

**THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH PODCAST
TRANSCRIPTS**

**EPISODE 182:
WORLD OF CONFUSION**

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Welcome to the History of English Podcast – a podcast about the history of the English language. This is Episode 182: World of Confusion. This time, as we work our way through the story of English, we’re going to continue to look at events in the early 1600s. It was a time when English was starting to spread around the world as speakers searched for new trading partners and new places to settle. And through that process, English started to become an international language. But as English speakers encountered people and languages in far away places, they sometimes became confused. And that confusion and uncertainty shaped the English language during this period, and it still shapes the language to this day. So we’ll also look at how confusion played a role in the development of English in the early modern period.

But before we begin, let me remind you that the website for the podcast is historyofenglishpodcast.com. And you can sign up to support the podcast and get bonus episodes at Patreon.com/historyofenglish.

Now last time, we looked at the publication of the King James Bible in 1611, and we examined how that translation impacted the English language. We also looked at the discovery of the telescope and the beginning of the scientific revolution. Well, at the same time that those events were taking place in Europe, there were several notable developments in North America. So this time, we’re going to backtrack and look at those events, and then we’re going to briefly turn our attention to England, and finally, we’re going to skip over to India look at the first important English contact with that region. So the focus of this episode will be global as the English language started to make its way around the world in the early part of the 1600s.

But let’s begin with European interest in North America. As we saw a couple of episodes back, England established its first permanent settlement at Jamestown in 1607. But the French were already exploring the regions further north in modern day Canada. And during the summer of 1608, the French explorer Samuel de Champlain surveyed the St. Lawrence River in that region. He was looking for a place to build a settlement that could be used to buy furs and pelts from the indigenous people who lived there. Prior to this point, the French had established a few settlements in the region as part of the fur trade, but those settlements had been temporary and seasonal. Now merchants back in France wanted a permanent trading post in the region, and Champlain was hired to look for a good spot.

He sailed up the St. Lawrence in June and July, and he eventually reached a point where the wide river narrowed significantly. Champlain chose that spot for the settlement. And he gave the settlement a name based on a local Algonquin word. In Algonquin, the place where a river narrows was called a *kebec*. So this settlement where the St. Lawrence River narrowed was called *Quebec*. It became Quebec City, and of course, it also gave its name to the Canadian province of *Quebec*. A few decades later, a settlement was established further up river at a place called *Mount Royal* – a name which eventually became contracted into the modern name *Montreal*. This part of North America was known as *New France* as the time, and these early settlements helped to secure the French presence in the region, and of course, it also secured the French language in the region.

Now I mentioned that Champlain's expeditions were related to the fur trade. And that is an important fact in itself. The early European explorers had hoped to find large deposits of gold and silver in North America, but they didn't really find those. Despite the lack of precious metals, they did find Native Americans who were eager to trade furs, and pelts, and other animal skins. And those furs and skins ended up being some of the most profitable exports from North America in those early years. They were in very high demand in Europe. And that's why the French were so interested in the region.

The Europeans were particularly interested in beaver furs. They used them to make felt for hats. In fact, the word **beaver** became a slang term for hats in England in the 1600s. Europeans also bought deerskins or buckskins. Buckskin was used to make riding pants or riding trousers. In fact, buckskins were so heavily traded and bartered in colonial America that they became a common unit of exchange in some regions. And many scholars think the trade in buckskins and the use of buckskins as a unit of exchange gave American English the word **buck** for a type of currency, specifically a slang term for a dollar. So if you have five bucks in your pocket, you don't have deerskins, but you may have a word that goes back to the trade in deerskins. I should note that the word **buck** as a slang term for a dollar isn't actually found in writing until the 1800s, but in the early 1700s, we do have references to **bucks** as a short form of buckskins, and we find that term being used as a type of currency. For example, in the 1730s, we have a trader's complaint about an employee who had sold "only eight bucks worth of goods." It was a specific reference to buckskins. So that has led some scholars to conclude that the use of the word **buck** in that way led to the modern slang term **buck** for a dollar. [SOURCE: *Wilderness Trail, Hanna, I, 370, in 'The Americans: A Social History of the United States,' J.C. Furnas, p. 36-7*].

There is also a popular notion that buckskin gave us the term **buck naked** for someone who isn't wearing any clothes. Of course, a buck would be naked in a sense if its hide was removed, but there is another theory that connects buckskins to the term **buck naked**. Buckskins could be turned into a type of leather, which was brown. So the word **buckskin** came to refer something that was brown or leather-colored. And from there, some early European settlers called the indigenous people they encountered **buckskins** because they had brown skin. And many of those people also wore very little clothing in the warmer months compared to the Europeans. So it is believed that the term **buckskin naked** or **buck naked** originally referred to the indigenous people of the region who were very little or no clothing. [SOURCE: "You're Saying It Wrong," *Ross and Kathryn Petras, p*] Again, this is a bit of conjecture because the origin of the term **buck naked** isn't clearly documented.

But this is where we encounter a little bit of linguistic confusion. Whatever the original connection was between the words **buck** and **naked**, it was lost on later English speakers. They didn't associate being naked with bucks, but they did associate it with a person's bare bottom. So for many people, the term **buck naked** gradually became **butt naked**. And that version of the term is still commonly heard today. When a word gets altered or reworked in that way due to a common misinterpretation of the original term or because people mishear the original term, it's sometimes called an eggcorn – 'e-g-g-c-o-r-n.' That's a linguistic term for that type of mistake. It's one of many different situations where speakers 'get it wrong,' and those situations are a fertile source of linguistic change.

Generally speaking, there are two ways to think about linguistic confusion. It can occur when people ‘say’ something incorrectly, and it can occur when people ‘hear’ something incorrectly. In the first instance, people sometimes mis-speak or mis-state something or use the wrong words when their speaking. A classic example of that is a malapropism, where someone confuses one word for another. We’ve encountered malapropisms before in the writings of Shakespeare. Shakespeare used them as comic relief to show that a character was a bit dull. So he would have a character say *reprehend* when he meant to say *represent*. That’s simply a case of mis-speaking or saying something wrong.

But we also have cases where we hear something wrong. A speaker says one thing, but we hear or interpret the word as something else. Sometimes, it’s just a mistake we make as an individual, or perhaps it’s a mistake that is made among a small group of people. When the mistake is limited in that way to a small group of people, it is sometimes called an eggcorn. That’s a modern term coined in the early 2000s. It’s based on an example of a woman who misheard the word *acorn* (a-c-o-r-n) as *eggcorn*, a plausible alternative because acorns are sort of shaped like eggs, and they are the nuts or grains of an oak tree in the same way that the word *corn* can refer to a type of grain. So the person misheard and misinterpreted the word *acorn* as *egg corn*. It was a mistake that was grounded in a sound bit of logic. And that’s what has happens when some people misinterpret *buck naked* as *butt naked*.

