

admit is correct English? Many people would say that they are just not as careful with their speech as they should be. But the reason most people are not more "careful" is that to follow these rules would actually render their speech socially unacceptable. Not unacceptable because it is "sloppy" but unacceptable because it would be considered "snobbish." In essence, what this behavior means is that we do not really aspire to membership in the kinds of social circles where such rules are really followed. If we were to base our speech on this kind of rules, we know we would soon gain a negative reputation among our friends and acquaintances for "putting on airs." In spite of this eminently good reason for not using this variety of English, most Americans still have the vague feeling that speech is basically careless and that we really should follow the rules. A very similar situation exists for some nonstandard English speaking youngsters. They may well have the feeling that their speech is not as good as it should be; they may even be able to cite the rules they are violating. But the cost in terms of damaged reputation among their peers is so high that the assumption of standard English forms is not likely to take place unless they begin associating with youngsters who use standard English. The average school-teacher probably will not find himself in the position to join the "upper crust" of society, but if this opportunity were to arise, I have no doubt that the teacher would fairly quickly and largely unconsciously adopt the speech appropriate to that social class. Similarly, a nonstandard English speaking individual, if he feels that he has a viable chance to become a member of a social group which uses standard English, and if he desires to do so, will also fairly quickly and largely unconsciously adopt standard English—and probably not before.

In summary then, language or dialect learning is a unique kind of learning which depends very heavily on a psychological factor of group reference. If this is not present, the best efforts of the English teacher is in grave danger of being completely nullified. If it is present, nonstandard dialect speakers can be expected to learn standard English, with or without formal teaching.

By continually correcting the children in her class, the teacher is capable of having an effect. She can succeed in giving the children a profound sense of linguistic insecurity and doubt about their language and even their personal worth. The teacher can easily have a negative effect but has a slight chance of actually teaching spoken standard English.

The third area of language with which an English teacher might be concerned is reading. The goal of teaching every student to read is a legitimate one. The best suggestion that linguists have been able to make with regard to reading has to do with the match between the language of the learner and the language of the reading materials. The hypothesis is that learning to read is easier if the language in the reading materials matches the language of the learner as closely as possible. For speakers of nonstandard English, this means that the materials used in beginning reading be constructed in accordance with the rules of nonstandard grammar. This hypothesis is currently being tested for children who speak black nonstandard English by the Chicago Board of Education and independently by the Education Study Center in Washington, D.C. To my knowledge, neither organization has published the results of their experiments, but the procedure seems reasonable. I will say no more here about reading, but further discussion of teaching reading to nonstandard dialect speakers is to be found in Wolfram 1970, Stewart 1969 and Wolfram and Fasold 1969.

With regard to writing, it may be important to take a hard look at just what kinds of writing are likely to be needed by a given group of non-

standard dialect children. Perhaps it would be more realistic to focus on writing personal and business letters and on answering questions on various forms than on developing the ability to write a literary critique of a short story, novel or poem. In some of these styles, personal letters for example, it may be unnecessary to insist that every detail of standard English grammar be observed. If a personal letter is to be written to a peer, there would seem to be little point in writing it in a "foreign" standard dialect. However in business letters, in filling in forms and in other official kinds of writing, only standard English grammar is accepted as correct and the ability to use it is a justifiable goal for an English teacher to set for all her students. In the process, it would be useful for the teacher to be able to distinguish three categories of errors: (1) There are errors of organization and logical development of arguments and similar difficulties. This kind of problem will be shared by all students regardless of dialect and linguistics has nothing to say about how such problems should be dealt with. (2) Then there are spelling and grammatical errors based on interference from a nonstandard dialect. In a study of written compositions by black inner city students admitted to a major university, over 40% of the errors found were due to dialect interference. (3) Finally, there are errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar which are not traceable to dialect interference.

A variety of apparent errors in the written work of nonstandard English speaking people are not errors in the strictest sense at all. They are simply the reflection in writing of the differences in grammar, pronunciation and verbal expression between the nonstandard dialect and the standard one by which the writing is being judged. In the area of grammar, when one of the university freshmen mentioned above wrote "Keith attitude" when standard English would call for "Keith's attitude" he was merely reflecting the rules of his nonstandard grammar. In standard English, this kind of possessive construction requires 's. According to the rules of the nonstandard dialect in question, 's may be used, but does not have to be. When another of these students spelled "closest" as "closes," he revealed that his pronunciation rules allow the elision of the t sound after s at the end of a word. Other cases arise when a writer uses an expression current in his speech community but perhaps unknown to the teacher. When one of the university freshmen wrote "Keith had negative changes about De Vries," he was using a common expression among black people. In this context, it means that Keith went through a change of opinion about De Vries. A teacher unfamiliar with the expression "to have changes" or "to go through changes" might well treat this expression as an error.

Other spelling, grammar and style errors occur which cannot be traced to dialect interference and should be considered genuine errors. In the same set of compositions discussed above, the misspellings "laid" for "laid" and "tring" for "trying" were observed. There is no pronunciation feature of the nonstandard dialect involved which would account for these spellings. In grammar, the use of the clause "in which you live in" is not called for by the grammar of any nonstandard dialect. An example of what might be called a style problem is the expression "in results of this," presumably for "as a result of this." All of these usages, along with mistakes in capitalization and punctuation, are appropriately treated as errors unrelated to dialect conflict.

This division into dialect and general errors has at least two implications for teaching writing. In a real sense, the dialect related "errors" are not errors at all, they are correct usages based on a different grammar rule system. Since this is the case, their correction is perhaps not as urgent

as the corrections of mistakes which are not founded on *any* rule system. This may mean that several writing exercises would be allowed to go by with no mention being made of the dialect related errors. In some styles of writing, personal letters perhaps, elimination of dialect interference errors might not ever be appropriate.

In order to carry out such a teaching strategy, of course, it would be necessary for the teacher to be able to identify which mistakes are which. This same ability carries over into the areas of reading and speech as well. If a teacher were to follow the suggestion of some scholars (Goodman 1965, Wolfram 1970) that nonstandard English speaking children be allowed to read aloud in their own dialect, the teacher would have to know what is correct in the dialect so that she could distinguish dialect readings from misreadings. In the area of speech, the teacher needs this ability to distinguish dialect pronunciations from genuine speech impediments.

A case can be made for requiring teachers of youngsters with non-standard dialects to be trained in the grammatical and pronunciation rules of nonstandard dialects of English. In the past, of course, very little of this has been done. There are a few sources to which an interested teacher could go to find partial descriptions of some nonstandard speech. McDavid (1967) provides a list of common nonstandard features from a number of dialects. Fasold and Wolfram (1970) give a semitechnical description of most of the features of the kind of nonstandard English used by urban black people. The Board of Education of the City of New York (1967) has prepared a booklet, distributed through the National Council of Teachers of English, which deals with the nonstandard kinds of English found in that city. None of these descriptions, however, is completely adequate.

There is much an observant teacher can do on his own to distinguish dialect features from more basic difficulties. To do this, he must accept a basic linguistic rule-of-thumb: everyone speaks his language correctly. If several youngsters use the same "bad grammar" feature consistently, it is safe to assume that their dialect rules call for that very construction. Sometimes, one child may seem to have speech problems different from his age mates. His difficulties are likely to be due to some other cause than dialect interference. All speakers of any language occasionally make mistakes because of "slips of the tongue" and nonstandard dialect speakers are no exception. But no speakers make the same slips all the time; if it seems that a speaker constantly makes the same "mistakes" he is no doubt following the grammar of another dialect. If a teacher accepts this rule-of-thumb and applies it carefully in observing his students, he will soon find himself able to make the necessary distinctions.

The answer to the question posed in the title of this article is first, that an English teacher probably cannot do very much about his pupils' spoken language habits and very likely would not want to if he could. What the teacher should do about nonstandard dialect in the teaching of reading may well turn out to be "use it." Finally, in teaching writing skills, a teacher should learn that there are more crucial aspects of writing than dialect related areas and that some writing exercises may allow for continued use of dialect constructions.

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### WHO GAVE US THE RIGHT?

Kenneth S. Goodman

Though the battle cries are different now and the groupings are different and the stated reasons for taking sides are certainly different the key issue in our schools today remains the same as it has been for several decades. Are our schools agencies of conformity designed to make the abilities, interests, preferences, values, habits, aspirations and speech of all pupils

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much the same, all safely within the prescribed limits of social acceptability? Or are our schools prepared to accept difference as a human right and cultural pluralism as the most vital characteristic of American society. Are they willing to accept the obligation to assist each pupil in becoming himself?

No matter what the source, no matter how strong the pressure or how sincere the motive behind it, the schools must not respond by succumbing to demands which would make them assembly lines for turning children into look-alike dolls, so many Barbies and Kens, some black and some white but all pressed in the same mold.

The behaviorists stand ready with their behavioral goals to redesign live children into look-alike, talk-alike, think-alike plastic people. We must drive the behavior changers out of the temples of learning because we do not have the right. And no one has the right to give it to us. Even the parents.

Parents of course have both the legal and moral right to make demands and decisions on behalf of their children. But they are ultimately accountable to these children both legally and morally. The kids are telling us that loudly and clearly.

It is time as educators we face, for ourselves and our communities, that we are accountable above all else to the pupils whom we serve. Somehow in the push pull arena in which educational decisions are made it's easy to forget about the kids—who they are, what they are, and where they're going.

With the kids in mind and with a clear focus on our obligations to them let's examine language issues and discuss positions which we can defend to them now and in the future when they fully realize what we've done to and for them.

#### *Helping Skilled Users of Language Become More Effective Users of Language*

Clearly schools have an obligation to help kids to increase their effectiveness in using language. That goal can not be accomplished in an atmosphere of hostile conflict in which we force young people to choose between identity and conformity. If black is beautiful then so is the way black people speak.

If we treat their language as inferior, deficient or inadequate we force the learners, in the very act of accepting our benevolent promise to give them better language, to accept this characterization of themselves and their means of communication, thought and learning as unworthy.

#### *Linguistic Deficiency*

If they were in fact linguistically deficient we would have to face such bitter truth in our teaching and in our curriculum making. But the truth is that the language every child learns is the language of his name and his immediate social community. Each child learns his language in much the same way, for much the same purposes, and in any group the range of effectiveness in using the language of the group is about the same as it is in all other human groups.

The myth of linguistic deprivation is as much a fraud as the myth of genetic difference in intelligence between blacks and whites which has been perpetrated recently by behavior changers. They've made the mold in their own image, measured all against this mold and found some wanting simply because they don't fit the mold. Having reduced some groups by this device

to sub-human status the behavior changers thus at once reduce their accountability for success in achieving even their own goals with such groups and at the same time justify the application of teaching-learning models derived from the study of sub-human animal forms like rats, pigeons, and chimpanzees.

Every child is born with the capacity to acquire language and he does so. In order to justify treating some children as inferior the behavior changers must ignore the fact that this capacity to learn language is innately and uniquely human and must furthermore demean the language and language learning capacity of these children.

Perhaps the crucial point which must be countered as this case for inferiority is argued is that some children, black or brown or red or poor white lack language suitable for dealing with the kinds of tasks schools pose. In this argument a remarkable leap in logic is made. Schools are urged to reject the language of so called non-standard speakers as inferior (which is essentially what schools have been doing all along) and then the reaction to that rejection on the part of the learners is cited as evidence that in truth they lack adequate language. If a black child chooses to hang his head when he's asked a question rather than subject himself to possible rejection he is labeled non-verbal. If he does venture to present his developing understanding to teacher or tester in his own language he is labeled as deficient in vocabulary and grammar because he is different in vocabulary and grammar. And what's even worse the assumption is made that he isn't learning. In point of fact the child himself will be confused as to whether he is learning or can learn because when he attempts to organize his experience and concepts in his own language and present them to teachers and classmates he is told that he is speaking unacceptably. Whether this is done rudely or lovingly the net effect is confusion on the part of the learner who can not sort out the rejection of language from the ideas he seeks to present. The teacher may not understand him if the teacher has not taken the trouble to listen and become familiar with the language of the learners, but the teacher may also pretend not to understand in order to force the child to shift to unfamiliar higher status forms. In this latter case the hypocrisy reaches a peak since the prime purpose of language use, effective communication, ceases to be a relevant issue.

Under pressure to be accountable for the learning they foster, teachers need to be accountable to themselves to get the cobwebs out of their views of language, language difference, language learning, and their own roles as teachers in the lives of their pupils.

Teachers need particularly to sort out the linguistic, sociological, psychological, and pedagogical realities of language.

A key problem in understanding language difference and reacting to it is the confusion of social attitudes toward language with intrinsic linguistic merit. Teachers have treated languages as good or bad, right or wrong, on the basis of the social status which particular language forms enjoy among the high status people in their communities. It's not surprising that high status people think their language is the standard on which to judge all others. Most people are ethnocentric, thinking all others speak quaintly or poorly. Because of the power in the hands of high status groups other groups in society may even partially accept the view of their language as being of little merit. Yet clearly language difference and language deficiency are not synonymous. Linguistic study reveals that all dialects are fully functioning language variants each with systematic phonology, grammatical structure, and vocabulary. Whether the language

community into which a child is born is the inner city or the plush suburb he learns that language form (dialect) which will be most functional for him in his communicative needs. What he learns is systematic and rule governed though the rules and system will vary from other dialects of the same language. A child's effectiveness in using language can only be judged within the language form he has learned as he uses it to cope with the communicative needs he has.

From the point of view of psychology we must understand that every child acquires language competence before he comes to school and that the language he has learned has become not only the medium of communication, but also the medium of thought and of learning. Human ability to learn and generate language as individuals in social interaction is so universal that it can be said that if a person can think a thought he can find the means of expressing it within the language available to him, by stretching or modifying that language, or by inventing new language on the basis of the old. In acquiring new concepts and coping with new experience the learner draws on that language form which is available to him. Attempts at imposing less familiar dialects however high their status or however low the status of his own, interfere with learning and cut the child off from the very medium of learning which is his major resource, his language.

Urban speakers of low status dialects will acquire *receptive* control over the various dialects they hear spoken in the community as they need to have such receptive control. Ironically this gives them a linguistic advantage over their sub-urban high-status peers who may never understand any dialect other than their own. Evidence of this receptive control over a range of dialects is shown in the way youngsters understand their teachers' dialects but repeat or respond to them within their own dialects. The child has the receptive control to match phonological and grammatical patterns in the dialect foreign to his own, even to handle vocabulary differences, but he does not yet have the ability to generate the response in the strange dialect instead switching to his own code. This receptive control is not likely to exist to any large extent among school beginners yet it is almost universal among sixth graders though the extent of control may vary. Movement toward receptive control of a range of dialects necessary for linguistic functioning in his expanding world may in fact be considered part of the natural expansion of the child's linguistic competence. Acquisition of the ability to generate language, either in speaking or writing, in these less familiar dialects is by no means as universal. That appears to depend on complex factors of need and motivation as the child moves into new social, educational and cultural situations.

Pedagogically we know that language change can not be forced and that language flexibility is not to any great degree a function of intensity of instruction. There is almost no evidence in fact to indicate that people can be formally taught to use other dialects in preference to their own. The most effective means of influencing learners to become more effective and more flexible in language use appears to be still to provide many opportunities to use language in relationship to expanding knowledge and experience. For generations pupils have rejected the efforts of teachers to apply a correct language model to their language and force change.

Bringing these linguistic, sociological, psychological, pedagogical factors together teachers can summarily dismiss forceable intervention in the language of learners. It is not necessary, desirable or practical. By working with the child rather than at cross purposes to him, we help him to expand on what he can do. We help him become more effective without rejecting what he is now. At the same time we accept the richness of

difference instead of the sterility of conformity. Our goal then is not to change behavior but to expand competence.

To achieve this goal we need schools and teachers who accept and understand language difference, who are able to encourage children to continue to use the language they bring to school in learning; who provide stimulating relevant learning environments for their pupils, who exemplify themselves rich, varied and appropriate language use rather than up-tight proper language. If we succeed, we will find our pupils opening outward and ever expanding on the base of their linguistic competence. If we do not we will hear them openly shouting or quietly muttering, "F'get you, honky, f'get you oreol!"

## BI-DIALECTALISM IS NOT THE LINGUISTICS OF WHITE SUPREMACY: SENSE VERSUS SENSIBILITIES

Melvin J. Hoffman

Accusations of covert racism have been leveled directly or by implication against linguists who support the teaching of Standard English as a second dialect. Two representative opponents of the teaching of a second dialect are Kochman (1969) and Sledd (1969). After a brief review of their position, I intend to oppose their arguments that the approval and encouragement of this concept, *Functional Bi-Dialectalism* is contradictory, mis-directed, discriminatory, and impractical.

The concept that they oppose has been defined by several authors who support bi-dialectalism:

Brooks (1964: 30) states:

... should teachers not exploit the tremendous psychological uplift implicit in . . . saying . . . "I accept you and your language; use it when you need it for communication with your family and friends. But, if you really want to be a successful participant in other areas of American life, why not learn the kind of language accepted and used there.

*Nonstandard Dialect* (1968: 1) finds:

Teachers should accept the pupils' nonstandard dialect in appropriate situations and build on the language patterns which pupils have been accustomed to using . . . Standard English thus becomes additive as another available language pattern while the original dialect may still be spoken in situations which the individual considers appropriate.

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Shuy (1969a: 89) gives the origin of the term:

... The term *functional bi-dialectalism* was proposed at the Indiana University Conference on Social Dialects and Language Learning as a way of identifying a person's legitimate right to continue speaking a "home dialect" (one which might be called nonstandard) even after he has learned a "school dialect" (one which might be called standard).

Sladd and Kochman share a common conviction with many of the linguists who support bi-dialectalism: that no language or dialect is intrinsically inferior to any other.

Sladd (1308) after a discussion of the traditional stereotyped authoritarian English teacher, states that such a teacher:

... is not popular any longer among educators. Though the world at large is still inclined to agree with her, the *vulgarizers* of linguistics drove her out of the academic fashion years ago when they replaced her misguided idealism with open-eyed *hypocrisy*.<sup>1</sup> To the popular linguists, one kind of linguistics is as good as another, and judgments to the contrary are only folklore; but since the object of life in the U.S.A. is for everybody to get ahead of everybody else, and since linguistic prejudice can keep a man from moving up to Schlitz, the linguists still teach that people who want to be decision makers had better talk and write like people who make decisions. [italics mine]

Kochman (87:8) points out that there is no easily identifiable standard dialect among the regional standards, that speaking a different regional standard may bring social handicaps, and that acceptability of speech, rather than being solely a matter of language mastery, depends on additional variables such as personality and the social and/or economic status of the speaker: Attempting to teach standard English in the face of these considerations is deemed a contradiction.

The main problem, these authors note, is prejudice, which will not end when a minority group member masters standard English. Kochman (88, and 157) argues very tellingly: a minority group member is well aware that he is suffering from social not linguistic discrimination; standard dialect mastery is not essential to many trades where discrimination exists; income disparity between minority and majority group members increases as educational levels rise. He concludes:

The present efforts to teach a prestige form of speech to nonstandard speakers are educationally wasteful and the effective realization is socially improbable, unless the express desire and cooperation of those learning it are forthcoming.

<sup>1</sup> Sladd, referring to bi-dialectalism as the "clank of white supremacy" (1308), prefates the word bi-dialectalism with the following modifiers: "compulsory" (1310), "mandatory" and "imposed" (1312), "coercive" and "regimented" (1313), "enforced" and "obligatory" (1314). Further, Sladd (1308) seems neither hesitant nor unwilling to suggest selfish motives for any white linguist supporting bi-dialectalism:

Black English provided the most lucrative new industry for white linguists, who found themselves lode when they discovered the interesting locations which the less protected employ to the detriment of their chances for upward mobility. In the annals of free enterprise, the early sixties will be memorable for the invention of functional bi-dialectalism.

It would be interesting to find how Sladd would characterize the work of McDavid and McDavid (1961) and McQuown (1954) who, among others, had expressed these concerns for the language-learning problems of the disadvantaged before such concerns were either popular or profitable and who had anticipated many of the present problems and recommendations for solutions.

Sledd (1315) states this more strongly:

... Nothing the schools can do about black English either will do much for racial peace and social justice as long as the black and white worlds are separate and hostile ... regimented bi-dialectalism is no substitute for sweeping social change.

These arguments have been used to counter the contention of bi-dialectalists that standard language mastery eases the social and economic advances of minority group members. Both authors find this argument intolerable. Sledd (1309) claims:

The basic assumption of bi-dialectalism is that the prejudices of middle-class whites cannot be changed but must be accepted and indeed enforced on lesser breeds.

More charitably, Koelman (88) remarks:

It is to the credit of the linguistic approach that it has at least recognized that the speaker's native dialect has cultural values for him and is not to be tampered with ... Unfortunately, the linguistic approach accepts as social determinant the same obnoxious and racist standards as the prescriptive-assimilationist approach.

Both authors contend that bi-dialectalism is impractical for two reasons: lack of cooperation from those being taught and lack of efficiency. Sledd (1314) and Koelman (88) feel that the bi-dialectal approach is doomed since minority group members will become less and less inclined toward the assimilationist approach and that emerging ethnic pride will increase resistance to second dialect learning. Sledd (1313) and Koelman (87) argue further that available materials are insufficient, that existing efforts have resulted in too little gain, and that not enough information is available about the structures of the dialects involved to permit the design of a feasible approach.

Both agree that advancement of social conditions should occupy the prior attention of people currently engaged in advancing the concept of bi-dialectalism.

Sledd (1315) minces no words:

... They may purge themselves of inconsistency, and do what little good is possible for English teachers as political reformers, if instead of teaching standard English as a second dialect they teach getting out of Vietnam, getting out of the missile race, and stopping the deadly pollution of the one world we have, as horribly exemplified by the current vandalism in Alaska.

Koelman (157) suggests that racism may be eroding and if social change occurs, the language problem will be solved as a by-product:

... Does it really matter how people of status speak? You say, what if the social order is not changed? Then I ask you, what have you accomplished in your program: the ability to avoid some stigmatized forms which are so stigmatized because the people who speak them are?

#### A Refutation?

Certain considerations seem to be lost sight of all too easily: as mentioned earlier, linguists and those who have come into contact with lin-

<sup>2</sup>My thanks to Eloise Courter and Barbara Schnee for their helpful suggestions.

guists are well-aware of the relativity of standardness in language; American structuralists have sought continually to make this clear. Works included in such collections as Allen (1964) and books such as Hall (1960) and others, are largely concerned with this and related matters of attitude toward language.

The lack of success that such efforts have had upon the profession of the teaching of English and the layman's nearly total unawareness of a non-prescriptive approach to language should indicate something about the attitude of most human beings toward correctness in language. Indeed, what little effect the introduction of linguistic sophistication had upon the *Websters Third International Dictionary* provoked vehement criticism from the linguistically naive but vocal and influential Eastern literati, which indicate the power that ignorance sanctified by tradition is still capable of exerting against a position supported by scientific evidence.

Judgments of the social acceptability of various forms of language are not solely judgments of the white middle-class. Both ethnic and social judgments are made by people of different ages, races, and status, often with a great deal of accuracy in identification. Findings of Shuy (1969b: 181-4), Labov (1964: 82-8), and Larson and Larson (1966) indicate that minority group members make the same judgments about language as majority group members although they may be more tolerant toward groups similar to themselves. What is more, minority group speakers tend to perceive themselves as employing the preferred or alternative forms even when this is not the actual case.

