

Regional Dialects in Midland and New England [Historical Back ground and Development]

MAYUMI MIWA

**LINGUISTICS 442
SPRING SEMENSTER 2001**

1. Introduction

The continuing study of American English Dialects has clarified some of ideas about the true nature of language. Regional dialects express evidences of historical backgrounds of time, manner, and aspect to us. I may say that England is the most significant country to the U.S. because people living in England mostly formed American English. This paper examines varieties of regional dialects appearing in Midland and New England, which are brought by frontiers and puritans from England to the New World. The analysis in this paper is based on the following sources: Buck (1949), Trudgill (1986), Clark (1972), Wrigh (1981), Klein (1969), Kurath (1973), and others. Refer to them for further information.

1. Regional Dialects in Midland: “Tow sack” and “Burlap bag”

My first examination deals with the dialects in Midland and Southern Midland in the U.S. It is thought that three processes form the dialects in Midland and Southern words (Trudgill, 1986).

- 1) The Advancing Frontier
- 2) The Growth of Town and Permanent Settlement.
- 3) The Increase of Regional Communication.

Each of these can be associated with certain aspects of 21st century regional vocabulary

in the Midland and Southern Midland. The varieties of regional dialects, “burlap bag” and “tow sack” are appeared in this area. The word, “burlap bag” is a synonym of “tow sack”. “Tow sack” is a regional dialect in Pennsylvania, Arkansas, and Louisiana. “Burlap bag” is a term of North Carolina and Tennessee. Since “burlap bag” and “tow sack” are compound, it may be difficult to examine as they are. Hence, I compare between two words, “bag” and “sack” first in following sections.

2-1 Examination for “Bag”

According to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), the main definition of “bag” is a container made of paper, cloth, mesh, metal foil, plastic, or other flexible material and use. Probably before 1200, “bagge”, and borrowed from Scandinavian source (Ernest, 1967). Medieval Latin form is “baga” and Old French is “baque” (sack). The Middle English “bagge” was from Old Norse “bugg” of Celtic origin (Partridge, 1958). “Bag” was brought to England by Norman (OED). According to the Dr. Santucci’s lecture note (February 15th), the Norman conquered England in 1066. In this time, although the use of French never extended to English masses following the Norman Conquest under William over the Saxon King Harold, the linguistic result of the Norman Conquest was to establish French as the language of England, at least in the sense of the language of power and authority. Probably, French formed “bag” during this time in England.

2-2 Examination for “Sack”

The word “bag” is strongly related to French, and there is no form of Dutch and German in the OED and other dictionaries. On the other hand, “sack” has various forms of languages; Old French “sac” and Old Icelandic was “sekk”, Latin “saccus”, an early borrowing of Latin “succus” from Greek “sakkos”, Middle Dutch and Middle High German “sak”, and old High German “sakkus” (partridge, 1958). Probably before 1200, “sack” was written “sac”, and later in the spelling “sack” about 1275 ~ 76 (Barnhart, 1988). The definition of “sack” is a large use, rectangular bag of coarse strong material as canvas or burlap used to store and ship goods as grain, fruit, coal (OED). Opposite to the “bag”, since “sack” has traveled everywhere and it is the same in so many languages, I thought that it was very hard to examine how “sack” was formed in England. Partridge (1958), however, points out that “sack” was reinforced by Old French “sac” and Old Icelandic form was “sekk” and Latin form was “saccus”, but initially developed from Old English “sacc” about 1000 in West Saxon. According to Dr. Santucci (lecture on February 15th), West Saxon was established as the first Standard form of English, which indeed gave English a Standard form considerably earlier than many other European languages. From the Partridge’s point and Dr. Santucci’s lecture, I realize that since West Saxon formed Standard English, no matter how many varieties of forms were existed, “sack” was derived by West Saxon as English initially in England. From my examination upon “bag” and “sack”, I found their historical formations in England. Next following sections, I scrutinize the words “burlap” and “tow”, then I will seek whether “burlap” relates to “bag” and “tow” relates to “sack” or

not. In words of one syllable, I examine whether or not “burlap bag” and “tow sack” were appeared in England as compounds before they came to the New World.

2-3 Examination for “Burlap” and Compound “Burlap bag”

I already mentioned that “bag” related to French. Hence, before my examination of the word “burlap”, I believed that “burlap” was also derived from French. However, “burlap” does not have any French source, unfortunately this fact breaks down my first expectation completely. “Burlap” is probably “borelapp” (1695 ~ 96), but it was uncertain origin and possibly borrowed from Dutch *brenlap (Klein, 1967). However “bag” has no Dutch form. From this fact, I can probably say that “bag” and “burlap” are derived from different source and brought to England individually by different language groups of people and it may not brought to England simultaneously. I also believe that compound “burlap bag” was produced in England for one’s purpose or necessity (carrying something).

