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ABSTRACT

This paper examines and evaluates 11 ERIC documents dealing with the manner and extent to which nonstandard dialects differ from standard English. The relative importance of each document to the issue is implicit in the comments concerning that article. The author presents and explains the deficit and difference models of explicating language varieties. Before actually evaluating the ERIC articles he discusses briefly the basic assumptions about the nature of language with which the deficit model is in conflict. Special notation is made of the articles which the author feels are of crucial importance. (DO)

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# AN APPRAISAL OF ERIC DOCUMENTS ON THE MANNER AND EXTENT OF NONSTANDARD DIALECT DIVERGENCE

Within the last decade, we have witnessed an expanding interest in the study of nonstandard dialects from a number of different vantage points. Various aspects of nonstandard dialects and their relation to standard dialects have now been investigated. With the increasing number of perspectives on a theme, it has become correspondingly more difficult to keep abreast of all the developments in the field. The various approaches to the problem may keep one rightly perplexed, for the conclusions drawn from similar data may differ dramatically. With the proliferation of papers on a general theme, it also has become increasingly difficult to select a subtopic from a larger area which may be of concern to the potential reader. Finally, the limited and delayed availability of papers through the normal channels of publication may keep one in a constant state of frustration.[1] The development of ERIC has certainly helped alleviate the problem of limited and delayed availability, but the relevance of various papers to a specific



1. Because of this problem, the reader should keep in mind that this description only includes ERIC documents which were processed prior to the Fall of 1969.

issue and the relative merit of these papers is outside the scope of ERIC. Yet, it is apparent that such evaluative judgements might be of great service to the reader who has neither the time nor interest to survey the many divergent aspects of nonstandard dialects for himself.

The primary purpose of this paper is therefore evaluative. It is designed to investigate a specific issue in the area of nonstandard dialects and to evaluate ERIC documents dealing with this issue. Obviously, not all of the articles will be of equal relevance to the specific issue being investigated here. The relative importance will be implicit in the comments concerning each article. In addition, special notation will be made of crucial articles in the bibliography.

The issue reviewed here is the manner and extent to which nonstandard dialects differ from standard English. In other words, they attempt to answer the question of HOW nonstandard dialects differ from standard dialects. ERIC articles germane to this area are reviewed within the framework of a general presentation of the issue.

## Deficiency versus Difference

Although it may seem somewhat oversimplified, the current viewpoints on how nonstandard dialects differ from standard dialects can be subsumed under two theoretical positions: either nonstandard dialects are viewed as a deficient form of standard English or they are viewed as a different but equal language system. In a deficit model speech differences are viewed and described with reference to a norm and deviation from that norm. The control group for describing deviation is middle-class speech behavior. From this perspective, nonconformity to the norm

is seen as an indication of retarded language acquisition or underdeveloped language capacity. Nonstandard pronunciation and grammatical patterns are viewed as inaccurate and unworthy approximations of standard English. Nonstandard dialects are considered as "the pathology of non-organic speech deficiencies", and the patterns of these dialects are labeled with such terms as "misarticulations", "deviations", "replacements", "faulty pronunciation", and the like. On the other hand, the <u>difference model</u> considers each language variety to be a self-contained system which is inherently neither superior nor deficient. Nonstandard dialects are systems in their own right, with their own pronunciation and grammatical rules. Although these rules may differ from standard English, they are no less consistent or logical than the rules of the socially prestigious dialect. That one language variety is associated with a socially subordinate group and therefore socially stigmatized has nothing to do with the actual linguistic capacity of the system. Careful attention is made, from this viewpoint, not to confuse the social connotations of a language system and its linguistic capacity as a communicative code.

Although the deficit perspective has enjoyed considerable popularity in a number of disciplines, it conflicts with some basic assumptions about the nature of language.[2] In the first place, empirical evidence suggests that all languages are capable of conceptualization and express-

2. These assumptions have been explicated in Walter A. Wolfram, "Sociolinguistic Perspectives on the Speech of the Disadvantaged" 1968 ED 029 280.

ing logical operations. It is therefore assumed that different surface forms for expression have nothing to do with the underlying logic of a sentence; there is nothing inherent in a given language variety which will interfere with the development of conceptualization.[4]

A second linguistic premise is that all languages and dialects are adequate as communicative systems. It has been established that language is a human phenomenon which characterizes every social group, and that all language systems are perfectly adequate for communication by the members of the social group. The social acceptability of a particular language or dialect, considered nonstandard because of its association with a subordinate social group, is totally unrelated to its adequacy for communication. The question for the linguist is not the WHAT but the HOW of communication.

