New England lexis and its signatures

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Paper received 15.02.2016; Accepted for publication 25.02.2016.

Abstract: New England lexis is of insular character, having little in common with other regions. The contribution of Northern and Western British donor dialect areas is prevailing, not Eastern and Southern, as supposed. NE vocabulary is mainly the product of the 19 and 20th cc. migration and social mobility of the population. Etymologically, the main sources are compounding, combinations and phrases, along with semantic changes based on metaphor. Semantically, household items, those related to professional spheres – hunting, fishing, lumberjacking, names of animals and plants are conspicuous; the bulk of the material show variation – multiple names for the same object

Keywords: dialect areas, distribution, etymological sources, lexis, semantic topics.

Introduction. There have been a number of different approaches to hot-button issues in American dialectology, still open to discussion. Among them are the classification of dialect areas and dynamics of interaction between them, futile attempts to reconcile the phonological and lexical principles of such classification, contribution of British dialect zones to American regions, consistency or its lack in relation between external history and language features, to name only but few.

Survey of publications. If phonology of American dialects is well studied in seminal works of the field, such as W. Labov [6], W. Wolfram [8], E. Schneider [5], etc., their complex lexis signatures are less fortunate to be revealed. Mostly, the latter are limited to a list of words used in an area [1, p. 268], while crucial questions remain unanswered. One of those is whether British dialect features in American regional vocabulary reflect the history of settlement in a direct, 'no-frills' way, as given in R. Hickey's work [4], or present-day reality has more intricate character that defies such simplistic approach.

Objective, material, methodology. The lexis of New England (NE) is a topical object for such study. Being the cradle of American language in the 17th c., this region is a case in point of sweeping historical changes reflected in its speech. The objective of the paper is to bring to light complex language characteristics of NE lexis both in synchrony and diachrony. NE vocabulary thoroughly gleaned from two volumes of Dictionary of American Regional English (DARE) [2], [3] serves as the material for the study. Its methodology includes methods of comparative and descriptive analysis.

Results and discussion. First, the material has been studied after its regional and areal labels. Of roughly 525 items under consideration, major part 75% (390) refers exclusively to NE area. In this group, most of the items (337) are used in NE with no restriction whatsoever; 73 lexemes with 59 labels show the restricted distribution within NE area, from 1 through 4 units each, e.g. cannikin 'wooden storage container' (south-eastern NE), bung up and bilge free 'in good order' (coastal NE), cleanser 'dry cleaner' (eastern NE, esp. Boston), honey pot 'quagmire' (esp. ME), election cake 'rich fruit cake' (esp. MA), etc.

The second group with 135 lexemes and 45 labels reveals joint distribution, e.g. NE & New York, NE & North Central, etc. The most numerous combinations are: NE + Great Lakes – 33, e.g. hogback 'sharp rise or ridge'; chiefly North, esp. NE – 15, e.g. fodder corn 'corn grown as fodder'; NE + South – 7, e.g. to cut one's comb 'humble someone'; NE + Great Lakes + Pacific Northwest – 6, e.g. crumb chaser 'cook's helper'; NE + South Midland – 6, e.g. to admire 'like, enjoy'; NE + NY

- 6, e.g. *dish kettle* 'large heavy pot'; NE + Midland − 5, e.g. *angry* 'of wound: inflamed'; North, esp. NE − 5, e.g. *buttery* 'pantry'; NE + South Atlantic − 4, e.g. *biddy* 'mature chicken'; chiefly North East, esp. NE − 3, e.g. *black ice* 'smooth layer of ice on still water', etc. As it is seen, New England lexis is of insular character without sharing it with other dialect areas. Even accounting both North East and North regions (170 and 240 units), which include NE as their original source (not object of present study), the uniqueness of NE vocabulary is striking.

Grammatically, the bulk of the material are nouns – 69%, as *dooryard call* 'neighborly visit', *hasty pudding* 'cornmeal mush'; followed by verbs (12%), as *to beau* 'escort, date', *to dickey up* 'dress up'. Then go adjectives (6%), as *frowy* 'rancid, spoiled', *budge* 'intimate, familiar'; followed by phrases and word combinations (5%), as *hell to pay and no pitch hot* 'predicament', *to hook Jack* 'skip school', as:

"I was familiar in my boyhood with the expressions to play hookey and hook Jack" [3, p. 1086].