The features that are diagnostic racially or socially in any area may be few, arbitrarily selected, and narrowly regional in scope. Yet Labov (1969: 33-7) points out:

... this overlap [either with Southern white speech or with the speech of recently immigrated white speakers who live in close proximity of black ghettos] does not prevent the features from being identified with Negro speech by most listeners: we are dealing with a stereotype which provides correct identification in the great majority of cases, and therefore with a firm basis in social reality. Such stereotypes are the social basis of language perceptions; this is merely one of many cases where listeners generalize from the variable data to categorical perception in absolute terms. Someone who uses a stigmatized form 20 to 30 percent of the time will be heard as using this form all of the time.

Existing bi-dialectal materials, dealing with such features, are indeed few as Sledd points out, and present results leave much to be desired. Yet, do such shortcomings argue that efforts should be abandoned to improve materials and to educate teachers to use them? Smith (1968: 119) writes:

... language problems [of minority group members] must be seen through the eyes of sympathetic and linguistically sophisticated teachers, and they must be led to literacy by means of materials based on the most effective application of the findings of both modern linguistics and modern pedagogy.

Maxwell (1970: 1159) answers Sledd:

... The question of whether the school can or cannot teach a second dialect is a technical question, beyond his [Sledd's] competence, since he is not an authority on learning. While it may be that present methodologies cannot teach a second

dialect [sic], it does not follow that methods cannot be developed.

I must concur with Sledd and Kochman in two criticisms however: more specific information about the effects of teacher attitude and linguistic interference should be available now as well as fully developed programs. It is time for linguists to progress beyond harangues and sample lessons. In Hoffman (1970) and in Davis et al. (1968), two examples of material addressed to these concerns can be found as well as in Feigenbaum (1970). In addition, three collections, edited by Aarons et al. (1969), Alatis (1969), and Baratz and Shuy (1969) include works, many of which address themselves to just such questions as design and implementation of concrete bi-dialectal programs. Hopefully, many more will be forthcoming.

The criticism of the desirability of bi-dialectalism requires further comment. Kochman (157) sees:

... our society experiencing the throes of social reform this very minute. Our cherished prejudices and practices are being assaulted at every turn, besieged with long hair and "bad manners" on the one hand and Black Power and creative disorder on the other. . . .

Sledd (1315) finds:

... the measure of our educational absurdity is the necessity of saying once again that regimented bi-dialectalism is no substitute for sweeping social change—necessity being defined by the alternative of dropping out and waiting quietly for destruction if the white businessman continues to have his way.

Somehow passed over is recognition that the learning of some kind of standard dialect or language is the normal situation for most speakers of any language in the world and that bi-dialectalism is normal and accepted in many countries. See Ferguson (1964: 114-5): The above quotations suggest social even military revolution. Forgotten by critics of bi-dialectalism is the matter of the standard language of China. Mandarin, the national standard of feudal China, now known as *Kuv Yu* or national dialect, has remained the standard speech both of republican Taiwan and the communist mainland; the concept of standardness in language for the Chinese survived two political revolutions of the world's most populous country. The Chinese experience throws a slightly different light on the effects of the changes that Kochman and Sledd suggest.

Those who ignore the considerations that second dialect and/or second language learning is the normal rather than the exceptional situation for many people in this world imply, however unintentionally, that minority group members in the United States are less able to fulfill such an expectation. The position opposing bi-dialectalism is, in this sense, more subtly paternalistic than the bi-dialectalism which is being attacked.

While the society moves toward mutual tolerance for cultural pluralism, what is going to happen to the thousands of students who must face the harsh realities of the here and now? Must we abandon their interests until the millenium? I raise the critics' own question: whose interests or sensibilities are to be taken into account? What does the student of the language-permissive teacher have to look forward to while discrimination continues? Speech differences may only be an excuse to justify a rejection already made on a prejudiced basis, but should we deny those who choose to remove this obstacle for themselves the opportunity to do so because such a choice may be offensive to our sensibilities?

Maxwell (1159) puts it in these words:

There seems to be no reason in the world why the teacher of English cannot . . . educate people out of their prejudices and at the same time give them some skills which they can use to advance whatever cause they set for themselves. That is why we teach children the skill of reading and writing, so they can get ahead. If teaching them standard dialect to use at their discretion can get them ahead, why not help?

What about the student who wishes to conform or assimilate? Shouldn't everyone in a free society have the choice to conform as well as not to conform? Should we limit the implementation of educational policy to those advanced by self-styled militants and liberals whose actual constituency in both the majority and minority community may be far more limited than their rhetoric would suggest?

Maxwell (1159) writes:

Sledd argues from evidence available to him that the black youngster may not want to speak the standard dialect. That's fine; and it should be his privilege not to do so. On the other hand, it should also be his privilege to put on the "man's" language whenever it suits his purpose. He should be allowed to make that decision as he shapes his decisions in life. But if he has not learned a second dialect, he is without the means to make that decision. Unfortunately, decisions on many educational decisions must be made by parents for their children. Sledd has listened to militants, but he gives no evidence (or ignores the evidence) that parents of black children consistently want control of standard English as one of their children's resources. And woe be to the school that tries for less.

Similarly in Hoffman (forthcoming), I submit:

Only a person who is functionally bi-dialectal enjoys the freedom to choose to reject or accept either dialect, or to use both as the occasion demands. Proponents of . . . [arguments against bi-dialectalism] . . . seem no more willing to provide the learner with the capability to make his own choices than the prescriptive schoolteacher about whom all complain. . . .

Both Labov and Stewart in an unexpectedly heated discussion following a paper by Allen (1969: 198 and 201-2) partially support an observation which I invite the reader to consider and to be on the alert for: most opponents of bi-dialectalism have not only a passable but often excellent command of some regional standard as well as control of standard written English. I wonder whether the opponents of bi-dialectalism permit their own children to attend schools taught by teachers who do not believe in teaching standard English. Further, why don't the opponents of bi-dialectalism permit their own children to attend schools taught by teachers who do not believe in teaching standard English. Further, why don't the opponents of bi-dialectalism write their articles in the colloquial language of their dialect area if personality and content—not form—are to be the important considerations of the future?

Occasionally in conversations and in articles, the suggestion is made that bi-dialectal teaching should be avoided, because it may harm the learner. Maxwell (1159) replies to Sledd on this point:

Sledd claims psychological damage to students who would be taught a second dialect. He does not offer proof of psychological damage, and if he had some he would be hard put to demonstrate that such damage would have arisen exclusively from the fact of learning a second dialect. The many people of apparently sound mind who can switch dialects cast doubt on his assertions.

Linguists who support the bi-dialectal approach are called arrogant in prescribing what *others* should do. Because of circumstances of origin, education, travel, etc., many of us who support bi-dialectalism *now* are regional and/or social bi- and even poly-dialectals. Regarding arrogance and credibility, the reader is left to draw his own conclusions.

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**"LOVE ME OR LEAVE ME BUT DON'T WASTE THE TIME":  
DIALECTS IN TODAY'S SCHOOLS**

Jean Malmstrom

Hey, maybe I won't be a grammatical English teacher, maybe not a published BOOK writer, maybe not a bright black shadow glowing deaddull not even knowing I'm not free, can't move like I want to pinned to the pavement. You think I will ever sit down, brow furrowed, and figure out, try to figure out want to figure out the sentence structure of everything I write? Lady, I just don't

- a. care
- b. have the time.

Too much to do so little time. Love me or leave me but don't waste the time.

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So, to his English teacher, wrote Warren Wardell, a successful black English major in secondary education at Western Michigan University. He knows that language is the key to both conflict and communication, as sociolinguists are making clearer every day. Language creates and consolidates social groups, separating in-groups from out-groups. Conflict festers and communication falters unless each group can say to the others, with pride and honesty, "Teach me your language and I'll teach you mine."

Until the English teacher can utter those words, with friendly, honest, intellectual curiosity, to his students who are nonstandard speakers, his teaching of standard English to these speakers will yield anger and despair, not joy and hope. Inside and outside classrooms, solutions to social problems require respect for dialect differences. Classroom success begins with teachers' respect for their students' dialects, both regional and social. Without granting this respect to students, we teachers cannot ask students' respect for our dialects. Without mutual respect, we merely "waste the time."

In 1963, the National Council of Teachers of English published *Dialects—U.S.A.*<sup>1</sup> It was a little booklet to help students learn how geography affects the way we talk in the United States. Since the 1930's, "linguistic geographers" had been collecting data on American speech for the Linguistic Atlas of the United States. Their findings supported what we all know from radio and television: a person's speech reflects his geographic background. The differences result from early settlement history, population migrations, physical geography, the presence or absence of cities, and the social structure of the region. The several ways each person speaks are technically called his "dialects," and every language is a collection of all the dialects of all its speakers.

As *Dialects—U.S.A.* emphasized, the word *dialect* has no negative or evil connotations in the technical vocabulary of the modern student of language. Dialects differ interestingly in vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. As students and teachers investigated regional dialects firsthand, they discovered that the man-in-the-street is amused by vocabulary differences, puzzled by pronunciation differences, and offended by grammatical differences. For example, he chuckles when he discovers that his deepdish apple pie is somebody else's apple slump or apple grunt. But he is perplexed when he finds that people from other parts of the country "mispronounce" words; since in his opinion, his own pronunciation is the only "correct" one. His puzzlement changes to righteous indignation when grammatical differences confront him. He absolutely "knows" that *he don't* and *ain't* are grammatically "wrong," and he feels subconsciously that they are also morally "bad."

The study of regional dialects in the schools capitalizes on all these emotions, which actually explain the built-in fascination of the field. People may be amused, puzzled, or angered by dialect differences, but they are never bored by them. The intellectual spin-off of dialect study is that teachers and students acquire a new viewpoint about both literature and language. They learn to observe how writers use dialect in literature for many artistic purposes, and, as Alfred Dauzat said years ago in "La géographie linguistique," they learn

that words, like men, are bound to the earth. Their conflicts do not take place in the clouds of philosophy but in one country or another, as men's conflicts do.

<sup>1</sup> Jean Malmstrom and Annabel Ashley.



Recently, men's conflicts in our cities have spotlighted the crucial importance of social dialects. As we face the educational dilemmas of urban ghettos, emotional reactions to dialects proliferate and intensify. Language is the most accurate single criterion of social class,<sup>2</sup> and racism in our country reflects in our national attitudes toward social dialects. Since the majority of the ghetto minority is black, their speech is the controlling nonstandard variety, the king of the street. The language of the street symbolizes intense intra-group loyalties and passionate social beliefs. This is the prestige language that the ghetto newcomer to New York from Puerto Rico, for example, wants to learn. It is his passkey into the commanding groups of his neighborhood. The middle-class standard English of the schools engages his attention only spasmodically and artificially; his involvement with the street language is massive and automatic. As Warren Wardell says, he does not attend "one of those littleredlilywhite schoolhouses where all the kids have the time to go home and play stump the English teacher. Or go home and play. Or go home."

We put the cart before the horse if we assume that a nonstandard speaker automatically wants to learn standard English in order to increase his economic, social, and political mobility. First, he must be convinced that such mobility is both possible and desirable. Skin color cannot be changed by dialect-switching; and skin color is crucial for our black majority-minority. It intensifies all the problems implicit in social dialect differences, inside and outside classrooms. Warren Wardell comments on it to his English teacher:

I don't believe in your language and I don't believe in you. Your language tells me that black is evil, magic, mysterious, dirty. You tell me with this same language I can get as far as the white boy? I got to write grammatically? I got to write in sentences? World's not built that way. I go to get a job, old days, man sees my face, nowords of mine, just his, Not hiring. Igottoget a job newdayshipperdays manseesmyface (says Sit down Boy. Are you qualified? Don't call us, we'll call you.) nowords of mine, justhis NOT HIRING. If I get A's on my papers it doesn't make me happy, it surprises me. That someone should go through all that trouble to form A when all the A's turn into simple easily made O with the Man.

Sociolinguists cannot solve these problems but they can give us guidance. They have analyzed social dialects and their relationships to race, age, sex, and class in several cities—New York, Washington, D. C., Chicago, Detroit, for example. So far, most work has been done on the language of the black-ghetto majority-minority, though attention is also being paid to the language problems of other minorities—Indians, speakers of Spanish from Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Mexico, and disadvantaged whites from Appalachia. Sociolinguists have discovered that black nonstandard English is as patterned as standard English, with which it contrasts in clear and definite ways. Though these contrasts are social markers, they are relatively few. In other words, nonstandard and standard English are much more alike than different. But those few differences are the crucial problems for teachers who would bring the black-ghetto child into the mainstream culture. Across the country, these patterns and contrasts are the same, a

<sup>2</sup> William Labov, *The Social Stratification of English in New York City* (Washington, D.C., Center for Applied Linguistics, 1966). Labov summarizes some of his findings in "Stages in the Acquisition of Standard English," *Social Dialects and Language Learning*, Roger W. Shuy, ed. (Champaign, Ill., National Council of Teachers of English, 1965), pp. 77-103.

fact that greatly simplifies the preparation of teaching materials and techniques.<sup>3</sup>

However, the study of social dialects is not being joyously welcomed into the schools, as the study of regional dialects was in 1963. Martin Buber says that real education is accepting the learner before trying to influence him. Too often such acceptance is the impossible hurdle for the teacher. A teacher who thinks that nonstandard English is "wrong," "bad," "sloppy," or "illiterate" reflects his middle-class values, clinging to his standard English as a symbol of his middle-class membership. English teachers, both black and white, are members of the middle class. A linguistically-informed teacher knows that any language is a collection of dialects, of subvarieties within dialects, and of stylistic varieties within those subvarieties. We all need many types of language to handle various situations appropriately.<sup>4</sup> The teacher's goal is to help students learn dialect-switching to cope intelligently with all parts of their lives. Speakers of standard and non-standard alike need to acquire such basic communication skill.

Working in New York City, William Labov has organized important phonological rules that correlate with crucial grammatical inflections. These correlations produce homonyms in the ghetto child's speech so that he cannot hear the signals of standard English. In other words, his language lacks the signals of school language; these signals are "silent" just like the *k* of *knife* or the *b* of *lamb* in standard English.

For example, Labov cites the following phonological variables.

1. *r-lessness*. The *r* is omitted before other consonants or at the ends of words and is often omitted even before a vowel. Thus the following pairs are homonyms.

guard/god	fort/fought	Carol/Cal
nor/gnaw	court/caught	Paris/pass

2. *l-lessness*. The same pattern appears almost as often with *l* as with *r*. The two sounds are similar in their physical production in the mouth. "Dropping *l*'s" produces homonyms like the following.

toll/toe	tool/too	all/awe
help/hep	fault/fought	Saul/saw

3. *Simplification of consonant clusters*. At the ends of words, one consonant disappears from a cluster, especially those ending in *t* or *d* and *s* or *z* sounds. Thus the following words become homonyms.

past/pass	mend/men	six/sick
riff/riff	hold/hole	mix/Mick

Note that if several rules of omission combine, triple homonyms can appear:  
told/toll/toe

4. *Other phonological variables producing other types of homonyms*. For example, the voiceless *th* sound becomes *f* at the end of words: *Ruth* and *roof* and *death* and *deaf* are homonyms. Lack of vowel distinction makes homonyms of *pin* and *pen*, *since* and *cents*, *sure* and *shore*, for example.

<sup>3</sup> William Labov, *The Study of Nonstandard English* (Champaign, Ill., National Council of Teachers of English, 1970); J. L. Dillard, "Negro Children's Dialect in the Inner City," *Florida Foreign Language Reporter*, Vol. 5 (Fall 1967), pp. 7-8, 10; Leo A. Pederson, "Some Structural Differences in the Speech of Chicago Negroes," *Social Dialects and Language Learning*, op. cit., pp. 28-51; *Teaching English in the Inner City*, Ralph W. Fasold and Roger W. Shuy, eds. (Washington, D. C., Center for Applied Linguistics, 1970); *Linguistic-Cultural Differences and American Education*, Special Anthology Issue, *Florida Foreign Language Reporter*, Vol. 7 (1969).

<sup>4</sup> Jean Mulmstrom, "Language and Situation," *An Introduction to Modern English Grammar* (New York, Hayden Book Co., Inc., 1968), pp. 2-44.

These phonological facts, and others, correlate with grammar in complicated ways. For instance, the loss of *r* affects the possessives *your* and *their*, making them homonyms of *you* and *they* respectively. The loss of *l* affects the future-time forms: *you'll* and *you* fall together as do *he'll* and *he*, and *she'll* and *she*. The loss of *t* and *d* affects the past forms of verbs, which regularly use these sounds for signalling the *-ed* inflection of the past tense and the past participle. The absence of *s* affects the present of verbs and the plural and possessive of nouns. These are only some of the consistent phonological-grammatical conflicts between the street language and the school language. They can cause extreme problems in learning to read and write standard English.<sup>5</sup>

Sociolinguists can now rank contrasts between the street and school languages in an order of cruciality so that teachers can knowingly teach the problems and avoid the non-problems.<sup>6</sup> In order of descending importance, the five most crucial contrasts which brand the speaker of black English in the ears of his listener are the following.

1. Omission of *-s* from the third person singular of the present tense of verbs (*he go* for *he goes*).
2. Multiple negation (*didn't do nothing* for *didn't do anything*).
3. Omission of the *-s* possessive suffix (*man hat* for *man's hat*).
4. Invariant *be* (*he be home*, with no standard equivalent, meaning something like "He is home frequently," as contrasted with "He is home permanently" or "He is home at the moment").
5. The absence of *be*, the copula or linking verb (*he nice* for *he is nice*).

On the basis of this information, sociolinguists are now preparing teaching exercises, using foreign-language teaching methods, contrasting two dialects instead of two languages. Four types of drills seem especially effective.

1. *Discrimination drills.* As stimulus the teacher says pairs of sentences: *He work hard* and *He works hard* or *He work-hard* and *He work hard* or *He works hard* and *He works hard*. To each pair the student reacts by saying "same" or "different." Thus he shows his power to hear the crucial *-s* of the third person singular present tense.

2. *Identification drills.* The teacher gives a one-sentence stimulus and the student identifies it as "standard" or "nonstandard." For example:  
*He work hard* "nonstandard"      *He works hard* "standard"

3. *Translation drills.* Students translate back and forth between the two dialects, changing the stimulus *He works hard* to *He work hard* and the stimulus *He work hard* to *He works hard*. Translation drills can be complicated in various ways. For example, *I*, *you*, *we*, or *they* may be substituted for *he*, whereupon the crucial *-s* of the third singular disappears. The student shows his understanding of that fact by replying *They work hard* to the stimulus *They work hard*. This knowledge is crucial because many nonstandard speakers overcorrect, generalizing *he works* into *I works*, *you works*, *we works*, and *they works*. He needs to examine the entire set to see the point of contrast. Translation drills illuminate the totality, not merely the one inflected form.

<sup>5</sup> "Reading Problems for Negro Speakers," *New Directions in Elementary English*, Alexander Frazier, ed. (Champaign, Ill., National Council of Teachers of English, 1967), pp. 146-157, updated and reprinted as "Some Sources of Reading Problems for Negro Speakers of Nonstandard English," in *Teaching Black Children to Read*, Joan C. Baratz and Roger W. Shuy, eds. (Washington, D. C., Center for Applied Linguistics, 1969), pp. 29-67.

<sup>6</sup> Walter A. Wolfram, "Sociolinguistic Implications for Educational Sequencing," in Fasold and Shuy, eds., op. cit., p. 117.

4. *Response drills.* Although still carefully structured, these drills give students greater freedom to reply. The teacher may give a nonstandard or standard stimulus and ask the student to match the dialect. For example, if the teacher gives the nonstandard stimulus *Your best friend work after school*, the student replies in the same dialect: *No, he don't*. If the teacher gives the standard stimulus *Your friend gets good grades*, there are several standard-dialect optional replies, *No, he doesn't* or *Yes, she does*, for example. To a nonstandard stimulus like *Do his sister go to this school?*, the student has a wide option in answering, but must reply in nonstandard to show that he has recognized the dialect appropriate to the stimulus.<sup>7</sup>

The important breakthrough in these exercises is the deliberate and respectful use of nonstandard dialect in helping students—both standard and nonstandard speakers—hear the contrasts. Never before has such proper respect been paid to the native language of our black majority-minority.

In acquiring standard English, the child develops in definite stages. He learns his basic grammar in his home to communicate with the people who surround him there. In his preadolescent years—from about five to twelve—he learns the vernacular of his neighborhood, the speech of his playmates and schoolmates. In early adolescence he begins to understand that school language differs from his vernacular, though he still speaks only the latter. In his first year of high school, at about age fourteen, as he is exposed to a larger group than his immediate neighborhood, he begins to shift his language in the direction of standard English, especially in formal situations. The two final stages often are not reached by nonstandard speakers. These stages are the ability to maintain standard speech for any length of time—long enough for a job interview, for example—and the ability to use the entire range of styles, shifting from standard to vernacular and back again.<sup>8</sup>

If the teacher in a ghetto school, having once been a nonstandard speaker himself, can achieve the final stage of flexibility, he has a true ace in helping students relax in the face of language study. He can convincingly demonstrate how to use both dialects, explaining how he recognizes situations appropriate to each. His problem is maintaining an unemotional, objective, balanced position between them. Lacking such ability, the teacher may ask a student to lead the drills. Interestingly, motivated students enjoy such drills, revealing that common sense is one of the best and easiest ways of motivating language study.

A pressing responsibility now rests on teacher-training institutions to set up courses in nonstandard English. Such courses already exist in some large universities—UCLA, Columbia Teachers College, Georgetown University and Trinity College in Washington, D. C., Northeastern Illinois University, and Michigan State University. Such a course should be part of every teacher's preparation.

With linguistic insights and information and classroom expertise, teachers bring hope to the disadvantaged black child. Without hope this child expects failure by grade four, and, from then till he is old enough to drop out of school, he lags farther and farther behind his advantaged classmates every year. The one crucial lack in the world-view of the very poor is hope. "Hope," says Jules Henry, anthropologist, "is a boundary: it separates the

<sup>7</sup> Irwin Feigenbaum, "The Use of Nonstandard in Teaching Standard: Contrast and Comparison," *ibid.*, pp. 92-100. Feigenbaum's program for speakers of black-ghetto English has been published as *English Now* (New York, New Century Educational Division, Meredith Corporation, 1970). It includes audio-visual materials as well as workbooks and teacher's manual.

<sup>8</sup> William Labov, "Stages in the Acquisition of Standard English," *op. cit.*, pp. 91-92.

free from the slave, the determined from the drifting . . . time, space, and objects really exist for us only when we have hope." The culture of the very poor is "a flight from death"; only the "survival self" remains.<sup>9</sup>

We need mutual respect, relevant programs, and an end to toying with trivia. So we will motivate our black college students, and motivation, like hope, fosters the will to carry on. Then the Warren Wardells will no longer write:

You offer me no new life, but rather a resurrection of the same old bloody cross-bearing.

