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Prethodno priopćenje

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**THE VARIATION OF FUTURE *GOING TO* IN AFRICAN-AMERICAN  
VERNACULAR ENGLISH<sup>1</sup>**

SUMMARY

*African-American Vernacular English (AAVE), Black English Vernacular (BEV), or Ebonics, is a social dialect or a non-standard linguistic variety of American English which carries distinctive grammatical and phonological features. Because of these features, AAVE is considered a unique communication system that has been recognized among linguists as an alternate, regular, and systematic form of vernacular language. Common phonological characteristics of AAVE include reductions or deletions of particular sounds (e.g., [sɪstə] for Standard American English "sister" [sɪstər]) and different realizations and vocalizations.*

*In this article, we examine the abbreviations of future going to (i.e., gonna, gon, I'ma) which have been typically associated with AAVE. The variants of future going to have been studied in the interviews with six African-American public figures: rap artists Redman, Prodigy, MC Lyte, and Queen Latifah, a talk-show host, Oprah Winfrey, and a blues musician, B. B. King. We analyze the completely abbreviated form I'ma in correlation to gon, gonna, and going to in the first person singular and explore the use of gon in relation to gonna and going to in the remaining grammatical environments. The main objective of this study is to calculate the frequencies of future going to variants in the speech data of each interviewee and test the sociolinguistic variability of the feature by considering the influence of two external identity characteristics, gender and affiliation with Hip Hop culture.*

**Key words:** *African-American Vernacular English, phonological features, future going to, social factors*

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<sup>1</sup> The theoretical framework presented in this article is based on the Ph.D. dissertation written under the supervision of Prof. Nada Šabec.

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## INTRODUCTION

Every language has more than one variety, especially in the spoken form, which is a well-recognized aspect in everyday language use. In this article, we will be concerned with two varieties of American English, i.e., Standard American English (SAE) and African-American Vernacular English (AAVE). There are other 'Standard Englishes', such as Standard British English, Standard Australian English, Standard Canadian English, or Standard Indian English. (Yule, 1996) Standard American English, also known as General American (GA), is a major accent of American English, which is taught in schools and used in the media. Other accents and regional or social varieties of American English which differ from SAE are considered as non-standard varieties of American English, e.g., Northeastern accents, Southern White Vernacular English (SWVE), and AAVE.

Most researchers in the field of sociolinguistics agree that African-American Vernacular English is a dialect or a distinct subsystem of non-standard American English, which is spoken by the majority of African Americans and has been defined by its innovative vocabulary, phraseology, and by specific grammatical and phonological characteristics. (Labov, 1972; Rickford, 1999; Novak, 2000; Alim, 2004) African-American speakers generally do not employ a particular AAVE feature at a hundred percent rate, but the usage rather alternates between vernacular and Standard American English variants, e.g., "He tall" versus "He *is* tall." The number of Black English variants within certain speech data may therefore be measured relatively precisely and calculated into percentages, representing the levels of Black vernacular usage. The degree of speech formality may be affected by internal grammatical restrictions and by external identity characteristics of a speaker. The latter are generally known as social factors, such as gender, age, social status, ethnic identity, and in the case of AAVE, affiliation with the urban Hip Hop subculture, which tends to be one of the main preservers of the Black American dialect. (Alim, 2004) On the other hand, the alternation between AAVE and SAE variants may be accommodated to the speech situation, the participants of interaction, the degree of formality, the function, or the topic.

AAVE is most widely and evidently represented in the Hip Hop culture, which has provided the biggest expansion of Black English Vernacular into youth slang since Harlem jive in the 1930s. (Dalzell, 1996) Hip Hop arose from the declining industrial atmosphere of New York in the middle of the 1970s. (Light, 1999) It consists of four elements: rapping, DJ-ing, breakdancing, and graffiti art, and it has had an enormous influence on the American youth. Rap music has transcended race, age, sex, region, and social class and left a huge impact on fashion and youth slang. (Dalzell, 1996) The unique expressions of the Hip Hop generation have notably contributed to the vocabulary of AAVE.

