and *nearer* have the same first vowel in most of the U.S., but not in Boston and New York. Bostonians and New Yorkers pronounce words like *hurry*, *Murray*, *furrow*, and *thorough* with the vowel of *hut*, whereas most other Americans use the vowel in *bird*. And of course there's the first vowel in words like *orange* and *horrible*, which in most of the U.S. is the same as in *pore*, but in Boston and New York is closer to the vowel in *dog*.

1. The New York City sphere of influence

Though New York shares many important features with Boston and other parts of the Northeast, it is also in many ways a linguistic island, undergoing little influence from the rest of the country and (despite the ubiquity of New York accents on TV and in movies) propagating almost none of its peculiarities to the outside world. Its lack of linguistic influence can be connected to its stigmatization: two surveys in 1950 and the 1990s found that Americans considered New York to have the worst speech in the country.

When you visit the New York City area (including neighboring parts of New Jersey and Long Island), be sure to listen for classic New Yorkisms like the deletion of h before u (e.g. *huge* is pronounced *yuge*, and *Houston* becomes *Youston*) and the rounding of a to an o-like vowel before l in words like *ball* and *call* (the same vowel also shows up in words like *water*, *talk*, and *dog*). New Yorkers who don't have a thick local accent may not have these particular features, but they are sure to have other shibboleths like *stoop* (small front porch or steps in front of a house), *on line* instead of *in line* (e.g. *we stood on line outside the movie theater for three hours*), *hero* for *sub*, *pie* for *pizza*, and *egg cream* for a special soft drink made with seltzer water, chocolate syrup, and milk. You can also tell New Yorkers by their pronunciation of *Manhattan* and *forward*: they reduce the first vowel in the former (it comes out as *Mn-hattan*), and delete the first r in the latter (so it sounds like *foe-ward*). Believe it or not, it is also common in the New York area to pronounce *donkey* to rhyme with *monkey* (which makes sense if you consider the spelling), even though they typically aren't aware that they are doing so.

New England

Moving up the coast to New England, we find that most people don't actually sound like the Pepperidge Farm man or John F. Kennedy, but they do all use *cellar* for *basement* (at least if it's unfinished), *bulkhead* for the external doors leading out of the cellar, and *rotary* for what others call a *roundabout* or *traffic circle*. New England itself is divided by the Connecticut River into two linguistically distinct areas, Eastern and Western.

2. Eastern New England: Boston

You can hear great Eastern New England speech almost anywhere in Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, or Massachusetts, especially if you stay away from more affluent areas in the bigger cities, but I'll focus here on the Boston area. (Revere, South Boston, Somerville, and Dorchester are traditionally considered to harbor especially thick local accents.) Thanks to *park your car in Harvard Yard* and *Nomar Garciaparra* many Americans are familiar with the Boston

pronunciation of *-ar-*, which generally comes out as something very similar to the Southern pronunciation of *-ay-* (Boston *park* sounds like Southern *pike*). The sequence *-or-* also has an interesting outcome in many words, being pronounced like the vowel in *off*; for instance, the Boston group LFO in their 1999 song “Summer Girls” rhymed *hornet* with *sonnet*. This rhyme also shows that Boston has the cot/caught merger, as we saw earlier; interestingly, though, they distinguish the vowels in *father* and *bother*, unlike many Americans.

In the domain of vocabulary, be sure to get a *frappe* (or if you’re in Rhode Island, a *cabinet*), a *grinder*, *harlequin* ice cream with *jimmies* or *shots* on it, and of course a *tonic*. (Frappes are milkshakes, harlequin is Neapolitan ice cream, and jimmies and shots are sprinkles.) You might also want to visit a *package store* (or *packie* for short) to buy some alcohol, or a *spa* to buy cigarettes and lottery tickets. There aren’t many spas (small independent convenience stores, equivalent to *party stores* in Michigan, as used in the movie *True Romance*) left in the area at this point, but you can still find a few that haven’t been replaced by 7-11 in Boston, Cambridge, Somerville, Allston, and Watertown.

The towns where you’ll hear the best Boston accents (and classic local terms like *wicked* and *pissa*) also feature many *triple deckers*, three-family houses with three front porches stacked on top of one another. These seem to be less common in Connecticut, but if you happen to pass through that area be sure to look out for *tag sales* (= yard sales). Connecticut is also home to the term *sleepy seed* for the gunk that collects in the corner of your eye after you’ve been sleeping; not all Connecticutians have this expression, but your trip will have been worthwhile if you find someone who does.