The rest is shared by adverbs, as *fortino* 'as far as I know'; adjectives and adverbs, as *chockablock* 'very full'; interjections, as *Godfrey!* 'God!'; and prepositions, as *beaft* 'behind'. The prevalence of nouns is somewhat determined by DARE's text of questionnaire where the informants are often asked to fill notional gaps, better suited by nouns. Still, the relative high frequency of phrases and word combinations is worth attention.

British origin of the New England lexis is of vital importance for the study. Some 12% of the items have their sources in British dialects. The problem dealt with in this part of the research refers to tracing the British input or antecedents in American dialect areas, i.e. finding out the relative importance of British dialect donor areas in American regions. One more crucial issue in the field is to check if present-day lexical signatures of American areas still bear the footprints of external immigration and settlement history, or the former are blurred by social mobility of the population.

The units with their traces in British dialects were checked on English Dialect Dictionary (EDD) [9], [10], [11] and Oxford English Dictionary (OED) [7] to find out their distribution in the English shires, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales and establish the contribution of British dialect areas to NE lexis. It is especially worthy of note here that many British dialect lexemes are not restricted to some counties or even areas but reveal complex distribution breaking the boundaries of dialect zones. Thus NE to gaum 'move awkwardly or clumsily' goes back to the

British dialectism to gaum 'stare idly, gape, be stupid' which is used in Scotland, Ireland, Cumberland (North West of England), Westmorland (North West), Lancashire (North West), Cheshire (North West), Yorkshire (North), Derbyshire (East Midlands), Nottinghamshire (East Midlands), Rutland (East Midlands), Lincolnshire (East), Leicestershire (Midlands), Herefordshire (West Midlands), Essex & Surrey (both – South East) [3, p. 577]. Therefore, to get a clear picture of British dialect input in NE lexis, all Scottish, Irish, and English distributions were counted in a grand total.

The study yields the following results. The Welsh area has only one count: *booby-hut* 'sleigh with an enclosed carriage body'; the Irish one numbers 11 counts, as *galoot* 'male, person'; the Scottish region has 24 counts (*bannock* 'thin bread made of cornmeal'). The English dialect regions reveal the following: shires of South West have 67 counts, including Devonshire – 16 (*angledog* 'earthworm for fishing'), Somersetshire – 16 (*granther* 'grandfather'), Gloucestershire – 11 (*daddock* 'rotten wood'), Cornwall – 9 (*drisk* 'drizzle'), Wiltshire – 9 (*drail* 'fishhook with a weighted shank for trolling'), Dorset – 6 (*effet* 'newt, lizard').

Shires of South East of England have 39 counts, with Sussex - 9 (hovel 'separate shed of a barn, shelter for chickens or cows'), Oxfordshire – 6 (hard pushed 'hardpressed'), Surrey – 6 (dish-kettle 'large pot for cooking'), Essex – 6 (hearth brush 'broom for sweeping a hearth'), Kent – 5 (to forelay 'ambush'). Berkshire – 5 (gooney 'stupid person'), London – 2 (duff 'flour pudding'). Shires of North West of England number 37 counts, with Cheshire – 15 (cleverly 'entirely'), Cumberland – 9 (dingtoed 'stumbling'), Lancashire - 7 (humbug 'taffy with peppermint'), Westmorland – 6 (to admire 'like, enjoy'). West Midlands shires are mentioned 33 times: Warwickshire – 10 (gawky 'awkward'), Worcestershire – 9 (to duff 'work energetically'), Herefordshire – 6 (gauming 'stupid'), Shrophshire - 5 (gambrel roof 'roof with two slopes on each side'), Staffordshire - 3 (eenamost 'almost'). East Midlands shires contributed 27 counts, as Northamptonshire – 10 (to empt 'empty'), - 8 (to gaum 'move clumsily'), Derbyshire Nottinghamshire – 6 (gaum 'clumsy person'), Rutland – 3 (gaumy 'inept').

