

/t, d/-glottalization and vowel variation in Houston AAE

Chris Koops & Nancy Niedzielski (*Rice University*)

Previous sociophonetic work (e.g. Kohl and Anderson 2000) has demonstrated that not only vowels but also consonantal variables, such as the glottalization of post-vocalic, word-final /t/ and /d/ (*seat, kid*), display phonetically gradient variation. Here, we explore the correlation of /t, d/-glottalization and vowel variation in the speech of teenage speakers of Houston African-American English (AAE). A comparison with the speech of European American teenagers shows that, while both groups display similar glottalization effects for /t/, the variability seen in /d/ is greater in AAE, where /d/ is more frequently and more strongly glottalized, and in fact can be completely deleted. At the same time, there are also substantial differences in the vowel systems of Houston AAE and EAE speakers. Specific AAE features include all parts of Thomas' (2007) African-American Shift, as well as other features that may be more specific to Houston, such as the raising of the STRUT and FOOT vowels. AAE speakers vary in their use of these features, and we find that the degree to which a speaker glottalizes or deletes /d/ is correlated with his or her participation in the AAE vowel system.

References

- Kohl, Amanda and Bridget Anderson. 2000. Glottalization as a sociolinguistic variable in Detroit. Paper presented at NWAV 29, Michigan State University.
- Thomas, Erik. 2007. Phonological and phonetic characteristics of African American Vernacular English. *Language and Linguistics Compass* 1: 450-475.