3. Western New England: Vermont

West of the Connecticut River I recommend you head up to the Northeast Kingdom in Vermont. (I especially recommend the beautiful towns around Lake Memphremagog, like Derby Line and Newport.) Here you’ll find the best Canadian features south of the border, thanks to the heavy French Canadian representation in the area, including *toque* (pronounced [tuke]) for ‘woolen winter hat’ (known as a *toboggan* in some other parts of the country); *poutine* (pronounced as *put* + *sin*, with the stress on *sin*) for french fries coated with gravy and cheese curds, and *sugar pie*. This is also the land of the *skidoo* (= snowmobile), the *skidder* (giant machine with jaws used to haul logs), and the *camp* (summer cabin, typically on a body of water). If you’re wise enough to visit the Northeast Kingdom, be sure to check out how they pronounce the *a* and the *t* in the name of the local town *Barton*.

4. Pennsylvania

As you head out of the Northeast you should try to stop through Pennsylvania, which is unique among the fifty states in having a significant number of dialect features peculiar to it. Some of these are due to the Pennsylvania Dutch presence in the region (*redd up* ‘clean up’, *gumband* ‘rubber band’ (cf. German *Gummi* ‘rubber’; now limited to parts of western PA), *toot* ‘bag’, *rootch* ‘scootch up (e.g. in a bed)’); the reasons for the restriction of other terms to Pennsylvania are less clear. To this category belongs *hoagie*, which as we already saw is limited to PA plus the parts of New Jersey in Philadelphia’s sphere of influence. Pennsylvania also shows extreme internal diversity: Philadelphia groups with the Northeastern dialects (e.g. in preferring *soda*), whereas Pittsburgh is tied to the Inland North (*pop*), the Midlands (many of my relatives there use the *needs warshed* construction), and the Appalachian region, of which it is the northernmost extremity.

Philadelphia (and its satellites in southern New Jersey) are perhaps best known for their pronunciation of *water*, which comes out as something like *wood + er*. This conveniently shows up in the local term *water ice*, which refers to something between Italian ice and a snow cone. Residents of the Philly sphere of influence are also more likely than other Americans to *bag* school rather than *skip* school or *play hooky*. When you make your trip to Philly to hear these choice linguistic tidbits and you run short of money, be sure to ask where the *MAC machine* is, not the *ATM* or *cash machine*.

You should also make a special effort to visit the opposite end of the state, anchored by the beautiful city of Pittsburgh, which (unknown to most Americans) has its own distinctive dialect. Here the *aw*-sound is replaced by something approaching [ah], as in *dahntahn* for *downtown*; *ay* similarly loses its *y* in certain situations, as in *Pahrts* for *Pirates* and *Ahrn City* for *Iron City*. The *o* in this region is very rounded in words like *shot*, and comes out sounding a lot like the New York vowel in *ball*. It is also popular to delete the *th*- at the beginning of unstressed words in certain collocations, such as *up 'ere* (for *up there*), *like 'at*, and *'n 'at* (for *and that*, which western Pennsylvanians are fond of ending sentences with).

In terms of vocabulary Pittsburgh and environs have some real whoppers, such as *yins* or *you 'uns*, used to address a group of two or more people; *jagoff* meaning ‘a jerk or loser’ (shared with Chicagoland); *jumbo* ‘bologna sandwich’; and *slippy* ‘slippery’.

These days many Pittsburgh residents don’t have the traditional dialect, but you’re sure to come across at least a few of the items just discussed. You’ll have even better luck if you visit some of the unknown small towns in western PA such as Franklin, Emlenton, and Iron City, which have satisfying variants of the Pittsburgh speech patterns and also happen to be unusually scenic.

5. Cincinnati

From Pittsburgh you’re in striking distance of Cincinnati, one of the better representatives of the Midlands dialect region. Here instead of inserting *r*, as we saw in Boston and New York, they insert *l*: *saw* comes out as *sawl*, *drawing* as *drawling*, and so on. In the Cincinnati area one can also find drive-through liquor stores (and for some people, regular liquor stores) referred to as *pony kegs*. (Elsewhere in the U.S., on the other hand, *pony keg* usually refers to small keg.)