Another linguistic premise relating to the adequacy of all language systems is that languages are systematic and ordered. Technically speaking, there is no such thing as a "primitive" language or dialect. All languages and dialects are highly developed and complex systems in their internal organization. Furthermore, affinities between the pronunciation and grammatical patterns of related dialects are consistent and regular, not haphazard and random.

Finally, language is learned in the context of the community. All linguistic evidence points to the conclusion that children have acquired

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3. This is not to say that differences between the handling of logical operations may never correlate with social class; however, on the basis of this premise, such correlations cannot be related to language differences, since all language varieties provide for the expression of syllogistic reasoning.

a fairly complete language system by the age of 5 or 6, with minor adjustments in language competence sometimes occurring until 8 or 9. This system is acquired from contact with individuals in the immediate environment. Whether the source for this acquisition is parental, sibling, or peer group interaction is only incidental from a linguistic viewpoint. What is more important is the fact that the rate of language development is approximately parallel across cultures and sub-cultures. That is, lower-class children learn nonstandard dialects at approximately the same rate as middle-class children learn standard English.

This brief but essential introduction to the nature of language sets the stage for our discussion of the manner in which nonstandard dialects differ from more standard-like varieties of English. The different ways in which nonstandard dialects are viewed in the ERIC papers reported here must always be measured against what we know about the nature of language.

## Nonstandard Dialects as Deficient

Although the linguistic premises concerning the nature of language have been basic to the discipline of linguistics for decades now, when the speech patterns of the so-called disadvantaged became an area of high priority for educators in the early sixties, it was the deficit model which provided a framework for this discussion. And, on this basis, programs were devised to describe and change the speech patterns of these children. One of the earlier programs designed to deal with the speech of these children was the Institute for Developmental Studies, founded and directed by Martin Deutsch.

The article entitled "The Deutsch Model--Institute for Developmental Studies", by Martin Deutsch and his staff, is largely a procedural description of a "language intervention" program: the attempt to intervene with the development of speech patterns at a pre-school period in order to prepare and equip the child with the linguistic capacity for success in school. In other words, the program is set up to remedy the presumed deficits of these children before arriving at school. Although the paper is largely concerned with the techniques involved in this program, the major premises of such a program are set forth, and these are of primary interest to our discussion. Three major premises are enumerated as the theoretical basis for this program: 1) the intellectual deficit caused by early cultural deprivation cannot be made up for by putting children in a middle class school; they need more direct emphasis on cognition 2) to overcome deficit, there must be a carefully planned match between specific deficit and remedial measures, and 3) the language handicap of children from disadvantaged homes must be motivated.

The Deutsch model for intervention is based on the theory that environment plays a major role in the development of cognitive skills, and that language skills and cognitive skills go hand in hand. Because of a "noisy environment" and the inaccesibility of adults in the home, the language and cognitive skills of these children are deficit. The basis for these conclusions is not presented in this paper, but in several papers which will be reviewed subsequently.

The theoretical basis of Deutsch's position is, I think, quite untenable. In the first place, it assumes that anything different from middle-class norms is inherently lacking in culture. Such ethnocentric

norms for comparison are in opposition to the most basic understanding of the nature of culture. That ghetto culture is different is not disputed here, but to de facto interpret this difference as deficiency is without basis. When the implicit criteria for viewing differences as deficiences are looked at closely, the main criterion which emerges is conformity to middle-class patterns, as if there were some inherent "correctness" in this way of doing things. Attributing speech deficiencies to the unavailability of adults for interaction, for example, assumes that there is only one model for language acquisition--parent-child interaction. What about sibling or peer group interaction, which may be quite extensive at a relatively young age for these ghetto children? Such a possibility is not even considered.

Furthermore, the relationship of language development and cognitive development has been misunderstood. That language is integral to the cognitive development of an individual is not at issue here, but the presumed debilitating effect of a nonstandard dialect on cognitive ability cannot be justified. Empirical linguistic evidence demonstrates that all languages and dialects provide for syllogistic reasoning; every bit of linguistic data points to the fact that any logical operation possible is a standard dialect is also possible in a nonstandard dialect. The linguistic expression of logical operations may be different from dialect to dialect, but the underlying logic is quite intact. For example, both standard English and nonstandard English provide for making "identity statements" such as The box is blue, but in the dialect spoken by many lower-class Negro children, this construction is The box blue. That the copula form be is not found in this instance has not effect on the ability

to form an identity statement. Rather, this dialect, like languages such as Russion, Thai, and Hungarian, may not have any copula in certain types of constructions. This is not a matter of deficiency, but a difference in linguistic expression. Whatever cognitive deficiencies ghetto children may or may not have, it is erroneous to cite their language as the contributing factor.

