AFRICAN-AMERICAN ENGLISH VERNACULAR: Dialect Characteristics

Phonology

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| --- | --- |
| **Final Cluster Reduction:** | **Example:** |
| * preceding a vowel or pause | cold apple → col’ apple |
| * intra-word | testing → tessing |
| * /iz/ pluralization after /s/ + C | tests → tesses |
| **Special Clusters:** | **Example:** |
| * /str/ → /skr/ | street → skreet |
| * lexical | ask → aks |
| * final /sp/ → /ps/ | wasp → waps |
| **Medial and Final “th”** | **Example:** |
| * /θ/ → /f/ labialization | tooth → toofs |
| * /δ/→ /v/ labialization | smooth → smoov |
| * / θ,δ/ → /t,d/ stopping | with → wit |
| **Initial “th”** | **Example:** |
| * voiced stopping | this → dis |
| * voiceless stopping | think → tink |
| **Fricative Stopping before Nasals** | **Example:** |
| * /θ/ → /t/ | nothing → not’n |
| * /z/ → /d/ | wasn’t → wadn’t |
| * /v/ → /b/ | seven → sebm |
| **/r/ and /l/ Vocalization** | **Example:** |
| * postvocalic /r/ loss | hear → hea’ more → mo’ |
| * intervocalic /r/ loss | during → du’ing |
| * /l/ loss before labials | help → he’p |
| * postconsonantal /r/ loss before /o,u/ | throw → th’ow |
| **Nasals** | **Example:** |
| * /η/ fronting | swimming → swimmin’ |
| * vowel nasalization | man → ma~ |
| * article “a” before a vowel | an apple → a apple |
| **Vowels** | **Example:** |
| * /ai/ vowel ungliding | time → ta’m |
| * /ai/ and /i/ neutralization before nasals | pen → pin |
| * /כ/ centralization | dog → dug |
| **Syllable Structure/Prosodics** | **Example:** |
| * stress shift | po-liceי → poי-lice |
| * unstressed syllable deletions “re-, ex-, to-, sus-“ | remember → ‘member  expect → ‘spect |
| * syllable collapse | fire → fa’r flower → fla’r |
| * tense vowel cluster collapse | serious → ser’ous |

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Grammar

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| --- | --- |
| **Verbs:** | **Example:** |
| * Irregular verb change |  |
| * + past form as participle | had went |
| * + participle as past tense | I seen |
| * + regularized | knowed |
| * + bare root | I come there yesterday. |
| * + different irregular | brung |
| * + quotative ‘say’ | Yesterday she say ‘I don’t want it.’ |
| * Habitual “be” | They always be messing up. |
| * Copula/auxiliary absence | They ugly. |
| * + double marking ‘I’m’ | I’m is. |
| * + ‘have’ auxiliary reduction | They been doing that. |
| * Verb class shift | We beat. There go the pencil. |
| * Special auxiliaries ‘been/done/liketa’ | They don’t posta go. |
| * Phonological tense reduction | They mess up before. |
| * Tense double marking | They likeded. |
| * Third person singular absence | She like her. |
| * Non-third person –s | We likes them. |
| * Generalization of ‘is/was’ | We was there. |
| **Adverbs:** | **Example:** |
| * Adverb regularization | beautifulest, badder |
| * Double marking | more nicer |
| * Absence of -ly | She answered the question different. |
| **Negation:** | **Example:** |
| * Multiple negation | They didn’t do nothing. |
| * Negativized auxiliary | Nobody didn’t do it. |
| * Negative inversion | Didn’t nobody do it. |
| * ‘Ain’t’ | He ain’t go. |
| **Nominals:** | **Example:** |
| * Plural –s absence | Two dog. |
| * Regularized plural | Two mans/mens. |
| * Possessive –s absence | Jimmy hat. |
| * Regularized ‘mines’ | Mines is nice. |
| * Regularized reflexives | hisself, theys |
| * Possessive ‘they’ | They house. |
| * Demonstrative ‘them’ | Them dogs. |
| * Relative pronoun absence | The man come down there is nice. |
| * Existential ‘they/it’ | It’s a North Street in Baltimore. |