Northern shires have 20 counts and Southern 19 counts, correspondingly: Yorkshire – 19 (door stone 'large stone used as doorstep'), Humber – 1 (hooley 'loud party') and Hampshire – 11 (cow slip 'marsh marigold'), Hertfordshire – 4 (honeysuckle 'white Dutch clover'), Isle of Wight – 4 (eaceworm 'earthworm'). East of England has 18 counts, with Lincolnshire – 15 (brewis 'puddinglike dish') and Bedfordshire – 3 (flummery 'sweet cold fruit pudding'). Midlands and East Anglia have 10 counts each, correspondingly: Leicestershire – 10 (to flax 'beat, thrash') and Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Suffolk, as gallus 'suspender'. North East shires with 4 counts – Durham – 2 ('angry 'of wound: inflamed') and Northumberland – 2 (ex 'axle') – close the list. In grand total, there are 320 counts.

The analysis of these figures against a background of external history yields quite important fruits of the study. It is known that the first wave of migration took place in 1629-41: more than 20,000 Puritans from eastern England

moved to Massachusetts Bay when the New England colonies were founded. It formed the basis of the Northern dialect area in AE [1, pp. 7-10]. Then, gentry and their servants from southern England migrated to Virginia in 1642-75, followed by Quakers from North Midlands and Wales to the Delaware Valley (1675-1725), and people from the North of England, Ireland, and Scotland to the Appalachians in 1717-75 [ibid.]. From 1629 through 1640, from 14,000 to 21,000 people left England for New England, and most of them came from five eastern counties – Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambidgeshire, and Essex [4, p. 123]. But the total contribution of those counties is only 31 counts, less than 10% of all.

By the 1640s, there were some 40,000 settlers in the area [ibid., p. 126], by the end of the 17th c. the number of settlers is believed to have more than doubled [ibid.]. By 1675, the main emigrant areas in England still were as mentioned five eastern counties [ibid., p. 127]. The secondary emigrant areas then included the territory between Wallingford (Oxfordshire), Windsor (Berkshire), Northampon, Warwick, and Derby, along with Surrey, Southampton, Kent, Hampshire, London, parts of Devon and Somerset [ibid.]. Even including the secondary emigrant areas, the two groups give 126 counts, some 38% of all. Other or tertiary emigrant areas are not considered there, since the number of settlers at that time was small.

In the map of 'The English origin of the Puritans 1620-1675' [ibid.], it is eastern and southern areas of England that were the main donors to NE lexis. In our study, the weight is cardinally shifted to West and North: western shires and Ireland have 148 counts against 98 in the East, while northern ones and Scotland have 196 counts against 135 in the South. In other words, vocabulary of New England has not been a product of the 17th c. from East and South East of England, but developed later, due to subsequent waves of migration from North West, South West, North Midlands, West Midlands, Scotland, and social mobility of the American population.

The most current etymological sources of the corpus are compounding (175) and word combination and phrases (46), in total – 41%. In the first group, 125 items are two-stem nouns, made on the pattern n1+n2, as apple John 'apple brandy', blanket chest 'large chest for bedding and linen', Hapmton boat 'sailboat for fishing', etc. Ten more nouns consist of 3 stems, as Abe Lincoln War 'The Civil War'. Some 25 compounds are made on the pattern adj. (Participle) + n, as balanced wall 'stone wall', high beam 'hayloft'. The rest are single cases of patterns other than mentioned above, as feather white 'quickly.' Words combinations and phrases are relatively numerous and reveal varied structures: as n's + n (captain's walk 'small platform for walk on the roof of a house'), n+and+n (devil and Tom Walker 'the Devil'), adjectival idioms (happy as a clam 'very content'), verbal idioms (to hook Jack 'play truant'), adverbial ones (as the fellers say 'as known'), nominal idioms (hell to pay and no pitch hot 'predicament', all talk and no cider 'action, substance'), as:

"The people... seem to be somewhat conscious of this propensity to talk, by which they are characterized, and have favorite proverb on the subject... 'all talk and no cider'" [2, p. 666].

