

## **(dh) across North American English dialects: comparing internal constraints**

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The English sociolinguistic variable (dh)/(th)—stopping of the fricatives /ð, θ/ as in *those* [dooz], *things* [tɪŋz]—is attested in many North American English dialects, including African American English (Labov et al. 1968), rural Southern Anglo English (Thomas 2004), and substrate varieties influenced by a language lacking dental fricatives, such as Chicano English (Penfield & Ornstein-Galicia 1985) or Cajun English (DuBois & Horvath 1998). While some of these varieties are socio-historically linked, not all are. The focus here is on (dh). Despite its long history of investigation, including several important recent papers (Grieser 2013, Newlin-Łukowicz 2013, Thomas & Van Hofwegen forthc.), this variable remains relatively understudied with respect to the question what cross-dialectal differences in (dh)'s internal constraints reveal about the relatedness and origins of this variable in different speech communities.

This talk presents the results of parallel pilot studies of (dh) in speakers of three dialects known for this variable. The data come from interviews conducted in the 1960s and 1970s contained in the Corpus of Classic Sociolinguistic Interviews (Strassel et al. 2003). The speakers are Adolphus H., an African American farmer from Hillsboro, NC; Jerry T., an Anglo gas station attendant from near Leakey, West Texas; and Rose B., a second-generation Italian-American factory seamstress from New York City's Lower East Side. All three speakers display high stopping rates (~40–60%). Every instance of (dh) in the interviewees' speech was identified and analyzed (~1,600 tokens total).

Consonant with most previous findings, a major linguistic predictor turns out to be the phonology of the sound immediately preceding the fricative. This is usually the final sound of the previous word, e.g. [t] in *out there*. Analyzed in terms of phonological features, all three speakers favor stopping in [-cont] \_\_ contexts (= after stops and nasals). In addition, there are differences in detail which lend tentative support to two hypotheses. The first is based on the observation that in substrate-based (dh), exemplified here through Rose B.'s Italian-influenced variety of NYCE, stopping applies about equally regardless of the preceding sound's place of articulation. This is unexpected given that the other two speakers strongly favor stopping after [-cont, +cor] sounds (= after [t, d, n]). This finding, taken together with other differences, suggest that the presence of (dh) in substrate and non-substrate based varieties need not be due to diffusion. Rather, it appears that (dh) can have entirely independent, disparate phonetic motivations, which will be discussed. Second, although African American and Southern Anglo (dh) share the [+cor] constraint, they still differ from each other in further details. One key difference seen here is that while Jerry T.'s Anglo stopping pattern is almost fully restricted to the [-cont, +cor] \_\_ context, in Adolphus H.'s AAE pattern stopped variants also occur regularly after vowels (e.g. *do that* > *do dat*). This finding contributes to contemporary debates about the historical relationship between these two varieties. It supports the assumption of an additional input source for AAE phonology, such as an Anglophone Creole (e.g. Thomas & Bailey 1998).