## LANGUAGE IN THE CLASSROOM: STUDIES OF THE PYMALION EFFECT

Frederick Williams

Jack L. Whitehead

Although Shaw's *Pygmalion*, as well as our everyday intuitions, make us well aware of the relationship between speech characteristics and social attitudes, only in the last decade has this relation been examined as a topic of behavioral sciences research. Perhaps the best known studies along this line have come from the work of the social psychologist Wallace Lambert and his associates at McGill University.<sup>1</sup> Among such studies have been experiments where, for example, listeners would assign personality characteristics thought to be associated with speakers of tape-recorded examples of French and English speech. Unknown to the listeners was that the samples spoken in the two languages were earlier recorded by persons who were perfect and coordinate bilinguals. Thus it was interesting, if not amusing, to find that, for example, listeners rated English speakers as better looking of more intelligent than their French-speaking counterparts, or that the French speakers were more kind or religious.

<sup>9</sup> "White People's Time, Colored People's Time," *The Disadvantaged Learner: Knowing, Understanding, Evaluating*, Staten W. Webster, ed. (San Francisco, Chandler Publishing Co., 1966), pp. 187-190.

<sup>1</sup> W. E. Lambert, R. C. Hodgson, R. C. Gardner, and S. Fillenbaum, "Evaluational Reactions to Spoken Languages," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, LX (January, 1969), 44-51; M. Anisfeld, N. Dego, and W. E. Lambert, "Evaluational Reactions to Accented English Speech," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, LXV (October, 1962), 228-231; E. Anisfeld and W. E. Lambert, "Evaluational Reactions of Bilingual and Monolingual Children to Spoken Language," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, LXIX (July, 1964), 89-97; W. E. Lambert, M. Anisfeld, and Graco Yeni-Komshinn, "Evaluational Reactions of Jewish and Arab Adolescents to Dialect and Language Variations," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, II (July, 1965), 84-90; and W. E. Lambert, Hannah Frankel, and G. R. Tucker, "Judging Personality Through Speech: A French-Canadian Example," *Journal of Communication*, XVI (December, 1966), 395-321.

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To anyone who has worked with minority group children in the classroom, there is the question of the degree to which the speech of such children elicits social stereotyping in the mind of a teacher, and whether such stereotyping and associated attitudes might mediate the teacher's instructional behavior toward the child. This latter question, of course, relates to the theme of Rosenthal and Jacobson's now well-known *Pygmalion in the Classroom*.<sup>2</sup> These researchers found a reliable correlation between experimentally manipulated attitudes of teachers toward children and the subsequent progress of those children in their classes.

The research to be summarized in this paper reflects the first step in the above relation—that is, the degree to which the speech characteristics of children can be related to the attitudes of teachers.

#### *Background*

One main study, the details of which are reported elsewhere,<sup>3</sup> led to the present research involving teachers' attitudes. Sound tapes of speech samples of Black and White, male and female, fifth and sixth grade children sampled from low and middle income families served as stimulus materials in this initial study. These tapes represented variations among degrees of Negro-nonstandard English, as well as White children's speech variations relative to standard English as recorded in conversations between a linguistic fieldworker and the child. The conversations were in response to two initial questions and followup inquiries: "What kinds of games do you play around here?" and "What are your favorite television programs?"

In the first phase of this research, individual teachers from inner-city schools in Chicago were interviewed according to a procedure whereby selected samples of the above tapes were played, then the teacher was asked to describe her impressions of the child—e.g., his ethnicity, educational background, language and speech characteristics, and so on. Adjectives from these free-responses formed the basis for the development of rating scales that were eventually used to obtain quantitative data on teachers' attitudes. A sample of one such scale appears as follows:

THE CHILD SEEMS: hesitant—:—:—:—:—:—:—enthusiastic

In subsequent phases of the research, sample groups of teachers from the same population were administered selected tapes from the above materials which they then rated on scales like the one above. The result of this series of projects was that although teachers would use some 22 individual scales in rating children's speech, their ratings were generally symptomatic of only two main evaluative dimensions.<sup>4</sup> One of these dimensions was labeled as *confidence-eagerness*, which was a reflection of highly similar ratings on adjectival scales such as "The child seems: unsure—confident" and "... reticent—eager." The second main dimension of evaluation was labeled as *ethnicity-nonstandardness*, as identified from the apparently global ratings given on such scales as "Pronunciation is: standard—nonstandard" or "Grammar is: good—bad," and so on. In sum, the evidence pointed to the generalization that teachers typically gave

<sup>2</sup> Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson, *Pygmalion in the Classroom* (New York, 1968).

<sup>3</sup> Frederick Willinms, "Psychological Correlates of Speech Characteristics: On Sound-ing 'Disadvantaged,'" *Journal of Speech and Hearing Research*, XIII (September 1970), 472-488.

<sup>4</sup> For the statistically inclined, these dimensions were obtained by a factor analysis of the scale intercorrelations. Such an analysis asks whether persons' uses of the detailed scales reflect more global judgments as indicated by very similar (correlated) uses of selected scales. If factors can be found, it is the researcher's task to interpret and label them (if possible).

rather global evaluations of children's speech, but that these evaluations were along at least two relatively independent dimensions.

That the above judgmental dimensions had been validly identified was supported by two types of information. First, the children who had been selected from the low and middle income groups, and whose speech reflected this social stratification, were reliably differentiated on the average along the above two dimensions. That is, the middle status children were typically rated as less nonstandard and ethnic-sounding, and as more confident and eager than their lower status counterparts. Second, it was eventually possible to predict mathematically teachers' ratings on the two dimensions by using several characteristics of the speech samples as predictor variables. Thus, for example, deviations from standard English in pronunciation or use of /s/, /z/, /θ/, or /ð/ phonemes and pronominal apposition were salient predictors of nonstandard ratings, and the lack of hesitation phenomena was an effective predictor of confidence-eagerness ratings.

One unexpected finding in this early research was that individual teacher-raters were sometimes quite consistent with themselves in terms of their ratings of all Black children or all White children, apart from the actual income group of the children or even details of their speech-samples. The latter point, of course, reflects a lack of predictability of ratings as based upon quantified characteristics of the samples. This phenomenon suggested that some teacher-raters (or some teachers in some ratings) may have been reporting simply stereotyped judgments of a category of child rather than their detailed perceptions and evaluations of what was presented on the stimulus tapes. Although the results are too detailed to be summarized here, further evidence of the stereotype biases of individual raters was revealed in a companion study<sup>5</sup> (using the same data) where it was found that various teacher-raters could be reliably grouped together on the basis of their commonality in rating certain types of children on certain scales.

The consistent and readily interpretable results of this earlier research prompted two main questions for further study:<sup>6</sup>

1. What is the generality of the two-dimensional judgmental model when the teacher can see as well as hear the child-speaker?
2. What is the relation between a teacher's ratings of children and her stereotypes of children of different income groups and ethnicities?

#### *Generality of the Judgmental Model*

In a new series of studies, the same technique for deriving rating scales as described above was undertaken, but this time, videotapes rather than simply audio tapes of children's speech samples were employed. These videotapes were obtained by interviewing children from specified income and ethnic neighborhoods of Austin, Texas and its environs. The tapes included samples of children from Anglo, Black, and Mexican-American families,<sup>7</sup> and within each of these groups, children from low or middle-status

<sup>5</sup> Rita C. Nuremore, "Teachers' Judgments of Children's Speech: A Factor Analytic Study of Attitudes" unpubl. Ph.D. diss. (University of Wisconsin, 1969).

<sup>6</sup> Technical reports of these studies are available from ERIC (numbers not yet assigned) as: Frederick Williams, Jack L. Whitehead, and Jane Traupmann, "Semantic Differential Scaling of Audiovisual Recordings of Children's Speech Samples," technical report, (Austin, 1970a); Frederick Williams, Jack L. Whitehead, and Jane Traupmann, "Latency of Teachers' Semantic Differential Ratings of Children's Speech," technical report, (Austin, 1970b); Frederick Williams, Jack L. Whitehead, and Jane Traupmann, "Correspondence Between Semantic Differential Ratings of Children's Speech and Speech Anticipated upon the Basis of Stereotype," technical report, (Austin, 1970c).

<sup>7</sup> The authors are aware of the problems involved in labeling ethnic groups. Since these labels are used in our technical reports of this research, we have chosen to use them again here.

families. Initially, six children were interviewed for each ethno-status category. The interviews were conducted in a living-room-like atmosphere by a 24 year-old Anglo female fieldworker. Each interview was from five to ten minutes in length and was guided by the fieldworker's questions about games and television (as in the earlier studies).

The adjectives used by small samples of teachers who viewed and described their impressions of the children in the videotapes were again used as a basis for developing rating scales. An experimental set of 59 scales was used by teacher-raters in a testing design whereby ratings were obtained of children in the six different ethno-status categories and each in a video-only, audio-only, and audio-video presentation mode. In this phase of the research, teacher-raters also had the opportunity to omit the use of any individual scales they thought irrelevant to their judgments.

Statistical analyses of all ethno-status and presentation modes combined indicated that the data fit a two-dimensional judgmental model nearly identical to the earlier model. The dimensions and their main correlated scales were as follows:

#### *Confidence-eagerness*

- The child seems: active—passive (.86)<sup>a</sup>
- The child seems to: enjoy talking—dislike talking (.85)
- The child seems: hesitant—enthusiastic (.84)
- The child seems: shy—talkative (.83)
- The child seems: eager to speak—reticent to speak (.83)

#### *Ethnicity-nonstandardness*

- The language shows: a standard American style—marked ethnic style (.90)
- The language spoken in the child's home is probably: standard American style—marked ethnic style (.90)
- The child seems culturally: advantaged—disadvantaged (.80)
- The child's family is probably: high social status—low social status (.80)
- Pronunciation is: standard—nonstandard (.70)

Separate analyses of ratings of children in each of the ethnic categories revealed nearly identical versions of the above results, thus testifying to the generality of the judgmental model across at least the three ethnic groups. Separate analyses of each of the presentation modes also yielded evidence of the two-factor model. However, the results closest to those given above were from the audiovisual mode, whereas by contrast the video-only mode showed relatively less use of the ethnicity-nonstandardness scales.

In sum, the results indicated a positive answer to the first question—the two judgmental dimensions of *ethnicity-nonstandardness* and *confidence-eagerness* were found relevant to the situation where teacher-raters saw the children as well as heard their speech.

#### *Relations of Judgments to Stereotypes*

In subsequent research, the second question was approached by having teacher-raters judge children who were not seen or heard but described for them in a stereotyped fashion. Ratings of the children as imagined from these descriptions were then compared with ratings of actual speech sam-

<sup>a</sup>The value in parentheses is a correlation coefficient. These have a range from 0.0, or no correlation, to 1.0, or perfect correlation. Accordingly, the values reported here are markedly high.



ples (videotapes). Six different stereotype descriptions were prepared, one for each category of children in the videotape samples. As examples, the descriptions for a low-status Anglo and a middle-status Black child were as follows:

He is Anglo and lives with his mother who is a laundress and his three brothers and one sister in a lower class neighborhood.

He is Black and the son of a professor of sociology at the University. He lives in an upper-middle-class neighborhood.

Ratings of all six stereotype descriptions were obtained from each teacher-rater approximately one week prior to, and one week after ratings of actual speech samples. Again ratings were also obtained for the videotapes of the six categories of children, but this time results were analyzed directly in terms of the scales constituting the two factor model.

Results indicated a definite, but only moderate, statistical relation between ratings of the stereotypes and ratings of the children. That is to say, as a teacher tended, for example, to rate the Anglo samples as relatively high on the confidence-eagerness scales or low in ethnicity-non-standardness, she tended to rate the actual (videotape) sample accordingly.

The implication of the foregoing relation and tentative answer to the second question, was that rather than reporting only a stereotype when rating a child, a teacher-rater may have been rating the videotape samples relative to her stereotypes. That is to say, stereotypes may mediate in the differentiation of the speech samples, but the teacher-rater nevertheless is still somewhat sensitive to individual differences within presumed categories of children grouped on an ethnicity-by-status basis.

Although the following is properly the subject of further research, it may be that a teacher's sensitivity to individual differences among children in the above categories is reflected in her tendency to exercise greater differentiation in rating actual speech samples relative to the ratings given for stereotypes. Conversely, the less sensitive to individual differences a teacher is to children of a particular category the more the ratings of actual children may be undifferentiated from a stereotype. Put in anecdotal terms, this latter example constitutes a case of the "they all look (or sound) alike" attitude.

#### Implications

Although studies in the current program of research continue, the findings to date suggest a number of implications. Some of these are, of course, theoretical, but for this report the practical will be emphasized.

One significant shift of thought challenging English language instruction in the schools today is that differences in language habits, particularly those of minority group children, have been too often confused as deficits.<sup>9</sup> The fact that, for example, teachers in this research program have consistently based about half of their judgmental perspective upon nonstandardness is symptomatic of a prescriptionist (for standard English) rather than, say, an aptness or a communicativeness criterion in evaluating children's speech. This hints of a major shortcoming in what teachers are taught about the language of school children, one of where the ends in teaching English overshadow the means. Perhaps too much is stressed about the objective of teaching (and expecting) standard English rather than the

<sup>9</sup>This issue is discussed further in Frederick Williams, "Language, Attitude, and Social Change," in *Language and Poverty: Perspectives on a Theme*, ed. Frederick Williams (Chicago, 1970).

careful diagnosis of existing linguistic capabilities of children as a starting point. The designation of *nonstandard* (or particularly as some say, *substandard*) implies a classification of "deficiency" in a child's speech which overlooks that a child speaking a nonstandard dialect of English may be as developed, psycholinguistically at least, as his standard-English-speaking age mate. To emphasize the point, this is not to argue against the merits of standard English as an instructional objective in American schools, but to stress that teachers might benefit from knowing more about language differences in children as a means for improving English instruction. If only for defining an instructional starting point, an ability to diagnose what a child can do linguistically in nonstandard English, should introduce some efficiencies into English language instruction.

Just as the present studies imply a bias in teachers' attitudes toward nonstandardness, they also suggest ways to measure such bias and still more to gauge the effects of teacher training.

As mentioned earlier, teachers' stereotype ratings appear quite consistent and do seem to influence judgments of actual speech. If these stereotypes somehow serve as judgmental "anchors," then effectiveness of teacher training in language differences might be gauged by shifts of the anchor point as well as by increased differentiation of actual speech ratings about that point. In all, the instructional goal in teacher training would be one of sensitivity to, and objective differentiation of, language differences. The goal is to reduce the effects of a teacher's stereotype bias in evaluating the language of her pupils.

As Eliza Doolittle counseled Professor Higgins, it is how you treat people that makes them what they are to you. The same advice seems pertinent to the reduction of teachers' negative stereotypes of children who speak nonstandard English.

## Section 5: The Historical Perspective

### BLACK ENGLISH IN NEW YORK

J. L. Dillard

For a long time, it has been fashionable to refer all the problems of Black-white maladjustment to the South—to assert that the Northern versions of those problems are the result of migration, especially during World War II and immediately thereafter. While it is undoubtedly true that ghetto problems in Northern cities were intensified—and, perhaps more importantly, came to national attention—during that period, it is not strictly true, historically, that the same problems had not existed for a long time in cities like New York. In the area of language, Black English (Negro Non-Standard English, or "Negro dialect"), although perhaps represented by less divergent (more decreolized) varieties in the Northern cities of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, proves to have been there all along.

Segregation and prejudice, although over-simple as explanations of the origin of a language variety, are of great importance in explaining the maintenance of that variety alongside Standard English in the same geographic areas. The patterns of these social problems in New York prove to have been more like those of the South than has been generally recognized. In colonial New York, slavery was as widespread and as oppressive as it was further to the South. The Black Code of New York City was second only to that of South Carolina, and not less oppressive by much (Leonard, 1910:210; Szasz, 1967:217). Racial separation of this sort promoted the maintenance of different language varieties.<sup>1</sup>

There was prominent in the West African slave trade a Pidgin English (Cassidy, 1962) which was creolized on this continent, in the West Indies, and elsewhere (Bailey, 1965; Stewart, 1967, 1968; Dillard in press). At base, this English Pidgin consisted of English vocabulary within the structure of Portuguese Trade Pidgin and the Mediterranean Lingua Franca, Sabir, with of course a large number of Africanisms, especially in phonology. Creolized, this variety of English gradually changed to be more like those varieties which came more directly from the British Isles (Bloomfield, 1933: 474; Hershovits, 1941). The results of this process are well known insofar as the still largely creolized variety found in the vicinity of the Georgia South Carolina Sea Islands is concerned (Turner, 1949); but it has only recently been shown that the earlier history of the English dialects of North American Negroes in general was almost exactly like that of the residents of the Sea Islands and of the West Indies (Bailey, 1965; Stewart, 1967, 1968; Dillard, in press).

<sup>1</sup> On survival of African cultural practices, see (among many sources) Gabriel Furman, *Antiquities of Long Island, New York*, 1876, pp. 267-269.

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Those West African slaves who came to New York in 1625 had such interesting names as "Paul d'Angola, Simon Congo, Anthony, Portuguese, John Francisco, and seven others" (O'Callaghan, 1867:xii). They and those slaves who soon followed them faced the problem of using, in interaction with their Dutch masters and with the fellow slaves who came from widely varying African language groups, a *lingua franca*. Some of the solutions, in the early days, were provided by the use of African Languages like Wolof or Mandingo, along with which the slaves brought West African cultural traits like the use of day names (i.e., Cuffee 'male, born on Friday'). Pidginized versions of European languages, especially Portuguese, English, and French, came, however, to have a more general—and therefore, more useful—function in the slave community. Use of a contact language was all the more mandatory because "a dozen or 15 European languages might have been heard in the streets of the town" (Ulmann, 1931:6).

To linguists, particularly those specialized in Creole studies, the notion of a Dutch Creole poses some special problems. The definition of a Creole is 'a Pidgin which has become the native language of a speech community'; but there is no record of a Dutch Pidgin. There are abundant records of pidgin varieties of English, French, and Portuguese—in West Africa and in the Americas—and there are borrowings from those pidgins in West African languages like Temne and Twi. But there are no such borrowings from Dutch, although there are traces of Dutch cultural practices (Schneider, 1967). It seems inescapable that early linguistic borrowings, especially, were made through the medium of the pidgins, and that there simply was no Pidgin Dutch.

The answer seems to be that the Dutch, along with other Germanic—Danish and English—traders, made use of the Mediterranean *Lingua Franca* (Sabir) and the Pidgin varieties of Portuguese and English. A small nation, trying to hold its own in the maritime competition, Holland was inclined even then to make up the difference in linguistic virtuosity. Their slaves, the earliest in the New York area, may have used Pidgin English, Pidgin Portuguese, or Pidgin French along with Wolof, Mandingo, or some other West African language, for the purposes of a language of wider communication. But there were many reasons why Pidgin English would have been the most useful of these closely related (Thompson, 1961; Whinnom, 1965) languages. Because of constant contact with their Dutch masters, they naturally took a lot of Dutch vocabulary into that Pidgin.<sup>2</sup> The same process has taken place in the English Creoles of Surinam (Rens, 1953), which are easily mistaken for varieties of Dutch by unwary English-speaking people. This process is known as 'relexification' (Stewart, 1962; Taylor, 1960) and contact languages like the pidgins and creoles are especially prone to that process (Whinnom, 1965). *Lingua Franca* was especially characterized by such vocabulary substitution (Schuchardt, 1909).

<sup>2</sup> This process, called relexification in Stewart, 1962, led to the development of Pidgin English (and French) on the structural model of the Portuguese Trade Pidgin. There are some overt statements:

The English have in the River Gambia much corrupted the English language by Words or Literal Transitions from the Portuguese or the Mandingoes.

(F. Moore, *Travels into the Inland Parts of Africa*, London, 1738, p. 294)

Relexification of Pidgin English with (e.g.) Dutch vocabulary items would be a continuation of the same process. There is indirect evidence like the following statements:

You the name of English-rien were [sic] so famous in the East, that the Hollanders in their first trade thither, varnished their obscuritie with English lustre, and gave themselves out English.

(Hakluytus Posthumus, or Purchas His Pilgrimes, II:288. The statement is dated 1591.)

The Dutch Creole, whatever its origin, of the slaves of Early New Amsterdam/York is an interesting historical topic upon which not even the preliminary spadework has been done.<sup>3</sup> For present purposes, we can go into the matter no more deeply than to say that Dutch Creole existed in the state from sometime after 1625 until at least 1910. A wide-ranging researcher named J. Dyneley Prince (who also did some of the only work on American Indian language-based pidgins in the New York/New Jersey area) recorded some "Negerhollands" from Suffern, N. Y., in 1910. Although, in his day, he could hardly have anticipated the hypothesis that Pidgin English was at the base of the Dutch Creole (first formulated, insofar as I know, by William A. Stewart and myself in 1970), he did note that many of the Black Dutch forms were English-like rather than Dutch (*wān* 'when,' rather than *wāner*), and that there were such (typically Creole, in effect) grammatical features as the use of an unmarked verb in a past-time environment. These strikingly non-Dutch grammatical features are also characteristic of the Dutch Creole texts recorded by Hesseling (1905) and Josselyn de Jong (1924, 1926).<sup>4</sup>

It would be difficult—perhaps even impossible—to recover biographical details about Prince's "Negro Dutch" informant, seventy-five year old William De Freece. But we can look into earlier times and find a famous informant about whom a great deal is known—Sojourner Truth, formerly a slave girl named Isabella who reportedly spoke only "Dutch patois" until she was twenty-one. In an interview with Sojourner Truth (*Atlantic Monthly*, 1863), Harriet Beecher Stowe quoted the former slave girl in a variety of English which is not too far removed from that of inner city (and rural) Blacks today:

I journeys round to camp meetings, an' wherever folks is, an' I sets up my banner, an' then I sings, an' then I preaches to 'em. I tells 'em about the sins of this people. A great many always comes to hear me; an' they're right good to me, too, an' say they want to hear me again.

("Sojourner Truth, The Libyan Sibyl,"  
*Atlantic Monthly*, 11[1863]:478).

Sojourner Truth is represented by many writers as a very fluent and powerful public speaker—another of the many who put to scorn the notion that Black English is a limited language variety—even if she did occasionally have to grope for special vocabulary items like *intellect*. But a totally new language, learned at the linguistically advanced age of twenty-one or more, would be a surprising vehicle for such public performance. True, Sojourner Truth was an unusual woman—one who might have mastered

<sup>3</sup> There are statements susceptible to reinterpretation in nonlinguistic works like Vanderbill, 1881:550:

For a long time [among the Negroes of New York City] in this mingling of two languages, neither was grammatically spoken, bad English and worse Dutch was the result . . .

It is amusing that English Creole in the Guyanah today is often called "bad" English (by Dutchmen) and "bad" Dutch (by Englishmen and Americans):

\* Virgin Islands "Dutch" Creole appears to have been, in the verbal auxiliary system, at least, closer to the Afro-Portuguese Trade Pidgin which was more or less original in the slave trade than Sranan Tongo, of Surinam. Thus we find not only *le* (from *de*, by regular phonological change) as a durative aspect marker but *lo* (from Portuguese *logo*, see Schuchardt, 1882) as a future marker. There are many other structures which are common to the related Pidgin and Creole languages, like the anticipatory verb in

Slaep me ka slaep  
(Hesseling, 1905:117)

the simple negation with *no*

Ml no wil 'Dat wil lk niet'  
(Ibid.; 173)

the use of *kaba* 'already' (from Portuguese Trade Pidgin *caba*), and the use of the preposition *na*.

many language varieties. But it seems quite plausible that she was helped along by the fact that her original Dutch "patois" and her new Black English were rather closely related, that both of them had some historical roots in the maritime Pidgin English which was the source of the English varieties of the slave trade—among other varieties.

