A COMPILATION OF SPEECH SOUND FEATURES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN ENGLISH

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— ABSTRACT —

African American English (AAE) is an American dialect spoken by many African Americans and people of other racial/ethnic groups. In the current study, AAE-related literature was reviewed, and AAE speech sound patterns were compiled, including examples and regional information regarding the dialect. A convenient chart was created upon the review and compilation of AAE speech sound patterns from previous scholarly works. Further, a thorough literature search was completed on Google Scholar and EBSCO databases and recent articles and seminal works were prioritized. Then, a current and more comprehensive chart of AAE speech sound patterns was developed and organized by phoneme for SLPs to use clinically when accessing AAE speakers. Also, AAE speech sound patterns were described using non-deficit terminology as outlined by Hamilton et al. (2018). Several previous scholarly works outlined AAE speech sound patterns; however, there was a need for a current compilation of data across the literature and the need for the inclusion of positive terminology in reporting AAE speech sound features. While this manuscript might not provide a fully comprehensive list of AAE speech sound features, it provides a more comprehensive, clinically feasible chart for SLPs to efficiently use when assessing AAE speakers suspected of having a speech sound disorder.

Keywords: African American English, AAE, speech sound disorder, regionality, assessment, cultural competence

Background

African American English (AAE) is the most current terminology used to refer to what was formally termed Ebonics, Black English, African American Vernacular English, and Negro dialect, to name a few. The study of Black English developed during the Black Power Movement, which sought to combat a White supremacy society (Taylor, 1972). Speech sound features are one common area of focus of AAE research. Various researchers provided AAE speech sound feature data and emphasized its legitimacy as a systematic dialect or language (Pollock, 1998; Stockman, 1996; Thomas, 2007).

Speech Sound Features of African American English

AAE is an American dialect that many African Americans speak or have developed familiarity with due to cultural influences (Taylor, 1972). However, not all African Americans speak AAE. Also, AAE is not exclusive to African Americans because various ethnic and racial groups speak this systematic dialect (Bland-Stewart, 2005; Fasold et al., 1987; Latimer-Hearn, 2020; Rickford & Rickford, 2000; Taylor, 1972). Like Mainstream American English (MAE) or "Standard" American English (SAE), AAE has distinct patterns across five language areas: phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics (Bland-Stewart, 2005; Hamilton et al., 2018; Rickford & Rickford, 2000). AAE rules differ from MAE rules in each language area (Stockman, 1996; Thomas, 2007); however, this manuscript focused on phonology (i.e., vowels, consonants, blends, and phonological processes). An example of a phonological difference of AAE is that AAE speakers might not release or produce sounds in the final position of words (Pollock et al., 1998; Stockman, 1996; Thomas, 2007). Tables 1-14 in the appendix include a more comprehensive compilation of AAE speech sound patterns. Charts in Pollock et al.'s (1998) and Stockman's (1996) studies influenced the format of the tables.

Eliminating Deficit Terminology When Describing AAE Speech

Regrettably, AAE is stigmatized because African Americans are stigmatized (Taylor, 1972). An inferior tone has been associated with AAE since the slavery era and persists in America (Champion et al., 2012; Gibson & Terrell Shockley, 2018; Hamilton, 2020; Horton et al., 2018; Jackson, 1997; Ladson Billings, 2000; Latimer-Hearn, 2020; Lee, 2005; Meyers et al., 1979; Payne, 2005; Pullum, 1999; Taylor, 1972; Todd, 1997). Scholars often discuss AAE using terms containing a negative connotation by using words such as deletion, omission, and reduction to describe its patterns (Hamilton, 2020; Hamilton et al., 2018). They have described AAE regarding how its patterns compare to MAE rather than describing it as a stand-alone dialect (Bland-Stewart, 2005; Hamilton, 2020; Hamilton et al., 2018). Even professionals who advocate for AAE habitually describe AAE using derogatory terms in teaching and research by describing what it "lacks." It is difficult to fully conceptualize AAE as a systematic and valid language when professionals discuss it in the same manner that they discuss impairments. Terms such as omission and deletion describe a disorder and could misrepresent AAE as a deficit that warrants intervention (Hamilton, 2020; Hamilton et al., 2018).