In "The Disadvantaged Child and the Learning Process", Deutsch is somewhat more detailed in his discussion of the environmental and psychological factors which contribute to the presumed verbal deficiency. Factors such as the lack of toys and books, an unstable family life, and substandard housing may leave a child deficient in perceptual discrimination, attentional mechanisms, expectation of rewards, and the ability to use adults as sources of information. All of these tasks, Deutsch maintains, are skills required for learning in school. Due to the "non-verbal" slum home, the child may fail to acquire a language concept system.

As we have suggested above, correlations between learning ability and the language of these children are invalid. What is considered to be a lack of syntactic organization and inadequate perceptual ability emerge only because of the external norms of acqusition, the white middle-class behavior, which serves as a measure of "normalcy". A dialect-fair measurement of perceptual ability and syntactic organization are not even considered as an alternative to the approach taken by Deutsch. Furthermore, claims about the non-verbalness of slum homes are not based on formal research evidence. As was mentioned above, the sibling and

and peer interaction patterns in ghetto homes may be the predominant source for verbal interaction in this cultural setting, but such an alternative is not considered. The explication of language differences as deficits, though ingenuous, must be thoroughly refuted because of the fallacious assumptions which serve as the basis for this position.

The papers described above mainly outline the assumptions and descriptive model of the deficit viewpoint. Two articles available in ERIC, one by Martin Deutsch and one by Cynthia Deutsch, report the actual research which leads them to their conclusions about the language deficit of lower-class children. In the article "Auditory Discrimination and Learning: Social Factors", Cynthia Deutsch measures the auditory discrimination abilities of lower-class black children. Her thesis is that "a particular minimum level of auditory discrimination skill is necessary for the acquisition of reading and general verbal skills" and that lower-class children are deficient in the development of auditory attentiveness and discrimination because of an excessively nosiy, overcrowded environment. The basis for measuring perception is the Wepman Auditory Discrimination Test, one of the standard tests for discrimination development.

Several important criticisms must be made. In the first place, the Wepman test is constructed without reference to legitimate dialect differences. Thus, the failure to discriminate between wreath and reef or lave and lathe by young black children is interpreted as indicative of underdeveloped auditory discrimination. But we observe that such pairs are the result of a systematic pattern in which th in wreath and

f in reef are both pronounced as f at the end of a word, and th in lathe and v in lave are both pronounced as v in the dialect spoken by many black children in the ghetto. This, however, is not the result of retarded speech development, but the result of a legitimate dialect difference which may be maintained by adults as well as children. In essence, this homophony (i.e. the pronunciation of two different words alike) is no different from that of the New England middle class child who does not discriminate between caught, the past tense of catch, and cot, the object for resting, or taught, the past tense of teach, and torte, the pastry. The learning of standard English, in the test used by Deutsch, is not differentiated from the language development of a different dialect. Without taking such dialect differences into account, one can only arrive at erroneous conclusions.

Even if a dialect-fair test indicated that some of these children did reveal developmental retardation, this would not be sufficient basis for asserting that this might be attributed to the noisy home environment of the child. No correlational study between the noise of the home and performance on the auditory discrimination test has been attempted, so that such an hypothesis is highly speculative. Such a suggestion is arrived at post-facto. After applying an invalid test which reveals underdeveloped auditory discrimination, a reason for the results of the test in terms of the home environment is sought. And, since excessive noise may have a damaging effect on discrimination, this conclusion is suggested. Without a valid test of auditory discrimination to begin with, and without actual correlational studies, such speculation has no basis in reality. The social dynamics of the ghetto home, although much

mentioned, are just beginning to be researched from an anthropologically valid perspective.