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The lexicon of AAVE has been developed by giving special meanings to some words used in Standard American English (e.g., *bad, butter, fly, dope, fresh, def, ill, stupid, hot, wicked*; all these words determine something "good") or by inventing new ones (e.g., *C.R.E.A.M.* – acronym for Cash Rules Everything Around Me, *dead prez, gusto*, as terms for "money"). (Spears, 1998) Black vocabulary is bold and confrontational. It might include explicit descriptions of sexual acts and obscenity, but at the same time, it is innovative, inventive, vibrant, and creative. (Mufwene et al., 1998)

AAVE's grammatical and phonological features demonstrate that it is a structured and systematic language variety rather than a mere careless speech. (Mufwene et al., 1998) Because of these features, there is a need among linguists for recognizing AAVE as an alternate and ethnically-based communication system, a regular and complex language variety, and not slang or broken language. Some of the most typical grammatical features of Black English include the absence of inflected *is* and *are*, technically known as copula absence (e.g., *She nice* for SAE "She is nice"), the absence of third person singular –s on present tense singular verb forms (e.g., *He talk* for SAE "He talks"), the absence of possessive –s in Noun-Noun possessive constructions (e.g., *John crib* for SAE "John's crib"), and the absence of plural –s suffix on semantically plural nouns (e.g., *Fifty cent* for SAE "Fifty cents"). One of the most salient features of AAVE belonging to this category of showcase variables is also the use of invariant *be* (or habitual *be*) for habitual or durative aspect, as in *He be walkin'*, (usually, regularly), or *He be studying all the time* for Standard American English "He studies all the time" (Rickford, 1999:263).

In order to determine the uniqueness of AAVE, researchers have often compared it with Southern White Vernacular English (SWVE) and with urban American varieties in the North. However, Wolfram and Shilling-Estes (2006:215) notice that it is the qualitative difference of linguistic features that is unique to AAVE. For instance, reduction of final consonant clusters may be found in most English varieties where it is mostly applied when the cluster is followed by a consonant, e.g., *bes' kind* [bes kænd] for SAE "best kind" [best kænd]. In AAVE, however, the reduction of final consonant clusters is usually followed by a vowel, e.g. *lif' up* [lif ʌp] for SAE "lift up" [lift ʌp]. On the other hand, there are quantitative differences between AAVE and other varieties of American English. Copula absence, for instance, (e.g., *They nice* for SAE "They're nice") is shared with Southern White Vernacular English, but it occurs most frequently in AAVE. (Wolfram & Shilling-Estes, 2006:215)

### PHONOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF AAVE

Morphology and syntax of AAVE had long been the primary focus of research at the expense of its phonology. However, that does not mean that linguists find AAVE phonology unimportant. During the 1960s and 1970s,

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linguists perceived phonological differences between AAVE and other varieties of American English as crucial for understanding the reading difficulties of African-American children. (Bailey & Thomas, 1998) In response to these educational problems, many studies have been conducted that documented the phonological features of AAVE (e.g., Wolfram, 1969; Fasold & Wolfram, 1970; Labov, 1972). Wolfram's (1969) study in Detroit, for example, revealed that there was a correlation between linguistic variation in AAVE and the external identity factors, such as age, gender, and social class: the highest frequencies of AAVE features were used by teenagers, males, and members of the lower-working class. Work on Black English and on language and discrimination has shown that phonology plays an important role in ethnic identity and in discrimination based on language. (Baugh, 1996)

Omitting final consonants (e.g., [hæn] for SAE "hand" [hænd] or [tes] for SAE "test" [test]) might be one among many reasons for regarding AAVE as "lazy English." However, the omission again follows certain rules; AAVE does not allow "the deletion of the second consonant at the end of a word unless both consonants are either voiceless, as with 'st', or voiced, as with 'nd'" (Rickford, 1999:323). Therefore, we cannot omit the final consonant in, for example, "pant", because the final /t/ is voiceless and the preceding /n/ is voiced.

