CHAPTER II

THEORY & METHOD

2.1 Theoretical Framework

2.1.1 Overview of American - English Dialects

Standard American English (SAE) is a prevalent version of English spoken in the United States. It does not exhibit strong regional characteristics, which gives it a "neutral" and clear quality—particularly advantageous for news anchors and those learning the language. Although earlier linguistic research typically neglected the impact of immigrant language interactions in the development of SAE, more recent studies recognize its significance (Salmons & Purnell, 2020). GA (General American) serves as one of the voice models in applications utilized in experiments, which were examined at the vocal level (/ʌ/, /ɑ/, /æ/, /ɒ/, etc.) (Gumanova, 2015). SAE is also linked to the standard grammatical structures that are taught worldwide, including:

- He is going to school. (Subject + be + V-ing → Present continuous)
- She doesn't like pizza. (Subject + don't/doesn't + base verb → Simple present negative)
- They have eaten lunch. (Subject + have/has + past participle → Present perfect).

In Southern American English, a unique dialect spoken in areas like Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas, has emerged in the American South. This dialect, which has its origins in the speech of early English settlers, developed distinctive features like r-dropping ("car" → "cah"), vowel shifts (e.g., "ride" → "rahd"), and

the pin–pen merger. Along with non-standard grammar, phrases like "I'm fixin' to" for "I'm going to" are also typical:

- I'm fixin' to go. (Means: I'm about to go / I'm going to go)
- You was late. (In Standard English: *You were late* → they often use "was" for all subjects)
- He done told you. (In Standard English: *He already told you* → "done" used like "already") (Chung:2020)

Shifting to the Northeast, New York City English (NYCE) showcases the city's diverse immigrant background. Recognizable for its distinctive pronunciation, NYCE includes vowel modifications ("coffee" becomes "cawfee"), dropping of r's ("car" turns into "cah"), and unique grammatical structures such as:

- "Car" sounds like "cah" (dropping the "r" at the end)
- "Coffee" sounds like "cawfee" (different vowel sound)
- Sometimes people say "I seen it" instead of "I saw it" (a common non-standard grammar form)
- In casual talk, they might say: "You was late." (Standard: You were late) (Labov, 2006).

In New England, Eastern New England English (ENE), particularly in the Boston area, presents another r-less dialect. It features fronted vowels and differentiates between "Mary," "marry," and "merry," making it acoustically distinct. Key examples are:

- "Park the car" → "Pahk the cah"
- "Mary", "marry", "merry" all sound different (not merged)
- "Palm" sounds like [pɑːm] or [pɑːəm], it has a more forward vowel (fronted vowel) (Browne & Stanford, 2018).

Venturing further inland, Northern American English covers areas including New York State and the Great Lakes. It is characterized by specific features like the Northern Cities Vowel Shift—raising /æ/ and fronting /ɑ/, as seen in:

- *"block"* [blɑk] might sound like *"black"* [blæk]
- *"cat"* [kæt] might shift toward *"kyet"*
- Northern speakers may also use constructions like *"The car needs washed"*—a structure rare elsewhere (Kinzler & DeJesus, 2013).

In the West, Western American English embodies a mixture shaped by migration and media, particularly in California. It is used in states such as California, Nevada, and Utah, incorporating elements from the California Vowel Shift:

- "bit" [bɪt] → "bet" [bɛt]
- "dude" [dud] → "dyood"
- This dialect also favours casual speech with words like "like," "totally," and "you know" (Umida et al., 2023).

2.1.2 African – American Vernacular English (AAVE)

African American Vernacular English or AAVE is a type of non-dominant English dialect in the United States. According to Holmes (2001) and George (2010), the term "vernacular" refers to a type of language that is not standardized, lacks formal recognition, and is frequently perceived as having low social status. In addition, Jacquelyn (2008), stated that vernacular language is used to express unity and group identity in informal settings among ethnic groups, specific social domains, or tribal communities within a nation.

According to study by Rickford (1999), AAVE is used across the United States, but it is especially noticeable in certain areas where historical and cultural influences have impacted its evolution and usage. In Southern states like Mississippi, Georgia, and Louisiana, AAVE shares many characteristics with Southern American English, stemming from common historical ties to slavery and plantation economies. In the North and Midwest, cities such as Detroit, Chicago, New York City, and Philadelphia became key locations for AAVE after the Great Migration (1916–1970), when a significant number of African Americans relocated from the South to northern urban areas, taking the dialect with them (Labov:1972). On the West Coast, particularly in cities such as Los Angeles and Oakland, distinct regional variations of AAVE have developed due to analogous migration patterns and community growth, influenced by local cultural factors and demographics (Rickford:1999).

Since it was first Identified, AAVE has received various and changing terminology over time, from Negro English, Black English, Ebonics, to the more academic terminology, African American Vernacular English. Referring to the definition of Fought, AAVE is a form of English variation used by many African-American populations in the United States which shares a set of grammatical and other linguistic features that distinguish them from other English dialects in the United States. The development of various forms of this English dialect, including synchronic and diachronic features, speech events, verbal artistry, and even how AAVE is used for teaching and learning, legal advocacy, and controversial public

issues, was greatly aided by Labov (1972), who was the primary pioneer in the study of AAVE.