Even without the Dutch associations, Pidgin English had come to the New York area very early. Sarah Kemble Knight reported of her trip from Boston to New York (*Journal*, 1705) that she had heard a current story regarding the attempt of a couple of justices to communicate in their clumsy Pidgin English with an Indian who was fluent in it. The Indian—who had been accused of delivering stolen goods to a Black slave—failed to understand the Pidgin English form *grandy*, although that belongs to the earliest Lingua Franca stratum of the background of the language. It seems very likely that the Indians got the Pidgin English originally from their Black fellow slaves (Dillard, in press, Chapter IV); but they must have altered it somewhat, especially in the manner of introducing vocabulary items and loan translations ("calques") from the Indian languages. The Indian calque for *grandy* is the well-known *heap*. Although it is popularly believed that the history of Black English took place below the Mason-Dixon line, there are eighteenth century attestations of its use in Massachusetts (from Cotton Mather, among others), New York, Philadelphia (from Benjamin Franklin), Maryland, and Nova Scotia (Dillard, in preparation).

Within the colony of New York, perhaps the most impressive evidence is that provided by Justice Daniel Horsmanden's *The New York Conspiracy . . . 1741-42*. A witness at the trial of the alleged conspirators of the "Negro Plot," Jack posed some language problems although he spoke "English"

his dialect was so perfectly negro and unintelligible, it was thought it would be impossible to make anything of him without the help of an interpreter. (1810 edition, p. 127)

There were, however, two young (white) men who had learned the dialect and who acted as interpreters. Jack was an acknowledged leader in the Black community, so it can hardly be that he suffered from a speech impediment. Furthermore, Horsmanden gave enough samples of his speech like

His master live in tall house Broadway. Ben ride de fat horse. (p. 128)

and enough other references to the speech of contemporary Blacks like

. . . Backarara . . . 'Negro language, signifies white people' (p. 331)

. . . the house . . . This in the Negroes dialect signifies houses, i.e., the town. (p. 209)

to enable us to recognize the obvious relationship to other contemporary Black English varieties. Whites of the period were familiar with the existence of this variety in New York; but only a few like the two young men, apparently, really mastered it. Jack's not overly long testimony required three days of the court's time.

In the nineteenth century, Black English is widely represented in literary texts set in the New York area. James Fenimore Cooper, whose practices have been severely attacked but just as strongly defended, put a rather greatly decreolized Black English into the mouth of Jaap (the *Santanoe* novels) and of others of his Black characters:

I'm York nigger born, and nebber see no Africa. (*Santanoe*, p. 149)

Even Natty Bumppo included Pidgin English among his many linguistic accomplishments. Mark Twain's brilliant criticism of Cooper's "Literary Offenses" goes aground here: In the world of Pidgin/Creole, many a speaker uses one variety of a language six days a week and quite another variety of the same language "on Sunday." Twain clearly transferred the relative linguistic simplicity of his midwestern youth to the polyglot complexity of the frontier, and in doing so committed almost as great a blunder as did Cooper in describing how several Indians jumped from a "sapling" and managed to miss a passing houseboat, one after the other.

Many other writers of the nineteenth century join Cooper in providing such evidence. Thomas Chandler Halliburton, a Nova Scotian who wrote under the pseudonym of Sam Slick, represented Black characters speaking English Creole or a somewhat decreolized variety all the way from Charleston, South Carolina, to Halifax, Nova Scotia.<sup>5</sup> Halliburton's dialect forms, insofar as white dialects are concerned, figure prominently in historical dictionaries like the *Dictionary of Americanisms*. One wonders what special characteristics of Black English make it not subject to the same kind of documentation, for the dictionaries record none of the usages which Halliburton attributed to Blacks.

Stephen Crane's *The Monster*, one of his Whilomville stories, presented a heroic, dialect-speaking Henry Johnson whose cruel rejection by the white community after he had disfigured himself in rescuing a small boy is held to have influenced Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man*. Johnson says things like

I done tol' yer many's the time not to go a-foolin' an' a-proj-  
jeekin' with them flowers. Yer pop don' like it nohow. (p. 9)

Another Black, Alex Williams, also speaks the dialect:

He mighty quiet ter-night. (p. 66)

These attestations were provided by an author who was a lifelong resident of the New York area.

It has been asserted (Stockton, 1966; Krapp, 1925) that there was a kind of literary conspiracy to misrepresent the English of Black speakers, falsely to represent a kind of "literary pseudo-Gullah" as the language of Blacks throughout the United States (and Nova Scotia). If there was such a conspiracy, it must have been the greatest in the history of literature—including eventually Black writers like Ellison, Charles W. Chestnutt, Zora Neale Hurston, and J. Mason Brewer (see the introduction to *Dog Ghosts and Other Texas Negro Folk Tales*, 1958). Everybody was in on it, including Charles Dickens, who put the following speech into the mouth of a New York City Negro of the 1840's:

Him kep a seat 'side himself, sa.  
(*Martin Chuzzlewit*, p. 164)

It is patently absurd to postulate a literary conspiracy—otherwise unreported, and having no consequences except the linguistic ones—which included Madam Knight, Justice Horsmanden, Halliburton, Dickens (and, incidentally, Charles Lyell), Cooper, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Crane among its hundreds of connivers. (To be fair, we would have to postulate a Dutch branch including Prince and Van Loon.) We seem rather to be

<sup>5</sup> New York was an important source of the ex-slaves who migrated to Nova Scotia in the eighteenth century (Ottley and Weatherly, 1987:30). At least one Black English variety still survives (Dillard, in preparation) in the Halifax area, where geographism sometimes ascribes a "Southern accent" to these long-time Canadian residents!

dealing with relatively accurate attestations—subject to exactly the same limitations as any literary attestations, including those of the older Germanic languages—over a long period of time and in many geographic areas by writers of many backgrounds, skills, and interests. Such uniformity as they represent may actually reflect a real uniformity. And the similarity of the New York attestations to the attestations from other areas may mean that Black English in New York was actually very similar to that of other areas. Variations were more in terms of social status, as in the famous differences between house servants and field hands (Frazier, 1957:13), than in geography.

But what of the notion, dear to many dialectologists, that Black English (conceived of as a "Southern" or "rural" dialect) found its way to New York in the World War II migrations? In its most basic sense, that notion is simply false. Dialects in the North were more greatly decreolized (Stewart, 1968) than those in the South, but they were completely merged with white dialects no more in New York than in Nova Scotia (Dillard, in preparation). Migrant dialects came into contact with Harlem dialects which were hardly more decreolized, especially among the younger children (Stewart, 1965; Dillard, 1967). The consequences of faulty dialect history have been frequent absurdity. Grier and Cobbs, in *Black Rage*, wrote of a subject who had been born and educated in "a large Northern city" that he spoke "the patois of the rural uneducated Negro of seventy-five years ago" (p. 98). Even if we believed such a statement in geographic terms, we could hardly accept the historical notion unless someone had invented an operational Time Machine. It is simply true that psychiatrists, like other non-linguists who have needed language information, have not been able to draw upon accurate information—whether grammatical or historical—about Black English.

Except for a few writers with intellectual curiosity like Prince, no one had looked at the language of Black people in Northern cities until it became fashionable to do so in the fad of social dialectology in the 1960's. Labov et al., 1968, now provides a gigantic corpus which shows just how much the English of Harlem teenagers differs from that of white New Yorkers.<sup>6</sup> (An equivalent corpus from youngsters between six and ten would show much more difference.) There are at last some stirrings of educational responsibility toward the ghetto population. It is to be hoped that a sensible attitude toward Black English, a language with a long and honorable historical background, will be incorporated into the resultant efforts.

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<sup>6</sup> Joan G. Fickett, *Aspects of Morphemics, Syntax, and Semology of an Inner-City Dialect (Merican)*, U. of Buffalo dissertation, 1970 presents material which is in many respects even more relevant, especially in that she points out that, while her Black informants who were born outside Buffalo may differ in phonological items, the grammar of "Merican" (approximately Stewart's Black English basilect) does not seem to vary with geographic origin.



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## FACTS AND ISSUES CONCERNING BLACK DIALECT\*

William A. Stewart

As the breakdown of racial barriers in American social and economic life is accelerated, greater numbers of young black people are finding it possible to go to schools which were once closed to them, and to seek jobs which until recently were out of their reach. But the swelling stream of black youths into previously all-white schools and vocations has not occurred without creating serious problems. And, although it is possible that some of these problems might (as has frequently been charged) be the result of white bigotry or black ineptitude, most of them seem rather to be a natural consequence of what social scientists have come to call "culture conflict" or, more dramatically, "the clash of cultures." What is meant by these terms is the kinds of misunderstandings and misjudgments which almost inevitably occur whenever the members of two or more cultural groups come together and attempt to interact. Most of the adherents to a particular culture tend to regard their own lifeways and social norms as indicative of the "natural" way for members of their own group (and, by extension, for members of other groups as well) to behave, even though the norms of different cultures are frequently different. Thus it is quite likely that the members of one cultural group will see the behavior of members of other cultural groups as something other than what it really is. The resulting misunderstandings and misjudgments often seriously impair basic communication (and therefore social relations) between the two groups, and thus constitute "culture conflict." Europeans, for example, are fond of saying that Chinese are sly and inscrutable, while the Chinese tend to categorize Europeans as coarse and lacking in self-control. Like the content of most stereotypes, these characterizations represent something more than malicious fantasies; they represent the behaviors of one culture whose functions have been misinterpreted by the members of another culture. (What the European sees as "inscrutability" in the Chinese is merely Chinese politeness, while the behaviors which the European used to

\*The present article is the text of an essay which I submitted to Western Electric in New York to accompany a disc recording entitled *The Dialect of the Black American*, produced and recently released by their Community Relations Division. Western Electric has kindly consented to the separate publication of the essay in its original form, which includes a number of paragraphs (the first five) which were eventually omitted from the version accompanying the disc. In order to have the essay conform as closely as possible to the terminology used in the record itself, I had decided to use black in many instances where I would otherwise have used Negro. Yet, in resubmitting the original manuscript for publication here, I have not felt it worth the effort to go through the text and change every black to Negro, just to make the article conform in this respect to others I have written. For to do so would be to accord more importance to the matter of terminology than I feel it deserves. After all, the futility of thinking that basic attitudes toward American Negroes could be changed by means of superficial name-substitutions was pointed out almost forty years ago by Carter G. Woodson in an essay "Much 'Ado About a Name," published as an appendix to his book *The Mis-Education of the Negro* (Washington, D. C., 1933). Today's black militants and white liberals would stand to learn much from a reading of Woodson's critique of their most cherished preoccupation. Suffice it to say, then, that the use of the term black in the present article represents no real concession to the game of terminological musical chairs which Negroes and whites are continually playing with each other.

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indicate friendliness and honesty strike the Chinese as vulgar and excessive.) And, since cultural differences can exist between different social groups within a single nation, as well as between different nations, culture conflict can occur at the national as well as international level. In the United States, for example, many whites have traditionally regarded blacks as child-like and boisterous, while blacks have often felt whites to be cold and "hateful." As in the Chinese and European case, there is some behavioral basis for the mutual misunderstanding of white and black in the United States. For, it is an observable fact that blacks tend to use more laughter (as a gesture of friendliness), talk slightly louder, and use more of their bodies in gesturing than do whites. And it is very probably these differences between the two groups, as misinterpreted by the members of each, which are in part responsible for their respective stereotypes.

Apart from their demonstrable falseness, a serious effect of stereotypes derived from culture-conflict (such as that blacks are "childish" or that whites are "cold") is that, explaining observable behavioral differences as they do in terms of innate attributes, they preclude any eventual understanding of the truly social nature of such differences. For, if blacks are truly "child-like," then no amount of social awareness on the part of whites could be expected to alter that fact. And the same would of course be true of white "coldness." Consequently, when persons of good will decide that they simply must come to grips with such stereotypes, they usually adopt the one obvious strategy for countering claims of innate human differences—their total denial. In such a strategy, it is almost routine to appeal to universal human similarity. Thus, in countering beliefs that "Chinese are inscrutable" or "Frenchmen lack self-control," the usual argument is "The Chinese (or Frenchmen) are human beings, just like everyone else. Therefore, it is improbable that they are more inscrutable (or more lacking in self-control) than any other sample of human beings." In this kind of argumentation, the behavioral differences which originally motivated the stereotype are not dealt with. Rather, a denial of the validity of the stereotype has implicit in it a denial of the validity of the behavioral differences themselves. Indeed, so desperately is this strategy of total denial clung to by avowed opponents of racial and ethnic stereotyping that it has now become completely taboo to so much as mention racially or ethnically-correlated behavioral differences—even for the purpose of discrediting the etiology of popular stereotypes.

In the United States, the taboo against recognizing behavioral differences as a normal function of ethnic identity is strongest in the liberal social-science treatment of behavioral comparisons of blacks and whites. Indeed, observations to the effect that "blacks do X while whites do Y" or even "blacks do X more (or less) than whites do" are shunned as potentially racist. In all fairness, it should be pointed out that there is some historical justification for this attitude. For it is a fact that in the past the main source of contrastive statements about the behavior of blacks and whites was the slaveholding class. Favored with the opportunity of viewing their field hands at close quarters, the early slaveholders were quick to notice a number of differences between the behavior of the imported Africans and that of the colonial whites. (They noticed, for example, that Africans tended to engage in laughter more than whites did.) And succeeding generations of slaveholders were able to observe the continuation of differences in the behavior of American-born blacks and whites. As heirs to a social and economic system which did not appreciate the inherent equality of alternative ways of being human, the slaveholders focused on these differences as evidence of the inherent superiority of whites over blacks. (That blacks were known to laugh more than whites,

for example, was presented as evidence that blacks were more childish and carefree than whites.) In this way the Plantation Negro stereotype was created—a portrait of the American black man in which some very factual (though often exaggerated) data on black behavior was presented in defense of a very questionable theory of black inferiority. Indeed, so entwined did observational fact become with racist fancy through the Negro stereotype that, in the minds of most Americans, the two were almost inseparable. Consequently, when American social science finally took it upon itself to attack the racist view of Negro inferiority, it did so by rejecting the behavioral data of the Negro stereotype along with its genetic implications. And this has been the policy of the social sciences ever since. Hence today, in response to an assertion like "Blacks laugh excessively, therefore they are child-like by nature," one never hears an accurate response like: "Yes, blacks do tend to laugh in more situations than whites do; but this is not a sign of childishness, since laughter is used in black culture to express sociability in situations in which laughter would be inappropriate according to the norms of white culture." Instead, one hears something like: "Blacks are human beings, just like whites, so that it is wrong to claim that one is more child-like than the other. Furthermore, all human beings (white as well as black) laugh—and cry." Implicit in this kind of response is an assertion that, since both blacks and whites are human beings (and fellow Americans), then it is quite improbable that the one would naturally laugh more than the other. Then, when observation shows that blacks do indeed laugh in situations in which whites wouldn't, there is no place for the theorist to go but to psychological explanations which have a pathological bent, such as: "Black people must laugh a lot to cover up their misery," or "A depressing environment has caused them to rely upon immediate gratification, so that they get as much joy as they can out of any trivial event," or "Oppression has made them hysterical." Undoubtedly, explanations of this type will satisfy those who would avoid at any cost the recognition of ethnically-correlated behavioral differences as normal in American society. Moreover, such explanations may have a special appeal for whites whose social conscience is built upon a deep-seated sense of their own psychological superiority, or for blacks in whom self-pity has become a cherished substitute for self respect. No matter how comfortable they may be, however, psycho-pathological explanations of behavioral differences between blacks and whites, like genetic explanations, are largely artificial. And being artificial, they can hardly serve as reliable guides for dealing with such differences directly, or with their many social side effects.

In addition to the presumed egalitarian stance of liberal social scientists, there are other attitudinal barriers to the recognition of distinctively-black behaviors as normal behaviors. Of these, perhaps the most significant is the deep shame which so many upwardly-mobile blacks have felt over the existence of visible differences between the way members of their own ethnic group behave in public (i.e., in the presence of whites) and the way the public (i.e., the white population) behaves. Justified or not, this shame goes back many generations. Long ago, it motivated Negro slaves of the house-servant class to give up many of the distinctively-black (and often African-derived) behaviors of the field hands in favor of the more prestigious (and European-derived) norms of their white masters. But, in the process, they often over-compensated. If the field hands were seen as acting too loud and boisterous in comparison to the "quality" whites, then the house servants would often become overly quiet and reserved. Yet, though the resultant modifications of black fieldhand behavior were seldom brought completely into line with the white models, they nevertheless were

often strikingly different from the more "characteristic" (i.e., more African) black behaviors. Thus the modified behaviors, joined with the unmodified ones to create an extremely wide range of variation within the black community, whether slave or free. And, today, image-conscious Negroes are fond of pointing to this range (particularly to the "respectable" end of it) as evidence that "typical" black behaviors do not exist—as if the existence of behavioral variations amongst blacks were enough to preclude the existence of behavioral contrasts between blacks and whites. Logically weak though this image-conscious denial of distinctively-black behavior may be, it unites with the current intellectual aversion to the topic to render exceedingly controversial any serious study of the folk culture of black Americans. And this, in turn, makes it extremely difficult to deal competently with the many cases of innocent yet highly problematic conflict between the black and mainstream cultures in America's changing society. Returning to the problems of black youths entering previously all-white, mainstream institutions for the first time, it is possible to trace out the detrimental effect which such attitudes have had on attempts to deal with learning problems (actually, behavioral conflicts) in one socially-important domain—that of language.

Of the many and varied problems which the requirements of the classroom and the office may present for young black people, conformity to the complex maze of norms defining "correct" English is one of the most imposing. For better or for worse, it is a fact that a variety of English which conforms to such norms (i.e., what is often called *standard English*) is required for many educational purposes and in many vocational situations. Yet, it is also a fact that a significantly high number of black students and employees lack the necessary skills in standard English, not only when they enter school for the first time, but often when they finish school and take up a job as well. The precise extent to which this problem exists, and its actual effect on educational and vocational opportunities, need not be of concern at the moment. Apparently, it exists enough to have motivated a special focus on language arts in educational programs designed for "disadvantaged" students, while its effects on total academic achievement and professional success seem to have been great enough to make this focus a continuing one. But, to whatever extent the problem exists and affects academic and professional performance, something should be done about it. And nothing meaningful can be done about the difficulties which many black students and employees have with standard English unless the nature of that problem is understood, and programs are based upon that knowledge.

Until linguists began to debate with them, educators assumed that the lack of skill which many black people demonstrated with standard English was in fact a lack of skill in handling language per se. Pronunciations like *nuttin'* or *nuffin'* for *nothing*, sentence patterns like *he workin'* for *he's working* or *we ain't go* for *we didn't go*, and word usages like *waste* for *spill* were all regarded as random errors in the stream of speech, the cause of which was laziness, carelessness, or underdeveloped audio-lingual skills. Accordingly, these "mistakes" were labeled "mispronunciations," "bad grammar," and "poor word usage," respectively. So certain were educators of the validity of their diagnosis of language containing such "mistakes," and so forceful and persistent in their condemnation of them, that those who normally spoke this way soon came to believe in the inferiority of their own speech. So today, one hears many blacks refer to even their own nonstandard speech by such terms as "talkin' bad" or "usin' bad grammar" or "talkin' broken English." Now, if these were random mistakes, reasoned the educators, then they ought to be corrected randomly. And

correct them they did. The only trouble was that the corrections didn't always work or weren't easily extendable. One could tell a student that *he workin'* ought to be said as *he is working*, for example, and applaud the results when he promptly repeated the phrase the "correct" way. But then, when that same student took it upon himself to correct his usual *we workin'* to *we is working*, the teacher would have to inform him that it was wrong. In the same way, a student would be rewarded for changing *we ain't go* to *we didn't go*, but faulted if he changed *we ain't gone* to *we didn't gone* instead of *we haven't gone*. And, as if that weren't enough, the keen black student who grasped the fact that his *ain't* became *didn't* in standard English in some cases and *haven't* in others, and who then confidently corrected *he ain't gone* to *he haven't gone* would suddenly find to his dismay that that, too, was wrong. Thus, while the teachers continued to correct their black students' English, the students would continue to make the same old "mistakes"—and sometimes a few new ones to boot. Of course, prolonged educational failure of such magnificent proportions must inevitably become a public issue, and when it does, it requires either a solution or an excuse. And since the educators of black children hadn't been able to solve the language problem, they looked around for an explanation of it which would shift the blame away from the educational process. Some, particularly in the South, were inclined to resurrect the theory of genetic inferiority. But genetic explanations of the low academic achievement of blacks were not popular in the North. Consequently, an explanation had to be found which would not place the blame on the school, but at the same time would not lay it at the door of black genetic structure. Ironically, the possibility of ascribing black language problems to genetic factors itself suggested a ready alternative. For a debate had been going on for some time in the social sciences, as to whether certain behavioral characteristics of human groups were predetermined by their genetic endowment or were simply a result of the workings of their environment. Environment, then, became the scapegoat for the low academic achievement of American blacks. The problem was merely to find a way to blame language problems on the environment. This was eventually done by claiming that there were psychologically "unstimulating" environments which, because of a dearth of intellectual stimuli, failed to motivate language development in children raised in their confines. There was a tacit assumption, of course, that the environment of most lower-class blacks was of this type. But, since language is very much a social phenomenon, it must have seemed a bit far-fetched, even to educators, to attribute a purported language deficit entirely to a poor physical environment. Something social was needed; and it was supplied by the widely-held belief that children learned language entirely from adults. Since many lower-class black families were known to be one-parent families, and since many lower-class black mothers were thought to communicate less with their children than white and middle-class mothers did, it seemed reasonable to conclude that there was a breakdown among lower-class blacks of the normal patterns of transmission of language from parent to child. Consequently, to the educator's random correction of black students' English, social psychologists were able to furnish a pseudo-scientific justification that these students were "non-verbal," or "verbally destitute," or "poorly languaged," or "linguistically deprived." It should be noted that the traditional view of black nonstandard speech as made up of articulatory blunders, incomplete sentences, and a lack of vocabulary furnished a fertile ground for the sophistic theory that lower-class blacks failed to learn language at home.

If the view of black nonstandard speech as unstructured and the characterization of lower-class black social life as non-verbal seemed reasonable

to educators and psychologists, they seemed seriously wrong to linguists and anthropologists. At best, they did not accord with otherwise universal truisms about human language and social behavior. For linguists had never found a language (or a variety of a language) without its own structure, while anthropologists had never encountered a social group in which language did not play a central role, and was not transmitted from generation to generation. At worst, these assessments of black language and life stood as evidence of a lack of common sense as well as a lack of contact with black reality on the part of those who made them. For the fact that lower-class blacks would make some "mistakes" in their English (e.g., they might say *bofe* for *both* or *we tired* for *we are tired*) but not others (e.g., they would never say *boke* for *both* or *tired we* for *we are tired*) should itself be clear evidence of structure in their language. And anyone walking down the street in a black ghetto, or passing by the playground of a black school, could hardly avoid having his ears bombarded by the incessant chatter of supposedly "non-verbal" children. But if linguists and anthropologists were somewhat amused by the absurdity of the educationalist and social-psychologist views of why blacks were having language problems in the schools, they were very much alarmed by the widespread popularity of these views, and by their devastating effects on the self-respect and academic achievement of black students. Consequently, a few linguists and anthropologists began to intervene by presenting a culture-conflict model of black educational failure and derivative suggestions for curriculum reform.