The most common phonological characteristics of AAVE are reductions, deletions, vocalizations, and different realizations of particular sounds. Varied intonation, high pitch range, and monophthongal pronunciation are typical (e.g., [ɑ] for SAE "I" [aɪ] and [boʌ] for SAE "boy" [bɔɪ]). (Rickford, 1999:5) *R* sound, for example, which plays an important part as a social variable in American English, may be deleted or vocalized at the end of the word (e.g., [sɪstə] for SAE "sister" [sɪstər]) or in the middle of the word (e.g., [fɔ:ti:n] for SAE "fourteen" [fɔ:ti:n] or [ɪntəstɪŋ] for SAE "interesting" [ɪntərəstɪŋ]). (Burling, 1973:35; Rickford, 1999) Vocalization of /r/ is shared with old-fashioned and older Southern white speech. (Wolfram, 1994; Stockman, 1996)

Some features are unique to AAVE: dropping the final nasal consonant after a vowel, as in [mæ] for SAE "man" [mæn]; devoicing of final obstruents, as in [bæt] for SAE "bad" [bæd]; centralization, deletion, or rhotacization of front vowels preceding /r/, as in [bɜ:] for "bear" [ber]; deletion of /j/, as in [kəmɹə] for SAE "computer" [kəm'pjʊ:tər]; metathesis or transposition of adjacent consonants, as in [æks] for "ask" [æsk]; and pronunciation of initial /str/ as /skr/, as in [skri:t] for "street" [stri:t]. (Burling, 1973; Wolfram, 1994; Stockman, 1996; Pollock & Berni, 1996; Bailey & Thomas, 1998; Rickford, 1999)

However, many of AAVE's phonological features are shared with other non-standard varieties of American English: realization of final /ŋ/ as /n/ in gerunds, e.g., [wɔkɪn] for SAE "walking" [wɔkɪŋ]; realization of voiced /ð/ as /d/ or /v/, as in [den] for SAE "then" [ðen] and [brʌvə] for SAE "brother"

[brʌðər]; realization of /ð/ as /t/, i.e., stopping of voiceless interdental fricatives, as in [wit] for "with" [wɪð], [tɛnt] for "tenth" [tɛnθ], and [nʌtɪn] for "nothing" [nʌθɪŋ]; realization of /θr/ as /θ/, especially before /u/ or /o/, as in [θroudəʊn] for SAE "throwdown" [θroudəʊn], or [pɹəfəsə] for SAE "professor" [pɹəfəsər]; voicing of initial singleton /p/ in initial unstressed syllables, as in [bədʒæməz] for SAE "pajamas" [pədʒæməz] or [bətɛɪrə] for "potato" [pə'tetɪtəʊ]; realization of /v/ and /z/ as /b/ and /d/, especially in the medial position before a nasal, as in [sɛbən] for SAE "seven" [sɛvən], [ɪdn] for SAE "isn't" [ɪznt], and [wɔdnt] for "wasn't" [wɔznt]; stress on the first instead of the second syllable, e.g., ['houɪl] instead of SAE "hotel" [hou'tel] or ['pouli:s] for SAE "police" [pə'li:s], etc. (Rickford, 1999:4–5). Vocalization of stressed syllabic /r/, as in [bɜːd] for "bird" [bɜːrd] or [bɜː] for "burr" [bɜːr], is shared with old-fashioned Southern white speech; vocalization of unstressed syllabic /r/, as in [fɑðə] for "father" [fɑðər] or [nevə] for "never" [nevər], can also be found in older Southern white speech; deletion or vocalization of /l/ after a vowel, as in [hɛp] for SAE "help" [hɛlp] and [təʊ] for SAE "toll" [təʊl], is shared with many English varieties; realization of voiceless /θ/ as /t/, /f/, or /v/, as in [tɪn] for SAE "thin" [θɪn] and [bæf] for SAE "bath" [bæθ], is shared with other non-standard varieties, especially in the South. (Wolfram, 1994; Stockman, 1996)