Hamilton et al. (2018) gave examples of how one might describe an apple as red, shiny, and crunchy but would not describe an orange as lacking a red tint, shine, and crunchiness. Similarly, AAE should not be discussed in comparison to MAE (e.g., deleting /d/ in the final position or substituting /f/ for /θ in the medial and final position). Hamilton et al. (2018) provided examples of appropriate ways to describe AAE. For example, instead of using terms such as "deletion" or "reduction," one could say, "MAE speakers produce /-ing/ whereas AAE speakers might produce /-in/." Since researchers have used deficit terminology throughout their work and discussions for several decades, it will take time for researchers and professionals (e.g., clinicians and professors) to shift toward AAE-individualized descriptions. Nevertheless, SLP professionals can collaboratively work toward reducing the negative manner in which AAE is discussed.

AAE Regionality

AAE is a regional dialect meaning its patterns may vary between geographical areas (Pollock et al., 1998; Thomas, 2007Wolfram & Kohn, 2015). For example, there may be differences in AAE patterns in the southeast quadrant of the District of Columbia (DC) compared to AAE patterns in New Orleans, Louisiana. One example of regional variation is vowel duration among southern AAE speakers. In the southern region, AAE vowels may be produced significantly longer (Holt et al., 2015). Also, diphthongs in southern AAE may include the production of one vowel instead of the gliding of two vowels (Dorrill, 1983, Labov, 1991; Labov, 1994; Kamhi, 1996; Thomas, 2007).

Another example is how AAE speakers in DC may produce /v/ for /θ/ in the medial position of words, whereas AAE speakers in Louisiana might produce /d/ for /θ/ in the medial position of words. Further, there may be differences in AAE in rural areas compared to AAE in urban areas. Dialectal differences may also occur within the same state (Wolfram &

Kohn, 2015). Regionality is a pivotal factor to consider when assessing speech sounds. There may be dialectal articulatory features that one should consider in a particular geographical area that may not have to be heavily considered in another area. Regionality information was included when creating Tables 1-14 (see Appendix).

In the current study, the researchers compiled AAE speech sound information across previous works while using positive terminology and reducing negative terminology such as deletion, omission, and reduction. Another aim was to conveniently outline the content for SLP clinicians to use in practice. Thomas (2007) provided a summary of many AAE speech sound features. However, the information was in paragraph form, which may take a substantial amount of time to review and interpret. The current study incorporated a more convenient format of AAE speech sound features, as seen in charts from Stockman (1996) and Pollock et al. (1998).

Method

An extensive literature search was conducted on Google Scholar and EBSCO databases to obtain data regarding AAE speech sound features. These databases were utilized to ensure the inclusion of scholarly, peer-reviewed works. To locate relevant articles, the researchers used keywords such as African American English, AAVE, African American English Vernacular, Black English, Ebonics, speech sounds, phonology, phonetics, speech, articulation, regionality, dialect, difference, and talk in a variety of arrangements. The goal of using the stated keywords was to obtain articles focusing on outlining and describing AAE speech sound patterns. Articles that appeared in the literature search that provided information regarding AAE speech sound patterns were used and reported in the current study's compilation of data.

Previously, Pollock et al. (1998), Stockman (1996), and Thomas (2007) provided extensive information regarding AAE speech sound patterns. These three works and their citations were the primary sources of the current study's reporting. Additionally, more recent sources such as Shipley & McAfee (2019) were utilized. The formatting and organization of AAE features in the current study were adapted from Pollock et al. (1998) and Stockman (1996). Pollock et al. (1998) provided AAE features in a convenient chart organized by description, internal constraints, examples, scope/direction, geographical information, examples, and references. Similarly, the current study organized AAE features by description/patterns, examples, population/geographical information, and additional information. However, rather than including references in the chart, the current study provided a separate refeernce list. Also, rather than features being organized by phonological patterns using terminology such as reduction and deletion, the current study organized AAE patterns by sound type (e.g., diphthong, vowel, consonant, and consonant cluster).

