

‘ELT for a Global World’



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Changing English in a changing world

Unit 6 Inner Circle Varieties 3

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American Englishes

- American English dialects
- New York
- Detroit
- African-American Vernacular English (AAVE)

American English dialects

US dialect areas

- North,
- Midland (Lower North + Upper South),
- South,
- West.

(Carver, 1987)

American English dialects

relative uniformity of American English

dialects more homogenous than in Britain:

- areas more divergent in original primary settlement: East;
- areas less divergent due to dialect mixing in areas of secondary settlement: Midland + West.

reasons for homogeneity:

- geographical and social mobility during settlement – with the result of **dialect mixing**;
- general geographical and social mobility ever since.

(Fennell, 2001, pp. 216-217)

American English dialects

Rhoticity

Non-rhotic areas and sociolects:

(Wolfram and Schilling-Estes, 2006, p. 107)

- Southern: Tidewater Virginia (Jamestown)
- Southern: South Carolina (Charleston), Georgia
- Eastern New England
- Lower class New York English
- Afro-American Vernacular English

American English dialects

Merger of /ɔ/ and /ɑ:/: *cot* and *caught* sound like RP father

Midland:

- Eastern New England (Boston)
- Western Pennsylvania

West:

- American West excluding Californian metropolitan areas

(Wolfram and Schilling-Estes, 2006, pp. 68-78)

American Englishes

Syntax

(1) Regularisation

Verb forms OF irregular verbs analogically levelled in the paradigm to look identical:

in all Northern and Southern vernaculars

1. past as participle: *had went*

2. participle as past: *done*

He done it yesterday.

3. bare root as past

She come home yesterday.

(Wolfram and Schilling-Estes, 2006, pp. 79-86)

American Englishes

Syntax

(2) *fixin to (fixta)* ‘planning to’, ‘about to’

South: South Atlantic, Gulf states (South)

(3) **Double modals:** *might could, might should*, etc.

She *might could* do it. pro:

She *might* do it. She *could* do it.

lessens the force of obligation

Southern vernacular

(Wolfram and Schilling-Estes, 2006, pp. 79-86)

New York English

/ai/ in tide

Nucleus backed to /ɔ/

1. New York: /toidi toid/ street: 33rd Street
2. Outer Banks of North Carolina:
/hoi toiders/ high tiders

(Wolfram and Schilling-Estes, 2006, pp. 68-78)

American English dialects: Northern Cities Chain Shift

long low vowels: forward and upward

short vowels: downward and backward

(Fennell, 2001, p. 227)

American English dialects: Northern Cities Chain Shift

Areas:

- Western New England
- N Pennsylvania
- N Ohio, N Indiana, N Illinois
- Michigan, Wisconsin

Cities: Chicago, Detroit, Buffalo, Albany, Cleveland

(Fennell, 2001, pp. 227-228)

Detroit

Significant difference in the use of three variables by burnouts and jocks: burnouts in the vanguard of the change

- /ai/
- /ei/
- /uh/

(Eckert, 2005)

Detroit

Belten High study -- Eckert (2005)

Student categories along various social practices

- Jocks
- Burnouts
- In-betweens

AAVE

Theories of origin (Fennell, 2001, pp. 232-233):

Anglicist

- most distinctive features can be traced back to **dialects in Britain** (loss of -s; habitual BE) brought to the South;
- any features that **cannot be found in Britain** come from African languages of the slaves (**substrate effect**).

Creolist

- **result of a creole** that developed from the contact between African languages and English in **internment and on plantations**;
- even though approximating to the standard, AAVE still **retained a lot of creole substrate features**.

AAVE

Syntax:

- **remote past *been*** (used to refer to sg that happened far in the past):

*I **been seen** him a long time ago.*

*You **been told** her that.;*

- **copula deletion:** *She nice;*
- use of **habitual or distributive *be***:
*Sometimes my ears **be itching**.*

(Fasold, 1981; cited in Fennell, 2001, pp. 233-234)

AAVE

Morphology:

- general **absence** of *-s/-es* in plurals: *four book*;
- **absence** of *-s* in 3rd person singular, present tense: *he sit*;
- **absence** of possessive *-s*: *man hat*.

(Fasold, 1981; cited in Fennell, 2001, pp. 233-234)

AAVE

Pronunciation:

(Fasold, 1981; cited in Fennell, 2001, pp. 233-234)

- reduction of final consonant clusters followed by a vowel:

lif up pro *lift up*;

- devoicing of voiced stops in stressed syllables:

/lit/ pro *lid*;

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