### **Going to / gonna / gon / I'ma**

Abbreviations of future *going to* have been typically associated with AAVE. The completely reduced variant in the first person singular results from a phonological rule where initial *g* is deleted in this tense aspect auxiliary, e.g., *I'ma go* ['amə 'gəʊ] for SAE "I'm going to go" ['aɪm 'gəʊɪŋ tə 'gəʊ] or *I'ma do it* ['amə 'du: 'ɪt] for SAE "I'm going to do it" ['aɪm 'gəʊɪŋ tə 'du: 'ɪt]. (Rickford, 1999) Abbreviations are not always used in completely reduced forms, thus *I'm going to go* may be pronounced as *I'm goin' ta go* ['aɪm 'gəʊɪn tə 'gəʊ], *I'm gonna go* ['aɪm 'gɔnə 'gəʊ], *I'ngna go* ['aɪn 'gɔnə 'gəʊ], *I'mana go* ['amənə 'gəʊ], *I'mna go* ['amnə 'gəʊ], etc. (Burling, 1973) Furthermore, Poplack and Tagliamonte (2000) summarize the differences in meaning between *gon* [gɔn], *gonna* [gɔnə], and *I'ma* [amə]:

Some authors have associated these variant forms with different meanings. Joan Fickett (personal communication, cited by Labov et al., 1968:25) suggested that the reduced form *I'ma* denotes immediate future, in contrast to *I'm gonna*, which would be more remote. Winford (1998:113) suggested a distinction between AAVE *gon* and *gonna* parallel to the creole distinction between "pure future" *go/gon* and "prospective" future *goin/gwine* (cf. Winford, 1998:133 n.14), basing this analogy on Rickford and Blake's (1990:261) finding of more copula absence before *gon* than *gonna*.

(Poplack & Tagliamonte, 2000:322)

At this point, it is important to further elaborate on the subject discussed in the quote. Absence of copula is the absence of *is* and *are* in present tense states and actions, as in "She nice" or "They working." The feature appears to be one of the most common characteristics of Black English and has been regarded as a classic showcase variable in the research of AAVE. (Rickford, 1999:263) In addition to Rickford and Blake's (1990) findings, Alim's research (2004:145) also confirms preference of copula absence with *gon* while *gonna* tends to disfavor it. Based on this analogy, we suggest that *gon* appears to be more characteristic of AAVE than *gonna*, since the latter is widely used in other non-standard varieties of American English, especially in informal contexts. Further abbreviation of *gon* in the first person singular results in a completely reduced form *I'ma*, which has already been recognized and listed as a phonological feature of AAVE. (Rickford, 1999:4-5)

On the other hand, Poplack and Tagliamonte's (2000:329) analysis of future *going to* variants (i.e., *gointa* [goum tə], *gonna* [gɔnə], *gon* [gɔn], and *go* [go]) in the diaspora data reveals patterns of phonological conditioning which are not characteristic of creole languages: *gon* is favored in alveolar stop contexts, while *gonna* occurs in other phonological environments. Moreover, the extensive analysis shows no grammatical constraints on the variable, which would support the creole origins of these variants. Consistent phonological restrictions therefore suggest the English origin of these variants, which should accordingly be treated as different realizations of *going to*.

## METHODS

One of the main objectives of this paper is to explore quantitative interspeaker variation of future *going to* according to gender and participation in Hip Hop culture. General sociolinguistic patterns show that women use more standard language forms favouring overt prestige, while men tend to use more vernacular forms. (Holmes, 1992) Some explanations for women's linguistic behaviour point out that women are more status conscious than men, and they play the 'guardians of values' in a society. According to Holmes (1992), women are linguistically more polite than men.