To date, the linguistic contribution has been by far the largest, involving proof of the linguistic integrity of black nonstandard dialect (through the description of many of its structural characteristics), suggestions for teaching standard English to speakers of black dialect (through the comparison of structural characteristics of the two forms of English), and an assertion of black linguistic identity (through the finding of evidence that black dialect evolved independently from white dialects of English). The one thing linguists have not yet done has been to bring about uniformity in the use of a term for the nonstandard speech of black people. *Negro dialect* is the term most well established by past usage, while *Black English* now seems to be gaining currency. But other terms have also been used, such as *Negro English*, *N.N.E.* or *NNE* (standing either for *nonstandard Negro English* or for *Negro nonstandard English*), *Black folk speech*, and *Black dialect*. (In the written use of these terms, words like *dialect* and *speech* are sometimes capitalized and sometimes not.) All of these terms have been used at one time or another by serious scholars, and each has its advantages and its drawbacks. Linguists have leaned toward *Negro dialect* because it parallels terms like *Scottish dialect*, and because *dialect* is the linguist's technical word for a language variety. But non-linguists have been less receptive of terms containing this word, because of the somewhat derogatory connotation of *dialect* in popular usage. But then the terms *Black English* and *Negro English*, which avoid this problem, share the common weakness that they can too easily be taken as applying to standard as well as nonstandard speech, just as long as it is used by black people. This allows those who happen to be ashamed of the nonstandard speech of lower-class blacks to dismiss it as a broken and degenerate jargon, and to designate the standard English often spoken by educated black people as the "real" Black English. The one term which seems to avoid all of these difficulties is *Black folk speech*. It has its own drawback, however, which is that the word *folk* has enough of a rural suggestion about it to make the term awkward when applied (as it now frequently must be) to urban situations.

But in spite of the terminological flux, and in spite of occasional differences of opinion among linguists as to the best analytical procedures to use or the right interpretation of the data gathered, the evidence in support of the structural integrity of black nonstandard dialect was overwhelming. Not only was it established that the dialect had a sound system and a grammatical structure of its own, but it was also discovered that in certain ways its structure was even more communicatively efficient than that of standard English. For example, black dialect turned out to have a special use of *be* which indicates extended or repeated action, and a special use of *been* (usually stressed) to indicate the completion of an action in the remote past. Thus a speaker of black dialect would consistently distinguish between *Dey be singin' in church* (meaning that they are in the habit of doing it) and *Dey singin' in church* (meaning that they are doing it at the moment), or between *I bought it* (meaning that it was bought at some unspecified time) and *I been bought it* (meaning that it was bought long ago). In standard English, there is no grammatical way to make such distinctions; one can only say *They are singing in church* and *I bought it*, no matter which of the precise meanings expressed in black dialect are intended. Yet, even where black dialect and standard English might agree in the meaning expressed by a set of parallel grammatical constructions, there could be differences in the form of these constructions. For example, both black dialect and standard English have possessive constructions of the type noun-plus-noun, where the first noun refers to the possessor and the second noun to the thing possessed. But while standard English requires the use of a special possessive marker (written '-s') at the end of the possessor noun in such constructions, black dialect does not. Accordingly, one must say *my uncle's car* in standard English, but may say *my uncle car* in black dialect, although the meaning of the two utterances is identical. Of course, there were also numerous grammatical constructions which were identical in both meaning and form in black dialect and standard English, such as the modification of nouns by adjectives placed before the noun. That is, one would normally say *I live in a big house* in both black dialect and standard English, but one would not say *I live in a house big* in either. (Black dialect does indeed have a construction of the type *my house big*, but this is equivalent to standard English *my house is big*, rather than to *my big house*.) Of course, it goes without saying that linguists found both similarities and differences between black dialect and standard English in the matter of pronunciation, although such differences between the two kinds of English seemed to be greater than in the case of word-equivalents. In other words, it appeared to be more likely that black dialect and standard English would use the same word for a particular object, than that they would have the same pronunciations for that word. And although an obvious exception to this observation is provided by the frequent use of slang or "jive talk" by many speakers of black dialect, particularly in the larger cities, the vast majority of slang expressions are by their very nature unstable and do not remain in use for long. At any rate, there is some doubt as to whether even those slang expressions which are used exclusively by blacks ought to be considered a characteristic of black dialect as such, since they are generally absent from rural varieties of black dialect, while in urban ghettos they may occur together with the pronunciation and grammar of either black dialect or standard English. It is probably best to consider black slang a separate entity from black dialect, with the understanding that the two are often used together.

To the linguists who studied black language usage, the pedagogical implications of many of their findings seemed obvious and incontrovertible



—even when these went against established educational views, which indeed they often did. For example, before the linguistic intervention, and in response to their own appraisal of the special language problems of black lower-class school children, a number of prominent educational psychologists had urged the creation of language-enrichment programs for lower-class black children of pre-school age. In the view of these psychologists, such programs were needed to offset the failure of many black children to acquire in their home environment what were felt to be basic language skills. Yet linguists found that virtually all of the lower-class black children whom they interviewed were fluent speakers of a structurally normal (though often nonstandard) variety of English. This meant that, no matter how emotionally appealing they might be, programs of the language-enrichment type were founded on a false premise. And, since many language-enrichment programs were already beginning to fail, their proven linguistic inaccuracy could easily be a contributory factor to that failure. But the pedagogical implications of linguistic findings on black language usage were by no means all so negative. For, in detailing many of the structural differences between black dialect and standard English, linguists were actually providing a blueprint for the development of special procedures for the teaching of standard English to speakers of black dialect.

In their pedagogical philosophy as well as in their content, these procedures were a far cry from the random correction of "mistakes" which had previously characterized the so-called "language arts" for black students. In recognizing that most of these "mistakes" were the result of confusion on the part of the learner between the structural patterns of his own dialect and those of standard English, the linguistic model of structural interference (i.e., the structural influence of one language or dialect on the comprehension or production of another) opened the way for the use in inner-city classrooms of modified foreign-language teaching techniques. Incorporating structural comparisons between the language of the learner and the language being taught, these techniques had originally been developed for the teaching of such clearly "foreign" languages as Arabic, Chinese, and Spanish to speakers of English and, later, for the teaching of English to speakers of foreign languages. (This last application came to be known professionally as TEFL—teaching English as a foreign language, TESL—teaching English as a second language, or TESOL—teaching English to speakers of other languages.) Although it was true that black dialect shared an infinitely larger number of structural features with standard English than did languages like Arabic, Chinese, or Spanish, the linguists pointed out that this merely made the areas of structural conflict that much more difficult for black students to overcome without pedagogical assistance. In learning standard English, the speaker of Arabic or Chinese would know from the start that he was faced with a language-learning problem, since it would be obvious that the language being learned was not the same language as his own. For the black learner of standard English, however, the fact that what was being presented in school seemed very similar to his own speech would be likely to convince him that he already knew the intricacies of the school language. For the English-speaking learner of Spanish, it soon becomes obvious that Spanish has two different equivalents of the verb *to be*: *ser* and *estar*. It is obvious, not so much because these verbs have somewhat different meanings, but rather because they sound and look different—both from each other and from English *to be*—and because they inflect differently. For the speaker of black dialect, however, it is by no means obvious that, while his own *is* and *be* are different verbs with different functions, *is* is merely an inflected variant of *be*.

in standard English. Nor, in fact, is this likely to be any more obvious to the teacher. For, if standard English has the verb forms *be* and *is*, and the black student is observed to have them in his own speech as well, then one might easily assume that he uses them just as in standard English. And other differences, even when involving nothing more than simple inflectional variations, can be just as confusing. The black student's *here it is* matches standard English, but his *here dey is* does not; his *he don't want it* is at variance with standard English, while his *we don't want it* is not. Because of the subtlety of the structural relationships between black dialect and standard English; the average black student simply cannot be expected to perceive with complete accuracy exactly where his dialect leaves off and the standard language begins. Indeed, this may be one reason why waves of foreign immigrants, speaking languages like Italian, Yiddish, and Ukrainian, have been able to acquire standard English within one or two generations in the United States, while American blacks have not been able to do so as completely over a much longer span of time.

Another pedagogically important fact which emerged from the linguistic research on black dialect was its relative uniformity throughout the United States. Sometimes obscured by age, sex, and socio-economic differences within a single black community, the underlying uniformity of black dialect from region to region became apparent as soon as these social variables were controlled for. Thus, nonstandard dialect with essentially the same structural characteristics was reported in use by young, lower-class black males in such far-flung urban centers as Washington, Harlem, Chicago, San Antonio, and Oakland. And, not surprisingly, these characteristics were also found to be prevalent in the nonstandard speech of blacks in the rural South. Minor variations in pronunciation, grammar, and idiom did indeed occur, but the variations within black dialect seemed to be of less pedagogical importance than those differences from standard English (and even from white nonstandard speech) which proved so characteristic of black dialect. For example, in the so-called Geechee variety of black dialect spoken in Charleston, South Carolina, one might say *we house* where speakers of other varieties of black dialect would, like speakers of standard English and white nonstandard dialect, say *our house*. Yet Geechee shares with other varieties of black dialect virtually all of the structural features mentioned earlier, plus many more. And it is such features which distinguish black dialect from both standard English and white nonstandard dialect of whatever type. Obviously, the pedagogical significance of this state of affairs lies in the possibility it provides for developing language-arts material with an extremely wide applicability. It also means, of course, that separate research programs will not be needed in each and every black community in the United States; the scientific findings for one community will be likely to have a high degree of validity—and therefore of pedagogical applicability—in other communities throughout the nation.

Finally, of the various pedagogical recommendations which were made, by linguists who studied black dialect, there was one which stemmed less from their immediate research than from their professional view of the basic equality of all varieties of human speech, and their knowledge that it was commonplace for people to learn and use two or more varieties of a language. This was the recommendation that black dialect be used side-by-side with standard English in the classroom. Some linguists felt that this should be done only in the early grades, and only as a way of relating standard English to the pre-school language of black children. Others, however, envisioned the eventual retention of black dialect as a pedagogical companion of standard English through the secondary level, and perhaps beyond. At first, this recommendation was limited to oral usage. But more

recently, a few linguists have begun to consider the use of a written form of black dialect as a device in beginning reading instruction for those black children whose knowledge of standard English proves inadequate for decoding traditional reading texts.

If the pedagogical implications of the linguistic research on black dialect seemed obvious and incontrovertible to most linguists and anthropologists, they nevertheless appeared decidedly radical and controversial to many educators and educational psychologists. The reason was that the linguistic view of nonstandard speech in general, and the linguistic findings on black dialect in particular, clearly argued against certain social beliefs, theoretical assumptions, and methodological traditions which were a part of the educational heritage.

Perhaps the most controversial finding to emerge from this linguistic research was that black nonstandard dialect was different from white nonstandard dialect—even in the Deep South. Moreover, research on the history of black and white dialect in North America revealed that they had always been different. This obviously meant that a white-black dichotomy in American language usage was as old as the earliest settlement of the colonies by European and African stock. And if this was true for language, it was very probably true for other kinds of cultural behavior as well. But in the view of many socially liberal educators, this was an uncomfortable conclusion to come to. For it attacked the cherished "melting pot" image of American society, in which foreign immigrants were supposed to be culturally transformed into Anglo-Saxon-like Americans within one or two generations. What is more, American blacks were often pointed to as exemplifying the most complete transformation ever effected by the American melting pot. Because, for reasons mentioned earlier, it had become scientifically taboo to admit to racially or ethnically-correlated behavioral differences, the entire educationalist rhetoric on the achievement problems of black school children had been adjusted to the strictly monocultural perspective implicit in the melting-pot image. And since it was an unwritten rule of this perspective that behavioral differences between black and white children had to be denied, ignored, or attributed to some sort of abnormal (i.e., neither natural nor permanent) cause, it was most convenient for educators, to accept the environmental-pathology model furnished by the psychologists as an explanation for the endemically low school-language performance of black children. It was on this model, then, that the educators had based virtually all of their remedial methods for dealing with black children who had language problems in school. Yet, here were the linguists saying that black nonstandard speech was fully developed and well-organized language, and thereby refuting the entrenched language-pathology model. And, what was still worse, these linguists were saying that black nonstandard dialect was not the same as white nonstandard dialect, asserting thereby that the American melting pot had lumps in it, and that one of these lumps was black! It soon became apparent to many educators that if they accepted the linguistic view of black dialect, with its obvious pedagogical implications, they would not merely be accepting new information of an innocuous kind; they would be acknowledging the refutation of their entire approach to the education of black children. Some educators were able to do this without misgivings, but others were not.

For those who were unwilling to accept the linguists' conclusions with respect to the nature of black dialect, and who wanted their opposition to appear reasonable to impartial observers, it was necessary to find a way to dismiss the linguistic findings on the dialect as something other than empirical data. A possible way of doing this was suggested by the striking

similarity between the transcriptions of black dialect published by the linguists and the kind of black dialect one could find in the older plantation literature. Given this resemblance, it was easy for opponents of the linguistic viewpoint to make the charge that the linguists (who were mostly white) had drawn their material, not from the real speech of black people, but from the traditional stereotype of black speech. Although those who made this charge were correct in discerning a similarity between the linguistic transcriptions of black speech and traditional literary black dialect, they were quite wrong in assuming that the former was a copy of the latter, or that the latter was entirely artificial. In general, the older plantation literature was written by whites who had been born and raised on plantations, and who had learned the dialect in childhood from black playmates (who often were their only playmates) on the plantation. Thus, even if slightly concentrated at times, the black dialect to be found in the plantation literature was a fairly accurate rendition of the actual speech of plantation fieldhands. And the reason why the up-to-date linguistic transcriptions of the speech of lower-class urban blacks turned out to look so much like the plantation dialect was simply that modern urban black dialect was a direct descendent of plantation black dialect. This fact might be an uncomfortable one for those who can see nothing but degradation and pathology in the black plantation experience; but the problem lies there, and not in the reliance by linguists on the literary representation of an older form of black dialect.

While such objections as there were to the linguistic description of black dialect focused initially on the question of black-white differences, this did not remain the central issue for long. After all, differences between black and white children in school-language performance were a matter of record, and therefore required some sort of explanation. The language-pathology model advanced by the psychologists had of course been an attempt to furnish one, but its validity had been seriously challenged by the linguistic evidence. And while, to most educators, the language-difference model might be less compatible with their assimilationist values than its psychological predecessor had been, it was still infinitely more comfortable than the other available model for explaining black-white differences in academic achievement: the genetic-inferiority model. Furthermore, the linguists' claims for the historical and structural integrity of black dialect (as a distinct entity from standard English and white nonstandard dialect) came at a time of growing self-awareness on the part of American blacks. Soon, educators found that they could openly entertain a linguistic model of black-white dialect differences without as great a danger of being interpreted as inferring thereby that black people were inferior. In fact, the wheel turned so far that one was now more likely to be considered a racist for advocating the language-pathology model than for accepting the language-difference model.

It is somewhat ironic that, while educational resistance to the linguistic view of black dialect died down rather quickly on the issue of its social and structural uniqueness, it continued on in terms of another issue which actually had nothing to do with such potentially controversial matters as racial or ethnic differences in language usage, or the structural details of black dialect itself. Rather, the issue which turned out to be much more deep-seated and enduring had to do with the traditional linguistic view of the nature of nonstandard dialects in general and their relationship to standardized dialects. As part of their professional training, linguists learned that virtually all of the world's languages were made up of a number of different varieties, or *dialects*, and that each of these had its own history of development into what it was, its own linguistic structure

including a set of sounds, a grammar, and a vocabulary), and its own particular function in the society which used it. Of course, linguists also knew that the developmental history and grammatical structure of only one or two of a particular language's dialects would be likely to have been noted down in books, and that this fact was often erroneously taken as evidence that only such dialects of a particular language had a history and a grammar. At the same time, linguists realized that these social facts concerning the different dialects of a language had nothing to do with the historical validity and structural integrity of any dialect, be it standard or nonstandard, be it of high prestige or low. In other words, insofar as the comparative structural and historical evaluation of different dialects were concerned, linguists were relativistic and egalitarian. In a sense which went to the very core of their professional outlook, linguists regarded any dialect as every bit as "good" as any other dialect.

Perhaps inevitably, the professional relativism with which the linguists treated black dialect and standard English clashed with the normativistic comparisons which educators had traditionally relied on in their attempts to replace the one with the other. Though it appeared in the context of black dialect, this basic conflict between linguistic relativism and educational normativism was not motivated by the unique social or structural characteristics of black dialect; it would have occurred over any other kind of nonstandard dialect which linguists might have chosen to study and describe. It just happened that, because of a national focus on racial inequities in American public education, the special school-language problems of black children had caught the attention of a number of linguists.

\*To start with, many educators were disturbed by the linguists' assertion that black dialect served as useful a purpose in the black community as standard English did in mainstream life, and therefore that the two forms of English could, and should, coexist in the language repertoire of those who found it necessary to function in both societies. The reason why this assertion upset even many of those educators who recognized nonstandard dialect as "real" language was that it seemed unrealistic in terms of a tacit assumption which American education had made concerning the use of different varieties of English. If a name were needed for this assumption, a fairly descriptive one might be the "single space" theory of dialect usage; for the assumption was that an individual had room in the language "compartment" of his brain for only one variety of a language. Accordingly, a person could be expected to know and use a nonstandard dialect, or to know and use standard English, but that it would overtax his language-production capacity to expect him to know and use both. Indeed, it followed quite reasonably from the "single space" theory that the continued use of nonstandard dialect by a school child was a sure sign that the child would not learn standard English well. Perhaps one reason why educators clung so tenaciously to the "single space" theory of dialect usage was that, if true, it automatically gave rise to a pedagogical corollary which indicated that standard English could be taught quite easily. For, if it was true that the knowledge and use of nonstandard dialect blocked the learning and use of standard English, then prohibiting the use of nonstandard dialect should eventually cause the student to forget it; and forgetting it would create a language vacuum into which standard English would flow almost by itself. It was a belief in this "vacuum" theory which led many English teachers to spend more time discouraging the use of nonstandard dialect by their pupils than in actually teaching them how to use standard English.

One way in which linguists were able to counteract the resistance to black dialect stemming from a commitment to the "single space" theory was

by pointing out that in Europe, for example, it was normal for educated persons to know and use more than one dialect of their national language. Another way was to suggest the analogy of, say, a Japanese merchant who found it necessary to do business in France. Obviously, the fact that he already spoke Japanese would not mean that he could never learn to speak French, nor would the learning of French force him to give up his knowledge of Japanese. If taught French well, he would then be able to use both languages—each on its appropriate occasion. And, if a demonstration of the falsity of the "vacuum" theory were needed, it would be pointed out that forcing the Japanese merchant to stop using his native language would hardly result by itself in any ability on his part to speak French.

While even the resistance based on pedagogical normativism has been disappearing from the educational perspective on black dialect, it must be admitted that educators are still left with a rather formidable amount of technical information on the dialect to be digested. Ideally, educators at all levels should learn about the historical background of black dialect, and its overall structural relationship to standard English. English teachers, in particular, should familiarize themselves with some of the more important points of structural conflict between standard English and black dialect, in order to understand the difficulties which a black student may have with classroom language requirements. Employers, too, should come to understand that the use of black dialect by an employee or applicant is in no way an indication of low mental ability.

The once-frequent charges of racism and stupidity which black students and employees and white educators and employers have leveled at each other are now giving way to a realization that much-needed knowledge and understanding, not name-calling, offers the most hope for overcoming the problems associated with the entry of black youths into mainstream schools and jobs. This essay is offered as an initial step toward the knowledge and understanding necessary to deal with language-conflict and, by implication, with other areas of innocent yet destructive culture-conflict between black and white.

#### APPENDIX: FURTHER READINGS ON BLACK LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

After decades of scientific and pedagogical neglect, the language and culture of black Americans has finally begun to receive the attention they merit from scholars and educators. In fact, the literature on these subjects is currently in a state of rapid expansion, as a glance at the "Black Studies" section of any good bookstore will confirm. Yet this literature is of very mixed quality, and the beginner will do well to seek guidance on the initial selection.

The following is a list of primary reading on black language and culture which are of uniformly high quality, having been written for the most part by professional linguists and anthropologists. They have all been written with the intelligent layman in mind, but they are by no means "popular" treatments. At times, the layman may find them too comprehensive, or the treatment too technical, because the authors have also written these works as contributions to their particular disciplines, and therefore have been addressing their colleagues as well. But this has an advantage; it gives these works more than passing value. As the reader becomes more informed in the area, he can return to these works again and again, and discover new information and insights which were previously obscure. The vast majority of these works deserve to be in the private collection of anyone seriously interested in Afro-American language and culture. (Indeed, one item—that of Herskovits—has already become a classic in this field.) Consequently, only items which are still in print have been listed.

and procurement information (such as the publisher and price) has been included in every case. The addresses of most of the publishers will be known to any bookseller, except perhaps the two non-commercial ones which, for the record, are

The Center for Applied Linguistics  
1717 Massachusetts Avenue, N. W.  
Washington, D. C. 20036

and

The Florida FL Reporter  
801 N.E. 177th Street  
North Miami Beach, Florida 33162

The list is divided into two parts: those collections, anthologies, or books which supply background information on black culture, and those which deal directly with black dialect and associated pedagogical issues. Although by no means the only reliable or informative works of their kind on black language or culture, these will give the ambitious reader a good start, and the bibliographic references which they include can serve as a guide to more extensive reading.

#### SECTION I: CULTURAL BACKGROUND

1. Roger D. Abrahams, *Positively Black*. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970. Pp. xii, 177. Price, \$5.95 hardcover, \$2.95 paperback.  
A study of black identity through black performance patterns. The book contains an insightful discussion of what could be called "black talk" (meaning the use of language among black people, rather than its form as is emphasized by the term "black dialect"), in which the author shows the interrelationship of discourse styles, speaker roles, and certain folklore motifs.
2. Ulf Hannerz, *Soulside: Inquiries into Ghetto Culture and Community*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1969. Pp. 236. Price, \$5.95 hardcover, \$2.95 paperback.  
An ethnographic study of a modern black inner-city neighborhood. The book is rich in its analysis of life styles and sex roles, and contains informative discussions of the function of rumor and gossip in the ghetto.
3. Melville J. Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past*. Boston: Beacon Hill Press, 1958. [A slightly updated re-issue of the 1941 text.] Pp. xxxii, 368. Price, \$2.45 per copy, paperback only.  
Originally published in 1941, this was the first serious attempt to trace Afro-American social and behavioral patterns back to African sources. Chapter VIII, on language and the arts, contains a number of provocative observations on possible African influences in the speech of New World Negroes. Has insightful comparative observations.
4. Charles Keil, *Urban Blues*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966. Pp. xii, 231. Price, \$2.45 per copy, paperback only.  
Although primarily a study of the urban style of blues singing, this book argues for, and illustrates, the existence of a black urban culture distinct from white or mainstream urban culture. Much of the perspective developed in the book on black music is directly transferable to other aspects of black culture.
5. John Szwed (editor), *Black America*. New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1970. Pp. xvi, 303. Price, \$7.95 per copy.  
A collection of 23 essays on various aspects of Afro-American language and culture; some with a historical, some a descriptive, and some a political orientation.