2-4 Examination for “Tow” and Compound “Tow sack”

Opposite to the compound, “burlap bag”, “tow” is easy for me to solve the relationships between “tow” and “sack” because they are closely related. According to the OED, forms of “tow” are 1400 ~ 1700 “towe”, 1500 “toow”, 1600 “toa”, and 1700 ~ 1800 “toe” (also 1500 ~ 1600 “tawe”, 1500 “tow”). Origin of “tow” is doubtful but perhaps related to Old Norse “ton” and it is known only from last quarter of fourteenth century. The definition of “ton” (Old Norse) is uncleaned wool or flays, unworked fiber of thread. The Old English “tow” (about 1000) means spinning or weaving. Icelandic form is “togen”, Medieval Latin is “towagiun” and Old Saxon is “tiohan”. Middle Dutch form is “touwen” (to knit, or to weave). The original sense of the word “tow” may have been textile fiber generally. “Tow” probably expresses something material or type of the “sack” and combine to the word “sack” instead of “bag”. Both “tow” and “sack” share similar historical process of their developments such as both have Saxon forms. From this point, I believe that the people who shared the same language (probably West Saxon) probably constructed the combination between “tow” and “sack”. In the previous sections, I described about the etymological approach of the word “bag”, “sack”, “burlap”, and “tow” and their developments in England. Next following sections, I’m going to scrutinize the processes of the development of the word “burlap bag” and “tow sack” in the New World, then seeking to be the regional varieties in the different states in the U.S. today.

3. Words From England to the New World

3-1 Expansion of Regional Dialect, “Tow sack” in Midland.

The English men established the first colony, James Town in the New World in 1607. After that, many English frontiers and puritans had migrated to the New World seeking their grounds and their religious freedom. They established the colony in Massachusetts Bay, and more than 20,000 immigrants came to the New World during 1828 ~ 1838. “Tow sack” was probably brought by these frontiers during this time.

“Tow sack” is the regional variety used the people living in Pennsylvania, Arkansas and Louisiana today. However, it is thought that “tow sack” was initially brought into Pennsylvania where is the closest location to the English colony in Massachusetts Bay and later it was brought to Arkansas and Louisiana. At the beginning of this paper, I mentioned that the dialects in Midland including southern Midland areas were mostly formed by three processes; 1) advancing frontier, 2) the growth of town and permanent settlement, and 3) the increase of regional communication. I realized that “tow sack” are undergone these three processes.

According to Shores (1977:P103), the first stage of advance into the interior south by way of the Appalachian Mountain Valley and Gaps. Daniel Boone and his contemporaries had pushed the frontiers into Tennessee and Kentucky first. However, I believe that they did not decide that Tennessee and Kentucky were the place not for their permanent settlement because “tow sack” is not the regional variety in both states until today. Hence, Daniel Boone and his frontiers around 1770 brought the regional dialect “tow sack” to these states. The series of way of the frontiers from Pennsylvania were blocked at South Carolina and (or) Georgia by Blue Ridge and By hostile Indians. Hence, these frontiers probably advanced toward to more Southwest along the River of Louisiana and finally they reached into Arkansas. In the second process, the frontiers established their permanent settlement there and gained their regional communication. After that they were expanding into the neighboring state, Louisiana together with their word “tow sack” around 1820.

3-2 Expansion of Regional Dialect, “Burlap Bag” in Midland

The word “burlap bag” was not formed by English people, probably other language people might bring it to England, “bag” was brought by probably French, but not “burlap”. These two words were brought to England by different time and groups. The compound “burlap bag” was formed in England undergoing some processes and carried into the New World by also English frontiers and puritans. “Burlap bag” is a term of North Carolina and Tennessee today. The same as “tow sack”, “burlap bag” is also undergone three processes before it reached into North Carolina and Tennessee. I strongly believe that “burlap bag” was also brought to the New World by English frontiers and puritans, however, these frontiers were completely different group form the Daniel Boone and his followers. It was thought that frontiers who shared the word “burlap bag” was arrived to the New World were later than Daniel Boone and his frontiers. The frontiers whose term was “burlap bag” advanced into interior south immediately after they reached to the New World because “burlap bag” is not used around Massachusetts Bay area. The word “tow sack”, on the other had, is used in Pennsylvania. From this point, I think that Boone’s frontiers probably used variety of “tow sack” in Pennsylvania, some of them may or may not settled their living area in Pennsylvania, and later Boone’s frontiers advanced to the southward until Arkansas and Louisiana. Opposite to the case of “tow sack”, “burlap bag” is not used around Massachusetts Bay area. From this point, it is thought that the frontiers did not contact with the people around Massachusetts Bay area or they did not stay this area after

arrived from England and they probably advanced into south immediately after their arrival to the New World.