Change of meaning as a source ranks next after compounding – 150 items (28%). Here, most of the NE lexemes show the change from neutral, informal, general, or special slang senses. E.g. cold deck is "stacked pack of playing cards to deceive" in informal English, in NE – 'in logging: a pile of logs held in reserve for later shipping'; family in NE 'a group of Shakers'; to belay in sailor's slang 'stop!', in NE 'cancel, disregard'; driver 'one who guides logs down a river'; fiddlehead from 'the scroll of a violin' (informal) to NE 'uncoiling frond of fern'; flaggins from hobo slang 'meal' to 'dinner toted out to the woods on a sled'.

Some semantic formations come from regional senses other than NE. Thus *fool killer* in Blackwater Chronicle of West Virginia is "mythical character whose business is to kill fools' (1853), later, in 1947, in NE in became 'thing or situation that is dangerous to the foolish or unwary'. Or *feeder* 'animal fattened for market' originated in Montana in 1880, in NE (1969), it is 'man who cares for horses and stables'. *Grinder* originated in Pennsylvania in 1904 as 'frog', in NE (1954) it became 'sub sandwich', etc.

As for the mechanism of semantic changes within this group, it is often metaphor that makes the difference, less often metonymy and narrowing of notions. E.g. hogback 'sharply rising hill or ridge', essence peddler from 'peddler of medicinal extracts' to 'skunk', barber pole from 'candy stick' to 'sawed tree fallen on another' (all – metaphors); dough god from 'bread, cooked over open 'doughnut' (metonymy); animal (narrowing). Less productive ways of formation NE lexis include affixation, with the suffixes -y and -ize the most current, as buttery 'pantry', to cruelize 'treat brutally'; corruption of a lexeme and appearance of a new sense, as hurrup (from hurry up) 'command to a horse or cow to move faster', to bange (from to bang 'go without definite purpose') 'idle about'; conversion, as to beau (from beau 'sweetheart') 'date, escort'; borrowing from Dutch, French, and Indian languages, as hooker 'boat for fishing' (Dutch hoekboot), cahot 'depression in a road' (from Canadian French); chogset 'perchlike saltwater fish' (from Algonquian); words of unknown origin, as calibogus 'drink made of rum, beer, and molasses'; phrasal verbs, as to dicky up 'dress up in fine clothes'; echoic words harry wicket 'woodpecker', etc.

The study of first dating in DARE is important to trace the formation of NE vocabulary. Although such first dates always lag behind actual oral usage, still they give relatively clear picture of the diachrony of the process. Almost all items have dating. Its analysis yields the following results. In the 17th c., 32 lexemes originated, by decades: 1, 0, 0, 10, 6, 4, 2, 3, 1, 4, e.g.: ground nut 'plant of the genus Apios', 1602 (the first dating); flake 'rack for drying fish', 1635; green corn 'corn plants cut green for fodder', 1645; dace 'freshwater fish', 1654; to flow 'flood', 1664; cunner 'perchlike saltwater fish', 1672; five fingers 'plant cinquefoil', 1683; corn-house 'corncrib', 1696.

In the 18th c., 68 more items originated, by decades: 4, 5, 2, 2, 11, 6, 6, 13, 15, 4, e.g.: *dreadful* 'extremely', 1704; *bateau* 'large flat-bottomed boat', 1711; *brief* 'of disease: wide-spread', 1722; *drag* 'sledge for hauling heavy loads', 1731; *beat out* 'tired' 1746; *clever* 'pleasant', 1758; *dooryard* 'grounds around a house',

1764; bush 'piece of land covered by shrubbery', 1779; fish warden 'officer to enforce fishing regulations', 1790; hard head 'menhaden', 1792. The 19th c. added 268 items, by decades: 12, 20, 26, 39, 33, 31, 18, 21, 31, 37, e.g.: hen clam 'surf clam', 1802; hard hack 'shrub Spirea' 1814; dry bridge 'overpass' 1821; boodle 'collection, crowd', 1833; back kitchen 'summer kitchen', 1849; flake yard 'area with containers with cold water', 1856; to browse 'beat', 1869; Copenhagen 'children's kissing game', 1873; belly-bump 'belly-flop', 1888; Hannah Cook 'unimportance', 1895.