Gender and Hip Hop, among other social factors, have been reported to affect the use of other AAVE features, such as the absence of copula and the absence of third person singular -s. (Alim, 2002, 2004) In this study, we analyze different realizations of future *going to* in the interviews with six African-American celebrities and public figures. The informants have been selected according to the two external identity constraints, i.e., gender and affiliation with Hip Hop, which presumably influence the use of particular *going to* variants. Accordingly, we included the following interviewees: Redman (male, Hip Hop), Prodigy (male, Hip Hop), B. B. King (male, non-Hip Hop), Queen Latifah (female, Hip Hop), MC Lyte (female, Hip Hop), and Oprah Winfrey (female, non-Hip Hop). We analyze the completely abbreviated

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form *I'ma* [ˈɑmə] in relation to *gon* [gɔn], *gonna* [gɔnə], and *going to* [gouɪŋ tə] in the first person singular and separately examine the use of *gon* in relation to *gonna* and *going to* in the remaining environments. We intend to find out if our results point to any patterns of external conditioning in sociolinguistic variation of this variable.

Relying on previous sociolinguistic findings on external identity constraints (Rickford, 1999; Alim, 2004), we hypothesize higher percentages of typical AAVE variants (i.e., *I'ma*, *gon*) with male informants who are affiliated with Hip Hop culture. We also anticipate an inverse proportion of frequencies: the lowest quantity of *I'ma* and *gon* variants would therefore be attributed to a female speaker who is not involved with Hip Hop.

Several methodological approaches were used in this article. The short presentational survey of AAVE's phonological characteristics is based on previous and recent sociolinguistic literature.

First, we transcribed the video interviews with the selected celebrities precisely and as accurately as possible. Most of the interviews are available on a video-sharing website, *Youtube.com*. We intended to capture sets of similar speech situations and conversations of approximately the same length, i.e., about an hour of speech data for each interviewee. There were some interviews available that could have met these requirements better, unfortunately, the sound quality and background noises made it difficult to transcribe them. The interviews represent the central data of our research.

Second, we calculated each variant's frequency of occurrence for individual speakers by means of quantitative measurement. The completely reduced form *I'ma* was analyzed in correlation to *gon*, *gonna*, and *going to* in the first person singular. The relation of *gon*, *gonna*, and *going to* in the remaining grammatical persons was examined separately.

Finally, we compared the frequencies of AAVE variants (*I'ma*, *gon*) with Standard American English variants (*going to*) and with the one that is shared with other non-standard varieties of American English (i.e., *gonna*). The analysis of interspeaker variation enabled us to determine the correlation and interaction between the quantities of vernacular usage and speakers' external identity characteristics that reportedly stimulate the use of dialectal features.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Before we analyze the vernacular variants of SAE future *going to* (i.e., *I'ma*, *gon*, *gonna*) in a non-standard language variety (AAVE), we should again specify these variants' degrees of linguistic formality: *I'ma* and *gon* tend to be more characteristic of African-American English and therefore carry a stronger vernacular connotation than *gonna*, which is shared with other informal varieties of American English.

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**Table 1.** Abbreviations of future *going to* in the interviews with African-American celebrities: the first person singular<sup>2</sup>

**Tablica 1.** Skraćeni oblici budućeg glagolskog oblika *going to* u intervjuima s afričko-američkim zvijezdama: prvo lice jednine

	<i>I'ma</i>	<i>I'm gon</i>	<i>I'm gonna</i>	<i>I'm going to</i>
Redman (m/HH)	(6) 75%	(2) 50%	(2) 50%	(0) 0%
Prodigy (m/HH)	(9) 81%	(1) 50%	(1) 50%	(0) 0%
B. B. King (m)	(0) 0%	(2) 66%	(1) 34%	(0) 0%
MC Lyte (f/HH)	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(1) 100%	(0) 0%
Queen Latifah (f/HH)	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(6) 100%	(0) 0%
Oprah Winfrey (f)	(0) 0%	(0) 0%	(4) 57%	(3) 43%
<i>Average (m)</i>	52%	55.3%	44.6%	0%
<i>Average (f)</i>	0%	0%	85%	14%
<i>Average (HH)</i>	39%	25%	75%	0%
<i>Average (others)</i>	0%	33%	45%	21.5%

**Note:** (m) – male; (f) – female; (HH) – Hip Hop artist; numbers in parenthesis denote the number of tokens

**Napomena:** (m) – muško; (f) – žensko; (HH) – Hip hop umjetnik; brojevi u zagradama označavaju broj pojavljivanja

<sup>2</sup> The percentages of the contracted variant *I'ma* have been calculated within the affirmative contexts exclusively, since the respective feature cannot occur in interrogative and negative forms. The analysis of *I'm gon*, *I'm gonna*, and *I'm going to*, however, includes affirmative, interrogative, and negative contexts.