## SECTION II: BLACK DIALECT

1. [Alfred C. Aarons, editor] "Dialects" by Jean Malmstrom; "Negro Children's Dialect in the Inner-City" and "Non-Standard Negro Dialects—Convergence or Divergence?" by J. L. Dillard; "Sociolinguistic Factors in the History of American Negro Dialects" and "Continuity and Change in American Negro Dialects" by William A. Stewart. [From *The Florida FL Reporter*, 1966-1968.] Price, \$1.25 for the five articles.

A packet of reprintings of articles on black dialect from past issues of *The Florida FL Reporter*, this collection is particularly useful in providing an understanding of the history and development of black dialect, and its position within the American dialect complex.

2. Alfred C. Aarons, Barbara Y. Gordon, and William A. Stewart (editors), *Linguistic-Cultural Differences and American Education* [=Vol. 7, No. 1 of *The Florida FL Reporter*, Spring/Summer 1969]. Pp. x, 176. Price, \$6.50 per copy.

A special anthology issue of *The Florida FL Reporter* devoted entirely to the implications for education of linguistic and cultural diversity in American society. Of the 43 articles included, almost half deal wholly or in part with black dialect.

3. Joan C. Baratz and Roger W. Shuy (editors), *Teaching Black Children to Read*. Washington, D. C.: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1969. Pp. xiv, 219. Price, \$5.00 per copy.

Contains eight articles (five of them appearing for the first time in this book) on the implications of black dialect for beginning-reading instruction. Some of the contributors suggest the use of elementary readers in the vernacular language of black children, and furnish sample texts in black dialect.

4. Ralph W. Fasold and Roger W. Shuy (editors), *Teaching Standard English in the Inner City*. Washington, D. C.: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1970. Pp. xx, 141. Price, \$5.00 per copy.

Contains six articles on the techniques of teaching standard English to speakers of black dialect. These readings will serve as an orientation for teachers of black students of all ages. The articles are uniformly rich in examples, both of the structural features of black dialect and the application of modified foreign language teaching techniques in the English classroom.

5. Irwin Feigenbaum, *English Now*. [Developmental Edition.] New York: New Century, Educational Division, Meredith Corporation, 1970. Teacher's Manual. Pp. viii, 158. Price, \$2.64 per copy. Student's Workbook. Pp. iv, 158. Price \$13.20 per package of 5. Reel-to-reel tapes are also available at \$156.00 per set of 14.

This is probably the first course in standard English designed specifically for speakers of black dialect, and based on a comparison of the two varieties of English. The pedagogical techniques utilized in the course are aimed at high school students and below, but the linguistic problems dealt with are shared by many adults as well.

6. Walter A. Wolfram, *A Sociolinguistic Description of Detroit Negro Speech*. Washington, D. C.: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1969. Pp. xviii, 237. Price, \$5.00 per copy.

A detailed study of certain structural characteristics of the speech of Detroit Negroes, and their correlations with such social factors as age, sex, and economic status. Comparison with white usage in Detroit, and Negro usage in other cities, are made.



## Section 6: Contrastive Dialectology

### A CONTRASTIVE HAITIAN CREOLE-ENGLISH CHECKLIST

R. M. R. Hall  
Beatrice L. Hall

#### 1. Introduction

Teachers of English to speakers of other languages in the greater New York area are encountering in their classes increasing numbers of students at every age level from the French-speaking Caribbean. While the majority of these students come from Haiti, there is also some in-migration from the French islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique and from French Guiana and from the British islands of St. Lucia, and Dominica where a significant part of the population is French-speaking.

Since these students come from places where the official language is French, the teacher faced with such a student is almost sure to assume that the student is in fact a speaker of some variety of Standard French which is not too different from the French the teacher studied in school, and, as a result, he will expect normal sorts of French-speaker mistakes in English. In this assumption he will be aided and abetted by his student (or the student's parents) who will insist that the native language is French. The teacher is usually then astounded by the fact that many of the things in English which are very difficult for the French-speaker (e.g., the contrast between the simple present and the present continuous) come quite easily and naturally to his student while other things which are normally easy for the French speaker (e.g., the application of *he* only to masculine beings and *she* only to feminine ones) come only with great difficulty.

The plain truth of the matter is, of course, that such students are NOT native speakers of Standard French or anything close to it, whatever they or their parents may say. Their first language is, almost without exception, Caribbean French Creole, a language which shares with French only its vocabulary and, to some extent, its sound system but which is so different from it grammatically that these two kinds of speech must be considered to be two separate languages since the speaker of one cannot, without study, understand the other in any effective sense. To understand, then, why people from this region refer to themselves only as speakers of French (even though their command of that language may be barely minimal) one must know something about the socio-linguistic situation in the area. Both in Haiti and in Martinique, Guadeloupe and French Guiana the official language and the language of instruction in all schools is French. All public business is conducted in French and it is considered appropriate to speak only French on any kind of a public or official occasion. Almost all writing is also in French and there is in Haiti very little

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literary tradition in Creole and in the other regions almost none at all. All of these facts combine to lend to French very high social prestige and to mark Creole as the language of peasants and illiterates (see Stewart, 1962a and 1962b, for further discussion of the social roles of Creole vs. French). Since a knowledge of French is a sine qua non for upward mobility, and since those who migrate to the United States are by and large members of the class with social aspirations, it is not surprising that, by a transference of Caribbean standards, these people claim French as their native language. For them to admit to outsiders that Creole is their native language would, in their eyes, stigmatize them as lower class and backward. However, it must be emphasized that, according to every reliable linguistic survey of the area, ALL social classes (except recent European immigrants) DO speak French Caribbean Creole and NOT Standard French as their first language. Indeed most of the middle-class residents of the area do speak very good Standard French but studies have shown that even this French is usually influenced in many more or less subtle ways by Creole and in no case can it be said to be the first or native language. Thus it must be emphasized that when dealing with students or their parents from this area their protestations that, "Yes, lots of other people do speak Creole but in *our* family we speak only French," are to be taken with a large grain of salt. It may be safely assumed that the language which will exercise the primary influence on the learning of English is not French but French Creole. The teacher must be acquainted with the facts of Creole structure if he is to help his students master English and it is our purpose here to sketch in broad outline the major facts of Creole grammar.

Although there are many minor differences between the Creole dialects as spoken in Haiti, Martinique, Guadeloupe, etc., they are all mutually intelligible and have the same basic grammar. The immediate basis for our description is Haitian Cr le, both because there are many more speakers of it (perhaps 4,500,000) than of all of the other French Creoles put together and because Haitians are also far and away the most numerous group of French Creole speakers in the New York area.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. PHONOLOGY

### 2.0 Consonants

The consonants of Haitian Creole are summarized in the following table:

p	t	(t <sup>h</sup> )	(k <sup>v</sup> )	k
b	d	(d <sup>h</sup> )	(g <sup>v</sup> )	g
f	s	ʃ		(h)
v	z	ʒ		
m	n	ɲ		(ŋ)
	l			r
w		y		

<sup>1</sup> Our description is based primarily on the speech of two informants: Mrs. Horna Jean-Charles, a native of Port de Paix, and Miss Gemma Durand, a native of Port-au-Prince. We would like to thank both of them for their wonderfully cooperative understanding. Our thanks also go to the numerous Haitians who were our students at the American Language Institute of New York University and to our former colleagues there with whom we have discussed many of these problems. Our special thanks also go out to William A. Stewart, Education Study Center, Washington, D. C., who first roused our interest in the comparative study of the Afro-Caribbean Creole languages and with whom we have had many valuable discussions of Haitian Creole grammar. For more complete descriptions of Haitian Creole grammar see R. A. Hall, Jr. (1953) and Valdman (1970).

They may be contrasted with the following summary of English consonants:

p	t	č	k	
b	d	j	g	
f	ə s	š		h
v	ð z	z		
m	n		ŋ	
	l	r		
w			y	

The following are the major points of difference between the two systems:

2. 1 Sounds present in English but lacking in Haitian Creole are /č/, /j/, /ə/, /ð/ as in *church, judge, thin, then*. The usual substitutions are /š/, /z/, /s/, /z/. A useful technique for teaching /č/ and /j/ is to have the student pronounce /t/ plus /š/ and /d/ plus /z/ in close juxtaposition, e.g. *what she is* said over and over at increasing tempo until the three words run together producing /wačfyz/. Then the element /č/ is isolated in word-initial position by diminishing the volume of the /wa/ until it disappears and the student is left saying *cheesc* and then *what cheese* with a clear break between the two words. This can be reinforced by contrastive phonetic-semantic drills, for example, *watch the baby* with the teacher pointing to his eye vs. *wash the baby* with the teacher miming the act of washing. Other pairs of words for practice on the contrast of /č/:/š/ are *cheap* and *sheep*, *chip* and *ship*.

Once /č/ has been mastered, /j/ should fall in line fairly rapidly.

The important thing to note about /ə/ and /ð/ in contrast to /s/ and /z/ is that /ə/ and /ð/ are not only frequently interdental; they are also *non-strident*—that is, English /ə/ and /ð/ in contrast with English, or Haitian, /s/ and /z/ are said with comparatively little air pressure. In teaching the student to produce /ə/ and /ð/ one should not only have him get his tongue forward into interdental position, one should also caution him to "say the sound very softly." It is useful to have him hold his hand about four inches in front of the teacher's mouth to feel the difference in air stream between /ə/ and /s/. This teaching technique is useful for speakers of any language who have difficulty with the English sounds /ə/ and /ð/.

2. 2 Sounds present in both languages but with different distribution.

#### 2.2.1 Aspiration of Voiceless Stops

English /p/, /t/, /č/ and /k/ are all aspirated in initial position. This means that when any of these stop consonants is the first sound in a word it is followed by a light puff of air. When an /s/ precedes these consonants this puff of air is absent, as it usually is when the sound occurs in the middle of a word. This can easily be seen by holding one's hand in front of his mouth while comparing the pronunciation of *pin* (aspiration, phonetically [p<sup>h</sup>ɪn]) with *spin* (no aspiration) and *slipper* (usually, no aspiration).

Haitian /p/, /t/, and /k/ on the other hand are never aspirated. This poses a one way problem—that is, the Haitian has no difficulty in hearing English [p<sup>h</sup>] [t<sup>h</sup>], [k<sup>h</sup>] as the equivalent of Haitian /p/, /t/, /k/ and separating them from all the other sounds of the English system, but his unaspirated /p/, /t/, /k/ will frequently sound to the English speaker like /b/, /d/, /g/, and lead the unwary English teacher into thinking that his student is confusing the voiceless stops of English with the voiced

ones. When teaching the differential control of aspiration it is much easier to establish the difference with /p/ than with /t/, /tʃ/ or /k/; once the student has learned to control this feature in the labial area he can then transfer it to sounds articulated farther back in the mouth.<sup>2</sup> While aspiration is not especially easy to teach, among methods that are reasonably successful are:

- a) telling the student to puff his lips out so that the inner edges of the lips meet when a /p/ is articulated in initial position and
- b) exaggerating the amount of aspiration by pronouncing the word emphatically and breathily.

#### 2.2.2. Affrication of /t/, /d/, /k/ and /g/.

In the chart of Creole consonants, after /t/ and /d/ and before /k/ and /g/ the sounds [tʃ], [kʃ], [dʒ], [gʒ] are given in parentheses. This is to indicate that these sounds are significant positional variants, or allophones, of /t/, /k/, /d/, /g/. When /t/ etc. are followed by /i/, /y/ or /w/, they affricate, that is, they are followed by a very lightly articulated fricative made in the same place in the mouth. The degree of affrication varies greatly from speaker to speaker and from region to region. For some speakers this is only a light /y/-like effect (palatalization) following the consonant and it does not interfere with their intelligibility in English but only makes them sound somewhat foreign. For other speakers the degree of affrication is great enough to interfere with intelligibility and work must be done with them to get them to use their non-affricated allophones before /i/, /y/ and /w/.

#### 2.2.3 The interchange of /l/ and /n/.

Although /l/ and /n/ are separate distinctive sounds in Haitian Creole, there exist a small number of words in which they are in either systematic variation, conditioned by their phonetic environment, as in the definite article *la* which varies with *na*, or in apparently free variation, as in /kunyey/ "now" which varies with /kulyey/. This habit of interchanging /l/'s and /n/'s seems to be carried over into English by at least some Haitians so that one hears, for example, from Haitians in New York the principal island on which the city is located referred to as /malhatan/.

#### 2.2.4 The pronunciation of /l/

General American English has two varieties of /l/ which are traditionally termed a bright *l* and a dark (or dull) *l*. For example, most Americans have a bright /l/ in words such as *light* and *leap*, *peel* and *pale*; they have a dark /l/ in *loop* and *love*, *Bill* and *pencil*. Haitian Creole has only a bright /l/; the dark /l/ of English is perceived as a /w/ by the speaker of Haitian Creole and when he attempts to imitate a teacher's pronunciation of a word such as *pencil* he may produce [pensuw]. The Haitian bright /l/ is quite acceptable to speakers of English in all of the positions where a dark /l/ is used (indeed, many Southerners and speakers of British English regularly use only a bright /l/). The problem is to bring the Haitian to realize that English dark /l/ is a kind of /l/ and to respond to it with his /l/. Writing the word on the board frequently helps clarify the problem.

#### 2.2.5 Conflicts caused by /r/ and /h/

Haitian Creole, in all dialects, has an initial /r/ which is produced by very light velar friction and which seems to American ears to have a /w/-like quality, especially before back vowels. In Haitian /r/ occurs

<sup>2</sup> The principle of teaching manner of articulation contrasts first in the labial area also applies to teaching voiced/voiceless distinctions to speakers of languages such as Chinese. Given speakers who have only /t/, /s/ and /k/ and not their voiced counterparts, it is much easier to first teach /v/ in opposition to /t/ and then transfer the newly acquired voicing contrast to /z/ and /ʒ/.

between vowels and between a consonant and a following vowel with the one restriction that the combination /ʒ/ + /r/ is not found. However, no /r/ may occur between a vowel and a following consonant or at the end of a word. This distribution of /r/ almost exactly parallels the /r/ distribution in American English *r*-less dialects and therefore, except for the need to teach the student an English /r/, there is no need to change the student's usage; even if the teacher's own speech has /r/ in these positions, he must steel himself to accept this relatively *r*-less usage—after all, a fair proportion of the U.S. is relatively *r*-less.

The problem of teaching English /r/ to Haitians is further complicated by the fact that the Haitian tends to perceive English initial /r/ as a /w/ so that he hears *ring* as /wiŋ/ but *crew* as /kruw/ and *dracary* as /driyriy/. When working with speakers of Haitian Creole who are adults or older children who already know how to read, as new words which begin with /r/ are introduced in oral/aural drills, they should be written on the blackboard and a moment taken to repractice the /r/-onset, with the friction of the /r/ slightly exaggerated by the teacher. (Good general directions for teaching English /r/ can be found in Lado and Fries (1954).)

For the majority of Haitian Creole dialects, initial /r/ has two historical sources: French initial /r/, as in /ri/ "street" (French *rue*), and the so-called "h-aspiré" of French, as in /romà/ 'lobster' (French *homard*). However, in some dialects in the south of Haiti, French "h-aspiré" is realized not as an /r/ but as an /h/, thus /homà/. This southern /h/ is the ONLY /h/ found in Haitian; it is completely acceptable to English speakers as a variety of /h/ and the speakers who have it represent no teaching problem in this regard. For the majority of Haitian Creole speakers, who have no /h/, this sound must be actively taught. While this is not easy to do, a strategy which has frequently worked for us is as follows: The contrast is first taught in intervocalic position with words such as *ahead* where a weakly stressed syllable is followed by an /h/ which commences a strongly stressed syllable. The student should be first made aware of the existence of a segment and the teacher should make the /h/ in his pronunciation model exaggeratedly breathy. This technique is usually successful and it simply remains to transfer the student's ability to, first, constructions with indefinite article plus noun with initial /h/, e.g.

I want a hat.  
I want a house.

etc.

and then to these same words with the definite article

The hat is good  
The house is big

etc.

and finally to other words

The hat is here.

and

Harry has a hat.

The pronunciation of /h/ before stressed syllables should be under good control before the student is led to attempt it before syllables with weak stress such as in *rehabilitation*.

If the student is unable to produce an intervocalic /h/ at first try, he can be brought to it by having him imitate panting.

### 2.3 Vowels

Haitian Creole has seven vowels:

i	u
e	o
ɛ	ɔ
æ	ɔH

and two diphthongs /ey/ and /ay/.

Their values are approximately the continental ones; their closest English equivalents are: /i/ to /iy/ as in *machine*; /e/ to /ey/ as in *bait*; /ɛ/ to /ɛ/ as in *bet*; /a/ to /a/ as in *father*; /ɔ/ to /ɔH/ as in *bought*; /o/ to /ow/ as in *boat*; /u/ to /uw/ as in *pool*. All of the Haitian vowels are pure vowels and all of them are relatively short; they have none of the diphthongal off-glide or "wa-wa" quality which is so characteristic of English long vowels. (This fact of English is symbolized above by writing the English vowels with a following /y/, /w/ or /H/.<sup>3</sup>) The Haitian diphthongs /ey/ and /ay/ are quite close to the ones found in the English words *bay* (/ey/) and *buy* (/ay/); these English sounds represent no problem for the speaker of Haitian Creole.

These seven Haitian vowels may be compared with the system of General American English which recognizes from eleven to thirteen contrasts in its vocalic system. In English we must distinguish between a system of short vowels and a system of long vowels.

#### SHORT

i  
e  
æ

(i)

u

ə

ɔ

#### LONG

iy

ey

(æH)

uw

ow

ɔH

All dialects of General American English show the following contrasts:

a) short vowels: *pit* (/i/); *pet* (/ɛ/); *pat* (/æ/); *pot* (/ɔ/); *putt* (/ə/); *put* (/u/); in addition, some dialects, but not others, have a contrast between /i/ and both /ə/ and /ɪ/ as can be seen in the contrast *just* (adj.) /ə/: *just* (adv.) /i/; *gist* /ɪ/.

b) long vowels: *peel* (/iy/); *peal* (/ey/); *pool* (/uw/); *pole* (/ow/); *Paul* (/ɔH/). In addition, some dialects, the dialect of New York City for example, have a contrast between long /æH/ and short /æ/ as in *have* /æ/: *halve* /æH/, or in the modal verb *can* when it is stressed /æ/: (*u* *tin*) *can* /æH/.<sup>4</sup>

There are two types of difficulty which the speaker of Haitian Creole is going to encounter with the English vowel system. One is concerned with differences in vowel quantity and the other is concerned with differences in vowel quality.

#### 2.3.1 Teaching English vowel quantity.

Haitian Creole already has one essentially quantitative vowel distinction which provides a starting point for the teaching of English quantity. This is the distinction between /ey/ as in /soley/, "sun" and /ɛ/ as in

<sup>3</sup> We are here following the Trager-Smith convention of symbolizing the centering off-glide, or non-syllabic schwa, found in words such as *bought* and *air* as /u/. For an exposition of this transcription convention, see Gleason (1961).

<sup>4</sup> It should be emphasized that what we are dealing with here is the set of systematic contrasts found in the surface phonological system of English as they may be most usefully presented to a foreign learner of the language. The vowel system of English as a system is treated exhaustively in Chomsky and Halle (1968) which the reader should see for the deeper implications of the analysis presented here.

/bet/ "animal." The English distinction between *bait* and *bet* should be practiced first. Then the diphthongal extension of /iy/, /uw/ and /ow/ should be taught with words such as *beat*, *boot* and *boat* with the vowel length and the /y/ or /w/ quality of the glide greatly exaggerated. With /uw/ and /ow/ the teacher should also exaggerate the lip rounding of the off-glide /w/ and try to get his students to, in the beginning, produce exaggerated rounding here. In our teaching of these contrasts we have found the conventional minimal pair drills to be of only limited help and much better postponed until *after* the student has some articulatory control over the extension of the vowels by producing the off-glide diphthongs.

Work on the extension of /ɔɪ/ is better postponed until the student has mastered /iy/, /uw/ and /ow/; Haitian /ɔ/ is close enough in placement in the mouth to English /ɔɪ/ that this sound is not particularly difficult for Creole speakers and since there is no surface contrast in English between a long and short /ɔ/ there is no possibility of misunderstanding.

The contrast between /æ/ and /æɪ/ is not a very productive one in English and again work on it should be postponed until the rest of the vowel system has been mastered.

### 2.3.2 Teaching English vowel quality

The English vowels /e/, /a/ and /ɔ/ are quite close to their Haitian counterparts and need not be specially stressed. However, English /i/ and /u/ are both lower and laxer than their Haitian equivalents—Haitian /i/ and /u/ are more nearly like the vocalic parts of the English long vowels /iy/ and /uw/ (much the same problem that one finds with Spanish speakers). In teaching these sounds, one must teach the student to find a slightly lower placement of the tongue and to lax his mouth muscles as the sound is articulated. In doing this mouth diagrams with the Haitian and the English position of the tongue marked are a useful initial teaching aid but the real work must be done in frequently repeated imitation drills where the student mimics along with the teacher. These should start with the teacher articulating the higher, Haitian-like vowel sound and then opening his mouth slightly to get the position of the lower, laxer English short vowel, thus /iiiiiii/, /uuuuuuuu/. The student should be repeating this sound sequence in chorus with the teacher, trying to get on the same harmonic beat with him. At the moment when the teacher makes the transition from the close to the more open vowel he can indicate this fact visually to his students by a hand signal, starting by holding his thumb and forefinger in the air parallel to the ground with the thumb rather close to the forefinger and then dropping the thumb slightly to indicate the onset of the laxer, more open articulation.

Variations of the same technique can be used to teach the other two short vowels which give the Haitian difficulty: /æ/ and /ɔ/. With /æ/ the point of departure is /e/ and the student again must be taught to achieve a more open articulation. With /ɔ/ the point of departure is /a/ and the student must be taught to close his mouth slightly for the English sound.

After the vowel segments have been mastered in isolation they can be transferred to words and to sentences which demonstrate the contrast desired, e.g. *Pet the dog* vs. *Pat the dog*.

### 2.3.3 /aw/ and /ɔy/

Although Haitian does not contain either of these diphthongs, they seem to pose no problem for the learner of English.

## 2.4 Syllable structure

In Haitian there are, essentially, only five permitted syllable shapes:

V; VC; CV; CVC; CCVC (with the second consonant of the cluster usually being either /l/ or /r/. English, on the other hand, has many more permitted syllable shapes. The difficulties which the Haitian will have with the beginnings of words, such as inserting an /e/ before the /s/ of words such as *station* or *street* are relatively unimportant. However, his inability to have final consonant clusters means that such important grammatical contrasts as those between *walk*, *walks* and *walked* are both things which he does not readily perceive (see 2.5) and which he will not be able to reproduce unless they are actively and intensively taught to him.