Implications/Application of the Study

SLPs can immediately begin using the chart of AAE features found in the appendix. Suppose one is not entirely familiar with AAE speech sound patterns. The chart can provide further context regarding sound productions characteristic of AAE speech sound differences that are likely not indicative of a disorder for AAE speakers. The chart can be one component of SLPs' dynamic assessment process in addition to independent learning about the dialect through engagement with AAE speakers and further research. SLPs are required to differentiate dialectal variations from disordered errors to facilitate accurate assessment reporting and reduce clinical misdiagnosis. When using the chart, clinicians should note that it may not comprehensively cover all AAE features. Also, all features in the chart might not apply to all AAE speakers. It is fitting to consider individual and regional information and differences when making diagnostic decisions. Finally, clinicians should consider that there is not a universal consensus on all AAE speech sound features. Clinicians should research individual AAE features further when deemed necessary.

Conclusion

A more comprehensive chart of AAE speech sound patterns organized by sound using non-deficit terminology can be an efficient clinical tool for SLPs to use clinically. The chart might also help reduce the negative terminology SLPs use to discuss AAE in report writing and clinical discussion. Also, terminology that beginner and advanced SLPs could easily understand was utilized. Various tables are provided in the appendix presenting systematic speech sound patterns of AAE. Expectantly, SLPs will use these tables when evaluating the speech production of AAE speakers to differentiate actual speech sound disorders from mere speech differences.

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APPENDIX

Allophonic Variations Complied Using Non-Deficit Terminology

Table 1

Diphthong Features

Sound	Systematic AAE Patterns	Systematic Examples	Population and/or Geographical Region Info	Additional Information
/ɑɪ/	• /ɑ/ • /ɑː/ • /aj/ • extended duration	• pie → /pɑː/ • ride → /rɑːd/ • time→ /tɑːm/	• /ɑ/ and /ɑː/ reported in the Appalachians, Ozarks, Piney Wood, and Wire Grassbelt, Gulf States, TN, and northern and southern AAE • less common in higher SES • might have extended duration in southern states	• second element of diphthong might not be present. only in open syllables, before nasals, or voiced obstruents (e.g., "prize" and "pry") rather than before a voiceless consonant (ex. "price") • /a/ common before /ɚ/ and /l/ • /ɑ/ and /ɑː/ less likely with the word "night" • /ɑ/ and /ɑː/ tend to be strongest before /l/ and /r/ (e.g., "fire and "file) • /ɑ/ and /ɑː/ decreasing in non-southern urban areas • /ɑ/ and /ɑː/might occur before voiceless consonant in Detroit
/ɑʊ/	• /ɑ/ • nucleus of diphthong might not be produced at the front • /æo/ • /æʊ/ • /aˆo/ • /aˆʊ/ • /əʊ/ • /əu/ • /a/ in our • extended duration	• cowboy→ /kɑboɪ/ • flour→ /flɑɚ/ • our→ /ar/	• /a/ recorded in Memphis • only one diphthong element reported in Memphis • /æo/, /æʊ/, /aˆo/, /aˆʊ/, /əʊ/, /əu/ reported in VA and the low country of SC and GA. • extended duration in southern states	• /a/ common in multisyllabic words before obstruents. • /a/ common before /ɚ/ and /l/
/ɔɪ/	• /ə/ • /oe/ • second element of the diphthong centralized • /ɔ/ • extended duration	• oil → /əl/ • toybox→ /tɔbaks/ • boy→ /boə/ • oil → /ɔl/	• extended duration in southern states	• Common in open syllables multisyllabic words before voiced obstruents • /ɔ/ common before /ɚ/ and /l/