In the 20th c., from 1901 through 1980, 163 more lexemes are dated, by decades: 31, 17, 11, 27, 25, 10, 40, 2, e.g.: gimp 'courage', 1901; greasy luck 'bon voyage!' 1916; to burn 'of fog: lift', 1926; fly camp 'temp camp', 1939; ant heap 'abscess', 1943; daisy ham 'cured pork shoulder butt', 1959; Finn 'Finnish language', 1968; barge 'receptacle for clams', 1979. It is seen, that the bulk of the material is traced in the 19th and 20th cc., with the most productive period from 1820 through 1910. It means that NE lexis is mainly the product of that time.

As for semantic categories, DARE's 41 topics [2, pp. Ixii-Ixxxv] have been changed to 20 in our research. Some of them contain just a few words, some were combined into one, as household topic which includes houses, furniture, utensils, dishes, foods, clothing, tobacco, liquor (all separate categories in DARE), nature which includes time, nature, and topography, or professional spheres, as fishing, hunting, lumberjacking, etc. The most numerous semantic categories in our study are, as follows.

Household, as mentioned above, leads the list with 105 units (20%). Within this group, names of foods, dishes, and drinks are prevailing, as anadama bread 'loaf bread made from corn meal, flour, and molasses', chicken coffee 'weak coffee with chicory root', dough dish 'wooden trough for raising and kneading bread dough'. They are followed by those of parts of the house, utensils, furniture, clothing, as *chamber* 'upper room or floor of a house used as bedroom', burgoo 'thick soup or stew', fry kettle 'large kettle for deep-fat frying', boiled collar 'boiled shirt', chimney shelf 'shelf over fireplace, etc.' The category of professional spheres follows the lead (53 items, 10%), as chaining 'skidding logs with horses and chains', fare 'catch of fish of commercial fishing boat', barroom 'logging camp', flue pan 'in the maple sugar industry: pan below the main part of the evaporator', etc. Then goes the group of people's status and their characteristics (52, 10%), as aunt 'elderly woman, term of respectful address', country gawk 'rustic', down Easter 'person from Northeastern USA', herring choker Canadian', happy as a clam 'very happy', etc.

Group related to animals, including farm animals, fishes, and birds, is roughly the same (51), as *coon cat* 'large, long-haired domestic cat', *to foal* 'of ewe: give birth', *hawk and chickens* 'hen with her chickens', *carpenter* 'woodpecker', etc. Notions related to plants – vegetables, fruits, wildflowers, weeds – lag behind with 8% of the stock: *beach plum* 'seacoast shrub *Prunus maritima*', *English bean* 'broad bean', *Adam's cup* 'sidesaddle flower'. The topic of relationship among people, their manner of action counts 40 items (7.5%), as *to*

ballyhack 'confuse', to hang by one's eyelids 'be left suspended', to cut one's comb 'humiliate'.

Groups of nature (time, weather, topography), (exclamations and emotional state transportation, and farming have correspondingly 24, 20, 15, and 13 units, as *capful of wind* 'light breeze', *chowder!* 'exclamation of mild oath', *double ripper* 'double sleds joined for coasting', beef creature 'fullgrown bull, source of beef'. Less numerous groups comprise commands, amusements, history and customs, parts of human body and health, religion, abstract notions, and those related to mental activities and physical actions, e.g. coaf! 'come! to summons cows', belly-butting 'coasting on a sled face down', eighteen-hundred-andfroze-to-death 'the period of unusual cold weather in 1816-17', to craunch 'chew noisily', to deacon 'lead congregation in singing', crowner 'climax', to calculate

Stylistically, there have been found 23 labels with 279 items. The most numerous are 'chiefly NE', 107 (ginger water 'drink of water, molasses, and ginger'); 'especially NE', 41 (glade 'smooth ice'); 'lumberjack lingo', 34 (heifer dust 'nonsense'); 'old-fashioned', 32 (bigness 'size'); 'somewhat old-fashioned', 16 (awful 'ugly'); 'chiefly NE, old-fashioned', 13 (forehanded 'prudent, frugal'); 'historical', 5 (election day 'inauguration day'); 'obsolete', 4 (harness cask 'cask for storing salt meat'); 'archaic', 3 (forthputting 'forwardness, presumption'); 'jocular', 3 (gap-and-swallow 'cornmeal mush or other unsubstantial food'), etc. As one can see, in some cases NE lexis overlaps with outdated, archaic, or old-fashioned vocabulary.

