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## LEXICO-SEMANTIC AND SOCIOCULTURAL FEATURES OF TEXAS REGIONAL VOCABULARY

### ЛЕКСИКО-СЕМАНТИЧНІ ТА СОЦІОКУЛЬТУРНІ ОСОБЛИВОСТІ РЕГІОНАЛЬНОГО ВОКАБУЛЯРУ ТЕХАСУ

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Texan English (TXE) represents one of the most complex array of regional varieties in the United States. Shaped by Southern migration, Western expansion, Spanish-English contact, African American speech traditions, and modern urbanization, the dialects' mapping of Texas reflects layered historical and sociocultural diversity. This paper examines phonological, grammatical and lexical variation across East, Central, West, and South Texas. The linguistic roots of Texan English begin in the 19th century, when Anglo settlers migrated from the southeastern United States into the territory formerly governed by Mexico and later incorporated into the United States. These settlers brought Southern American English features, including vowel shifts and distinct grammatical constructions. Texas reveals its heterogeneity in a range of accents and dialects, including African-American Vernacular (black), Tejano (Spanish-influenced) and Cajun in the far southeastern corner of the state [1.]. Additionally, German and Czech immigrants established communities in Central Texas, contributing lexical borrowings and subtle phonological influences [4.]. Enslaved Africans and their descendants introduced features associated with African American speech varieties, many of which later became central to African American Vernacular English (AAVE) [5.]. As a result of the complex settlement pattern, however, the South Midland/Southern dialect division that divided areas to the east was blurred in Texas. Throughout the history of the state, South Midland lexical items (e.g., *green bean* and *chigger*) and phonological features (e.g., constricted *postvocalic r* in words like *forty* and *intrusive r* in words like *warsh*) have coexisted and competed with Southern words (e.g., *snap bean* and *redbug*)

and pronunciations (“*r-lessness*” in words like *forty* and *four*), although Southern features were and still are strongest in east Texas. [7, p.39]. In south, south central, and west Texas, a substantial number of Spanish loanwords gained general currency such as *frijoles* “pinto beans”, *olla* “a clay pot,” *arroyo* “dry creek bed,” and *remuda* “a band of saddle horses” *resaca* “body of water” , *mesa* “high, flat land” *morral* “feed bag,” *pilon* “an extra gift accompanying a purchase” *mesa* “dry plateau,” *mott* “clump of trees,” *chaparral* “thicket,” *hackamore* “rope halter”. Several others are probably widely known, though very rarely used outside of the Southwest, especially those terms related to cattle raising, ranches and rodeos such as *toro* for bull , *lariat* for rope with a noose, *hacienda* for the main ranch house. Likewise, cowboy stories and movies have probably spread *vaquero* (= cowhand) and *reata* (= lariat, lasso) into many other parts of the United States. The term “*dally*” (to wrap a rope around a saddlehorn) is said to come from the Spanish *da le vuelta*, which means “give it a turn.” The same is probably true of *chaparral*, which is a common thicket-forming shrub or shrubby tree that grows in this wide open region. Though these terms may be familiar in many other parts of the country, they remain genuine usages primarily only in the Southwest. [3, p.229]. The massive influx of Hispanics into the new territory increased the importance of Mexican American culture in the development of a distinct Texas culture adding much to the dialect mix. Many features of Southern American English never became as widespread there so that hallmarks of Southern English like the quasi-modal *fixin’ to* (as in *I can’t talk to you now; I’m fixin’ to leave*), the “*fixin’*” also refers to food in Texas, garnishes and side dishes in particular. If you order a burger or barbecue plate with all the *fixin’s*, you’ll get onions, pickles, peppers, and any number of sides or sauces piled on the plate. Multiple modals like *might could* (as in *I can’t go today, but I might could go tomorrow*), and traditional pronunciations like the upgliding diphthong in *dog* (often rendered in dialect literature as *dawg*) have always been restricted in their occurrence in south and south central Texas, although they occurred extensively elsewhere. Other trademarks of Southern English also occur extensively throughout most of the state, with south and south central Texas sometimes being exceptions. These include both stereotypical phonological features such as the *pen/pin* merger (both words sound like the latter) and the loss of the offglide of *i* in words like *ride* and *right* (so that they sound like *rahd* and *raht*), and also grammatical features like *y’all*, *fixin to*, and *perfective done* (as in *I’ve done finished that*). In addition, a number of lexical items seem to have originated or have their greatest currency in Texas (e.g., *tank* ‘stock pond’, *maverick* ‘stray or unbranded calf’, *doggie* ‘calf’, and *roughneck* ‘oil field worker’), while at least one traditional pronunciation, the use of *ar*

