1. Introduction
Kortmann (2008) identifies a north-south divide regarding the morphosyntactic characteristics of British English varieties with the north constituted by Scottish English, Orkney/Shetland, and the dialects of North England, and the south constituted by the Southwest, the Southeast and East Anglia.

In this class we are going to exemplify morphosyntactic variation in the verbal and nominal domains.

2. Variation in the verb phrase

Past tense paradigms
A common tendency in regional dialects is the reduction of strong paradigms with three contrasting forms in Standard English to two (drink/drank/drunken → drink/drank/drunken) and those with two forms to one (come/came/come → come/came/come). This is especially common in the South-East.

In the North forms like tellt and sellt are also found, and the past tense eat tends to be found in the South-West.

Present tense verb endings
Regional dialects have a variety of patterns which level out the standard paradigm. For example, East Anglian dialects tend to have no -s ending anywhere.

Q: What do you think is the motivation for this?

Northern and Western dialects, on the other hand, have the -s ending throughout. This is complicated by the Northern Subject Rule, illustrated in (1).

(1) a. Our young one’s mates talks something like you.  
b. We visit her mam.

Forms of be
Every vernacular variety of English appears to be variable with respect to past tense be. There are three main patterns: levelling to was; levelling to were; and levelling to was in positive contexts but weren’t in negatives.
Variation of the progressive

Some dialects can be seen as conservative in using older forms of the progressive, while others expand its use to contexts in which it is not found in Standard English. Consider (2).

(2)  
   a. The kittle bile.  
   b. I’m liking this.

Q: (2b) is given by Beal (2011: 34) to exemplify the influence of the McDonald’s slogan *I’m loving it*. What is your view of such forms? Why are they becoming increasingly widespread? Is this really a non-standard feature?

Patterns of negation in interrogatives and tags

There are a variety of patterns in this domain:

(i)  It rained, didn’t it? vs. It didn’t rain, did it not?
(ii) She can’t come, can she not? vs. She can’t come, can’t she not?
(iii) Can’t Jack not ride a bike?

Periphrastic do

In Standard English *do* as an auxiliary verb only appears in positive declarative sentences when it is emphatic or to avoid repetition of another verb.

The use of unstressed *do* was found in Standard English until about 1700 and it is still found in the South-West as well as Welsh and Irish varieties of English.

Modal verbs

Two features that we discuss here are double modals and epistemic *mustn’t*. Consider (3).

(3)  
   a. I can’t play on a Friday. I work late. I might could get it changed, though.  
   b. I wouldn’t could’ve worked, even if you had asked him.  
   c. The lift mustn’t be working.

Complementation

In the South-West *for to* is used to introduce purpose clauses, but in the North it can introduce any infinitival clause.

(4)  
   a. When I moved it just didn’t enter me head for to say I wonder what if it’ll be different.  
   b. We were glad for to get out.
3. Variation in the noun phrase

Noun morphology

In most dialects, there is a tendency for nouns referring to quantities or measurements to lack an overt plural marker, especially after numerals.

Q: What do you think motivates this?

Second person pronouns

A historical note: The subject/object distinction between thou vs. thee and ye vs. you is no longer observable in Standard English.

Q: This is no great loss pragmatically. Why? The loss of singular/plural distinction is more problematic. Why is that?

Pronoun exchange

This term refers to a phenomenon whereby what would, in Standard English, be the subject form is used in object position and vice versa. This is shown in (5).

(5) a. You can come with we to that as well.
    b. Us’ll do it.

In the North-East, only first person plural forms are exchanged, whereas in the South-West it occurs in both first and third persons.

Demonstrative pronouns

In Standard English, demonstrative pronouns distinguish between referents that are close and those that are distant, and between singular and plural. Regional dialects differ with regard to both the forms of demonstratives and the system of contrasts expressed by them. Some dialects differentiate three degrees of distance: close, distant, and more distant. For example, in the North, you and thou can be used to express ‘that over there’.

The definite article

One feature which is regarded as stereotypically northern is definite article reduction. It is generally recognised as a stereotype of Yorkshire and Lancashire speech.

In the North-East, the full form of the definite article is used in contexts where it would not appear in Standard English. Some examples illustrating this are given below:

(6) a. So what are you doing in college the morrow?
    b. So I never really started work til I was about the fifteen.
    c. Going over to the girlfriend’s concert first though.