### 2.5 Morphophonemic and morphological invariance

One major way in which Haitian Creole and English differ is that words in Haitian do not vary in phonetic shape within the same grammatical class. Haitian possesses no "long-short" vowel alternations as in English *crime-criminal*, *south-southern*; no vowel reduction with shifting stresses as in English *photograph-photographer*; and no internal vowel change as a grammatical marker as in *keep-kept* or *ring-rang-rung*. Tense and plurality are indicated in Haitian by free morphemes which are connected very loosely, if at all, with the words with which they are associated. Thus a form such as *walked* or *ships* is doubly difficult for the speaker of Haitian Creole since it involves a non-permitted final syllable cluster which ends in a, to him, almost soundless consonant, and a grammatical function which is quite foreign to his native feeling of how a language is put together.

## 3.0 GRAMMAR

In the space available it is obviously impossible for us to give even a reasonable outline of the grammar of Haitian Creole. What we shall do is sketch in some of the major ways in which Haitian Creole differs from English.

### 3.1 Articles and Plurality

Haitian Creole has, from a surface view, an indefinite article and two definite articles—a singular and a plural. However, this apparent similarity with English breaks down rapidly. The Haitian indefinite article only corresponds to one function of the English indefinite—that is, when the meaning is "one." Thus, Haitian says

/niwen genyen un liv/      I have a book

but in the negative

/mwenn pa genyen liv/      "I don't have (a) book."

since

I have a book

means the same as

I have one book

but

I don't have a book

means the same as

I don't have any book.

Thus the English indefinite article corresponding to *any* must be actively taught to the speaker of Haitian Creole.

In the case of the singular definite article, the distribution poses no major problem but the Haitian syntax will pose a real problem—the Haitian article occurs *after* its noun and, if the noun has an associated relative clause, then the article comes after the relative clause, thus



/let la/ "the milk"  
milk the

/let ke u t'aste dan market la/  
milk which you past buy in market the  
"the milk which you bought at the store."

Plurality is far more difficult. Haitian Creole nouns are not inflected for plurality. The only marker of plurality in Haitian is the plural definite article. Thus one can say

/zoranz yo paret ser/ "The oranges seem expensive"

but

/zoranz paret ser/ "Oranges seem expensive."

Marking nouns for plurality is very difficult for Haitians and must be drilled intensively.

### 3.2 Pronouns

Haitian Creole has the following pronouns:

	Singular	Plural
1.	/mwɛn/	/nu/
2.	/u/	/nu/
3.	/li/	/yo/

These are absolutely uninflected for use in a sentence:

/mwɛn wé yo/	"I see them"
/yo wé mwɛn/	"They see me"
/frè mwɛn/	"my brother"

In addition, there is no gender distinction in the third person singular pronoun—/li/ means *he, she* and *it*. (This should not be interpreted to mean that Haitians cannot detect sex differences—it simply means that they do not make any overt distinction in their pronominal usage.) By and large, the use of pronouns in Haitian and English is the same but the morphology of the English pronominal system is very difficult for the Haitian and must, again, be intensively drilled.

#### 3.2.1 Possessives

The Haitian Creole rules for what is possessed are more nearly like those of English than they are those of French and should pose no problem. However, possession in Haitian is shown by what is technically termed a *status-construct*: that is, there is no MORPHOLOGICAL sign of possession; it is simply indicated by the juxtaposition of two nouns or a noun and a pronoun with the second noun or pronoun being the possessor of the first:

/frè papa mwɛn/ "my father's brother"  
brother father I

Where the Haitian has difficulty, then, is the position of the possessive and the learning of the appropriate morphological forms. As we pointed out above (2.5), the Haitian is almost totally unprepared by his language for any sort of morphological change and he becomes very confused by it.

#### 3.3 Relative clauses

Relative clauses are one English structure which will not give the speaker of Haitian Creole any problem since (a) he has the equivalent of the English *who/whom* distinction (he uses /ki/ for the subject and /ke/ for the object) and (b) the relative pronoun can be deleted in Haitian under exactly the same conditions as govern its deletion in English. Even

the distinction between restrictive and non-restrictive relative clauses is simple for the Haitian since the restrictive always requires the definite article but the non-restrictive does not.

### 3.4 Noun clauses

In Haitian Creole noun clauses cannot be used as the subjects of sentences. A sentence such as

That John drinks whiskey frightens me  
must be expressed by the Haitian equivalent of

What frightens me is that John drinks whiskey.

Furthermore, infinitive verbal complements can be used only if the subject of the infinitive is the same as the subject of the main sentence. Thus

I want to go  
is exactly paralleled in Haitian but

I want him to go  
must be

I want that he go.

### 3.5 Verbs

Verbs in Haitian are absolutely invariant.

#### 3.5.1. Tense and Aspect

Haitian makes, essentially, seven tense-aspect distinctions. They are indicated by particles which precede the verb. These particles are:

/a/ which indicates distant futurity

/pral/ which indicates near futurity

/ap/ which indicates present continuous or near future

unmarked which indicates either habitual actions; actions the time of which is obvious from context or co-occurring time adverbials; or perfective actions

/fek/ which indicates the immediately completed past

/te/ which indicates definite past and emphatic perfective

/ta/ which indicates the conditional mood.

Of all these, the only one which closely parallels an English usage is /ap/, the indicator of an action in progress at the time of speaking. Since the English tense-aspect system divides reality rather differently, every other tense-aspect must be actively and intensively taught. This is especially true of the simple past tense, which, as we pointed out above, also presents phonological problems for the Haitian. Since the Haitian can leave a past tense unmarked if context makes it clear that it is past, we have here two factors which combine to make the correct production of the English form difficult for him.

#### 3.5.2 Agreement.

Haitian has no agreement, either between subject and verb as in the third person singular present tense of English or between noun phrases across the copula as in

My brothers are doctors

which would be expressed in Haitian as

/frè mwèn yo se dokteu/  
brother I the (pl.) be doctor

"My brothers are doctors."

#### 3.5.3 Prepositions

While Haitian possess a full complement of prepositions, these are not used with verbs of motion when the goal of the motion is the to be ex-

pected one. They are also not used across the copula if the location is a place name.

#### 3.5.4 The passive

Haitian has a rule which says that the subject of the sentence must never occur in any position other than immediately before its verb. Since the formation of the passive would require that this rule be violated, Haitian has no passive.

Quasi-passive relationships such as

John broke the window.  
The window broke

which pose problems of interpretation for speakers of many languages offer none to the Haitian since this is the normal way the same concepts are expressed in his language.

#### 3.6 The copula

There are four major uses of the copula or linking verb *be* in English:

- 1) predications of the type *John is a doctor*
- 2) predications of the type *John is sick*
- 3) predications of the type *John is in New York*
- 4) as a verbal auxiliary in the formation of the continuous tenses and the passive voice.

In Haitian, while usage (1) is directly parallel to that of English, usages (2) and (3) are not. In both of these sentence types the copula usually has no overt realization. Thus, sentence (2) in Haitian is simply

/zǎn nɔlǎd/  
John sick

and sentence (3) is

/zǎn nu yɔk/  
John (is in) New York

(Note that in this sentence no preposition is used either; see 3.5.3 above.)

As we stated above, the present continuous in Haitian is formed with /ap/ which here functions as a sort of copula, and, as there is no passive there is absolutely no parallel for the use of *be* in this structure.

The English copula *be* represents a myriad of problems for the Haitian: It has more overt agreement than any other verb in English and, especially in its contracted form, in the third person singular ('s) and in the plural ('re), presents the speaker of Haitian Creole with a difficult phonological hurdle.

A great deal of time should be devoted to establishing the USE of an overt copula with adjectives and in predications of location and in establishing control of subject-verb agreement, particularly where English uses contracted forms.

#### 3.7 Questions

In Haitian, as we stated in 3.5.4, the subject-verb order is inviolable; there are no rules which require subjects to come after their verbs. Yes/no questions are formed either simply by a rising intonation or by prefixing to the sentence /eske/ 'is it the case that'. . . The English rule of subject-verb inversion for questions with *be* or with an auxiliary verb is particularly difficult since it violates a basic rule of Haitian Creole grammar. Question word questions are formed by having the question word at the beginning of the sentence. However, nothing corresponding to *do* is used—the Haitian question is of the form

What you want?

Intensive drill on the use of *do* and on its agreement with its following subject is necessary.

### 3.8 Negatives

In general, Haitian negatives are formed by putting /pa/ 'not' before the verb or before the tense/aspect particle. Again, nothing corresponding to English *do* occurs. Haitian has no negative articles, but it does have two negative indefinite pronouns: /peson/ 'no one' and /anyen/ 'nothing' which, if they are used, require /pa/ before the verb

/mwèn pa we peson/  
I not see no one

"I didn't see anyone"

/ʒan pa manʒe anyen/  
John not eat nothing

"John didn't eat anything"

An additional learning problem is posed by the fact that the English negative in its reduced form *-n't* presents an impossible final cluster for the speaker of Haitian Creole which is compounded even worse when it has to co-occur with *does*, *is* or *was*, since /-znt/ (with a lightly syllabic /n/) is an utterly impossible final cluster. It is best, in the beginning, not to insist on /-znt/ but rather to teach the contraction as being /-zən(t)/ since this is, after all, the English alternant which is found in rapid speech.

### 4.0 Lexicon

As is normal in any Romance-based language, the everyday Haitian word is frequently the same as the learned word in English. This often means that the more elevated and Latinate the teacher is in his speech style the more apt his student is to understand him. Thus, *He is nearsighted* in Creole is /li miopik/, literally "he (is) myopic" and *The child is changeable (in mood)* is /petit la šimerik/, literally "the child (is) chimeric."

A caveat which should be entered, of course, is that, again like standard French and Spanish, Haitian has some words which are only partly the same in meaning, as /mone/ 'coins (not money in general)' and deceptive cognates as /aktwel/ 'present (adv.)', /aktwelman/ 'at present,' not, as in English, *actual* = 'real'; these, again, must be looked out for and actively taught.

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## THE INFLUENCE OF NONSTANDARD NEGRO DIALECT ON READING ACHIEVEMENT

Kenneth R. Johnson

Many disadvantaged black children speak a variety of English that linguists have labeled nonstandard Negro dialect. This variety of English—or dialect—differs from the variety of English taught in school and included in reading texts. Specifically, nonstandard Negro dialect differs from standard English in its phonological and grammatical systems. For example, disadvantaged black children who speak nonstandard Negro dialect lack some of the phonemes in particular linguistic environments that are found in standard English, and they include phonemes not found in standard English in certain linguistic environments. Also, the grammar of nonstandard Negro dialect differs from the grammar of standard English.

The existence of nonstandard Negro dialect has been established by educators and linguists. There is no doubt that this dialect exists . . . that there is a variety of English which is spoken by many black people, particularly disadvantaged black people. Although those who speak nonstandard Negro dialect can communicate effectively and function successfully in a cultural environment, where nonstandard Negro dialect is the primary language system, they are handicapped when they come to school where another dialect of English (standard English) is the dialect for communication and learning.

The relationship between achievement—especially achievement in reading—and the inability to speak standard English has been clearly demonstrated many times. That is, children who speak a nonstandard dialect of English usually don't achieve in reading. Since many black children speak a nonstandard dialect of English, these children are disproportionately under-achievers in reading.

Of course, this is not the only reason disadvantaged black children do not achieve in reading . . . there are many other reasons that contribute to the explanation of a lack of achievement in reading by disadvantaged black children. Still, many educators and linguists believe that the lack of standard English speaking skills is the most important reason to explain the lack of achievement in reading by disadvantaged black children. This is particularly the case when the differences between nonstandard Negro dialect and standard English conflict to create difficulties during the conventional methods teachers employ in reading instruction.

One purpose of this paper is to illustrate the nature of the difficulty when disadvantaged black children are taught reading by conventional methods. This will be done by identifying some of the conflict points between nonstandard Negro dialect and standard English; and showing how these differences conflict during the teaching of reading by conventional methods. After these conflict points are pointed out, however, another purpose of this paper is to show that the conflict points—specifically, the phonological conflict points—need not be a problem if they are simply disregarded. Finally, a third purpose of this paper is to argue that disad-

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vantaged black children who speak nonstandard Negro dialect be taught to read their dialect *first* (with only grammatical changes made in reading texts to match their nonstandard grammar), and later—after they have acquired the decoding process and attained some facility in standard English—they should be taught to read standard English.

Conflict points (or, interference points as they are sometimes called) occur between two languages—or dialects—when there is a difference either in sounds or grammatical patterns in particular contrasting linguistic environments. Another way of explaining what conflict points are is that one language system does something different (has another sound or grammatical feature, or has a sound or grammatical feature that does not contrast with a sound or grammatical feature in the other language system) from the other language system at corresponding places. This is the case between nonstandard Negro dialect and standard English: there are points where the two differ in sound or grammar when they are contrasted. These conflict points create difficulty during reading instruction, and when teachers attempt to illustrate the difference they more often confuse disadvantaged black children rather than clarify the difference. The reason for this will be explained.

First, however, it is necessary to illustrate some of the conflict points between nonstandard Negro dialect and standard English. These are not all the conflict points that exist between nonstandard Negro dialect and standard English, but they are outstanding examples, the kinds likely to cause the difficulty in reading instruction. After the conflict points are listed, it will be shown how the conventional approach to teaching reading—specifically, how the conventional way teachers handle the conflict points—confuses rather than helps nonstandard speaking disadvantaged black children (phonological conflict points are listed first, followed by grammatical conflict points).

Standard English has two sounds for the letters *th*—one of the sounds is voiced, the other is voiceless. The voiceless initial sound occurs in words like *thing*, *thigh* and *thought*. The voiceless final sound occurs in words like *with*, *both* and *mouth*. In nonstandard Negro dialect, the voiceless initial /th/ is the same as in standard English. The voiceless final /th/ in nonstandard Negro dialect, however, is changed to /f/. Thus, for *with*, *both* and *mouth*, nonstandard Negro dialect speakers say *wif*, *bof* and *mouf*. This substitution (or conflict point) operates systematically . . . that is, whenever standard English has a voiceless final /th/, nonstandard Negro dialect has /f/.

In standard English, the voiced initial /th/ occurs in words like *the*, *this* and *that*. The voiced final /th/ occurs in words like *breathe* and *bathe*. In nonstandard Negro dialect, the voiced initial /th/ is changed to /d/; the words *the*, *this* and *that* are pronounced *da*, *dis* and *da*. The voiced final /th/ is changed to /v/ in nonstandard Negro dialect; the words *breathe* and *bathe* are pronounced *breave* and *bave*.

Thus, in nonstandard Negro dialect there are four different sounds for the letters *th*, depending on whether the letters are the voiced or voiceless sound, and whether they occur in the final or initial position, while standard English has only two sounds for the letters *th*.

In nonstandard Negro dialect, certain consonant sounds in the final position tend to be reduced. These consonant sounds are /b/, /d/, /g/, /h /p/, /t/ and /k/.

A number of problems are created for the nonstandard speaker learning to read standard English. For example, if certain consonant sounds are reduced in the final position, more homonyms are created in non-

standard Negro dialect. Words like *hard* and *heart*, *car* and *card*, *cold* and *coat* become homonyms and this is likely to cause comprehension difficulties in reading (i.e. The boy had a *cold/coat*). The obvious implication for reading instruction is that *more time should be spent on helping non-standard speakers develop the ability to use context clues rather than phonics clues for comprehension* (instead, teachers usually spend a great deal of time trying to get these children to hear the difference between *cold* and *coat*).

Another problem caused by the reduction of consonant sounds at the ends of words occur when certain words are pluralized. For example, the words *test*, *fist*, *desk* and *mask* are pronounced in nonstandard Negro dialect as *tes*, *fis*, *des* and *mas*. The consonants /t/ and /k/ are two of the consonants reduced in the final position in nonstandard Negro dialect. Reducing the final /t/ and /k/ in the words cited puts /s/ in the final position. In English, words ending in /s/ add another syllable when they are pluralized. For example, the plurals of *kiss*, *dress*, *boss* and *pass* are *kisses*, *dresses*, *bosses* and *passes*. In other words, the ending to indicate the plural in these words is /iz/. In nonstandard Negro dialect, *tes*, *fis*, *des* and *mas* (for *test*, *fist*, *desk* and *mask*) end with the consonant /s/, so speakers of nonstandard Negro dialect follow the regular pluralization rule of English for words ending in /s/. Thus, the plurals of *test*, *fist*, *desk* and *mask* in nonstandard Negro dialect are: *tessiz*, *fissiz*, *dessiz* and *massiz*.

A third problem caused by consonant reduction is the past tense morpheme represented by the letters *ed* (which, in some words, is /t/, one of the consonants reduced in nonstandard Negro dialect). Thus, many non-standard speakers say, "He talk to him yesterday." If they read this sentence, the letters *ed* signal past tense even if they don't pronounce it.

The sound represented by the letter *r* is reduced in nonstandard Negro dialect creating a phenomenon that William Labov, a linguist at University of Pennsylvania labels "r-lessness." A similar phenomenon that Labov labels "l-lessness" is created by the reduction of the sound represented by the letter *l*. Both r-lessness and l-lessness occur in medial and final positions. Thus, words like *guard*, *court*, *help*, *cold* that contain /r/ or /l/ in the medial position are pronounced as if these sounds aren't there; words like *door*, *car*, *school*, *howl* that contain /r/ or /l/ in the final position are pronounced without these sounds.

A problem caused by r-lessness in the final position is that more homonyms are produced in nonstandard Negro dialect. For example, *door* and *dough*, *more* and *now*, *store* and *stow*. This may interfere with reading comprehension (in a similar way that consonant reduction at the end of words interferes with comprehension by creating more homonyms as explained, above) and suggests that black children be given extra help on developing skills to determine meaning from context clues.

In nonstandard Negro dialect, there is no distinction between /i/ and /e/ before /n/ and /m/. The sounds /i/ and /e/ are both pronounced /i/ before nasals. Thus, *pin* and *pen*, *meant* and *mint*, are given the same pronunciation.

It can be seen from these examples of conflict points between non-standard Negro dialect and standard English that there are many points where difficulties are likely to occur when children who speak this dialect attempt to learn to read. The way teachers handle these difficulties compounds, rather than clarifies, the difficulties. The reason for this situation is the fact that disadvantaged black children have different audio-discrimination skills from those expected by the teachers. In fact, the students fail to hear some of the sounds of standard English; thus, they

fail to pronounce these sounds. Teachers, however, view their pronouncing deviations from standard English as careless, sloppy speech full of errors. Stated another way, disadvantaged black children cannot hear some standard English phonemes and they cannot hear the difference between their nonstandard pronunciation and standard pronunciation. They cannot auditorily discriminate between conflict, points. The younger the children, the more this is the case. For example, black children have difficulty distinguishing which pronunciation is given twice in the following series of words: *wif, wif, with; dis, this, dis; share, share, show*. This simple exercise illustrates the difficulty these children have in hearing certain standard English sounds.

The way teachers usually handle this difficulty is to insist that there is a difference—when the children hear no difference. Thus, to tell these children that they are saying *pin* instead of *pen* is to confuse them, since they don't detect the difference!

Or, take the case of consonant reduction at the end of words: black children pronounce *test* and *desk* as *tes* and *des*, and the plurals of these words are *tessiz* and *dessiz*. When a black child says or reads, "The *tessiz* were put on *dessiz*" the usual response of the teacher is to correct the child by pointing out the pronunciation of the words in question is *tests* and *desks*. Now, if the child does not hear the final consonant sounds (/t/ and /k/) in the singular forms of these words, the child also fails to hear /ts/ and /ks/ at the end of the words. Thus, when the teacher says, "Don't say *tessiz* and *dessiz*, say *tests* and *desks*" the child hears, "Don't say *tessiz* and *dessiz* say *tes* and *des*" so the child is left with the impression that the teacher means for him to use the singular form. Yet, in the sample sentence (The *tests* were put on the *desks*) the letter *s* signals the plural (assuming that the child reads the sentence) and his pronunciation—*tessiz* and *dessiz*—whether reading or speaking the sentence conveys the correct message. For the teacher to insist that he use the singular form (that is, what he heard as the singular form in her correction) is to confuse the child.

Thus, the different phonological system of nonstandard Negro dialect equips black children with different auditory skills. If teachers do not recognize this, and tend to treat these children as if, through carelessness, they do not hear standard English sounds, they confuse the children.

What should teachers do, how should they handle these conflict points? There are two alternatives. One is to delay reading instruction and work on teaching these children standard English, before teaching them to read standard English. The delay in teaching them to read, however, would have to be long because it is unlikely that young disadvantaged black children can learn to speak standard English. What reason can one give them to convince them they need to know it? Where will it be reinforced? Do they need to know it to function in their culture? Also, learning another dialect of a language is, in some ways, more difficult than learning another language. The difficulty, then, is that the delay in teaching these children to read would last until they learn standard English and this is not likely to occur until the children recognize a need to learn standard English—this probably does not occur until adolescence. That is, it would be difficult to convince very young children of the need to learn standard English, particularly if they are attending a school where the majority of children speak nonstandard Negro dialect. If, however, black children are attending a school in which many children speak standard English, they are participating and functioning in an environment where standard English is operable. Under these circumstances, black children may pick up some of the features of standard English. In addition, young children often



learn another language just for the joy of learning a different language. This may also be true of learning another variety—or dialect—of a language. That is, black children may learn some of the features of standard English just because they are new. That is likely to occur only when they have an opportunity to participate in social situations where standard English is the operable linguistic system. It has been pointed out many times that young children easily learn another language, and this phenomenon of language learning has been equated with learning another dialect of a language the learners already speak. The case, however, is not the same: in many ways, learning another dialect of a language is more difficult than learning another language because the differences (conflict points) between two dialects of a language are so subtle as to hide the differences—especially to young children. The important point in young black children learning standard English is that they must be able to use it in meaningful situations. This can only occur when black children have an opportunity to associate with standard English speakers in meaningful situations. If young black children must remain in a social environment where only nonstandard Negro dialect is operable, then it is unlikely that they will learn standard English.

It has been pointed out that if they don't learn standard English, they are likely to have difficulty in learning to read. The problem, then, is how to teach reading to black children who speak nonstandard Negro dialect? There is another alternative, however. This other alternative is to ignore the phonological conflict points between nonstandard Negro dialect and standard English, and to teach the children to read in their dialect (reading texts would retain standard spelling, but they would use the grammar of nonstandard Negro dialect). What this means is that black children would be permitted to impose their phonological system onto standard spelling. Thus, the letters *th* occurring at the end of a word would be given the pronunciation of nonstandard Negro dialect: *with* would become *wif*; *breathe* would become *breave*. Or, in some cases letters would be silent (consonants at the end of words, the letters *r* and *l* in some cases). In other words, standard spelling would receive nonstandard pronunciation.

Actually, this is not as radical a proposal as it seems. Standard pronunciation does not match standard spelling. There are countless examples of words not being spelled the way it could logically be expected on the basis of pronunciation and the English graphemic system (*phone*, *enough*, *ration*, etc.) and English spelling is full of silent letters (*receive*, *caught*, *meant*, etc.). Thus, black children are being asked to do no more than what all children who learn to read English are doing, anyway.