In "The Role of Social Class in Language Development and Cognition", Martin Deutsch attempts to identify background patterns at two developmental stages and relate them to specific cognitive and linguistic patterns. His conclusions are based on a four year "verbal survey" of 292 Negro and white children in the lower and middle socio-economic groups. The data indicate that being lower-class and/or Negro contributes to lower language scores. On the basis of these data Deutsch suggests that there is a "cumulative language deficit". That is, language deficits become more marked as the child progresses through school. The finding that the language deficits become more marked as the child progresses through school is an interesting one, although I would not accept the assumptions and interpretations of these differences. It does, nevertheless, show the increasing disparity between the school expectations and performance of these children with respect to the prescribed mold. The explanation for this disparity in terms of cumulative language deficits, however, seems unwarranted. Labov and Robins for example, in their study of Harlem teen-agers, have shown that there is a direct relation between peer group involvement and reading achievement.[4] On this basis, it is more reasonably suggested that as the child becomes older, the values of the peer group, in direct conflict with the school-imposed value system, are responsible for the increasing alienation of ghetto children in middle-class oriented class-

4. William Labov and Clarence Robins, "A Note on the Relation of Reading Failure to Peer-Group Status in Urban Ghettos" in Alfred C. Aarons, Barbara Y. Gordon, and William A. Stewart, Linguistic-Cultural Differences and American Education, Special Anthology Issue, The Florida FL Reporter, Vol. 7, No. 1 (Spring/Summer 1969).

rooms.

Like other studies by the staff at the Institute for Developmental Studies, the lack of verbal interaction between parent and child is cited as one of the main factors contributing to the language inpoverishment. It is maintained that in adult-child interaction "the feedback is such that it gives the child the articulated verbal parameters that allow him to start and fully develop normative labeling". Like other studies which cite this inhibiting factor of the social environment, no mention of peer group or sibling interaction as a source for such feedback is mentioned. Yet, Susan Ervin-Tripp recently pointed out to me that language acquisition from older siblings and peers seems to be a much more widespread acquisition pattern throughout the world than adult-child interaction. That there is not extensive adult-child interaction, in itself, means very little with respect to normal language development.

In connection with the Institute for Developmental Studies, Vera John has set forth the early stages of language acquisition as they relate to social environment in "The Social Context of Language Acquisition". She suggests that a child, surrounded by a sea of words, selectively and sequentially acquires the names of objects and actions. The learning of new responses is facilitated by "the relative invariance of the environment where the social context of learning as well as the stability of the bond between word and referent is being acquired." Differences in the rate and breadth of acquisition can be influenced by the nature of verbal interaction with those caring for the child. Using the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test as a basis for measurement,

it is found that three clusters of words are difficult for low-income children: words relating to rural living, words whose referents are rare in low-income homes, and action words, particularly those dealing with gerundives (e.g. lying, running). That these children have difficulty with the first two types is not surprising to John, because of sub-cultural differences; however, she suggests that the relatively little opportunity these children have to engage in active dialogue must be considered as a reasonable explanation for their difficulties with action words. The children did not have difficulty in experience with the referent, but had trouble fitting the label to the varying forms of the action.

The assumptions and methods of John follow those of Deutsch, and therefore we need not repeat the criticisms we have already mentioned above. We have already suggested that the assumptions concerning the social environment of these children are unwarranted, and the failure to recognize legitimate form differences between dialects in discussing linguistic capacity. Nowhere, for example, is the possibility that difficulties with standard English gerundives might be attributed to form differences in the linguistic structure of the dialects investigated.

In all fairness to John and other members of the Institute for Developmental Studies , we must mention that all the above articles were written before the issue of difference versus deficiency was clearly articulated. Characteristically, these articles did not even recognize the existence of the difference alternative. However, with the more recent explication of this issue, current literature

dealing with this topic must bear the full responsibility for considering and examining alternatives to the deficit view of language differences in the lower-class child in its assumptions, methods, and interpretations.

A slightly different approach to the speech of the economically impoverished is offered in Osser's "The Syntactic Structures of 5-Year-Old Culturally Deprived Children". Osser has compared the syntactic structures of middle class children and black ghetto children in an attempt to discover how much environmental stimulation is necessary for language development. Using the total number of sentences the children used in the experimental session, the total number of different syntactic structures, and the average "complexity score", a difference favoring the middle-class group is found. Osser also observes that the lower-class group does not show homogeneous speech behavior, a fact he interprets to support the position that environmental differences may not only account for large differences between divergent group, but large differences within groups.