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The percentages of *I'ma* variants in Table 1 show a notable distinction in the feature's usage between male and female interlocutors. While Redman and Prodigy produced high frequencies of *I'ma*, none of the female interviewees employed this variant. Nevertheless, there is an exception in B. B. King's results which do not conform to this pattern. On the other hand, the use of *I'm gon* again indicates a significant effect of gender as a social variable, since every male informant exhibited the variant as opposed to female interviewees. Moreover, the only interlocutor to use a standard form *going to* was a female while *gonna* was used by all informants. The results in the speech data of individual interviewees within a frame of intraspeaker variation also show that male informants displayed the highest percentages of features that are more typical of Black English (i.e., *I'ma*, *gon*) while females preferred *gonna* as a common language feature of colloquial American English. Average percentage rates in Table 1 confirm these observations as well.

We now test the relevance of the following quote for our sample of informants:

Preservation of Black English plays an important role in representing Black culture, especially in urban youth Hip Hop subculture. '...the artists and participants in the Hip Hop Nation (HNN), in seeking to present a "street-conscious" identity, are the main preservers and maintainers of Black Language (BL).'

(Alim, 2004:143)

Accordingly, rap artists should exhibit the highest rates of variants typical for AAVE, i.e., *I'ma*, and *I'm gon*. The relation between Hip Hop affiliation and percentage ranks of future *going to* variants in the first person singular is shown in Table 1.

The highest frequencies of *I'ma* were exhibited by male Hip Hop artists, Prodigy and Redman. In fact, the two entertainers were also the only male rappers in our sample of informants. B. B. King, a blues musician, joined the male rap artists in the use of *I'm gon*. On the other hand, the two female interviewees who have actively been a part of the Hip Hop industry for the last two decades did not display a single instance of Black English Vernacular variants in the first person singular.

Table 2 displays the arrangement of tokens for *gon*, *gonna*, and *going to* in the remaining grammatical environments, excluding the first person singular.

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**Table 2.** Abbreviations of future *going to* in the interviews with African-American celebrities

**Tablica 2.** Skraćeni oblici budućeg glagolskog oblika *going to* u intervjuima s afričko-američkim zvijezdama

	<i>gon</i>	<i>gonna</i>	<i>going to</i>
Redman (m/HH)	(11) 64%	(6) 36%	(0) 0%
Prodigy (m/HH)	(17) 56%	(14) 44%	(0) 0%
B. B. King (m)	(0) 0%	(8) 88%	(1) 12%
MC Lyte (f/HH)	(1) 25%	(3) 75%	(0) 0%
Queen Latifah (f/HH)	(2) 50%	(2) 50%	(0) 0%
Oprah Winfrey (f)	(0) 0%	(11) 78%	(3) 22%
<i>Average (m)</i>	40%	56%	4%
<i>Average (f)</i>	25%	67.6%	7.3%
<i>Average (HH)</i>	48.7%	51%	0%
<i>Average (others)</i>	0%	83%	17%

**Note:** (m) – male; (f) – female; (HH) – Hip Hop artist; numbers in parenthesis denote the number of tokens

**Napomena:** (m) – muško; (f) – žensko; (HH) – Hip hop umjetnik; brojevi u zagradama označavaju broj pojavljivanja

Male informants, Redman and Prodigy, produced higher ranks of AAVE variant *gon* than female speakers, MC Lyte and Queen Latifah, despite the disproportional arrangement of tokens between males (28 tokens) and females (3 tokens). *Gonna* was again used by all informants while one female and one male employed the SAE variant *going to*. The speech data of individual informants again show preference of *gon* with most male speakers (i.e., Prodigy, Redman)

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while the majority of female speakers (i.e., MC Lyte, Oprah Winfrey) used *gonna*.