The variation of the material is last but not least object of the study. Of the whole, 330 items have another name (or more) for the same object, some 63%. Thus dace 'freshwater fish Cyprinidae' has 19 equivalents, including chubsucker, fallfish, golden shiner, horned dace, etc; apple pandowdy 'deep-dish apple desert' has 6, as apple grunt, apple John, bald-headed pie, deep dish pie, etc. Four items have 4 variants: apple bee 'social gathering at which apples are prepared for drying' – apple cut frolic, apple paring, apple peeling, schnitz-in; bag leaves 'plant Orpine' (bag plant, frog plant, pudding bag, witches' moneybags); cannikin 'wooden storage container for

sugar, flour' (cannikin tub, canna pail, canny pail, can pail). Eight items have 3 counterparts, e.g., hulled horn 'dried flint corn with the hulls removed' (hull horn, flint corn, hominy); Baptist cake 'raised bread-dough fried in deep fat' (fried bread, holy poke, huffjuff); booby hut 'small clumsy cart or carriage' (booby, booby hack, booby hutch), etc. More 31 items have 2 synonyms each, as election cake 'rich fruit cake served on election day' (March meeting cake, town meeting); choke rag 'necktie' (choke strap, choker); Cape Cod turkey 'cod' (Albany beef, Arkansas chicken), etc. The rest of items have one equivalent each.

Semantically, three major groups tend to have different names for the same objects: animals, plants, and foods, as checkered adder (chequered snake, coral snake), coon cat (coony cat, coon), fresh water clam (fresh water mussel), cowberry (mountain cranberry), flipper (flapjack), cymbal (fried cake). Less numerous groups include transportation, entertainment, utensils, and parts of the house, as devil's fiddle 'homemade noisemaker, one made with waxed or rosined string and tin can' (dumb bull), handsled (handsleigh), hod 'coal scuttle' (coal hod, coal bucket, hod pail), dirt cellar (earth cellar).

Summary. New England lexis has somewhat insular character, standing up per se, with relatively little shared distribution with other regions, even those it belongs to by phonological classification (North and North East); etymologically, compounding, word combinations and phrases, along with semantic changes based on metaphor are the main sources of the vocabulary; the contribution of North and West British donor dialect areas is prevailing, not East and South as expected, New England vocabulary is mainly the product of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, due to migration from North West, South West, North Midlands, West Midlands, Scotland and social mobility of the American population; among the semantic categories, household items, those related to professional spheres - hunting, fishing, lumberjacking, and names of animals and plants are conspicuous; the bulk of the material show variation – other names for the same object. The prospects of further study lie in expanding the material for research, including other US dialect areas – South, Midland, North, and Northeast – to reveal differences in their corresponding characteristics.

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Лексика Новой Англии и её особенности Р.Я. Крицберг

Аннотация. Лексика Новой Англии достаточно изолирована от других регионов. В ней преобладает вклад северных и западных британских диалектных зон, а не восточных и южных, как считалось ранее. Этот словарный состав – результат миграции и социальной мобильности населения 19 и 20 вв. Этимологически главные источники – словосложения, словосочетания, идиомы и семантический сдвиг, основанный на метафоре. Семантически наиболее многочисленные группы – предметы обихода, профессиональные сферы охоты, рыбной ловли, лесоповала, названия животных и растений. Большая часть корпуса обнаруживает вариативность – разные обозначения для того же референта.

Ключевые слова: диалектные зоны, дистрибуция, этимологические источники, лексический состав, семантические группы.