APPENDIX

Table 1 continued

/eɪ/	• /e:/ • /ɛi/ • laxed (e.g., /ɛ/) before tautosyllabic /l/	• tail→ /tɛl/	• /e:/ reported in MD, VA, NC, southern LA, and the south	
/oʊ/	• /o:/ • not present • /æo/ • brought to the front • /oɪ/	• roach→// roɪtʃ/	• reported in MD, VA, NC, and southern LA • bringing to front reported in Ohio • /oɪ/ observed in older speakers in GA, SC, and LA	• /æo/ less likely • brining front is rare
/ɔʊ/	• /ɔ/ • /a/			
/ɛɚ/	• /ɚ/ • /ɛə/ • /eʊ/ • affected when intervocalic • followed by /ə/ • vowels preceding /r/ centralized, rhotacized, or not produced	• bear → /bɚ/ • there→ /dɛə/ • bear→ /bɛʊ/ • chair→ /tʃɛɚə/	• /ə/ reported in Memphis. • /ɛə/ reported in north and central Texas and Memphis, TN	
/iɚ/	• /ɚ/ • /ɪə/ • affected when intervocalic • followed by /ə/ • vowels preceding /r/ centralized, rhotacized, or not produced	• here→ /hɚ/ • deer→ /dɪə/	• /ɚ/ reported in Memphis.	
/aɚ/	• /a/ • affected when intervocalic • followed by /ə/	• car→ /kɑ/		
/ɔɚ/	• /oʊ/ • affected when intervocalic • followed by /ə/	• story→ /stɔʊi/		
/ɔr/	• /oʊ/ • /o/	• court→ koʊt • court→ /kot/		

Note. This may not be an exhaustive list. Consider individual differences that may occur.

APPENDIX

Table 2

Vowel Features

Sound	Descriptions	Systematic Examples	Population and/or Geographical Region Info	Additional Information
/ɝ/	• produced as non-rhotic vowel following a vowel produced toward the front • /ɜ/ • affected when intervocalic • extended duration	• bird → /bɜd/ • hurry→ /hʌi/ • hurry→ /hɛə˞i/	• might have extended duration in southern states	
/ɚ/	• produced as non-rhotic vowel following a fronted vowel • /ə/ • affected when intervocalic • addition of /ɛ/ to stressed syllabic /r/	• zipper→ /zɪə˞/ • stir→ /stɛə˞/	• /ɛ/ addition reported in Memphis	
/æ/	• /ə/ • /ei/ • /a/ • /e/ • /ɛ/ • produced with long off-glide toward /i/ • extended duration	• butter → /buttə/ • can't→ /kɐin/ • aunt →/ɑnt/ • ham→ /hɛm/ • wagon→ /wɛn̩/ • glass→ /glæˈs/	• reported in southern, urban, and rural areas. • /ɑ/ reported in the gulf states • /a/ more common in Virginia • /ei/ especially in the South • raising of vowel reported in NC • extended duration in southern states	• Especially common before voiceless fricatives

/ɛ/	• /ɪ/ before a nasal • /i/ • extended duration	• pen → /pɪn/ • again→ /əgɪn/	• /i/ reported the gulf states • /ɪ/ reported to occur virtually "everywhere" • raising of vowel reported in NC • extended duration in southern states	
/ɪ/	• produced between sibilants • /ʊ/ • /ɪˤ/ • rhotacized following postvocalic or syllabic /l/ • extended duration	• sister → /sɪster/ • sister → /sʊstə/ • whip → /wʊp/ • still → /stɪˤl/ • pig→ /pɪˤg/ • milk→ /mə˞k/ • pickle→ /pə˞l̩/	• /ɪˤ/ and /ə˞/ reported in Memphis. • /ʊ/ reported in Gulf states • extended duration in southern states	• /ɪˤ/ especially before liquids and velars
/o/	• /ə/ in unstressed syllables • extended duration	• hollow→ /holləw/	• extended duration in southern states	
/i/	• /ɪ/ rarely • laxed before tautosyllabic /l/ • extended duration	• happy→ /hɑppɪ/ • wheel→ /wɪl/	• /ɪ/ might occur among older speakers • /ɪ/ rarely • extended duration in southern states	
/ɑ/	• /ɒː/ • /ɒ/ • /ɔ/ • extended duration	• /start/ might be produced as /stɒːʔt/ or /stɒɹʔt/ • wasp→ /wɔs/	• ɔ reported in southwest Louisiana • extended duration in southern states	
/ɔ/	• /æ/ • extended duration		• /æ/ reported in Gulf States • extended duration in southern states	
/ʊ/	• /u/ • extended duration		• extended duration in southern states	

/u/	• /ʉ/ • brought to the front • extended duration		• reported in Gulf states • brining front is rare in AAE • /ʉ/ reported minimally in Gulf states • extended duration in southern states	
/e/	• might have extended duration		• extended duration in southern states	

Note. This may not be an exhaustive list. Consider individual differences that may occur.