in words like horse and for (this makes *lord* sound like *lard*), occurs only in Texas, Utah and a few other places. [1,7, p.40 ] . In Texas as a whole, the South Midland and Southern terms *sook!* (call to cows), *French harp* "harmonica," *barn lot* "barnyard," *you-all* "you" (pi.), *Christmas gift!* "Merry Christmas!" (corn) *shucks*, *light bread* "wheat bread," *pulley bone* "wishbone," and *tow sack* "burlap bag" are most prevalent; and the Southern terms, *carry* "to escort," *snap beans* "green beans," *chitlins* "fried intestines of swine," *tote* "to carry," *croker sack* "burlap bag," and low "to moo" are strongly represented. The commercial term *cottage cheese* is now quite common. [6, p.52 ] .

The recent influences of French on American English vocabulary are largely from the bayou country of southwestern Louisiana, where French is still spoken by half a million people. This area, settled originally by displaced French settlers (called Acadians) from Nova Scotia in the eighteenth century, abounds with French borrowings. Atwood's The Regional Vocabulary of Texas points out that many French words are in common use in parts of Louisiana and Texas today, particularly in the rural areas. Among these words are *banquette* "sidewalk," *lagniappe* "extra gift with a purchase" *cush-cush* (a corn meal preparation) *pirogue* (boat used on a river) *armoire* (wardrobe with drawers) *bayou* "running stream" *praline* (pecan candy) *la!* (command to a cow to make her stand still) Thus, from Louisiana, Texas has the terms *jambalaya* "rice stew," . *Shinnery* (= land covered with scrub oak), for example, emigrated from Louisiana and is the anglicized version of Louisiana French *cheniere*, ultimately from French *chene* which means oak. [3, p.232 ] . Reflecting the settlement of this area that was dominated by Anglo-Americans, the German influence is proportionately less prominent than the Spanish influence in South Texas. Of the 11 isoglosses 4 are of German origin: *clook*, *smearcase*, *kochcase*, and *cook cheese*. None of these, however, are unique to Central Texas, but are also found in the other German settlement areas of the United States, especially in Pennsylvania and other parts of the North. The Germans brought with them their word for a broody hen, die Glucke or Klucke (*Gluuk* in Pennsylvania German), which was adopted into English as *clook*. In Texas the high back vowel /u/ of the original German word is apparently retained, while in the Inland North, where the term is still current, it is usually *cluck* with the central vowel /a/, the difference in pronunciations probably indicative of independent borrowings. *smearcase* (= cottage cheese) is first recorded in American English in Pennsylvania, where English borrowed the German word *Schmierkase* (literally "smearing cheese") and from whence it spread throughout most of the Lower North. At about the same time, but independently, the Germans brought their word to Central Texas. They also brought *kochcase*, which refers to a *soft cheese*

similar to cottage cheese but which is cooked and poured into containers. The anglicized version is the calque *cook cheese*. Similarly, *sugan* testifies to the distant Scotch-Irish heritage of northwestern Texas. A *sugan* is a coarse blanket or comfort, often made of scraps of material patched together. [3, p. 230–232]

To conclude, The Lone Star State speech is defined as a multilayered dialect continuum shaped by Southern heritage, Western settlement, sustained Spanish-English contact code-switching, African American speech traditions, and modern urban transformation. Its linguistic landscape mirrors the state's demographic complexity – dynamic, hybrid, and socially meaningful. Texan English (TXE) serves as a significant factor in the genesis of the Southwest, as well as in the definition of the West as a whole, both in the popular mind and in certain aspects of Western speech. Texanisms are the markers of the unique identity, belonging, and regional pride. To study Texas speech is to study Texas history itself – one vowel, one phrase, and one “y’all” at a time.

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