6. The Rust Belt: Milwaukee

Moving westward, the next interesting dialect zone is the Inland North or Rust Belt, within which I recommend Milwaukee, Wisconsin (not to be confused with Zilwaukee, Michigan). Here, in the land so eloquently etymologized by Alice Cooper in *Wayne’s World*, you will find—especially if you visit an area where there hasn’t been much immigration, such as West Allis—not only the classic speech features identified with the Midwest (as canonized for example in the Da Bears skit on Saturday Night Live), but also features characteristic of areas other than the Midwest (*freeway*, otherwise associated with the West Coast; *bubbler*, most familiar from the Boston area; *soda*, otherwise characteristic of the West and East coasts). Milwaukeeans share some features with the rest of Wisconsin: they pronounce *Milwaukee* as *Mwaukee* and *Wisconsin* as *W-scon-sin* rather than *Wis-con-sin*; they refer to annoying Illinoisans as *FIB*’s or *fibbers* (the full form of which is too saucy to explain here), and they eat *frozen custard* and *butter burgers*. They also share some features with the Upper Midwest, notably pronouncing *bag* as *baig* and using *ramp* or *parking ramp* for ‘parking garage’ (the same forms surface in Minnesota and

Buffalo). Milwaukee is also known for the *cannibal sandwich*, raw ground sirloin served on dark rye bread and covered with thin-sliced raw onions.

Milwaukee is only an hour and a half drive north of Chicago, yet it lacks many of the classic Chicagoisms, such as *jagoff*, *gaper's block* (a traffic jam caused by drivers slowing down to look at an accident or other diversion on the side of the road), *black cow* (root beer with vanilla ice cream, known elsewhere as a *root beer float*), *expressway*, and *pop*. It also differs from the more northern reaches of Wisconsin with respect to many of the classic Upper Midwestern features so cleverly reproduced in the movie *Fargo*, such as the monophthongal *e* and *o* in words like *Minnesota* and *hey there*. You can find the occasional inhabitant of Wisconsin's northern border with Minnesota who has Upper Midwest terms like *pasties*, *whipping shitties* (driving a car in tight circles, known elsewhere as *doing donuts*), and *hotdish* (elsewhere called a *casserole*), and *farmer matches* (long wooden matches that light on any surface), but for the most part these are less commonly used than in Minnesota and the Dakotas (and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan in the case of pasties).

7. The West: the San Fernando Valley

Moving ever westward, we come next to the West Coast. Here it is more difficult to find hardcore traditional dialects, largely because the West was settled relatively recently, and by individuals from a wide variety of different locales; one is hard-pressed to find any Californian (or other Westerner) whose family has been there for more than two generations. Perhaps the best place to start is the San Fernando Valley of California, home of the Valley Girl. Many of the Valley Girl quirks immortalized in Frank Zappa's 1982 song *Valley Girl* and the 1995 film *Clueless* are now profoundly out of favor, such as *gnarly*, *barf out*, *grodie (to the max)*, *gag me with a spoon*, *rad*, *for sure*, *as if*, and *bitchin'*, and others are now ubiquitous throughout the U.S., such as *totally*, *whatever*, *sooo X* (as in "that' so like 5 years ago"), and the use of *like* to report indirect speech or state of mind (I was like, "no way!"). Others are still used in the area but have yet to infiltrate the rest of the country, such as *flip a bitch* or *bust a bitch* for 'make a U-turn', *baunch* for *taint* (the area between the scrotum and the anus), and *bag on* in the sense of 'make fun of, diss'.

And if you're interested in figuring out whether someone's from northern or southern California, I recommend seeing if they use *hella* or *hecka* to mean 'very' (e.g. *that party was hella cool*; characteristic of northern California), and if they refer to freeway numbers with or without "the" before them (Southern Californians refer to "the 5", "the 405", and so on, whereas northern Californians just use "5" and "405").

The South

Looping back around the country we come finally to the South, which is perhaps the most linguistically distinct and coherent area in the United States. This is not only home to obvious cases like *y'all*, initial stress on *Thanksgiving*, *insurance*, *police*, and *cement*, and the other features mentioned above, but also showcases *feeder road* (small road that runs parallel to a highway), *wrapping* (tp'ing), and *doodlebug* (the crustacean that rolls into a ball when you touch it) in the Houston area, and *party barns* (drive-through liquor stores) in Texas (*bootlegger*, *brew thru*, and *beer barn* are also common terms for this in the South). The South as a whole differs from the rest of the country in pronouncing *lawyer* as *law-yer*, using *tea* to refer to cold sweet tea, and saying the *devil's beating his wife* when it rains while the sun is shining (elsewhere referred to as a *sunshower*, or by no name at all). The South is so different from the rest of the

country that almost anywhere you go you will hear a range of great accents, but I especially recommend the Deep South (start with Mississippi or Alabama) and New Orleans.