The frontiers (“tow sack”) advanced to south along with the Coastline of Atlantic Ocean instead of Boone’s way of Appalachian Mountain Valley. They arrived to North Carolina and established their settlement as their permanent area. After that, they built towns and villages there and gained their regional communication. They were expanding their living area to the neighboring West Side State, Tennessee together with their term of “burlap bag”. The same as Boone’s case, they are blocked to enter South Carolina and Georgia because of the high Blue Mountain Ridge and hostile Indian there. “Burlap bag” is not remaining the neighboring state of Arkansas and Louisiana because already Boone’s settlement was established and used the term of “tow sack” there.

4 Conclusion for the Variety of Regional Dialect in Midland

Two varieties of the words “tow sack” and “burlap bag” are still remaining in Midland and Southern Midland in the U.S. Both varieties came from England by English frontiers, puritans, and their followers. From this examination, I conclude the variety of regional dialects in the U.S. is formed by three reasons: of the types of frontiers from England, of the ways or routes of frontiers’ advancing, and of the different regional settlement and their expansion to neighboring state. David L. Shore (1977:P104) says that we cannot say how the force of stability acted upon a particular element in regional vocabularies but we can delimit those regions in which Midland or Midland Southern becomes the distinctive vocabulary.

5. Introduction for Regional Dialect in New England

My second observation deals with Regional Dialects in New England. New England is called the area of Main, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. In New England, there are many numbers of regional dialects, which were formed by frontiers from mostly England and another countries. Actually, New England was populated largely by people from Eastern and Southern parts of England.

According to Burkett M. Evan (1987:P28), New England has two major dialect areas, Eastern and Western New England. Western New England includes the Lower Connecticut Valley and the Long Island Sound, west of the Connecticut River. Western New England had a number of immigrants from the area North and Northwest of London, as well as settlers from Northern England. There were also Scotch-Irish, but they settled along the frontiers. Eastern New England has Boston as its center and extends from the Atlantic Seaboard to the Connecticut River Valley in Massachusetts. Regional differences within New England as elsewhere are greater in the homely vocabulary of the family and the farm than in the vocabulary of “society” and of urban area (Kurath, 1973:P8). The farm area is keeping their regionalism than the urban area. Next following sections, I research regional dialect, the words “porch” and “stoop” in New England.

6 Regional Dialect in Eastern New England, “Porch”

The term “porch” is used by the people living around Eastern New England. According to the OED, the forms of “porch” are; 1300 ~ 1700 “porche”, 1500 “poorche”, 1600 “portche” and 1700 “portch”. “Porch” is developed from Old English “portic”. Old High German “pforzih” is directly from Latin “paticus”. The main definition of “porch” is an exterior structure forming a covered approach to entrance of a building. About 1300, “porch” was borrowing from Old French “porch” from Latin “porticus”. “Porch” is mostly used from Eastern Connecticut to Cape Cod, Maine, and Boston as center of Eastern New England. The definition of “porch” in Maine is very unique. It is a sort of extra shed-kitchen used as laundry. It is thought that when “porch” was introduced into Maine, probably “porch” was lacking from the houses in Maine, and there was no definite information about it. Because “porch” was probably formed by French, people used this variety were undergone at least some historical influences by French people in England. Hence, “porch” was brought by those groups of frontiers into New England.

7 Regional Dialect in Western New England, “Stoop”

“Stoop” is the dialect of Western New England. The term “stoop” is Dutch word “stoep”. The definition of “stoop” in OED is an uncovered platform before the entrance of a house, raised, and approached by means of steps and sometimes incorrectly used for “porch” or “veranda”. The Noun form, “stoop” was derived from the verb “stoupen” by 1300. Old English form is “stupian”, which is cognate with Middle Dutch “stupen” (to bow, bend). Therefore “stoop” was formed by initially Dutch and people shared this variety were influenced by at least Dutch historically and later these group of frontiers brought the word into New England. The Dutch word “stoop”, denoting a “porch” of varying construction, was probably introduced into New England with the covered porch itself, which was lacking on Old New England house (Burkett, 1978:P28). This Dutch term rather widely used in the Western Fringe and the Connecticut Valley. From Eastern Connecticut to Cape Cod, “stoop” is rare. “Porch” is a variety of Boston and “stoop” may have reached the Boston area by the time of Revolution. Two varieties of “porch” and “stoop” were formed by the different groups of people in England and later they crossed to the New World as English frontiers and expanding their varieties regionally in New England.

