AFRICAN-AMERICAN ENGLISH VERNACULAR: Dialect Characteristics

Phonology

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **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 → ‘memberexpect → ‘spect |
| * syllable collapse
 | fire → fa’r flower → fla’r |
| * tense vowel cluster collapse
 | serious → ser’ous |

AFRICAN-AMERICAN ENGLISH VERNACULAR: Dialect Characteristics

Grammar

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **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. |