Although Osser is treated here along with other studies of nonstandard dialects from a deficit model, he shows considerably more respect for the legitimacy of nonstandard speech as a linguistic system than other approaches from this perspective. It is for this reason that he recognizes the concept of functional equivalence in syntactic structures. This refers to "the fact that sequences of words in one dialect may be something different in the other dialect, yet the two sequences are syntactically functionally equivalent, e.g. his sister hat in the nonstandard dialect is functionally equivalent to his sister's hat in the standard dialect".

Despite the caution found in Osser's conclusions, several exceptions to his interpretations must be taken. We have already seen the need to justify statements about the influence of verbal environment on speech by correlational studies, so we need not elaborate this criticism again. The conclusions about the syntax of these children must also be viewed suspiciously, as Osser himself has cautioned. The total number of sentences used in an experimental situation may not have any direct relationship to the communicative adequacy of speech in a natural speech situation. Furthermore, the number of sentences used is significantly intercorrelated with the diversity and complexity of structures. Is, for example, the absence of relatives among the lower-class children representative of the actual linguistic capacity or a function of the failure to elicit a sufficient speech sample? Unfortunately, the legitimacy of cultural differences affecting the experimental situation has not been recognized.

Nonstandard Dialects as Different

One of the first important attempts to explicate the different approaches to the study of nonstandard speech was Cazden's "Subcultural Differences in Child Language: And Interdisciplinary Review". Although this article reflects the fact that it was written at the inception of much of the current research on nonstandard speech, it is still quite useful. Disciplines included in Cazden's review are linguistics, experimental psychology, anthropology, and sociology. Three main areas of inter-disciplinary convergence are reviewed: 1) nonstandard versus standard English, 2) stages in the developmental continuum, and 3)

different modes of communication.

In her discussion of the relation of standard to nonstandard dialects, Cazden delimits several methods of describing differences, including frequency of errors, contrastive analysis, and transformational grammar. The first method, describing errors, is associated with the deficit view of language described above. Cazden is rightly skeptical of studies which assess the status of nonstandard dialects as a cognitive liability, although not as polemical as most linguists dealing with this issue might be. The other two methods, contrastive analysis and transformational grammar, assume a difference view of nonstandard languages. Cazden's distinction of contrastive analysis from transformational grammar, however, is nebulous. For one, these two approaches are not mutually exclusive. Contrastive analyses can, and often do, employ the methods of transformational analysis. Furthermore, transformational grammar is only one linguistic model which might be used in the description of a language or dialect. What is more important than the particular linguistic model is the general linguistic perspective which recognizes the structure of different languages and dialects as systems in their own right, with both similarities and differences to related varieties.

With reference to the stages of the developmental continuum, Cazden summarizes work in this area by noting that children of upper socio-economic status are generally evaluated as more advanced than those of lower socio-economic status. But she correctly points out that studies are only valid if evaluated in terms of the norms of a child's own speech community. In this regard, she anticipates the significance of constructing dialect-fair tests.

The final area, the different modes of communication, reviews research on both the intra and inter-individual aspects of communication. Essentially, this concerns the importance of what, to whom, how, and in what situation we are speaking. She concludes that we know very little about differences in language function.

As a review of the literature (up to 1965) on the subcultural differences in the language of children, this can be recommended as a thorough reference. It is less evaluative than might be hoped for with respect to the crucial issue of difference versus deficit, but the period in which it was written may have called for a more cautionary evaluation.

The most explicit sources on the difference/deficit issue are several papers by Joan C. Baratz. In "A Bi-Dialectal Task for Determining Language Profeciency in Economically Disadvantaged Negro Children", the major dispute about this issue in the literature is outlined, and experimental evidence for her own conclusion is offered. Baratz suggests that there are three main viewpoints concerning the linguistic system of low-income Negro children. First, is the view that such children are verbally destitute, not having yet developed a functionally adequate or structurally systematic language code. This viewpoint is rejected by Baratz because of the biased testing procedures (e.g. the use of middle class testing situations such as the classroom). The second viewpoint considers these children to have systematic but underdeveloped language behavior, their underdeveloped system leading to cognitive deficits. Again the viewpoint is considered invalid because of the use of middle-class oriented tasks and norms which serve as a

standard of normalcy. The third viewpoint is that these children have a fully developed but different system from standard English. In support of this viewpoint, Baratz has conducted a bidialectal test in which she assesses the profeciency of black ghetto children and middle class white suburban children in repeating standard English and non-standard Negro English. The black children were significantly more proficient in the repeating the nonstandard Negro dialect sentences than the white children, but when they repeated the standard English sentences there were predictable differences in their repetitions based on interference from the nonstandard dialect. When the same test was given to the white children, the standard English sentences were repeated quite adequately, but predicatable differences in their repetitions of the nonstandard sentences based on interference from the standard English system were observed. The results of this study show that (1) there are two dialects involved in the educational complex of black children (2) black children are not bidialectal and (3) there is evidence from their dialect when black children attempt to use standard English. This type of evidence, Baratz points out, indicates the bias of testing which uses standard English as a yardstick of language development.