But sometimes, this type of mistake becomes so common and so widespread among a group of speakers that the incorrect version of the word becomes the dominant form of the word over time, and it effectively replaces the original form of the word. When that happens, it’s called a folk etymology. That’s a related, but slightly different, phenomenon, and we will encounter an example of that type of confusion in a moment. But for now, *butt naked* hasn’t completely replaced *buck naked*, so we can think of them as competing variations, and we can also think of them as terms that apparently have their origin in the early fur and pelt trade in North America.

Now as I noted, Samuel de Champlain founded the settlement that became Quebec City in 1608, but he continued to return to the region in subsequent years. In fact, the following year he returned to explore the tributaries of the St. Lawrence River. And during that expedition, he discovered a large lake located in what is today the northern part of New York state. Of course, that lake was named after him and became known as *Lake Champlain*.

Now around the same time that Champlain came across that lake in the summer of 1609, another European explorer was in the same general region, but he wasn’t looking to trade furs or deerskins. He was actually looking for a waterway across the continent that would take him to the Pacific and then to Asia. His name was Henry Hudson, and he was obsessed with the idea that there might be a shortcut to the East Indies.

In fact, in the prior couple of years, he had attempted two different expeditions across northern Europe in search of a shortcut. If one could be found, it was allow sailors to avoid sailing all the way around Africa to get to Asia. But Hudson couldn’t find a passage across northern Europe, and his English financing started to dry up.

But then a group of Dutch merchants associated with the Dutch East India Company stepped in. They also wanted to find a shortcut to Asia, and they knew Hudson had been looking for one. So in 1609, the Dutch agreed to finance another expedition to look for a shortcut across northern Europe. But Hudson had given up on the idea of a European shortcut. He didn't think there was one to be found there. Instead, he wanted to look for one in North America. Even though his Dutch financiers insisted that he go east, he ignored their instructions, and he decided to go west instead. [SOURCE: *The Colony of New Netherland, Jaap Jacobs, p. 19.*]

In September, Hudson and his crew reached a small bay along the northern coastline of North America between the new English colony at Jamestown in the south and the French settlement at Quebec in the north. The bay was the area we know today as New York harbor. When he arrived at the bay, he noticed that a large river emptied into the bay, so he headed up the river. Of course, that is the river that bears his name today – the Hudson River. He traveled as far as he could go up the river until the waterway was no longer navigable. A small settlement was established at that point during a later expedition, and it eventually led to the modern-day city of Albany, the capital of New York state.

But for Henry Hudson, that point was as far as he could go, so he turned around and headed back down river. One of the crew members named Robert Juet kept a journal of the voyage, and as the ship approached the mouth of the river, he made note of the land mass that lay on the eastern side of the river. He said that the indigenous people of the region called the area on the eastern side 'Manna-hata.' He probably didn't realize that the land on the eastern side was actually a long narrow island. Of course, 'Manna-hata' eventually became *Manhattan* – the center of New York City. The original meaning of 'Manna-hata' is disputed by modern scholars. Some think it meant 'island' in the native Algonquian language. But others think it meant 'the place where one gathers the wood to make bows' – as in bows and arrows. At any rate, the name of *Manhattan* is recorded for the first time here in Robert Juet's journal of this voyage in 1609. [SOURCE: *The Island at the Center of the World, Russell Shorto, p. 32-3.*]

Having once again failed to find a shortcut to Asia, Henry Hudson returned to Europe. In fact, he didn't even bother returning to the Netherlands to inform his Dutch financiers about his expedition. Remember, he wasn't supposed to be in North America anyway. He was supposed to go the other way and look for a passage across northern Europe.

Well, the Dutch soon found out the details of Hudson's journey, but rather than being disappointed, they were actually excited about what they heard. They appear to have given up on the idea of finding a shortcut to Asia, but Hudson had established that there was a vast unclaimed region between the English territory of Jamestown to the south and the French territory of New France to the north. And much like the French, the Dutch realized that the region Hudson explored would be a perfect place to establish a settlement to buy furs. And this is important because it was the basis of the Dutch colony that was soon established in the region called New Netherland. And of course, that island of 'Manna-hata' eventually became a Dutch settlement called New Amsterdam. The English later renamed it New York when they took it from the Dutch in the mid-1600s, but for now, the important point is that the Dutch presence in the region was really sparked by Henry Hudson's expedition in 1609. And since the Dutch language took

root there, it eventually had an influence on early American English. We'll look at that Dutch influence a little more closely in an upcoming episode.

Now one other quick note about Henry Hudson before we move on. After he returned to England in 1609, the English authorities also took a look at his records, and they decided to fund another expedition to look for a shortcut across North America. The following year, Hudson made another trip. This time he went further north and explored the strait in Canada that bears his name to this day – the Hudson Strait. That took him to the massive bay in northern Canada that also bears his name – Hudson Bay. But it still didn't provide a route to the Pacific. His progress was also limited by extremely cold weather and limited supplies. His crew finally had enough of his shortcut obsession, and a short time later, there was a mutiny. Hudson was placed on a small boat and left to die in the open vastness of northern Canada. He was never seen again. But his legacy survives in the names of the river, the strait and the bay that were all named after him.

[*SOURCE: Canada and Her Story, Mary Graham Bonner, p. 55-7.*]

Now keeping the story in North America, let's briefly turn our attention down to Jamestown. At this point, the English settlement there was barely hanging on. It was kept going thanks to limited cooperation with some of the local indigenous tribes, and also thanks to the occasional supply ships that came from England.

In the late spring of 1609, nine more supply ships left England for Jamestown. In addition to supplies, the ships also contained more settlers. But along the way, the fleet encountered a storm – probably a hurricane. And in the storm, one of the ships called the Sea Venture became separated from the rest of the fleet. The remaining ships assumed that the Sea Venture was lost at sea, so they continued on to Jamestown.

Well, as it turned out, the Sea Venture eventually ran aground in the Bermuda islands off the eastern coast of North America. All of the passengers on the ship survived, and over the following months, the passengers managed to use the plentiful wood on the islands to build two new boats. And about a year later, they were able to leave Bermuda and set sail for Jamestown. Again the settlers at Jamestown assumed that the ship and all its passengers had been lost at sea, so the settlers must have been astonished when they looked on the horizon one day and saw two boats approaching, and the boats carried all of the passengers that they thought had drowned a year before.

