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Laboratorio di Lingua e Traduzione inglese

“Characteristics and Varieties of North American English” John Gilbert

**Lexical contributions to North American English**

**Native American languages**: borrowing of words for flora & fauna & indigenous cultural notions (most lexical borrowings date from early period of colonization in 17th c)

*-* fauna: *raccoon, opossum, moose, skunk, terrapin, woodchuck, chipmunk, caribou, menhaden, muskellunge*

*-* flora: *hickory, catalpa, pecan, catawaba, persimmon, sequoia, squash*

*- canoe, moccasin, tomahawk, wigwam, teepee, squaw, wampum,*

- calques or loan translations: *war dance, warpath, pipe of peace, Great Spriti, paleface, medicine man, big chief, bury the hatchet*

**Dutch**

*- yankee (?), boss, Santa Claus, How come?, waffle, coleslaw, cookie, landscape, caboose, sleigh, to snoop, to be a spook* (spy), *Breukelyn, Haarlem, Bronck’s*

**Germans** largest group of immigrants in 19th c:

- *check (zeiche,* bill for drinks), *cookbook (Kochbuch), delicatessen, ecology, fresh (freche,* impertinent), *hoodlum, kindergarten, nix (nichts), phooey (pfui), rifle (riffle,* groove), *scram!* (Yiddish *scrammen), yesman (Jasager,* yes sayer), *and how! (und wie), no way (keineswegs), can be (kann sein), will do (wird getan), let it be (lass es sein)*

**Frontier/West**:

- cowboys (1st recorded in present sense in 1877)

 - pidgin w/ Mexicans & Natives: *long time no see, no can do*

 - from **Spanish**: *rodeo, stampede, bronco, chaps, lasso, mustang, lariat, pinto, poncho, ranch*

 - also *maverick, bronco-buster, wrangler, range rider, cowhand, cowpoke, cowpuncher,* new sense for *rustler, hot under the collar, bite the dust*

- also *You bet, I reckon not, dead broke, take it easy, to get even, gilt-edged, a close call*

- drinking:

 *- saloon, firewater, bootleg, straight* liquor (not BrE *neat), cocktail* (?)

- tobacco:

 *- roll your own, bite off more than you can chew,*

- card & dice gambling:

 *-* poker:  *passing the buck, deal, dealer, square deal, new deal, big deal!, what a deal!, big dealer, dealing from the bottom of the deack, deal me in/out, for openers, sweeten the pot, to go someone one better, bluff (?), to call one’s hand/bluff, a poker face, ace in the hole, ace up the sleeve, a full house, to cash in one’s chips, blue chip, to stack the cards, to have the cards stacked against one, to stand pat, a wild card, to break even, on a shoestring, to string along*

 - bridge: *to follow suit, to make points, to be in spades, a bid* for something (e.g. fame), blackjack: *hit me*, dice: *to load the dice*

- continental railroad after Civil War

 - (from nautical jargon) *berth, purser, steward, fare, cabin, freight*

- *railroaded* (1877)*, sidetracked* (by 1890s)*, to be in the clear, to make the grade, to have the right of way, to backtrack, to reach the end of the line, to go off the rails*

1848/9 California Gold Rush

 - *bonanza, el dorado, pan out, prospector, stake a claim, strike*

*-* Civli War 1861-65:

 - *unconditional surrender* (Grant 1862)

- **Afro-Americans** (presumably African roots):

- *okra, gumbo* (okra stew)*, pinders* (peanuts)*, goobers* (peanuts), *cooter* (type of turtle)*, buckra* (disparaging term for "white man," esp. a poor one)*, yam, okay* (probably comes from Gullah word *okeh,* from Wolof & Bantu word *waw-kay* or the Mande (aka "Mandinke" or "Mandingo") phrase *o ke*, *cat* & *hip* from Wolof *hipicat, mojo* (from Gullah *moco* witchcraft, magic), *voodoo, tote, banjo, juke, banana, to bad mouth, a high five, jam session, yum-yum, nitty gritty, jazz* (from Bantu linguistico group verb *jaja),*

- the talk of the Afro-Am jazzmen & women became cult slang of hippies in 1960s:

 - *beat* (tired), *cat, chick, groovy, have a ball, hip, hype, in the groove, jam, mellow, out of the world, pad, riff, solid, square, stache,* for *kicks, rip off, hung-up, cool, man, dude, roach, busted, heavy, stoned* (borrowed from AAVE intensifier e.g. *stone blind), uptight, sock it to me baby, let it all hang out, right on!, get down, get with it, do one’s thing, funky,*

**Yiddish** (“Yinglish”):

- *chutzpah, glitch* (minor malfunction), *goy/goyim, kibitz* (chat/gossip), *kibitzer, kitsch, klutz, kosher* (authentic), *kvetch* (complain), *lox (smoked salmon), maven (expert), mazel tov* (good luck), *nosh* (snack), *oy!* (oh!), *oy vey* (oh, woe!; oh, no!), *schlep* (drag, haul), *schlepper* (bum), *mensch* (person of consequence), *nebbish* (a non-entity), *schlock* (a shoddy, cheap article), *schmaltz* (excessive sentimentality), *schmaltzy, schmo* (stupid person), *schmuck* (jerk), *schnap*s (liquor), *schnoz/-schnozzle* (nose, esp. big), *shlemiel* (a simpleton), *shpiel* (lengthy talk), *shtik* (business), *tush* (behind)

- calque expressions:

 - Wear it in good health; I need it like a hole in the head; Get lost; Give a look; If

 you’ll excuse the expression, I’m telling you; Enjoy!; Smart he isn’t; I should worry.

 - expressions beginning w/ sarcastic ***schm*** prefix (e.g. *actor-schmactor!)*

**Italians**:

- *spaghetti, macaroni, ravioli, pizza* (after WW II), *lasagna, espresso, cannelloni, minestrone, parmesan, pasta, vermicelli, tortellini, macaroni, broccoli, zucchini*

- *Mafia, godfather, the family, capo*

**Chinese**

- *chow, won ton, chow mein, chop suey, chopsticks, egg foo young*

**Japanese**

- food terms: *sukiyaki, teriyaki, sushi*

**radio**: *play-by-play, blow-by-blow*

**television**: *prime time, talk show, the late show*

**cinema**:

 - word *movie* (from *moving pictures)* prob. from NY or Chicago ca. 1906-7

 - *previews of coming attractions, newsreels, westerns* (from earlier use for

 novels?),*shoot-em-ups, gangster pictures, musicals, tear-jerkers, screen credits, sound track, stunt man, star, starlet, on location, character actor, supporting cast, 3D*

 - pseudo-Italian/gangster but actually Hollywood: *rough house, hatchet man, doing the dirty work, hot seat* (electric chair), *protection racket, loan shark*

**sports**: baseball: *on deck, in the hole, bush league;* football: *Monday night quarterback*

**theater**: *Bronx cheer, get or give the bird, lay an egg, play down*

**telephone**:

 *- operator, long distance, person-to-person, station-to-station, local call, toll call, direct dial, area code, dial tone, busy signal, obscene call, unlisted number, yellow pages, wrong number*

**corporate advertising** (brand-name labels): *kleenex, frigidaire, hoover, kotex*