Table 3

Semivowel Features

Sound	Descriptions	Systematic Examples	Population and/or Geographical Region Info	Additional Information
/j/	• not produced after non-coronal consonants as in the word "new" • not present after other consonants • /r/ for /j/ after a consonant • not present in the word "pasture"	• computer→ /kʰəmˈpʰuɾə/ • music →/mɹuzik/ • beautiful →/buɹɪfl/ • cute → /krut/ • pasture→ /pæstə/	• rhotacization of /j/ may be limited to Southern U.S. • "pasture" reported in Gulf states	• usually followed by /u/ vowel • usually precedes a consonant

Note. This may not be an exhaustive list. Consider individual differences that may occur.

Table 4

Consonant Features (Sonorants)

Sound	Descriptions	Systematic Examples	Population and/or Geographical Region Info	Additional Information
/m/	• not produced in final position			
/n/	• not produced in final position			

/ŋ/	• not produced in final position • /n/ in unstressed final syllables • preceding vowel nasalized and /ŋ/ not produced	• sing→/sĩ/	• Nasalization reported in Boston	
/l/	• not produced in final position • /ə/ in final • mid to high back rounded vowel or semivowel in the range of /o/ or /w/ in final • not produced after rounded vowel in final • not produced when following a vowel and preceding a labial sound as in "twelve," "help," and "-self" compounds • might be /ʊ/	• pull →/pʰʊː/ • feel →/fiɔː/ • bell → /bɛʊ/ • ball→ /bɑɯ/ • belt→ /bɛɤt/ • bottle→ /boɾʊ/ • ball→ /bɔ/ • bowl→ /boʊ/ • help → /hɛp/ • rudolph → /rudɔf/ • milk→ /mɪʊk/	• not produced when preceding a labial -reported in the south • /ʊ/ reported in Boston	• usually either high back rounded /ʊ/, high back unrounded /ɯ/, mid back unrounded /ɤ/, or sometimes /ə/ • assimilate sound might be influenced and shaped by preceding vowel when following a mid-back vowel

/r/	• not produced when preceding word that begins with vowel • not produced if part of a consonant cluster of unstressed syllables as in "throw," "through," "brother," and "forget." • /r/ in a syllable coda is produced as /ə/ in unstressed and stressed syllables • "linking /r/" in final position preceding word that begins with vowel (e.g., "four eggs") might be produced when • word intervocalic /r/ not produced • /ʊ/	• four → /foə/ or /foː/ • four → /foː ɛgz/ • carry→ /kʰæi/ • florida→ /flɑəɹə/ • bird→ /bʊd/	• in the "deep south" (i.e., from South Carolina to Louisiana) and up the Mississippi valley, /r/ in stressed syllables may be produced as /əi/ as in the words "work" and "third" • /ə/ reported in and out of the south-high prevalence in New York City and Hillsborough, North Carolina. Low prevalence in Columbus, OH and Davenport, IA • not present at all in Boston and NYC dialects • /ʊ/ reported in Boston	• /ə/ most common in unstressed syllables and in final and preconsonantal postvocalic positions

Note. This may not be an exhaustive list. Consider individual differences that may occur.