Now the story of this voyage is important for a couple of reasons. First of all, the English were apparently unaware of Bermuda prior to that. So having discovered the islands, they soon began to settle there. A few years later, the Virginia Company responsible for Jamestown established a permanent settlement in Bermuda. So the English settlement in Bermuda actually pre-dates the arrival of the pilgrims at Plymouth Rock. And in fact, within a couple of decades, Bermuda had around 2,000 settlers, which was almost as many as were living in the entire Virginia colony.

[*SOURCE: The Bold and Magnificent Dream, Bruce and William B. Catton, p. 80*]

In addition to planting the English language in Bermuda, the tale of the ship that ran aground there in 1609 is also notable for another reason. It is widely believed that accounts of that ship's experience provided the inspiration for a play by William Shakespeare which appeared a short time later. That play was called *The Tempest*. It begins with a shipwreck and is set on a mostly deserted island. It was one of Shakespeare's final plays, and I'll have more to say about it later in the episode.

Also one other quick note about that ship that ran aground in Bermuda. One of its passengers was named Stephen Hopkins. After making his way to Jamestown with the other passengers, he remained there for a while and then returned to England. But that wasn't his last voyage across the Atlantic. A few years later, he was onboard the *Mayflower* as it carried the pilgrims to North America, and he was in fact one of the signers of the *Mayflower Compact*. So some of these people made history in multiple ways.

Now, the year after that shipwreck in Bermuda, three more supply ships arrived in Jamestown. They were organized and led by the newly-appointed governor of Virginia named Thomas West, who was the Baron de le Warr. That peerage title 'de le Warr' literally meant 'of the Warr.' It's a title that had Norman origins, and soon after he arrived in Virginia, the large bay to the north and east of the Chesapeake Bay was named after him. It became known as the 'Delaware Bay.' Soon after that, the large river that feeds the bay was also named the Delaware. And a few years later, the state that was formed on the western bank of the bay was also called Delaware. So that common place name in the region is ultimately named after the title of Thomas West, the Baron 'de le Warr.'

Lord de le Warr basically took over for John Smith who had been the de facto leader for several months, but Smith had been injured in a gunpowder explosion and was forced to return to England. Lord de le Warr was brought in to succeed Smith, and his new reinforcements from England were desperately needed in Jamestown. Only about 60 settlers remained out of the 500 or so that had made their way there over the prior three years. The rest had died from starvation, disease or attacks by local indigenous tribes. De le Warr's reinforcements helped to keep the settlement going – though people continued to die. [*SOURCE: The Wild Shores: America's Beginnings, Tee Loftin Snell, p. 91*]

Members of some of the friendly tribes nearby had taught John Smith how to plant and grow maize, also known as *Indian corn* or simply *corn* today in North America. That knowledge also proved to be vital in sustaining the colony. [*SOURCE: What Happened When, Gorton Carruth, p. 13, 15*]

And around that same time, one of the settlers named John Rolfe began to experiment with different strains of tobacco to produce a plant that people would want to smoke in Europe. Europeans were starting to pick up the smoking habit – or addiction if you prefer. But they preferred the plant variety that was grown in the Carribean and South America. The native Virginia tobacco had an unpleasant flavor that most Europeans didn't care for. So Rolfe imported some seeds from Trinidad and Venezuela, and he produced a new strain that flourished in the Virginia soil and had a flavor that Europeans loved. The tobacco quickly became a popular cash

crop in Virginia. So John Rolfe was the father of the tobacco industry in North America. [SOURCE: *The Americans: A Social History of the United States*, J.C. Furnas, p. 35] [*The Wild Shores: America's Beginnings*, Tee Loftin Snell, p. 94]

Rolfe is also notable for another reason. He soon married Pocohantas – the daughter of the local Powhatan tribal chief. I mentioned her a couple of episodes back. The modern legends associate her with John Smith, but it was John Rolfe who married her. The circumstances surrounding this marriage are a bit murky. She was actually taken hostage by the English prior to the marriage, so there is some evidence that she might have been coerced. At any rate, her father – the Powhatan chief – consented to the marriage, and it actually led to a period of relative peace between the English and the Powhatans for a few years.

Around the time of that marriage, John Smith returned to North America from England. But this time, he decided to explore the northern coastline – north of the area that Henry Hudson had explored a few years earlier, so north of modern-day New York. Smith was looking for a place to build a settlement in the region. He kept an account of the expedition and made a map of the region, and both were published a short time later. The account is notable because Smith referred to the region as *New England*, and that is the first known use of that term. It appears to be a term that Smith coined. Of course, it was in keeping with other Europeans who loved to designate places in the Americas as the ‘new’ version of some familiar place back home. As I noted a few moments ago, the French territory in North America was called *Nouvelle France* or *New France*. The Spanish called their territory in the New World *Nueva España* or *New Spain*. The Dutch territory south of New England was called *New Netherland*, and the Dutch settlement that was eventually established on the southern tip of Manhattan was called *New Amsterdam*. Around the same time, King James authorized a Scottish settlement in the eastern part of modern-day Canada, and that settlement became known as *Nova Scotia*, which was Latin for New Scotland. And again, John Smith gave us the term *New England* for the region that bears that name today.

I should note that Smith returned to England a short time later, and he presented a draft of his map to King James’s son, Charles. Of course, Charles was the future King Charles I, but at this point, he was simply the prince. For most of the place names on the map, Smith had inserted the words used by indigenous people in the region, but he told Charles that he was free to change any of the names to English terms if he preferred. And Charles did just that. Several of the terms Charles coined still survive like the Charles River, named after himself, Cape Elizabeth in modern-day Maine, named after Charles’s sister Elizabeth, and Cape Anne in modern-day Massachusetts, named after Charles’s mother Anne, who was also the queen. Charles also changed the name of a region in modern-day Massachusetts which the local indigenous people called ‘Accomack.’ Charles changed the name to ‘Plymouth’ after the port city in southern England. And when the pilgrims arrived there a few years later, they kept the name. [SOURCE: *Made in America*, Bill Bryson, p. 11]

Now during this period, John Smith continued to write about his experiences in Virginia, as well as in New England. His account of New England gave us one of the first recorded uses of the word *moose* in English. It's an Algonquin word used by the indigenous people who lived in the northeast.

His account of Virginia from this period also included lots of new words that were recorded for the first time. For example, the account includes the word *toadfish*, which was a type of puffer fish. It's a term that was apparently coined by the original settlers in Virginia. Smith's writings also contain the first recorded use of the word *persimmon* for a type of fruit found in North America. It's another Algonquin word.