Considering Hip Hop affiliation, the results in Table 2 show that *gon*, as a typical feature of AAVE, was produced by Hip Hop artists exclusively. Moreover, while *gonna* was employed by all interviewees, none of the Hip Hop artists used the SAE *going to* variant. The feature's variation according to each informant individually again shows that *gon* was favoured by male rappers while the remaining interlocutors preferred *gonna*.

Overall, the results show that male Hip Hop artists (i.e., Redman and Prodigy) produced the highest frequencies of *I'ma* and *gon* forms, which we categorized as typical AAVE variants. B. B. King's results, on the other hand, are somewhat difficult to interpret, since there is no clear polarization towards AAVE or SAE forms in his usage of the variable. The remaining informants (i.e., MC Lyte, Queen Latifah, and Oprah Winfrey) employed *I'm gonna* and *gonna* mostly while Oprah Winfrey also used a notable amount of SAE forms *I'm going to* and *going to*. Incidentally, her social status ranges higher than that of other informants, considering her reputation as a well respected talk show host and humanitarian, her acquaintances with prestigious circles, and her publicly exposed financial status. (Goudreau, 2012) Very likely born as an AAVE speaker, Winfrey exemplifies an African-American female who is aware of the normative pressure on television broadcasting in terms of overt prestige, however, according to her relatively distinguished position in the public eye of the American society, we have anticipated even less non-standard language forms, i.e., the use of *gonna*.

Members of the upper social class are positioned at the top of the social ladder and are considered to be those with great wealth and influence. Public figures selected in this study rank from urban musicians to Hollywood actresses and talk-show hosts, and it would be difficult and somewhat groundless to draw the precise dividing lines between different levels of their social positions since we lack the information on each interviewee's specific social components, such as income, degree of education, occupation, wealth, popularity etc. However, there probably are differences in public perception of these interviewees, and one aspect has to do with their reputation, respect, and esteem, known as prestige. Vernacular language varieties generally appear less prestigious than standard linguistic behavior. Therefore, Redman and Prodigy's extensive use of AAVE variants is undoubtedly considered less prestigious by the general public. Consequently, this perception is often extended to the evaluation of the speaker's social status. On the other hand, linguistic features may be an important factor for ethnic-group membership while the term *African-American English* itself determines a strong link between African Americans and their linguistic heritage. Moreover, authentic linguistic behavior of Hip Hop artists is greatly appreciated by the consumers of rap music, which is what the record companies are probably aware of. The music industry seems to be less strict in its demands about the linguistic behavior of their artists, compared to other professions in the

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entertainment business, e.g., TV presenters or talk-show hosts. Nevertheless, approval seeking is very powerful in mass communication. We can assume that communicators are always in some sense trying to win the approval of their target audience. (McQuail, 1969)

## CONCLUSION

In this study, we explored the influence of gender and Hip Hop affiliation on variability of future *going to* in the interviews with six African-American celebrities. The average percentages of *going to* variants, displayed in Table 1 and Table 2, showed a significant effect of gender as an external factor, which is similar to the findings of the previous sociolinguistic studies on gender as a social variable. (Holmes, 1992) Generally, male informants exhibited higher rates of language forms that are more characteristic of AAVE. Similarly, participation in Hip Hop culture stimulated notably higher usage of AAVE variants, however, this applied specifically to male rap artists.