Similar to other varieties of English, AAVE dialect encompasses its own systems of phonology. Green (2002) stated some of the phonological variation of AAVE, among which are as the table below:

No.	Features of AAVE's Phonological Process	Description
1)	Stopping, fronting, or omission of /θ/ and /ð/	Example: θ/ in 'bath' often changed as 'baf', (involved fronting process from /θ/ to /f/). In initial position of the word, /θ/ often spelled as /t/ as in 'think' to 'tink'. Meanwhile, /ð/ if it is at the initial of the words, the sound frequently pronounced as [d]; in the middle or at the end of words, it can turn into [v] or be completely omitted in unstressed function words, e.g., this to dis, brother to bruvva, 'them' to 'em.
2)	Subtitution of /ŋ/ → /n/ ("G-dropping")	The final consonant '-ing' reduced and becomes '-in', such as: running to runnin'
3)	Final consonant cluster reduction	Simplifies word-final cluster, particularly when the following word begins with a consonant and both are obstruents, e.g., the simplification of the word 'test' to [tɛs], cold to [koʊl], and 'hand' [hæn] to [hæ̃].
4)	Final single consonant deletion	The final consonant reduced and form a new word, especially in nasal /n/ (e.g., 'man' [mæn] to 'ma' [mæ]), and liquid /l/ and /r/ (e.g., in liquid /r/, 'more' [mɔr] to 'mo'[mɔ]).
5)	Syncope of Syllable Deletion	The deletion engaged in unstressed medial vowels, especially vowel schwa [ə], e.g., the word *gonna* shortening to *gon'*

6)	Apheresis	The deletion of initial vowel in unstressed syllables, e.g., the word 'about' to *'bou*t.
7)	Monophthongization from /aɪ/ → /a/	The diphthong of /ai/ substituted into monophthong vowel /a/ e.g., ride to [rad].

2.1.3 Phonological Process

The phonological process happens due to the adjustment of the speech tool to the sound that will be produced by the speech tool. Phonological process occurs directly and we may not realize the occurrences, because it is occurring automatically by every speech tool we have. Even if we try to realize the process of phonology that occurs, we perhaps will actually have difficulty producing the sound (Neijt, 2007:59).

The change of sound is part of the phonological process, including sound changes in song lyrics. The phonological process of song involves how the sounds of language are used and changed in singing. This also includes how vowels, consonants, and other phonological elements (such as intonation, stress, and pauses) are organized and learned through song. The phonological processes that can be detected in songs will be further explained as follows, cited from Katamba (1989), and some other experts:

1) Fronting: fronting is the substitution from posterior (back) sound to a sound that articulated at the further forward of the mouth, e.g: velar to alveolar sound.
2) Stopping: The substitution from fricative or affricate to plosive/stop consonant.

3) Vowel Lowering: The substitution sound from certain vowel to another vowel that is produced with a lower tongue height.

4) R – dropping: r – dropping is a deletion/silence for consonant /r/ in a certain context and condition (Trudgill:1983).

5) Post – Vocalic Deletion: the deletion of sound after a vowel/vocal.

6) Weak – Form Initial Sound Deletion: the deletion in the first sound by a weak form (Roach:2009).

7) Asphaeresis: The loss of one or two sound in the beginning of certain words, common in unstressed vowel.

8) Monophthongization: simplification/reduction process from a diphthong (vowel sound that glides from on vowel to another) to monophthong (single and stable vowel sound).

9) Diphthongization: addition of glide from monophthong to diphthong (Roach:2009).

10) Syncope: the loss of medial sound, in particular, a vowel, from within a word.

2.1.4 Distinctive Feature

In this part, the researcher described significant sound changes in selected songs by using Distinctive Feature Theory introduced by Roman Jacobson, a Russian scholar and figure in the Prague school of phonology (1962). The most basic unit of phonological structure that can be analysed in phonological theory is the distinctive feature. Distinctive features are classified based on the natural classes of segments they represent: major class features, manner features, laryngeal features, and articulator features (Chomsky et.al, :1968).

2.1.4.1 Major Class Features

Major class features are essential and consist of [±consonantal], [±sonorant], and [±syllabic]. The [±consonantal] attribute differentiates sounds that are

produced with a considerable obstruction in the vocal tract. Consonants are usually [+consonantal], with the exception of /h/ and /ʔ/, which, similar to vowels and glides, are classified as [–consonantal]. The [±sonorant] characteristic pertains to the resonant quality of sounds; vowels, glides, liquids, and nasals are [+sonorant], while obstruents such as stops and fricatives are [–sonorant]. The [±syllabic] feature indicates whether a sound can serve as the nucleus of a syllable, where vowels, syllabic liquids, and nasals are [+syllabic], whereas other sounds are [–syllabic].