Table 5

Consonant Features (Obstruents)

Sound(s)	Descriptions	Systematic Examples	Population and/or Geographical Region Info	Additio-nal Information
/b/	• not produced in final position • not released followed by glottalization in final position • /p/ in final position	• cab→ /cæp/		
/p/	• not produced in final position • voicing of initial singleton /p/ in initial unstressed syllables	• Pajamas → /bəʒæməz/ • Potato → /bəteɪɾo/	• voicing of /p/: Memphis, TN	

/d/	• not produced in final position • not voiced followed by glottalization in final position • /t/ in final position	• bɑd → /bæːtʔ/ • bed→ /bɛt/	• absence and voicelessness reported in Detroit and more common as SES decreased; more common among adolescents than adults	
/t/	• not produced in final position • glottal stop before a syllabic nasal			
/g/	• not produced in final position • not voiced followed by glottalization in final position • /k/ in final position	• pig→ /pɪk/		
/k/	• not produced in final position			
/v/	• not produced in final position • /b/ when preceding a nasal • /b/ in the medial position	• seven → /sɛbm/		
/z/	• not produced in final position • /s/ in final position	• scissors→ /sɪzərs/		
/s/	• not present in final position when the word precedes a quantitative marker as in "two shoe" • lengthened in plurals • glottal stop before a syllabic nasal • /d/ before a syllabic nasal	• posts →/pʰousɛz/ • desks →/dɛsəz/ • wasn't→ /wʌdnt/ • wasn't→ /wʌʔn/		
/ʒ/	• not produced in final position • might be /dʒ/ in final position			

Note. This may not be an exhaustive list. Consider individual differences that may occur.

Table 6

Interdental Fricative Features

Sound	Descriptions	Examples	Population and/or Geographical Region Info	Additional Information

/ð/	• /d/ in initial position • /d/ in medial position • /v/ in medial position • /d/ in final position • /v/ in final position • /d̚/ • sound might be influenced and shaped by preceding sound	• thy→ /dɑj/ • other → /ʌdɚ/ • bathe→/beiv/ • like that → /ɬɑik:æʔ/	• reported in Detroit and New York City • Reported in the gulf states • might be less common among people of higher SES, women, speakers with frequent contact w/ White people	
/θ/	• /t/ in initial position • /f/ in medial position • /f/ in final position • /tθ/ • not produced in final • /t̚/ • occasional occurrence of /s/ • /t/ in the medial and final positions when following a nasal • /d/ in initial position	• thigh → /tɑigh/ • bath→ /bæf/ • bathtub→ /bæftʌb/ • tenth → /tɛnt/ • nothing → /nʌtn/ • bathroom → /bæs-rum/ • birthday→/bɚ-sdei/ • thumb→/dʌm/	• /θ/→ /s/: Memphis, TN and middle and south Atlantic states • Reported in the gulf states • reported in Detroit and New York City • might be less common among people of higher SES, women, speakers with frequent contact w/ White people	• /θ/→ /s/: When in the final position of a syllable within a word before another consonant

Note. This may not be an exhaustive list. Consider individual differences that may occur.

Table 7

Final Consonant Features

Descriptions	**Systematic Examples**	**Population and/ or Geographical Region Info**	**Additional Information**
• Most likely not produced if a nasal sound or oral stop			• when voiced obstruents are deleted, length of preceding vowel is maintained • may be lexically determined

• Most likely not produced if before a word starting with a consonant, especially an obstruent or pause rather than a vowel	• right food → /rɑj fu:/ • best buy → /bɛs bɑ:/		
• Most likely not produced if it contains a vowel that can be lengthened or nasalized (more than usual) to maintain semantic clarity	• bad→ /bæ̃/ • bean → /bĩ:/ • man → /mæ̃/		
• Most likely not produced if part of monomorphemic consonant cluster	• sent →/sin/		
• Voiceless consonant might occur instead of voice consonant	• bad→ /bæ:t/ • nose→ /nou:s/	• may be unique among Southern dialects • /d/ phoneme reported in Detroit	• voiceless sound (e.g., /t/) more common before pauses than consonants • no sound more common before constants than pauses

Note. This may not be an exhaustive list. Consider individual differences that may occur.