8. New Orleans

Louisiana is famous for the Cajuns, a local group descended from the Acadians, French people who were exiled from Nova Scotia and settled in southern Louisiana in the 1760s. Some Cajuns still speak their own special creole, Cajun French, and this in turn has influenced the English dialect of the region, as can be seen in local expressions such as:

- *by my house* for ‘in/at my place’ (e.g. *he slept by my house last night*), which is claimed to be based on French terms *chez moi*;
- *make dodo* meaning ‘to sleep’, based on Cajun French *fais do do*;
- *make groceries* ‘do grocery shopping’, cf. French *faire le marché*;
- *lagniappe*, French for ‘a little something extra’, e.g. when your butcher gives you a pound and two ounces of hot sausage but only charges you for a pound.

Some of the creole elements that have made their way into the local English dialect may be of African rather than French origin, such as *where ya stay (at)?* meaning ‘where do you live?’, and *gumbo*, referring to a traditional southern soup-like dish, made with a rich roux (flour and butter) and usually including either sea food or sausage. The word *gumbo* is used in Gullah (an English-based creole spoken on the Sea Islands off the Carolina coast) to mean ‘okra’, and appears to have descended from a West African word meaning ‘okra’.

The New Orleans dialect of English also includes words drawn from other sources, such as *yat* (a typical neighborhood New Orleanian), *neutral ground* (the grassy or cement strip in the middle of the road), *po boy* (basically a sub sandwich, though it can include fried oysters and other seafood and may be *dressed*, i.e. include lettuce, tomatoes, pickles, and mayonnaise), *hickey* (a knot or bump you get on your head when you bump or injure it), and *alligator pear* (an avocado).

9. Hawaii

Last but not least we come to Hawaii, which in many ways is the most interesting of the fifty states linguistically. Many Americans are aware of Hawaiian, the Austronesian language spoken by the indigenous residents of the Hawaiian Islands before the arrival of colonizers from Europe and Japan, but fewer know of the English-based creole that has arisen since that time, known as Hawaiian Pidgin English, Hawaiian Creole English, or just Pidgin. This variety of English is spoken by a fairly large percentage of Hawaiians today, though they tend not to use it around *haole* (Caucasian) tourists.

Pidgin combines elements of all of the languages originally spoken by settlers, including Portuguese (cf. *where you stay go?* meaning ‘where are you going?’, or *I called you up and you weren’t there already* meaning ‘I called you up and you weren’t there yet’), Hawaiian (*haole*, *makapeapea* ‘sleepy seed’, *lanai* ‘porch’, *pau* ‘finished’), Japanese (*shoyu* ‘soy sauce’), and even Californian/Surfer (*dude*, *sweet*, *awesome*, *freeway*). They also have some English expressions all their own, such as *shave ice* ‘snowcone’ and *cockroach* ‘cockroach’.

The syntax (word order) of Pidgin differs significantly from that of mainland English varieties, but resembles the English creoles of the Caribbean in important ways, including deletion of the verb *be* in certain contexts (e.g. *if you one girl, no read dis* ‘if you’re a girl, don’t read this’), lack of inversion of the subject and finite verb in questions and subordinate clauses (e.g. *doctah , you can pound my baby?* ‘doctor, can you weigh my baby?’, or *how dey came up*

wid dat? ‘how did they come up with that?’), null subjects (e.g. *cannot!* ‘I can’t!’), *get shtrawberry?* ‘do you have strawberry [flavor]?’), and the use of *get* to express existential conditions (‘there is’, ‘there are’), as in *get sharks?* ‘are there sharks [in there]?’.

This tour only begins to scratch the surface of the range of English varieties to be found in the United States, but it should provide enough fodder to keep you busy for a while on your travels, and with any luck will enable you to provide some entertainment for your hosts as well. And if the info I’ve provided here isn’t enough to sate your thirst for American dialects, I urge you to visit the Sea Islands, where Gullah is still spoken, Tangier Island in Chesapeake Bay, and Ocracoke Island, off the coast of North Carolina. Each of these islands features a variety of English that will shock and titillate you; I’ll leave the details for you to discover.