Smith also is the first to record the word *pone* for a type of bread made out of corn flour or flour from maize. Again, it's an Algonquin word. While we don't use that word *pone* much today, it does survive in the term *cornpone*, literally a type of 'cornbread.' But that word *cornpone* is better known as a disparaging term for things associated with the rural South or rural America in general. So if someone refers to 'cornpone humor,' it means country humor or humor associated with rural matters. Again, it goes back to this Native American word *pone* for a type of bread eaten by indigenous tribes in Virginia.

Smith also gave us the first – or one of the first – recorded uses of the Algonquin word *moccasins* for a type of shoe worn by the native people of Virginia. The word was later extended to a type of snake in the 1700s, though the connection between the shoe and the snake is unknown, and there is some suggestion that the name of the snake was originally a completely different, but similar sounding, word. So again, there may have been linguistic confusion that gave us moccasin shoes and moccasin snakes.

Smith is also one of the first people to record the word *opossum* for a type of marsupial found in North America. Again, it's a native Algonquin word. Of course, today most people just call it a *possum*. The 'o' part at the front isn't pronounced much these days. And we have evidence that the 'o' was being dropped from the very beginning. In the early 1600s, we find the word written both ways – as both *opossum* and *possum*. So English speakers have apparently always found that 'o' at the front to be a little odd.

If you're curious about that 'o' in *opossum*, it actually comes from the original construction of the word within the Algonquin language. The word *op* meant 'white,' and the word *assom* meant 'a dog or dog-like animal.' So an 'op-ossom' was literally a 'white dog.' But when pronounced in English, the 'o' was pronounced as a completely separate syllable as 'o-possum' rather than 'op-ossom.' That left the 'o' sound hanging out at the front, which was apparently awkward for English speakers, so they tended to drop it altogether.

This is actually another example of linguistic confusion. It's what happens when a multi-syllable word – or two adjacent words – are divided in the wrong place. It's a phenomenon that linguists call 'metanalysis,' or 'rebracketing,' or 'resegmentation,' or 'misdivision.' So there are lots of fancy terms for it, but I prefer the term 'misdivision' because that really describes what's happening here. Again, speakers simply divide up a word in the wrong place.

We've actually encountered this before in the podcast. In earlier episodes, we saw that the articles 'a' and 'an' sometimes created confusion and caused misdivision before other words. So there was a type of snake called a *nadder*. And people referred to it as 'a nadder.' But sometimes, they pronounced it as 'an adder.' So rather than inserting a brief pause after the 'a', they put the pause after the 'n'. It was an easy mistake to make because the article 'an' is used before a word that begins with a vowel. So 'an adder' made just as much sense as 'a nadder.' It just depends on where you put the pause. And thanks to that misdivision, the word *nadder* lost its 'n' over time, and it became the modern word *adder*. Through that same process, 'a nomper' became 'an umpire.' And 'a naperon' became 'an apron.'

And a similar type of misdivision caused an 'op-osuum' to become an 'o-possum.' And from there, it was easy for speakers to simply drop the 'o' at the front, thereby giving us the modern word *possum*. These types of linguistic changes are common in the language, but as we can see, they are heightened when people encounter words from other languages. In those cases, people have to analyze and assimilate those foreign words into English. And they sometimes make mistakes as they try to do that.

Now again, words like *opossum* and *moccasin* were introduced into English by John Smith. His description of Virginia also contains a description of how the local people prepared their food. In one passage, he wrote, "Their fish & flesh they boil either very tenderly, or boil it so long on hurdles over the fire, or else after the Spanish fashion, putting it on a spit, they turn first the one side, then the other, till it be as dry as their jerkin Beef in the west Indies, that they may keep it a month or more without putrifying." Now I mention that passage because it contains the first recorded English reference to 'jerkin Beef' in the west Indies. Of course, that term survived in Jamaican cookery as the word *jerk* for a type marinated meat that has been smoke-cured or barbecued. The word can actually be traced back to the Incas in South America. The Spanish took the word from there to the Caribbean. And it was from that Caribbean usage that John Smith and other English settlers brought the word into English. And when John Smith made that first English reference to 'jerkin Beef,' he was giving us an early form of the term 'beef jerky,' which later became a popular meal or snack in North America. So American 'beef jerky' and Jamaican 'jerk chicken' or 'jerk pork' have a common linguistic connection through this word with Incan origins.

Now earlier, I mentioned the trade in furs and pelts that was so prominent during this early period of European contact. Well, the indigenous people of Virginia wore a type of robe or covering made from furs called a *matchkore* in the local Algonquin language. Again, John Smith provided the first recorded use of that term in English. English settlers soon applied that term to a type of coat made from furs, and through that process, the native word *matchkore* eventually became *matchcoat* in English. It's a term that was more common in colonial and early American English.

Now I mention this word *matchcoat* because it's a good example of that phenomenon I mentioned earlier called folk etymology. Earlier we saw that some people convert *buck naked* into *butt naked* because they don't really know what the word *buck* has to do with being naked, so *butt naked* sounds similar and makes more sense. Since that term is a relatively recent term and is somewhat limited in English, it is called an eggcorn. But sometimes, this type of mistake

becomes so common and so widespread in the language that it replaces the original word altogether. And when that happens, it is called folk etymology.

Again, this phenomenon usually happens when a word is borrowed into English, and the sound and meaning of the word resembles a separate object and separate word that already exists in English, so people associate those two things, and they eventually anglicize that borrowed word so that it more closely resembles the English word. In the case of *matchcoat*, we had the Algonquin word *matchkore* for a type of clothing worn on the upper body, and English already had the word *coat* for a type of clothing that covered the upper body. So people naturally associated those two things, and over time, the word *matchkore* became *matchcoat*. That's a classic example of folk etymology.

Folk etymology an old phenomenon. It has a long history in English, and it continues to this day. Another good example is the French word *crevise*, which meant 'crab.' It referred to a type of crustacean found in rivers and creeks in England and later in North America. And since those rivers and creeks also contained fish, people associated that word *crevise* with fish, and over time, the word was anglicized from *crevise* to *crayfish*, and in North America, it became *crawfish*. But again, that's an example of how folk etymology shapes the language over time.

Now speaking of crayfish – or crawfish – we know that the early settlers in Jamestown also encountered them because we have a reference to them in a separate account written by Alexander Whitaker. He was the reverend in Jamestown, and in fact, he converted Pocahontas to Christianity while she was living in Jamestown. In his description of the region, Whitaker wrote about catching fish and other creatures in the rivers and creeks. He wrote, "I have caught with mine angle pike, carpe, eele,..creafish, and the torope or little turtle."