Table 8

Other Consonant Variations

Descriptions	Examples	Population and/or Geographical Region Info	Additional Information
• nasals in nonfinal contexts not produced	• convenient → /kʰənvˈiənt/		
• sound might be influenced and shaped by preceding sound	• ran there → /ræn nɛə/ • talking about → t/a: ba:/ or /ta: ma:/		

Note. This may not be an exhaustive list. Consider individual differences that may occur.

Table 9

2-Element Cluster Features (Obstruent + Sonorant; Sonorant + Obstruent; Obstruent + Obstruent)

Sound(s)	Descriptions	Systematic Examples	Population and/or Geographical Region Info	Additional Information

/θr/	• /θ/ in initial	• throw→ /θoʊ/		• most often with unstressed /θr/ or in unstressed syllables
/ʃr/	• /s/ in initial • /ʃɹ/ in initial • /sw/ in inital	• shred→ /srɛd/ • shrimp → /ʃɹɪmp/ • shrimp → /ʃwɪmp/		
/pr/	• /p/ in initial cluster	• professor → /pofɛsɚ/		
/lm/	• /m/ in final	• film → /fɪm/		
/ln/	• /n/ in final	• kiln → /kin/		
/lp/	• /p/ in final	• help → /hɛp/		
/ld/	• /d/ in final	• held→ /hɛd/		
/lt/	• /t/ in final	• lilt → /lɪt/		
/lk/	• /k/ in final	• elk → /ɛk/		
/lf/	• /f/ in final	• elf→ /ɛf/		
/lv/	• /v/ in final • not produced in final position	• solve → /sɑv/ • solve → /sɑ/		
/lθ/	• /f/ in final • /t/ in final	• health → /hɛf/ • health→/hɛt/		
/ls/	• /s/ in final	• false → /fɑs/		
/ltʃ/	• /tʃ/ in final	• mulch → /mʌtʃ/		
/ldʒ/	• /dʒ/ in final	• bulge →/bʌdʒe/		
/mp/	• /m/ in final	• trump → /trʌm/		
/mf/	• /mp/ in final	• triumph → /trɑ-jmp/		
/nt/	• /n/ in final	• bent → /bɪn/		Whole cluster more likely to be produced than other clusters
"n't"	• /n/ • not produced	• can't→ /kein/		
/nd/	• /n/ in final	• land → /læn/ • might not be pro-duced		
/nz/	• /ns/ in final	• lens → /lɛns/		
/nθ/	• /nf/ in final • /nt/ in final	• tenth → /tɪnf/ • tenth → /tɪnt/		
/ŋk/	• /ŋ/ in final • not produced	• sink → /siŋ/		Whole cluster more likely to be produced than other clusters

/ks/	• /k/ in final • /s/ when cluster preceding vowel initial suffix	• six → /sɪk/ • accepts→ /ʌsep/		
/sp/	• /s/ in final • /ps/in final	• wasp → /wɑs/ • gasp → /græps/		
/st/	• /s/ in final	• west → /wɛs/		
/sk/	• might be /s/ in final • might be /ks in final	• ask →/æs/ • ask → /æks/	• reported in gulf states	• /sk/→ /ks/ may be lexically determined • primarily occurs in the world "ask"
/pt/	• /p/ in final	• kept → /kɛp/		
/kt/	• /t/ in final • /k/ in final	• act → /æt/ • act →/æk/		
/ft/	• /f/ in final	• left → /lɛf/		
/dθ/	• /t/ in final • /f/ in final	• width → /wɪt/ • width → /wɪf/		

Note. This may not be an exhaustive list. Consider individual differences that may occur.

Table 10

3-Element Cluster (Obstruent + Obstruent + Sonorant; Sonorant + Obstruent + Obstruent)

Sound(s)	Descriptions	Systematic Examples	Population and/ or Geographical Region Info	Additional Information
/str/	• /skr/ initial	• strike → /skrɑik/ • street → /skrit/ • straw → /strɔ	African Americans born in the South	
/mpt/	• /nf/ in final	• tempt → /tɛmp/		
/ŋkθ/	• /nf/ in final	• strength→ /skrenf/		
/ŋks/	• /ns/ in final	• larynx → /lə˞ns/		
/kst/	• /ks/ in final	• next → /nɛks/		
/ksθ/	• /st/ in final • /ks/ in final	• sixth → /sɪst/ • sixth → /sɪks/		

Note. This may not be an exhaustive list. Consider individual differences that may occur.