2.1.4.2 Manner Class Features

Manner features elucidate how sounds are articulated. The [±continuant] distinction separates sound with continuous airflow, including vowels, glides, liquids, and fricatives ([+continuant]), from those requiring complete closure like stops, affricates, and nasals ([–continuant]). The [±delayed release] characteristic differentiates affricates ([+delayed release]) such as [tʃ] and [dʒ] from other stops. The [±nasal] feature differentiates sounds that involve nasal airflow, such as [m], [n], and [ŋ] ([+nasal]), from oral sounds ([–nasal]). The [±lateral] feature is specific to the sound [l], which permits airflow along the sides of the tongue and is marked as [+lateral]; all other sounds are [–lateral].

2.1.4.3 Laryngeal Features

Laryngeal features indicate the functioning of the larynx and are divided into three primary categories. The first characteristic is [±voice], with [+voice] representing voiced sounds and [-voice] referring to voiceless sounds. The second characteristic is [±spread glottis]; [+SG] indicates aspirated consonants, whereas [-SG] pertains to all other sounds. The third characteristic is [±constricted glottis],

where [+CG] is applicable solely to the glottal stop [ʔ] in English, and [-CG] encompasses the other sounds.

2.1.4.4 Articulator Features

Articulator features describe the placements of certain speech organs. These features can be divided into labial, coronal, and dorsal categories. Labial characteristics concentrate on the usage of lips, where [±round] differentiates between rounded lip sounds like [w] and rounded vowels ([+round]), as opposed to unrounded labials such as [p], [b], and [m] ([–round]). Coronal attributes pertain to the frontal part of the tongue. The [±anterior] attribute distinguishes sounds made in front of the alveopalatal region ([+anterior], such as [t], [d], [s]) from those produced further back ([–anterior], like [ʃ], [ʒ]). The [±strident] feature separates louder fricatives and affricates, including [s], [z], [ʃ], and [tʃ] ([+strident]), from softer counterparts like [θ] and [ð] ([–strident]). Dorsal features, related to the tongue body, incorporate [±high], [±low], [±back], [±tense], and [±reduced]. The [±high] feature indicates whether the tongue body is raised ([+high], e.g., [i], [u]) or lowered ([–high]). The [±low] feature pertains to the height of vowels, with [+low] vowels having a lowered tongue position (e.g., [æ], [a]) while [–low] applies to other vowels. The [±back] designation indicates whether the tongue is positioned towards the back of the mouth ([+back], e.g., [u], [o]) or more forward ([–back], e.g., [i], [e]). The [±tense] feature distinguishes vowels that exhibit more muscle tension ([+tense], e.g., [i], [e]) from lax vowels ([–tense], e.g., [ɪ], [ɛ]). Finally, the [±reduced] label signifies vowel reduction, where [+reduced] refers to the schwa

[ə], commonly found in unstressed syllables, while [–reduced] refers to all other vowels.

In summary, these features provide a clear and systematic structure for delineating phonological phenomena, especially useful for examining sound changes sung language.

2.2 RESEARCH METHOD

In this study the researcher uses qualitative and descriptive research. Tobing (2016) explains that qualitative research is research based on inductive logic and is planned to get a comprehensive picture of an existing phenomenon. Therefore, this research aims to collect data, analyses them, and provide interpretations of the data descriptively.

2.2.1 Data & Data Source

The data of this study is from the words from the selected song's lyrics that contained the different pronunciation compared to Standard American English (SAE). The words are then transcribed using phonetic transcription. The symbol uses for the transcription refers to IPA symbol.

The main data sources collected by the researcher is all of the words from the song's lyrics contain the pronunciation change. The researcher choses three songs from two famous black singers. For the first black singer, the data gathers from three selected songs from Beyoncé's: Get Me Bodied (2006), Video Phone (2009), and Me Myself and I (2003), as the first object for researching AAVE grammatical features. Secondly, the three songs titled: Get Ur Freak On (2001), *Ain't* it Funny (2004), and I'm Really Hot (2004) by one of the pioneers of American black woman - rapper & singer, Missy Elliot.

2.2.2 Method of Data Collection

In this study, the data collection method was carried out through four stages. First, the researcher collected the primary data by listening to selected songs from Beyoncé and Missy Elliott via *Spotify & YouTube Music*. Second, after the data has

been collected, the researcher gathered the words which are involved the different pronunciation apart from Standard American English, then transcribed the words with phonetic transcription. Third, the data then encoded through phonological processes using distinctive features approach that have been developed by scholars. Fourth, after the data had been coded, the data was interpreted and then concluded by the findings that exist about what types of AAVE's phonological processes that appear on the selected songs.

2.2.3 Method of Data Analysis

The researcher employed the Distributional Method for data analysis. This method aims to categorize linguistic units at a specific level according to their syntagmatic characteristics, which refer to their distribution in spoken language (Ataeva & Kurbanova, 2020). To successfully implement this method, the researcher has to determine the context in which the linguistic unit occurs and the settings in which it can operate. By utilizing various techniques to describe a single dataset, the researcher can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the linguistic landscape. Additionally, the distributive method can be applied to the study of word formation. Various stems combined with affixes can merge, enabling the researcher to categorize the process of creating new words (Ataeva & Kurbanova, 2020).