So Whitaker caught crayfish and lots of other creatures in the rivers and creeks around Jamestown. Now I mentioned that passage because it contains the first recorded reference to another term – a '*torope*,' which Whitaker described as a 'little turtle.' It was a local Algonquin word for a snapping turtle. And it's notable because *torup* gradually evolved into the word *terrapin*. The word *terrapin* took its modern form by the end of the century.

But that same passage is interesting for another reason. When Whitaker described a *torope* or terrapin as a 'little turtle,' he was using the word *turtle* in a brand-new way. Traditionally, a *turtle* wasn't a reptile that lived inside of a shell. It was actually a bird – a turtle-dove like in the 'Twelve Days of Christmas.' "Three French hens, Two turtle doves, And a partridge in a pear tree." Sometimes, the *dove* part of *turtle-dove* was dropped, and the birds were simply referred to as *turtles*. So how did the word *turtle* come to refer to these slow, shell-covered reptiles? Well, the answer is another bit of linguistic confusion.

During the Middle English period, the Old English words for the reptiles gradually fell out of use. That included words like *fen-yce* and *byrdling*. In their place, English speakers adopted the word *tortoise* from Latin. They also borrowed the French version of that word, which was *tortue*. Both versions were common in early Modern English. But at some point around the current point in our story, English speakers started to be influenced by that word *turtle* for a type of bird, and

they started to change the pronunciation of that French word *tortue* into *turtle*. It was another case where a familiar English word was substituted for a similar-sounding loanword. And thanks to that substitution, those reptiles became known as *turtles*. So there was a period of time when the word *turtle* could refer to either a turtle-dove or a tortoise, but over time, the word became mostly restricted to the reptile.

So in Modern English, we have the Algonquin word *terrapin*, the Latin word *tortoise*, and the word *turtle*. In modern usage, the word *tortoise* refers to the variety that lives on land, and the word *terrapin* refers to the variety that lives in fresh water. In Britain, the word *turtle* is largely restricted to the variety that lives in the sea, but in American English, the word *turtle* has a broader meaning and is more of a catch-all term that can refer to any variety of the reptile. Apparently, Australian English is trending in the direction of American English in the way it used the word *turtle*. But the point is that these distinctions developed after the early 1600s when these three separate terms came into use.

As I noted, the word *turtle* was just starting to make this transition from bird to reptile in the early 1600s. Reverend Whitaker's use of the word that way was one of the earliest recorded cases. But the Oxford English Dictionary actually cites another instance in the prior year – 1612. That's the earliest known uses of the word *turtle* for a shell-covered reptile. And that citation occurs in another interesting book. It was a book composed by another settler at Jamestown named William Strachey. He composed a book about his experiences in Virginia called 'The Historie of Travaile Into Virginia Britannia.' Among other features, the book included a dictionary of about 400 Algonquin words used by the indigenous people who lived around Jamestown. One of those words was Tuwcuppewk, which he defined as "a sea turtle." And that is the first recorded use of the word *turtle* in its modern reptilian sense.

Strachey's account also contains the first recorded use of the Algonquin word *pohickory* for a type of milky liquid made from the nuts of a tree that was common in the area. Over time, the word *pohickory* was shortened to *hickory*, and was used to refer to the nuts themselves. So they were called *hickory nuts*. And from there, the word was applied to the tree that produced those nuts. So the name of the *hickory* tree is derived from an Algonquin word recorded for the first time in Strachey's account of Virginia.

His account also contained the first use of the Algonquin word *tomahawk* for a type of weapon resembling a small axe. In later Australian English, the first part of *tomahawk* was treated as the name *Tommy*, and it produced the term *tommy-axe*, and sometimes simply *tommy*, for a small axe. But again, that's a case of linguistic confusion. Later English speakers in Australia were a little confused by that Native American word *tomahawk*, so they altered it to the more familiar English name – *Tommy*.

Now again, those terms are found for the first time in William Strachey's account of Virginia. As I noted, Strachey lived at Jamestown for a brief period, but he is also important to our story for another reason. He was one of the passengers on that supply ship that ran aground in Bermuda – before the passengers were able to build new boats and sail on to Jamestown. Well, a few weeks after arriving in Jamestown, Strachey wrote a letter back to England describing the near disaster

that occurred in Bermuda. There is evidence that the letter was circulated among the members of the Virginia Company back in England. And other accounts of the shipwreck also began to appear in England a short time later.

There seems to have been a great deal of interest in this story at the time, and it is widely believed that a copy of Strachey's letter made its way to William Shakespeare, or at least that Shakespeare heard about the contents of the letter from someone else. Though there is no way to know for certain, it appears that the letter inspired at least parts of a new Shakespeare play called the *Tempest*. The play was apparently composed a short time after that letter arrived in England – sometime in 1610 or early 1611. It was certainly completed by the end of 1611 because surviving documents indicate that the play was performed before the royal court in November of that year. [SOURCE: *Shakespeare: The Evidence*, Ian Wilson, p. 354].

The play is one of Shakespeare's more popular plays from the latter part of his career, and it opens with a ship being tossed around in a tempest or storm that causes it to run aground on a mostly deserted island. The big 'give-away' that this passage was inspired by the Bermuda story is a line where Shakespeare writes that the ship can come to rest in 'the still-vexed Bermoothes.' *Bermoothes* is a made-up name that appears to be based on the name *Bermudas*, which was a common name for Bermuda at the time.

Now I'm not going to go through the whole play, but the story centers around the deposed Duke of Milan who had fled to this island after being deposed. After making his way to the island, he studies magic, and through his wizardly, he creates the storm and causes a ship to run aground on the island. He wants the ship to become stranded on the island because it contains his brother who deposed him. So the tempest and the shipwreck are part of a larger plan for revenge against his usurping brother. The story takes place entirely on the island, and it features a plot to kill the King of Naples, who is also a passenger on the ship, as well as a separate plot to kill the deposed duke himself. There's also a romance between the deposed duke's daughter who lives with him on the island and the king's son who is a passenger on the ship. It is actually one of the few Shakespeare plays that is completely original. Most of his plays were based on other stories that he re-worked, but this one appears to have been entirely the product of his imagination.

The popularity of the play has caused a few of the phrases used in it to pass into general English usage. For example, the term '*brave new world*' is recorded for the first time in the play. In the 1930s, a writer named Aldous Huxley composed a satirical novel called 'Brave New World' based on that phrase used in the *Tempest*, and from there, the phrase passed into widespread use in English.

The play also gave us the phrase '*The past is prologue*.' It means that current events are shaped by the past. It was a line that was added to the entrance of the National Archive in Washington, D.C. in the 1930s, and that probably contributed to its spread within modern English.