Table 11

Other Consonant Cluster Information

Descriptions	Example(s)	Population and/or Geographical Region Info	Additional Information
• ask →/æks/			
• /ps/ → /sp/	• wɑsp →/wɑps/		
• **Cluster simplification less likely when:** ○ less likely when both consonants are stops than when first member is a sibilant ○ less likely when the first member is a sibilant than when it is an /l/ ○ less likely when the first member is an /l/ than when it is a nasal ○ less likely when a stop forms a morpheme than when it does not	• closed → /kloz+d/ • More frequent for irregular past tense forms Ex. "kept"		
• **Cluster simplification more likely** ○ when both members of the cluster have the same voicing than when they do not have the same voicing • in unstressed syllables than stressed syllables	• "past" vs. "lamp"	reported in Rural and urban areas	**More likely when** • single morpheme compared to double • when unstressed compared to stressed • when following consonant compared to vowel when an alveolar plosive compared to other consonants
• in clusters with a stop + /s/ or /z/, the stop might not be produced	• that's → /dæs/		

• postvocalic consonant in medial consonant sequence in bisyllabic words not produced if the cluster does not function like an initial cluster (e.g., /sk/)	• fifteen → /fɪtin/		
• might occur when preceding a word starting with a vowel	• past a house → "pas' a house"	any social level	
• items in a cluster may move with or without reduplication	• escape→ /ɪˈskeɪp/	Detroit	

Note. This may not be an exhaustive list. Consider individual differences that may occur.

Table 12

Suprasegmental Features

Descriptions	Examples	Population and/or Geographical Region Info	Additional Information
• Stress placed on first syllable of some	• police • Detroit	• reported in Gulf states	• Might be lexically determined

Note. This may not be an exhaustive list. Consider individual differences that may occur.

Table 13

Unstressed Syllable Features

Descriptions	Examples	Population and/or Geographical Region Info	Additional Information
Initial unstressed syllables are not always present in AAE when • syllable is a single vowel • word before ends in a vowel • target word belongs to a closed grammatical class (e.g., conjunction, preposition) that is usually unstressed in natural speech	• away • go away Other examples of unstressed syllables: • away • before • admit • about • until • pretend • believe →/bliːv/	• possibly more common in older speakers • reported in rural and urban areas	• unstressed syllables are more likely not produced when the target word belongs to a closed grammatical class compared to an open grammatical class.

Initial unstressed syllables are most likely present when • the syllable has a cv shape that cannot be clustered with the initial consonant of the second syllable	• become → "come" • expect → "spect"	• reported in MS	• not producing CV combo is becoming less common than V alone.
• entire weak syllable (including consonants and vowels) deleted initial position			• More likely in syllable for vowel only compared to CV syllables
• unstressed syllables in the medial position not produced	• government → /gʌvment/	• possibly more common in older speakers • reported in rural and urban areas	
• reduplicated syllables not produced	• Mississippi → /mɪsɪpi/ • probably→ /prɑbli/		

Note. This may not be an exhaustive list. Consider individual differences that may occur.

Table 14

Plural, Past Tense, and -ing Features

Descriptions	**Examples**	**Population and/or Geographical Region Info**	**Additional Information**
• stop sounds in cons0onant clusters of plural words may not be produced	• posts → /pʰousɛz/ • desks → /dɛsəz/		
• past tense "ed" might be pronounced as /ɪd/ in the following words: skin, bone, face, like • past tense "ed" might be pronounced as /s/ when final sound is /st/	• two faced→ /tu festɪd/ • liked → /laɪkɪd/ • missed→ /mɪs/ • passed→ /pæs/		
• Words ending -ing might be /ɪn/	• Working→ /wɜrkɪn/		

Note. This may not be an exhaustive list. Consider individual differences that may occur.

Tables 1-14 References

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