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## **AFRICAN-AMERICAN ENGLISH IN MEDIA AND SPOKEN REGISTERS**

The problem of syntactic and phonological characteristics of Black English has become *topical* over the last decades. The representation of African-American people and their way of communication has increased significantly in mainstream media in particular. The first thing that should be noted is that Black English is spoken by the most part of African Americans with the most pronounced features appearing in inner-city areas of Detroit, Washington, Chicago, Philadelphia, Miami, New York, Los Angeles. It is also widespread among adults in rural America (Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, Texas etc.) in their everyday speech.

Though a lot of people (including researchers) still consider African American English as a “broken language” or “slang-based dialect”, it is worth remembering that slang is used by a certain group of people such as athletes, actors, teenagers etc. African-American English, in fact, is used among people of all classes and parts of the community of color and its units stay unchanged over time (Smitherman, 1995; Matjaž's, 2012) review states the following: “*The speech of African Americans carries specific grammatical and phonological features which demonstrates that it is a structured and systematic language variety rather than mere careless speech. Because of these features, there is a need among linguists to recognize AAVE as an ethnically-based communication system, and not slang or broken language*”. The research is *aimed* at analyzing the examples of “black street speech” in such pieces of mainstream media as TV series *Orange is the New Black* (2013-2016), *The Chi* (2018) and movies *Boo! A Madea Halloween* (2016), *Boyz n the Hood* (1991) and *The Help* (2013). To analyze the language of Black Community from different

perspectives we are going to present examples from comedies, historical period drama, hood drama and comedy-drama series and movies. The *objective* is to illustrate syntactic and phonological characteristics of Black English.

Considering syntactic characteristics, the first feature to discuss is the frequent use of multiple negations in the same sentence, which was found multiple times in each one of the analyzed sources. It is commonly known that it includes the widespread substitution of *am not, isn't, aren't, haven't, hasn't* by *ain't*.

Feature	Sources	Examples
Multiple negations used in the same sentence	<i>The Chi</i>	Barry: "Tracy <b>ain't</b> your girl <b>no</b> more, though."
	<i>Boyz n the Hood</i>	Doughboy: "I <b>ain't</b> got <b>no</b> brother. Got <b>no</b> mother, <b>neither</b> ."
	<i>The Help</i>	Minny: "But now I <b>ain't</b> gonna <b>never</b> get <b>no</b> job again."

The next feature that is spread not less than the previous one is the elimination of auxiliary verb in yes/no questions.

Feature	Sources	Examples
Elimination of 3 <sup>rd</sup> person -s in Present Simple	<i>Orange is the New Black</i>	Janae: "This <b>go</b> here. That <b>go</b> there."
	<i>The Help</i>	Minny: "I done something terrible to that woman, and now she <b>know</b> what I done."
	<i>The Chi</i>	Ronnie: "She <b>know</b> you're pregnant?"

One of the most distinctive features used by the Black Community is elimination of copula *be*. There is definitely no difficulty to find this one in any motion picture or TV show analyzed here.

Feature	Sources	Examples
Elimination of copula <i>be</i> in the Present Tense	<i>Boyz n the Hood</i>	Tre: “Like it or not, you from Africa.”
	<i>The Help</i>	Aibileen: “She always mad about something.”
	<i>The Chi</i>	Jerrika: “she gonna make it seem like I'm the reason that he dead!”

One more frequently observed feature is the substitution of *were* for *was* in Past Progressive. As we can see, this feature is represented widely too.

Feature	Sources	Examples
Substitution of the Plural <i>Were</i> with <i>Was</i>	<i>Orange is the New Black</i>	Crazy Eyes: “People forget we <b>was</b> all new here once.”
	<i>Boyz n the Hood</i>	Furious: “All of my friends <b>was</b> dropping out of high school.
	<i>Boo! A Madea Halloween</i>	Madea: “First we <b>was</b> colored, then we <b>was</b> black and now we African-Americans.

And the last syntactic feature that we are going to present is using of the aspectual marker *be* that is equivalent to *usually* or *always*.

Feature	Sources	Examples
Usually, always = aspectual <i>be</i>	<i>Orange is the New Black</i>	Janae: “She'll see what she <b>be</b> messing with.”
	<i>Boyz n the Hood</i>	Doughboy: “That's why fool <b>be</b> getting shot all the time.”
	<i>The Help</i>	Minny: “Don't <b>be</b> taking those women any more pies, you understand?”

Unquestionably, exploring phonological characteristics of the language deserves a full-size separate study. This is not a secret that African American pronunciation has multiple sound specificities. The researchers Thomas, E.R. and Green L.J. dedicate extended studies of the phonology to describe at least some of them. The features include “r-lessness”, replacement of the initial /ð/ with /d/ (as in “this” [dɪs]) and the initial /θ/ with /t/ (as in “think” [tɪŋk]), glide reduction (e.g., wife [wa:f], time [ta:m]), word stress shift to the first syllable (e.g., **police**, **hotel**, **revise**, **polite**, **Detroit**, **insurance** etc.), a final loss of /j/ after non-coronal consonants (e.g., **new** [nu:], **suit** [su:t], **neutral** [nu:trɪ], **Houston** [hu:stn]) and many more.

In *conclusion*, the results of the study generally confirmed the wide use of the most spread syntactic features of Black English in numerous sources reflecting the culture, communication and life of African-Americans. In spite of the fact that the limited size of the article only lets us show a small part of the broad variety of characteristics “black street speech” has, the open space of Internet and television provides a free opportunity for all to study it in greater detail. To do so there is no need to go far, since different elements of AAVE are present in speech of lots of people frequently seen in public from rap artists and singers such as Missy Elliott, Jennifer Hudson, Kanye West, talk-show hosts and actresses Oprah Winfrey, Queen Latifah and Whoopi Goldberg to the former US general and Secretary of State Colin Powell and the former First Lady of the United States, Michelle Obama.

To take into consideration all mentioned above, different factors like age, gender, location etc. that make certain features of the speech more or less pronounced can be considered for in *further studies*. The topic is justly considered of interest not only in frames of linguistics, but in the cultural studies as well.

## References

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### **Sources of illustrations**

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