The play also gives us the first recorded use of the term '*sea change*' to mean a significant change or alteration. And the play also gives us the first known use of the term '*strange bedfellows*' to mean a surprising alliance between two different people or things. Today, we hear

it a lot in the phrase ‘Politics makes strange bedfellows,’ but it’s ultimately a term that can be traced back to the Tempest.

And in an important scene in the play where the deposed duke’s daughter and the king’s son are attending a make-shift masque or dance with the other passengers, the duke interrupts the festivities to bring them to an end with a passage in which he says, “These our actors, As I foretold you, were all spirits and Are melted into air, into thin air.” So here we have the term ‘*thin air*,’ which appears to be a term that Shakespeare coined. And a few years earlier, in Othello, Shakespeare was the first known person to use the phrase “Go; vanish into air.” So we have Othello’s “vanish into air” and The Tempest’s “melted into . . . thin air.” It wasn’t until the 1800s that these two Shakespearean phrases were put together to give us the modern blended form ‘*to vanish into thin air*.’ Perhaps that was the result of some confusion. Or perhaps it was intentional. But either way, if you say that something ‘vanished into thin air,’ it appears that you are using a phrase derived from those two Shakespeare plays.

In that same passage where the usurped duke says that ‘these actors were all spirits and melted into . . . thin air,’ he concludes the speech by saying, “And, like this insubstantial pageant faded, Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff As dreams are made on, and our little life Is rounded with a sleep.” That line is the source of the modern phrase ‘*the stuff that dreams are made of*.’ But note that the original line in The Tempest is “We are such stuff As dreams are made on” – not “of.” As I noted in earlier episodes, during the early modern period, many prepositions didn’t have the same precise meaning that they have today. They could be used in ways that we don’t use them today, especially in phrases like that. So in many of these earlier works, we find these types of phrases where it seems like the wrong preposition was used. It’s part of what gives Shakespeare’s language its unique feel. For example, a few lines later in the same play, we find the line, “We were dead of sleep.” Today, we would probably say that we were “dead from sleep.” But again, prepositions could be used in different ways back then.

Also, note something else about that line “We are such stuff As dreams are made on” or “dreams are made of.” Whichever preposition you use there, it’s at the end of the line. And supposedly, you shouldn’t end a sentence with a preposition. You’re supposed to say something like “We are such stuff as of which dreams are made” or something like that. Of course, that sounds awkward because English doesn’t really work that way. As Shakespeare shows us, English has ended sentences with a preposition for many centuries.

The modern prohibition against ending sentences with a preposition largely comes from an English poet and playwright named John Dryden, who formulated the arbitrary rule in the late 1600s. Though he didn’t state his reasons, he was obsessed with Latin and thought English should try to imitate Latin as much as possible. And since you can’t end a sentence with a preposition in Latin, Dryden apparently thought English should follow the same rule. And interestingly, when Dryden formulated that rule in 1672, he specifically cited a line in a play by Ben Jonson which he found objectionable. The play was called ‘Catiline his Conspiracy,’ and the line read “the bodies that those souls were frightened from.” And I mention that play because it was composed around the same time as the Tempest. So both Shakespeare and Jonson sometimes

ended sentences with a preposition because pretty much everyone else did. That's simply the way English worked and still works today.

Unfortunately, Dryden's artificial rule only created confusion in the language, and it was a rule that many people failed to adhere to – or it was a rule to which many people failed to adhere. And so, some modern grammarians said “What are we doing this for?” – or “For what are we doing this?” They said, “Look. It's an arbitrary rule that we have to put up with.” Or “It's an arbitrary rule up with which we have to put.” So most of them decided it was rule that we needed to get rid of. Or it was a rule of which we needed to get rid. Anyway, for that reason, the rule has fallen out of favor in recent years, and today, most grammarians say that it is perfectly fine to end a sentence with a proposition. And I guess all of that gives us something to think about – or something about which to think.

The point is that linguistic confusion usually occurs by honest mistake, but sometimes it's forced upon us.

Now as I noted, Shakespeare's play *The Tempest* was apparently composed in late 1610 or 1611. And around that same general time frame, it appears that he also composed another play called *The Winter's Tale*. This play is of interest to some fans, but it isn't one of his most popular plays, so it hasn't had much of an impact on the language. It does contain the phrase “as white as driven snow,” which is considered to be an early version of the phrase “as pure as the driven snow.” So that phrase is often attributed to Shakespeare. But beyond that, the play hasn't had much of an influence on the English language that we speak today.

Now one last note about English drama before we move on. We just saw how John Dryden and others tried to change the English language later in the century because they thought it should be more like Latin. But not everyone shared that sentiment. In fact, in the early 1600s, there was already an emerging view that English was just as good as Latin and was perfectly fine the way it was. And that was a relatively new opinion.

Back in Episode 147, which was set in the mid-1500s, I described how writers of that period thought that English was a rude and rustic language inferior to Latin and ancient Greek, and even inferior to French which was still a prominent language in England and much of Europe. But by the early 1600s, people had gained confidence in English, and that old perception had started to change. And according to some writers of the period, it had changed in large part due to the way the language had been used on the stages of the London theaters over the intervening decades.

That sentiment is captured in work by a playwright and actor named Thomas Heywood, which was published in 1612 around the same time that *The Tempest* appeared. The work was called ‘*An Apology for Actors*,’ and in one of the passages of the book, Heywood described how English drama had changed the perception of the language. He specifically referenced how ‘playing’ – which meant ‘acting’ – had elevated the language. He wrote:

“. . .our English tongue, which hath ben the most harsh, vneuen, and broken language of the world, part Dutch, part Irish, Saxon, Scotch, Welsh, and indeed a gallimaffry of many, but perfect in none, is now by this secondary meanes of playing, continually refined, euey writer striuing in himselfe to adde a new flourish vnto it; so that in processe, from the most rude and vnpolisht tongue, it is growne to a most perfect and composed language, and many excellent workers, and elaborate Poems writ in the same, that many Nations grow inamored of our tongue (before despised.).”

So that passage shows that drama and the London stage changed the perception of English during the late 1500s and early 1600s. And even if John Dryden and others never really felt that same level of confidence in their native language, a lot of other people did. And the days of apologizing for English were largely in the past.

Now so far, our story of English has taken us from the British Isles to North America, and even to Bermuda. But in the same year that Thomas Heywood was writing about the new perception of English, the language secured a foothold in a new continent. In 1612, the English East India Company established its first trading post in India.