8 Expansion of the Varieties “Porch” and “Stoop” in New England

Dutch term “stoop” and French term “porch”, both are formed in England and brought by different groups of English frontiers, Puritans, and their followers into New England during the time of Colonization of the New World. The English frontiers used different varieties express us about the historical backgrounds of England. People from another European countries due to their innovation, conquest and another reasons influenced the people in England. The Eastern Area of New England corresponds roughly to the section of New England occupied in gradual expansion from the Atlantic Seaboard. The Western Area, to the area settled from the Lower Connecticut Valley and from Long Island Sound, west of the Connecticut River (Kurath, 1973:P14). Boston has

remained the dominant center of Eastern New England through the centuries. The history of innovations in the speech of Eastern New England is in large measure the history of the influence of Boston upper-class speech on the dialect of the seaboard from Cape Cod to Maine. On the other hand, the Plymouth Area has never had a prominent center and has never been an important independent economic unit such as Massachusetts Bay or Narragansett Bay. These differences between Western and Eastern New England distinct the varieties of words “stoop” and “porch” and people are still remaining their regional varieties until today.

9. Conclusion for the Dialect in New England

Regional dialects in New England are strongly influenced by England. The colonial population of New England derives very largely from the group of puritan, frontiers and their associates who settled Massachusetts Bay in the years between 1628 and 1640 (Saito, 1986:P249). The tide of migration began to follow when the Massachusetts Bay company undertook the colonization of its land. People who influenced from French or Dutch in England produce the different varieties. The varieties of the “stoop” and “porch” reflect both the history of England and the U.S.

10 Conclusion

The continuing study of American English dialects has clarified some of ideas about the nature of language. Dialect in Midland and New England reflect most clearly the regional pattern of historical Midland and New England, which must be reconstructed as well as possible if we would understand fully the present speech are as, and trace the source of Midland and New England speech back to the dialect of English. Studying regional dialects provides us the ideas of both developments of the words and root of the words, and researching regional dialect takes us to the long historical trip to the both countries England and the New World in the U.S.

Bibliography

- Klein, Ernest. *A Comprehensive Etymological dictionary of English Language*. Amsterdam, London, New York: Elsevier Publishing Co., 1967
- Barnhart, K. Robert. *The Barnhart Dictionary of Etymology*. U.S.: The H. W. Wilson Co, 1988
- Skeat, W. Walter. *Etymological Dictionary of the English Language*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1961

- Partridge, Eric. *Origins: A Short Etymological dictionary of Modern English*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958
- Simpson, J. A. and Weiner E. S. C. *The Oxford English dictionary 2nd Edition*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989
- Wardhaugh, Donald *Sociolinguistic 3rd Edition*. Massachusetts: Blackwell, 1998
- Buck, Carl. *A dictionary of Selected Synonyms in the Principal Indo-European Languages*. Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1949
- Trudgill, Peter. *Dialects in Contact*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1986
- Clark, L. Thomas. *Publication of the American Dialect Society. Article of The Continuing Erosion of a Speech Island*. (University of Nevada; April # 57) Marietta, Ohio: The Society by University of Alabama Press, 1972
- Wright, Peter. *Cockney Dialect and Slang*. London: Billing and Sons Ltd., 1981
- Dr. Santucci, James. (Lecture Note on Feb. 15th and March 1st 2001) *Etymology: The Historical Background, Political and Social*
- Burkett, M. Evan. *American English Dialects*. New Jersey and London: The Scarecrow Press, 1978
- Shoemaker L. David and Hines, P. Carole. *Papers in Language Variation*. Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1977
- Kurath, Hans. *Handbook of the Linguistic Geography of New England*. New York: AMS Press Inc., 1973
- Manfred, G. *Focus on Scotland [Varieties of English Around the World]*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Co., 1985
- Mather J. Y. and Speitel, H. H. *The Linguistics Atlas of Scotland*. Hamden, Connecticut: The Shoe String Press Inc., 1975
- Kirk, M. John, and Sanderson, Stewart. *Studies in Linguistic Geography: The Dialect of English in Britain and Ireland*. Australia: Croom Helm. Australia Ltd., 1985
- Ferrel, H. Robert and Natkiel, Richard. *Atlas of American History*. London: Bison Books Ltd., 1987
- Saito, Shin, Kaneko, Yoshio and Kamei, Shunsuke. *Cyclopedia of the United States of America*. Tokyo, Japan: Heibonsha Ltd., 1986