The conclusions that Baratz reaches on the basis of her study are important support for the viewpoint which maintains that we are dealing with different but equal systems. Furthermore, the concise discussion of the deficit/difference controversy makes this one of the most essential articles for anyone interested in the issue.

A slightly different emphasis on this issue is given in Baratz's article "Language and Cognitive Assessment of Negro Children: Assumptions

and Research Needs". In this article Baratz focuses mainly on views which consider the speech of lower-class children to lead to cognitive deficiencies. Several of the problems confronting the psychological approach to the language assessment of black children are pointed out. First, the psychologist has assumed that language development is synonomous with the acquisition of standard English. Another problem is the tendency to equate cognition with rationality. The tacit acceptance of external norms results in the description of cognitive abilities of black children in terms of a developmental lag. Finally, Baratz claims that the psychological approach has erroneously concluded that some environments are inherently more adequate than others for stimulating general language and cognitive growth. It is observed that the fallacious assumptions of the psychologist have evolved because of misconceptions of what language is and how it functions.

Like the previous article by Baratz, the explication of the different viewpoints in approaching the speech of low-income children makes this an invaluable contribution to the field. Without taking issue with the essential contribution of this article, I would like, however, to make a specific criticism on one example where she misrepresents the position of Englemann and Bereiter. One of her prime examples in her refutation of the Bereiter-Englemann position of language deficits is the treatment of the if-then construction; they claim that children are unable to handle this construction in deductive reasoning (e.g. If this block is big, then the other one is small). Baratz understands this use of it to be the same as the "question" if in a sentence such as He asked John if he could come. Because black children may not use if in

the second type of construction (He asked John could he come being appropriate in the dialect of these children), she assumes that Bereiter and Englemann have interpreted a legitimate dialect difference as a cognitive liability. But one cannot argue the case of if-then deductions on the basis of "question" if since the two uses of if have quite different syntactical functions. Although Baratz' general criticism of the reasoning of Bereiter and Englemann is quite correct, the particular example chosen to refute their position is, in this case, inapplicable.

In "Grammatical Constructions in the Language of the Negro Pre-School Child", Baratz and Povich compare the language development of a group of Headstart children with the results obtained for middle-class preschoolers, using Lee's Developmental Sentence Type model.[5] This article chronologically preceded the papers discussed above, but probably has been pre-empted by them in terms of relevance to the deficiency/difference issue. It is, nevertheless, important because the analytical method used by Baratz and Povich is different from that described in the articles of Baratz which were discussed in the above paragraphs. The majority of utterances by the lower-class children are on the kernal and transformational levels of Lee's developmental model, according to Baratz and Povich. Although the language of economically impoverished Negro children indicates that their language contains a number of structures which would be considered as "restricted forms" when they are compared

5. Laura L. Lee, "Developmental Sentence Types: A Method for Comparing Normal and Deviant Syntactic Development", Journal of Speech and Hearing Disorders 31 (1966)

with standard English, they conclude that these forms are not only acceptable in lower-class dialect, but also indicate a level of syntactic development where transformations are being used appropriately. Inasmuch as the lower class Negro child is using the same forms as the lower-class Negro adult, Baratz and Povich conclude that he has adequately acquired the forms of his linguistic environment.

Although the vast majority of the controvery over the difference/deficit model in describing speech differences concerns the speech of ghetto Negro children, Vincent P. Skinner looks at the speech of low-income families in Appalachia from this perspective in "Mountainers Aren't Really Illiterate". Because of the paucity of material on Appalachian speech, the article is mentioned here, despite the fact that it is lacking in detail. Skinner does, however, note that this dialect is a sophisticated language which is quite effective for the communicative purposes of the community. The dialect spoken by these mountaineers tends to preserve a more arhaic form of English, due to the geographical and social isolation of this group from mainstream American culture. Unfortunately, this article is much to brief and sketchy to be useful as more than an illustration of the status of white nonstandard Appalachian speech as a different but equal system.

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