The English had actually arrived there four years earlier in 1608, but they ran into roadblocks as they tried deal with local authorities. The first English ship arrived at Surat on the western coast of India in that year. Its captain was William Hawkins. He worked for the East India Company, which had been established in 1600 to trade with parts of Asia. When Hawkins arrived at Surat in 1608, he became the first commander of the English East India Company to set foot on Indian soil. [SOURCE: *The Anarchy*, William Dalrymple, p. 14.]

The Company wanted to establish a trading post in Surat because Indian goods like pepper and indigo were harvested and produced and came on the market at random times, and the Company needed someone on the ground who could buy those goods when they were available, otherwise the Company would miss out or be forced to pay a much higher price. So the Company needed buyers on the ground and a warehouse to store the goods until they could be picked up and brought back to England.

The problem is that the English couldn't just put a trading post anywhere they wanted. India was governed by the very powerful Mughal Empire. So the East India Company had to obtain permission from the Mughal authorities in order to establish a trading post there. And that permission was hard to come by.

The power of the Mughal rulers is still reflected in our language today. The word **Mughal** originally referred to the rulers of India, but over the course of the 1600s, the word started to acquire a more general sense as a powerful leader. And by the late 1600s, the word was sometimes being used in that more general sense to refer to a powerful business leader. And it survives with that sense today as the word **mogul** as in a 'business mogul' or 'media mogul.' **Mogul** is just a slightly altered form of **Mughal**.

So the English had to convince the Indian authorities to allow a trading post to be built, and the East India Company finally received permission to build a trading post in Surat around the current point in our overall story in the year 1612.

And this is an important development in our story because it marks the first direct and regular contact between the English and the inhabitants of India. And from this date, we can start to identify words that passed from Indian languages directly into English on a regular basis.

Now before I go any further, I should probably discuss the linguistic situation in India because it's a bit complicated. There are hundreds of languages in India. The precise number varies and depends on factors like the fine distinction between a dialect and language. But generally speaking, most of the languages in the northern half of India are part of the Indo-European language family, which of course includes English. And the languages in the southern part of India are part of a separate language family called the Dravidian languages. When the original Indo-Europeans arrived in northern India about 4000 years ago, their language spread throughout the northern part of the subcontinent, but it never reached the far south. Of course, Sanskrit evolved out of that original Indo-European language, and many ancient texts were written in that language.

Today, Hindi is the dominant Indo-European language in northern India, and since India was part of the British Empire, it has two official languages today – Hindi and English.

Now the dominant religion of India is Hindu, but during the British colonial period, the majority of the population in the northwestern part of the colony was Muslim, so after World War II, that region was separated from India and became Pakistan. And in that region, the dominant language is an Indo-European language called Urdu. It's closely related to Hindi, and is also spoken in parts of India. But again, it is the dominant language in Pakistan. So today, Pakistan also has two official languages – Urdu and English.

And I mention this history because English speakers had contact with both regions from the early 1600s. And since Hindi and Urdu have many similar features, it isn't always clear which language provided particular loanwords to English.

As I noted, Hindi and Urdu are Indo-European languages, so they are actually distant relatives of English. They are all Indo-European, so they all share a common ancestry. But England and the Indian subcontinent were located at opposite ends of the Indo-European world, so words from India rarely made their way into English prior to the current point in our story. But despite that distance, a few Indian words did make their way to English prior to the 1600s. So I want to conclude this episode by looking at the words from India that can be identified in English up to the year 1612 when English traders arrived in India.

Many of these early Indian words are associated with commodities that originated in India. In earlier centuries, those commodities were traded along the famous Silk Road, which took them eastward to China and westward to Persia and the Mediterranean. And from the Mediterranean, some of those commodities made their way to northern Europe.

For example, the word *ginger* probably originated in the Dravidian languages of southern India. Ginger made its way to Europe in the early Middle Ages, and an early form of the word is found in Old English. It is probably the oldest surviving English word that originated in India. In the 1300s, the word *rice* also made its way to English via those old trading routes. *Rice* is apparently derived from a Sanskrit word.

Together with those products, early English speakers probably heard about a far away place called India. So it probably isn't surprising that we find the word *Indian* in documents from the 1300s. It's derived from the name of the Indus River in India. The place names *India* and *Indies* are first recorded a couple of centuries later in the 1500s, but they were probably around in the language before that.

By the 1500s, Europeans had started to sail around Africa and reach India directly by ship. The Portuguese were the first to do that, and those European intermediaries brought those Indian goods and some of those local words back to Europe. So a few more words from India can be found in the 1500s.

That's when we find the word *Mughal* recorded for the first time in regard to the rulers of India. The word *raja* also appeared. It originally referred to an Indian king or prince.

As we'll see in the next episode, a lot of words associated with fabrics and clothing came from India due to the trade in Indian fabrics and dyes. An early example of those loanwords is the word *calico* which is recorded in English in the mid-1500s. It is actually the name of a city on the southwestern coast of India that was known as Calcut in English. Its modern name is more like Kozhikode. The name of the city was used to refer to a type of cotton cloth sold there known as 'Calico cloth.' In England, the cloth was sometimes called *calico* for short. And the word *calico* still refers to a type of cloth, but in the late 1700s, a printed or colored form of the cloth was exported from England to the US, and as a result, American English started to use the word *calico* to refer to the colored patterns associated with that cloth. So American English sometimes uses the word *calico* to refer to a type of color pattern, specifically a tri-color pattern consisting of white, black and orange. So it's common to refer to cats with that color of fur as 'calico cats.' Sometimes horses with a multicolored coat are called 'calico horses.' But again, the word *calico* itself goes back to a type of cloth produced in India, and the word has been around in English since the 1500s.

The word *mango* is also found in English in the late 1500s. The fruit was grown in India, and the name *mango* comes from a Dravidian language in southern India. It passed into English via Portuguese, which was essentially the lingua franca of traders in India at the time since Portugal had dominated the early European trade there. Though the word *mango* is found in English in the late 1500s, it is only found in descriptions of the fruit, which one would find if one traveled to India. The fruit itself wasn't common in England because it took so long to transport the fruit by ship that it would rot along the way. But a pickled form of mango could be transported, and pickled mango became very popular in England in the 1700s. In fact, it was so popular, the word *mango* became synonymous with pickling. Sometimes a pickled cucumber or other vegetable or fruit was called a *mango*. That usage was transferred to the US, and in some parts of the US

today, a green pepper is called a *mango* because it was once common to pickle green peppers, and for that reason, they were called *mango peppers* or simply *mangos*. [SOURCE: *The World In So Many Words*, Allan Metcalf, p. 143-4.]

