

The History of Dialects in Britain. Dialectology.





The History of Dialects in Britain

The United Kingdom is perhaps the most dialect-obsessed country in the world. With near-countless regional Englishes shaped by millennia of history, few nations boast as many varieties of language in such a compact geography.



English is a West Germanic language that originated from the Anglo-Frisian dialects brought to Britain by Germanic settlers from various parts of what is now northwest Germany and the northern Netherlands. The resident population at this time was generally speaking Common Brittonic—the insular variety of continental Celtic, which was influenced by the Roman occupation. This group of languages (Welsh, Cornish, Cumbric) cohabited alongside English into the modern period, but due to their remoteness from the Germanic languages, influence on English was notably limited.



TAYLOR'S
FOUNDRY.

SAFE WALL
ONE SIDE

OFFICE CRYST
EASTWATER STREET



Initially, Old English was a diverse group of dialects, reflecting the varied origins of the Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms of England. One of these dialects, Late West Saxon, eventually came to dominate. The original Old English language was then influenced by two waves of invasion: the first was by speakers of the Scandinavian branch of the Germanic family, who conquered and colonised parts of Britain in the 8th and 9th centuries; the second was the Normans in the 11th century, who spoke Old Norman and ultimately developed an English variety of this called Anglo-Norman. These two invasions caused English to become "mixed" to some degree





Cohabitation with the Scandinavians resulted in a significant grammatical simplification and lexical enrichment of the Anglo-Frisian core of English; the later Norman occupation led to the grafting onto that Germanic core of a more elaborate layer of words from the Romance branch of the European languages. This Norman influence entered English largely through the courts and government. Thus, English developed into a "borrowing" language of great flexibility and with a huge vocabulary.

Map showing phonological variation within England of the vowel in
bath, grass, and dance.

'a' [ä]

'aa' [æ:]

'ah' [ɑ:]

anomalies

Those in the north generally pronounce such words with a short
vowel whereas those in the south use a long vowel





Dialectology

Dialectology (from Greek διάλεκτος, dialektos, "talk, dialect"; and -λογία, -logia) is the scientific study of linguistic dialect, a sub-field of sociolinguistics. It studies variations in language based primarily on geographic distribution and their associated features. Dialectology treats such topics as divergence of two local dialects from a common ancestor and synchronic variation.



Dialectologists are ultimately concerned with grammatical, lexical and phonological features that correspond to regional areas. Thus they usually deal not only with populations that have lived in certain areas for generations, but also with migrant groups that bring their languages to new areas

Commonly studied concepts in dialectology include the problem of *mutual intelligibility* in defining languages and dialects; situations of *diglossia*, where two dialects are used for different functions; *dialect continua* including a number of partially mutually intelligible dialects; and *pluricentrism*, where what is essentially a single genetic language exists as two or more standard varieties.

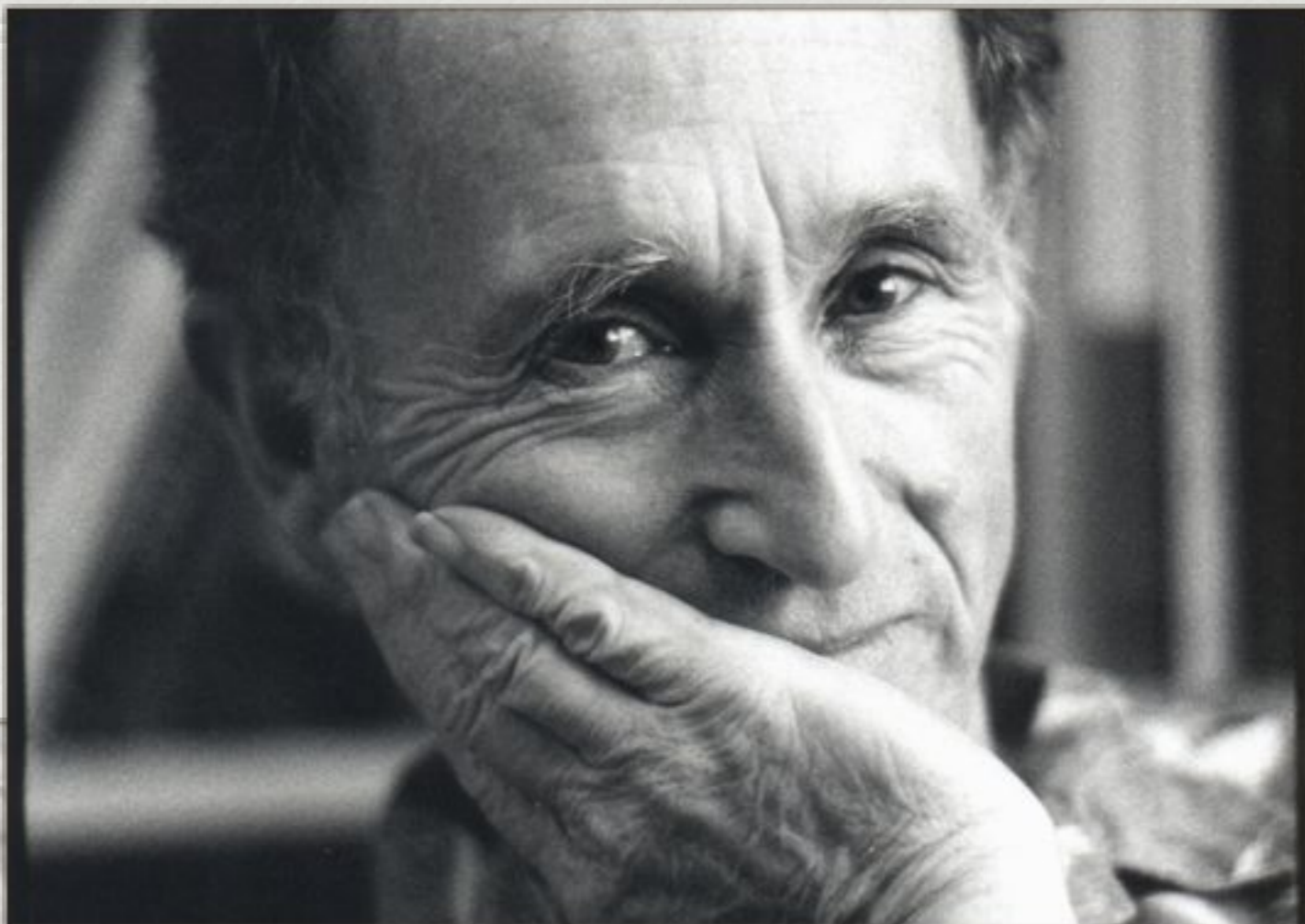
FRANC. FLORVS
PINXIT IN SVBR-
BANO NICOLAI
IONGEINQ PROPE
VRBEM ANVERPIA
HIERONYMVS
COQVS EXCVDEBAT
1553



In London, there were comments on the different dialects recorded in 12th century sources, and a large number of dialect glossaries were published in the 19th century.

Philologists would also study dialects, as they preserved earlier forms of words.

Hans Kurath and *William Labov* are among the most prominent researchers in this field.



Thank you for attention 🌸