Overall, we may summarize our findings by highlighting a particular combination of the selected social factors, which has proven to be the most significant for an extensive usage of Black English Vernacular forms. Our results showed that male Hip Hop artists (i.e., Redman and Prodigy) convincingly displayed the highest percentages of *I'ma* and *gon* forms. Moreover, the respective Hip Hop artists stay in touch with the Black inner city circles and are known for their street credibility and ghetto mentality. (Sanchez, 2002) The loyalty to a particular ethnic or social group may be expressed by the use of stigmatized, non-standard language varieties which are said to carry covert prestige. Taking this into account, *I'ma* and *gon* variants may be perceived as potential indicators of social status in the African-American community. On the other hand, we had expected a larger quantity of distinctively Black English variants (e.g., *I'ma*) with female rap artists, which indicates that participation in Hip Hop culture itself did not have such strong impact on the use of AAVE variants with female rap artists as it did with males. Incidentally, a detailed observation provided in Chapter 4 revealed that gender as a social factor alone did not completely coincide with the suggested sociolinguistic pattern either, since B. B. King, as a male informant, did not produce any tokens of *I'ma*. Furthermore, as a non-Hip Hopper, he was the only male interviewee to employ the SAE variant *going to*, which additionally contributes to our interpretation of the results. Considering the fact that our sample of six informants is too small and too specific to draw reliable conclusions for the African-American speech community in general, the aim of this analysis was to explore whether these semi-structured conversations with African-American celebrities reveal any patterns in variability of future *going to* according to gender and Hip Hop affiliation.

To sum up, we managed to confirm our hypothesis about the preference of *I'ma* and *gon* variants with male Hip Hop artists. Additionally, our results

showed the complete absence of these AAVE variants in the speech of a female informant who is not affiliated with Hip Hop culture. Finally, a larger amount of data is needed to test our hypotheses regarding the individual phonological realizations of the variable while further quantitative research might reveal if similar patterns also apply to a larger sample of informants in similar speech situations.

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## VARIJACIJE BUDUĆEG GLAGOLSKOG OBLIKA *GOING TO* U AFRIČKO-AMERIČKOM GOVORNOM ENGLISKOM<sup>3</sup>

### SAŽETAK

*Afričko-američki engleski* (engl. African-American Vernacular English, AAVE), *crnački engleski* (engl. Black English Vernacular, BEV) ili Ebonics socijalni je dijalekt ili nestandardna jezična varijanta američkog engleskog koju karakteriziraju specifična gramatička i fonološka obilježja. Navedena obilježja čine AAVE jedinstvenim komunikacijskim sustavom, a lingvisti ga priznaju kao jedinstven, pravilan i usustavljen oblik govornog jezika. Među često spominjanim fonološkim karakteristikama AAVE-a navode se redukcije ili ispadanja određenih glasnika (npr. [sɪstə] umjesto standardnog američkog engleskog izgovora sister [sɪstər]) te različita glasnička ostvarenja i vokalizacije.

U ovom radu istražujemo skraćene oblike budućeg glagolskog oblika *going to* (npr. gonna, gon, I'ma) koji se obično povezuju s AAVE-om. Varijante budućeg *going to* istraživalo se na govornom uzorku intervjua održanih sa šest afričko-američkih javnih osoba: rap umjetnikom Redmanom, grupom Prodigy, MC Lyte, Queen Latifah, voditeljicom razgovorne kontaktne emisije Oprah Winfrey te s blues glazbenikom B. B. Kingom. Analizirali smo skraćeni oblik I'ma u odnosu na gon, gonna i *going to* u prvom licu jednine. Također je analizirana uporaba oblika gon u odnosu na gonna i *going to* u ostalim gramatičkim uvjetima. Glavni cilj istraživanja bio je izračunati učestalost različitih varijanti budućeg oblika *going to* u govornom uzorku svakog ispitanika te testirati sociolingvističku varijabilnost tog izraza uzimajući u obzir utjecaj dviju vanjskih karakteristika, spola i pripadnosti kulturi hip-hopa.

**Ključne riječi:** *afričko-američki engleski, fonološke karakteristike, budući oblik going to, društveni čimbenici*

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<sup>3</sup> Teorijski okvir predstavljen u ovom radu temeljen je na disertaciji izrađenoj pod voditeljstvom profesorice Nade Šabec.