Now referring to a pickled cucumber or a green pepper as a *mango* is another case of linguistic confusion. And it occurred because the word preceded the fruit into England. So there was confusion as to exactly what *mango* meant. When pickled mangos arrived, it wasn't clear if *mango* referred to the fruit or the fact that it was pickled. When people assumed that it meant pickled, it was applied to other fruits and vegetables, only to create further confusion when actual fresh mangos arrived in later centuries. By that point the word was being applied to a variety of pickled fruits and vegetables. But gradually, the confusion was resolved, and the original meaning of the word *mango* as a kind of fruit was restored. But that's a good example of how contact with a new culture can create uncertainty and confusion in the language.

Another word that passed from the Dravidian languages of southern India to Portuguese, and then to English in the 1500s, was the word *curry*. It referred to a dish consisting of meat, vegetables or fish cooked in a sauce flavored with spices and served with rice. Of course, the word is still common today, especially in the UK where Indian cuisine became very popular due to the colonial connections.

And here's one that might surprise you. The name *China* is actually an Indian word, well, in a way. I mentioned this in one of the earlier episodes about Shakespeare because he was one of the first people to use the word *China* in an English document. The older name for China in much of Europe was *Cathay*, which came from Persian. But the modern name *China* originated in India, where it is first recorded in Sanskrit. The name probably comes from the Chin Dynasty that once ruled ancient China, but the word itself was apparently coined in India, and eventually made its way to England in the late 1500s.

By the way, the Chinese call their country *Zhongguó*, which means 'Middle Kingdom.' At least, that's the Mandarin form of the name. And speaking of *Mandarin*, that another term that apparently came from Sanskrit in India. Sanskrit originally used the word *Mandarin* to refer to a type of Indian official, and from there the word spread throughout Southeast Asia. Again, it was the Portuguese who picked up the word when they arrived in the region, and they were the first to apply it to Chinese officials. From there, the word was extended to the dialect or manner of speech used by Chinese officials in and around Beijing in northern China, and today, the word is used in the West to refer to the standard Chinese dialect or language. In fact, the first English reference to the 'Mandarin tongue' meaning the official language of the Chinese court was in the first decade of the 1600s.

And speaking of the 1600s, the year 1600 is when we find the first recorded use of the word *punch* in the sense of a drink, usually a concoction served at parties. The origin of this word is usually attributed to India, and specifically a Sanskrit word that meant 'five nectars' because it was usually made with five ingredients – water, fruit juice, sugar, spices and some type of wine or spirits. That would make the word *punch* cognate with the English word *five*. The original Indo-European word for five began with a 'p' sound as reflected in the Greek word *pente*, which

survives in words like *pentagram* and *pentagon*. *Punch* reflects the Sanskrit form of that word, which also began with a ‘p’ sound. Of course, as we saw in the early episodes of the podcast, the ‘p’ sound became an ‘f’ sound in the Germanic languages, thereby producing the native English word *five*. But I should note even though the word *punch* apparently came from Europeans who were trading with India in the late 1500s, no drink with that name is known to have existed in India at the time. So some scholars have speculated that European traders derived that word from some other unknown source.

In the first decade or so of the 1600s, we find a few other Indian words recorded in English – presumably picked up by traders in the region. Those include *pilau* – a dish cooked in stock with spices, usually mixed with meat and other ingredients. That word has survived in a slightly different form in some parts of the American South. There you might encounter a rice dish called *perlow*, which is ultimately derived from the Indian dish. Another variation of the same Indian word is *pilaf*, as is ‘rice pilaf,’ which is rice cooked in stock with spices or other flavorings.

Around the time that the English East India Company arrived in Surat in 1612, we find the first recorded use of the Hindi word *toddy*, which is a sweet sap obtained from palm trees. It was used in drinks, and it survives in the term ‘hot toddy’ for a type of alcoholic mixed drink made with honey, lemon and spices and served hot.

The word *mung* for a type of plant found in India is also recorded around this time, as is the word *nabob* for a provincial governor in Mughal India. We don’t really use that word *nabob* much today, but it does survive in a somewhat well-known line attributed to former US President Spiro Agnew, who referred to relentless critics as “nattering nabobs of negativism” – a nice bit of alliteration that used that Urdu word *nabob*, and can still be found in political circles to this day.

Of course, traders in India also picked up the word *rupee*, which was the principal monetary unit of the region. It is found in English for the first time in 1612 – the year that the English established that trading post in Surat.

With the English now on the ground in India, we will encounter a lot more words flowing into English from that region as we move forward with the podcast. In fact, some of them may surprise you by how common they are in the English we speak today. They include words like *dungarees*, *pariah*, *guru*, *cot*, *tank*, *juggernaut*, *shampoo*, *jungle* and *pajamas*.

But I want to conclude this episode with one last bit of linguistic confusion, and it has to do with where we began this episode and where we ended it. We began this episode in North America, and during the course of that discussion – and other discussions about North America in prior episodes – you might have noticed that I generally referred to the indigenous people of the region as just that – the ‘indigenous people.’ And sometimes, I used the term ‘Native Americans,’ which came into fashion in the 1960s and 70s. In Canada, the term ‘First Nations’ is common. But in those discussions, I haven’t used the term that the original English settlers used – which was *Indians*. As we saw in an earlier episode, the use of that term goes all the way back to Christopher Columbus, who thought he had reached Asia when he first landed in the Caribbean. At the time, the term *India* could be used to refer to all of Asia, so Columbus referred to the

indigenous people he encountered as *Indians*. And the fact that the indigenous people of North America were called *Indians* is a reflection of the fact that Europeans were encountering both India and North America for the first time in the 1400s and 1500s, and some of them like Columbus were confused as to where they were.

Now today, some indigenous groups in the United States still prefer the term ‘American Indians,’ and the US Census still uses that term as well. But for the most part, the term *Indian* has fallen out of favor when referring to the native inhabitants of North America. Part of the reason for that decline is because the term has acquired a negative or derogatory sense over time. But the use of the word *Indian* has also declined because it was another case of linguistic confusion. By incorrectly applying the term to North America, it meant that it was used to refer to two completely different groups of people on two different continents. So this linguistic confusion was another factor in searching for a more suitable term for the indigenous people of North America.

Having brought this episode back to where we began, I think it’s a good time to wrap up. And I hope I haven’t confused you with all of those discussions about linguistic confusion. Along the way, we saw a how a common shelled-reptile was named after a bird, how pickled cucumbers and green peppers were once called mangos, and how the native inhabitants of one continent were named after the people of another continent. I guess it just goes to prove that we’ve been living in a world of confusion for a very long time.

So until next time, thanks for listening to the History of English Podcast.