The grammar of reading texts for disadvantaged black children should be the grammar of nonstandard Negro dialect, because it is grammar, not pronunciation, which carries meaning. A black child who says, "mouf" means "mouth" but a black child who says, "My mouf hurtin'" means something that can't be expressed grammatically in standard English, or a black child who says, "She been talk to him" again means something that can't be grammatically expressed in standard English.

Nonstandard Negro dialect differs from—or conflicts with—standard English at specific points, and these points interfere with reading comprehension. In addition, black children, when they read standard English, are encountering a strange grammar system and this causes them to read haltingly and with difficulty. To illustrate how the grammar of nonstandard Negro dialect differs from the grammar of standard English, a few conflict points between the two varieties of English will be pointed out.

In nonstandard Negro dialect, it is unnecessary to put the plural morpheme onto a word if another word in the sentence indicates that the

word is plural. For example, in the sentence, "The three boys are running down the street" the word *three* marks the plural; thus, in nonstandard Negro dialect the sentence is, "the three boy running down the street" (the copula verb *are* is also omitted in present progressive tense of the verb *to be* in nonstandard Negro dialect). Now, in reading the sentence, black children may not pronounce the plural ending of *boys*. In other words, their dialect pattern interferes. A teacher, hearing a black child read the sentence without pronouncing the plural ending, will usually correct the child for a reading error when what is really going on is interference, and it should be pointed out to the child the difference between nonstandard and standard English when marking plurals. This observation helps the child contrast his language system with standard English, and he is more likely to learn the standard pattern, "three boys" if he is aware of the conflict, rather than treating his pattern as a reading error.

In nonstandard Negro dialect, the possessive morpheme is not necessary. Thus, the sentence, "That man's hat is too big" would be, "That man hat too big." Again, when black children fail to pronounce the possessive morpheme teachers usually treat this as a reading error, rather than an interference point between the two language systems.

The most important problem of grammatical interference is not the failure of black children to pronounce certain inflectional endings of standard English (the past tense *ed*; the third person singular, present tense morpheme; the possessive morpheme; the plural morpheme), but the difference in meaning that the conflicting grammatical features of their dialect carry. Because nonstandard Negro grammar differs in both structure and meanings, it is recommended here that texts be written in their dialect.

Some examples of grammatical features in nonstandard Negro dialect which mean something different from standard English, and which teachers generally don't understand are: forming the past tense of regular verbs; conjugating irregular verbs; conjugating the verb *to be*.

The past tense of regular verbs in standard English is formed by adding the inflectional ending, or past tense morpheme, to the verb: *play*, *played*; *talk*, *talked*. Because black children reduce the consonant sounds /d/ and /t/ at the end of words, they often say or read *play* for *played*, and *talk* for *talked*. In their dialect, this means the same as the standard English inflected verb—that is, action was completed in the past. Often, when a black child fails to pronounce the inflectional ending during reading, teachers correct the child by pointing out to him that the word means action happened in the past. Now, the child knows this, because he sees the letters, *ed* and this signals past tense to him. By telling the child in a correcting manner something he already knows is likely to cause some confusion. Usually, the teacher demands that the child pronounce the "ed" which results in the overcorrection of pronouncing *talked* as *talk-ted*. The teacher usually forgets to let the child in on the secret that the "ed" is really a "t" at the end of *talked*. It was pointed out that when black children say *play* for *played* and *talk* for *talked*, it means the same as it does in standard English. But nonstandard Negro dialect can indicate grammatically that the action not only happened in the past, but that it happened in the distant past. This is done by adding the auxiliary verb *been*. For example, "I talk to the man" means that the speaker talked to the man sometime in the past; but, "I been talked to the man" means that the speaker talked to the man in the distant past. Further, nonstandard Negro dialect can grammatically indicate that the action happened so long ago that it is ridiculous even to mention or question the action. This is achieved by adding *done*: "I been done talked to the man." Standard English cannot

make these distinctions grammatically, and here is one point where non-standard Negro dialect is more complicated (often, nonstandard Negro dialect is erroneously thought to be a "simplified" version of English). If reading texts were written in nonstandard Negro dialect, the reading comprehension of black children could be increased.

Another grammatical feature which differs from standard English is the irregular verb pattern in nonstandard Negro dialect. In standard English, the pattern for irregular verbs is: *do, did, have done; take, took, have taken*. In nonstandard Negro dialect, the pattern for irregular verbs is: *do, done, have did; take, taken, have took*. The past tense form and the past participle form are reversed from standard English. When a black child says, "The boys taken the ball" he is using the past tense of the verb *take*. The teacher, however, hearing *taken* without *have* assumes that the child is just being sloppy or careless in omitting *have*; thus, the teacher "corrects" the child by telling him the sentence should be, "The boys *have taken* the ball." Notice that the teacher has switched tense on the child—he used his past tense, but the teacher "corrects" him into the standard present perfect tense. What this means to the child is that the standard past tense of the verb *take* is formed by saying *have taken*! Now, if the teacher knows the grammatical system of nonstandard Negro dialect, the standard equivalent of "The boys taken the ball" can be given to the child: "The boys took the ball." To "correct" the child into a different tense is to create confusion, and it prevents the black child from learning the appropriate translation.

The verb *to be* in nonstandard Negro dialect is different from standard English, and includes forms which have special meanings that aren't duplicated in standard English. For example, the present progressive tense sentence, "The teacher is talking" in nonstandard Negro dialect is, "The teacher talking." The copula is omitted if the action—the talking—is currently happening. That is, the "talking" is going on now. But nonstandard Negro dialect can indicate that the action is a regular or habitual action by adding the verb *be*: "The teacher be talking." Standard English can't make this grammatical distinction. Again, "correction" can create confusion rather than clarification. If a teacher tells a black child to say: "The teacher is talking" for his "The teacher be talking" the child is not being taught the appropriate translation.

These examples of the difference between the grammars of nonstandard Negro dialect and standard English were given to illustrate how a difference in meaning exists because of the grammatical differences. There are many such examples when contrasting nonstandard Negro dialect and standard English.

Because of these differences, it is recommended that beginning texts for black children who speak nonstandard Negro dialect be written in their dialect. Again, it is unnecessary to alter spelling for reasons pointed out, above. Dialect texts would undoubtedly be more meaningful to black children. After all, these children would be *reading* the variety of English they are *speaking*. Not only should this increase comprehension, but black children would be able to read a lot more smoothly instead of the halting way many of them now read because they are mentally juggling two linguistic systems when they read. It seems as if educators could not argue against the logic of this . . . but they do. The arguments, however, are not logical but emotional. The arguments usually point out that to teach black children to read their dialect is to deprive them of the equal quality education white children receive. Some educators base their argument on the erroneous view that nonstandard Negro dialect is really not a language at all, or that it is an incomplete language (something that is linguistically impossible). Others point out that these children would be handicapped

because they would only know how to read their dialect. What is being suggested here, however, is that black children begin to read in their dialect, and after they have learned to read—that is when they know the decoding process—they can then make a transition to reading standard English texts.

Actually, the proposal to teach black children to read in their dialect is not so radical. In other parts of the world (Sweden and Haiti are two examples) children are taught to read in their local dialects before they read the national dialect. The opposition in this country to such a proposal (and the opposition is fierce) is really based on a kind of ethnocentrism, and a disregard—even a rejection—of black culture. That is, many feel that standard English is the only variety of English, that should appear in print since it is the "best." The corollary of this is that nonstandard Negro dialect is inferior, sloppy speech that does not deserve the dignity and legitimacy of appearing in print. In case one doubts that this is the case, attend a conference of educators where the question of teaching black children to read in their dialect is discussed.

Ironically, black teachers are the greatest objectors to teaching black children to read in their dialect. These black teachers reject their own cultural identity more strenuously than many whites reject "blackness." One can understand black teachers' objections if one understands the way our society has taught black people to hate themselves, and how black people infer self-hate from the way a racist society has treated them.

A few attempts are being made to try this approach in teaching black children to read. The most notable attempt is being conducted at the Education Study Center in Washington, D.C. William A. Stewart and Joan C. Baratz have produced a series of dialect readers and the initial results after using these readers are dramatically promising (not only are these readers written in nonstandard Negro dialect, but they are also culturally accurate, that is, the stories are about real black folks, not black white folks).

Unfortunately, no one can deny that black children are not learning to read. There is no need for documentation, since it is well known that this is one of the monumental problems of American education. All other methods and materials have been tried without massive success (there has been limited success with small populations using a variety of approaches and materials). Yet, when the method proposed here is asking for a chance to prove its effectiveness, educators start screaming about the ineffectiveness of the approach to teach black children to read in their dialect *before the approach has even been tested*. Such prejudice does not belong in American education.

### SOME OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING BLACK CHILDRENS' CONVERSATIONS

Richard L. Light

Studies over the past decade have convincingly demonstrated the value of studying language within social and situational contexts. By relating

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linguistic and extra-linguistic phenomena, such studies have discovered regularity in speech fluctuations that were previously either ignored or dismissed as free variation. The purpose of this study is to quantify variations in four speech features in the conversations of five black children, and to determine how these might correlate with extra-linguistic factors in fourteen interview situations.

The five black children in the fourteen conversations considered here are from a lower socioeconomic group in Washington, D. C. The speech of these children, ages 6-11, was recorded and transcribed in various settings involving adults of different races as interviewers.<sup>1</sup> The four nonstandard linguistic features used by the children and examined in the fourteen interviews with them are multiple negation, and absence of the Z suffixes marking noun plural, possession, and the third person singular form of the verb.<sup>2</sup> Extra-linguistic variables considered are presence or absence of an adult participant-interviewer, sex and race of the adults, and age of the children. For each linguistic feature, three tables are provided. One shows distribution of the feature throughout the conversations and indicates the children and interviewers involved in each; one gives a summary of the features used by each child in all conversations, and one shows features used correlated with characteristics of adult interviewers in the conversations. A summary indicates percentages of the four nonstandard features occurring in the speech of each child in all conversations, and shows percentages of the features used correlated with characteristics of the adult interviewers. Finally, some notes of interest to the classroom teacher are included.

#### *The Plural Suffix*

Table 1 gives an outline of all nouns with the potential of being marked with the plural suffix which occur in the corpus.<sup>3</sup> "Potential of being marked" here means that the marking is grammatically possible. The unmarked occurrences are limited to 22, or 7% of a potential of 303. And of this unmarked 7% only 1% is "potentially non-redundant," and thus possibly ambiguous. That is, if the noun were marked in the case of this 1% (column IX on Table 1) it would not be redundant. Redundant here means that there is some indication of number other than the plural suffix in a noun phrase, e.g., *five pencils, some books*, etc. Thus in all conversa-

<sup>1</sup> The source of the data for this study (excerpted from the writer's unpublished doctoral dissertation, Georgetown University, 1969. © 1970) is *Conversations in a Negro American Dialect*, recorded and transcribed by Bengt Loman (Washington, D. C.: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1967).

<sup>2</sup> The use of such socially significant nonstandard features is not, of course, limited to black children, any more than standard features are limited to whites. For some characteristics of white nonstandard speech see William Labov, *A Study of the Nonstandard English of Negro and Puerto Rican Speakers in New York City*, Cooperative Research Project No. 3288, 2 Vols. (New York: Columbia University, 1968), I, passim, but especially pp. 41, 146, 275-278.

<sup>3</sup> Throughout the paper, the following reference are made to adult participants with the children in the conversations:

"Negro male" refers to either of two brothers of approximately the same age (32 and 39) in two conversations with the children

"Negro female" refers to the 39 year old mother of one of the children, and/or to a younger black research assistant.

"White male" refers to Bengt Loman, the principal investigator.

"White female" refers to a young research assistant.

"Negro and white females" refers to the two research assistants.

"No adult interviewer" indicates that there were no adult participants in the conversations.

A notation such as (121 MJ) indicates that the speech feature so marked occurred on page 121 in the Loman text and was used by MJ. Ages and sex of the five children are indicated in Table 2.

TABLE 1  
 MARKED AND UNMARKED NOUN PLURALS AND  
 CHARACTERISTICS OF INTERVIEWERS

adult participants	conver- sation number	child	nouns marked for plural				unmarked			total plural	percentages of potential marked
			IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X		
II	III		non- redundant	redundant	marked	potentially redundant	potentially non- redundant	unmarked totals			
Negro	1	GJ	4	2	6	5	1	6	12	50	
		MJ	2	1	3	2	0	2	5	60	
		AP	6	0	6	0	0	0	6	100	
	3	JD	8	4	12	0	1	1	13	92	
White	2	JD	4	16	20	0	0	0	20	100	
		MJ	3	15	18	0	0	0	18	100	
No adult interviewer	5	JD	1	3	4	1	0	1	5	80	
		BS	3	1	4	5	0	5	9	45	
		AP	6	1	7	0	0	0	7	100	
White	4	GJ	no potential plurals				0	0	0	0	0
		JD	11	5	16	0	2	2	18	89	
		MJ	9	3	12	0	0	0	12	100	
Negro & White	6	MJ	4	15	19	0	0	0	19	100	
	7	JD	10	13	23	0	0	0	23	100	
Negro	8	GJ	0	28	28	1	0	1	29	97	
	9	MJ	2	7	9	0	0	0	9	100	
Negro	10	GJ	7	9	16	1	0	1	17	94	
	11	MJ	11	4	15	1	0	1	16	94	
White	12	GJ	17	19	36	1	1	2	38	95	
	13	JD	5	7	12	0	0	0	12	100	
	14	AP	11	4	15	0	0	0	15	100	
Totals:			124	167	281	17	5	22	303		
Percentages of Column XI:			41%	52%	98%	6%	1%	7%	100%	98%	

tions taken together the vast majority (93%) of the nouns with potential for plural marking were so marked, the majority (77%) of unmarked nouns were in phrases which would have made the marking redundant, and only small minority (1%) were in fact ambiguous.

Although the plural marker was present in 93% of the cases where it was potentially present in the conversations as a whole, there were two conversations in which this percentage was considerably lower.

In conversation #1, the only one which involved two boys and a female Negro interviewer, only 55% of the potential was marked. The children in this conversation appeared to be relaxed, and their speech included the most spontaneous and aggressive exchanges of any of the interviews. It might be suggested that in the informal atmosphere of this conversation, the only one in which two boys are the only peers present, the children employed forms more nearly typical of the speech they normally use with their peers alone.

In the other conversation in which significant percentages of potential plurals were not marked (conversation #5) at least two factors may be tentatively considered as likely influences. First, there was no adult immediately present; none participated in the conversation. Second, one of the children was only six years old, at least four years younger than any of the other children in the conversations. Less than half of the potential plurals in this six-year-old's speech were marked, a much lower percentage than for any of the other children.

It can be suggested then that the factors of both age and situation affect the use of plural markers by the children in these conversations.

Table 2 shows the percentage of marked plurals used by each child, and Table 3 shows the percentage used with sex and race of the interviewers as the variable.

TABLE 2  
PERCENTAGES OF PLURALS MARKED, BY CHILD

Child	BS	GJ	MJ	JD	AP
Age	6	10	10	11	10
Sex	F	M	M	F	F
Potential Plurals	9	96	79	91	28
Percentage Marked	45	89	92	93	100

TABLE 3  
PERCENTAGES OF PLURALS MARKED, BY INTERVIEWERS

Interviewers Present	None	Negro female	Negro and White females	White female	Negro male	White male
Potential Plurals	14	88	19	118	26	38
Percentage Marked	62	83	96	97	97	100

Although there appear to be significant differences in the marking of plurals depending both upon age and upon interview situation, in some cases the correlations must be considered tentative because of the small number of tokens. In the speech of BS for example, there were only nine

potential plurals, four of which were marked and five unmarked. However, JD marked only 80% of the potential plurals in this situation, and there does appear to be enough indication of a negative correlation between percentage of plurals marked and the absence of an interviewer to warrant further investigation.

*Third Person Singular*

Potential for this marker was considered only for main verbs in affirmative statements, e.g. *John like it* was counted as a potential for third singular marker, but *do John like it* was not.

There were a total of sixty-eight potential occurrences of the third person singular marker; only sixteen percent of them were marked. The breakdown of occurrences is shown in Table 4. Table 5 shows that the percentage of third person singular marker usage by child varied between 25 and 15 percent, except for the youngest child who did not mark any

TABLE 4  
THIRD PERSON SINGULAR

Adult interviewers		conversation number	child	marked	unmarked
race	sex				
Negro	F	1	GJ	Ø	1
			MJ	Ø	Ø
			AP	Ø	1
		3	JD	1	Ø
White	M	2	JD	1	Ø
			MJ	Ø	2
no adult interviewer		5	JD	Ø	Ø
			BS	Ø	11
White	F	4	AP	Ø	2
			GJ	Ø	Ø
			JD	Ø	5
			MJ	Ø	Ø
Negro and White	F	6	MJ	3	5
Negro	F	7	JD	Ø	1
		8	GJ	2	2
Negro	M	9	MJ	Ø	3
		10	GJ	1	5
White	F	11	MJ	1	7
		12	GJ	Ø	4
		13	JD	Ø	5
		14	AP	2	3
Totals:				11	57
Percentages:				16%	84%



verbs for third singular. There was also considerable variation in percentages marked depending upon the adult interviewer present as indicated on Table 6. However, because of the small potential for marking and other factors, this can be taken only as a suggestion of the possible effect of different interview situations. For example, in the column with "none" indicated for interviewer, the eleven potentials for marking the verb for third singular in this situation were all in the speech of the youngest child; this is the only conversation in which she takes part. It is therefore not possible to isolate either age of the child or race and sex characteristics of the interviewer alone as the variable accounting for the complete lack of the third person singular suffix in the child's speech.

TABLE 5  
PERCENTAGES OF THIRD PERSON SINGULAR  
MARKED, BY CHILD

Child	AP	GJ	MJ	JD	BS
Age	10	10	10	11	6
Sex	F	M	M	F	F
Potential	8	15	21	13	11
Percentage Marked	25	20	19	15	0

TABLE 6  
PERCENTAGES OF THIRD PERSON SINGULAR  
MARKED, BY INTERVIEWER

Interviewers Present	None	White female	Negro male	White male	Negro female	Negro and White female
Potential	11	29	9	3	8	8
Percentage Marked	0	10	11	33	38	38

The marking of the third singular was not limited to any small set of verbs; nine of the eleven verbs so marked were different. And except for the fact that all children marked a small percentage of the third singular potential (from 0% to 25% depending upon the child) no clear pattern of such marking emerged. One child even switched from unmarked to marked third singular in the same sentence:

we wen' on na thing da' go down an' den goes right back aroun'  
(121 MJ)

*Possessives*

Table 7 outlines the use of possessive suffixes in the conversations.

TABLE 7  
POSSESSIVES

Adult participants race	sex	conv. number	child	possessive suffix	
				present	not present
Negro	F	1	GJ	2	Ø
			MJ	Ø	3
		3	AP	Ø	Ø
			JD	Ø	Ø
White	M	2	JD	2	Ø
			MJ	1	Ø
No adult interviewer		5	JD	Ø	Ø
			BS	3	1
White	F	4	AP	Ø	Ø
			GJ	Ø	Ø
			JD	7	Ø
			MJ	Ø	Ø
Negro and White	F	6	MJ	Ø	Ø
Negro	F	7	JD	3	Ø
		8	GJ	Ø	Ø
Negro	M	9	MJ	Ø	1
		10	GJ	4	Ø
White	F	11	MJ	Ø	2
		12	GJ	1	1
		13	JD	Ø	1
		14	AP	Ø	Ø
Totals:				23	9
Percentage with possessive suffix present				72%	

Table 8 shows a breakdown of the use of the possessive suffix by child and Table 9 by characteristics of adult interviewers. The possessive suffix was regularly used by all children except MJ to mark nouns for possession. MJ marked possession with the suffix only once in seven potential occurrences. He regularly used sentences such as

you got Harry Lee tennis ba'

(5 MJ)

Three other children, including the youngest, regularly used the possessive suffix; there was one child with no potential for its use in the corpus. The only correlation here then is absence of the suffix with the speech of a single child.

TABLE 8  
POSSESSIVE SUFFIX, BY CHILD

Child	JD	GJ	BS	MJ	AP
Age	11	10	6	10	10
Sex	F	M	F	M	F
Potential	13	8	4	7	no potential
Marked	12	7	3	1	—
Percentage Marked	92	88	75	14	—

TABLE 9  
POSSESSIVE SUFFIX, BY INTERVIEWER

Interviewers	White			Negro		Negro and White female
	male	male	none	female	female	
Potential	3	5	4	12	8	no potential
Marked	3	4	3	8	5	—
Percentage Marked	100	80	75	67	63	—

#### Multiple Negation

Negative sentences in the corpus were examined for instances of multiple negation, that is, the realization of a negative element both in an auxiliary verb and in an indefinite pronoun (e.g., *nobody*, *nothing*, etc.), an adverb (*never*, *hardly*, etc.), or an indefinite determiner (*a*, *any*, etc.). Multiple negation involves up to three negative elements in a single sentence in the corpus as in:

ain' nobody in ne house gave me not'n' (124 MJ)

Following the procedure used by Shuy,<sup>4</sup> negatives co-occurring with indefinites were tabulated. The "potential occurrences" of multiple negation (e.g., *dey ain't show a movie* 155 AP) as well as "actual" or "realized" occurrences (*you ain' got no notebook* 2 GJ) were totaled and entered in column V on Table 10. The actual occurrences of multiple negation were entered in column VI. The percentages of "actual" multiple negatives in relation to "potential" multiple negatives was then computed and entered in column VII. There were a total of 53 realizations of multiple negation in a potential of 64 occurrences. Thus 83% of the potential for multiple negation was realized in the corpus.

<sup>4</sup>Roger Shuy, Walter Wolfram, and William Riley, *Linguistic Correlates of Social Stratification in Detroit Speech*, Cooperative Research Project, No. 6-1347 (East Lansing: Michigan State University, 1967), Part III, p. 9.

TABLE 10  
MULTIPLE NEGATION

Adult interviewers race	sex	conv. number	child	potential occurrence	realized	percentage realized
I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII
Negro	F	1	GJ	10	6	60
			MJ	2	1	50
		3	AP	no potential		—
			JD	1	1	100
White	M	2	JD	3	1	33
			MJ	3	3	100
No adult interviewer		5	JD	1	1	100
			BS	4	4	100
White	F	4	GJ	no potential		—
			AP	2	2	100
			JD	1	1	100
			MJ	1	1	100
Negro and White	F	6	MJ	no potential		—
Negro	F	7	JD	9	9	100
		8	GJ	2	1	50
Negro	M	9	MJ	4	4	100
		10	GJ	1	1	100
White	F	11	MJ	8	8	100
		12	GJ	4	3	75
		13	JD	3	3	100
		14	AP	5	3	60
Totals:				64	53	83%

Percentage Realized:

Tables 11 and 12 give a breakdown of the number of potential occurrences of multiple negation and percentages realized, by child and by situation. The highest percentage of multiple negation was in the speech of the youngest child. However, because of the small number of potential occurrences (only four), this can only be taken as a tentative indication of a positive correlation between younger age and multiple negation. The highest percentages of multiple negation occurred with the Negro male as interviewer and in the one conversation with no interviewer present. Somewhat surprisingly the next highest percentage occurred with a white, not a black, female as interviewer. A partial explanation for this might be that she was very well known by the children and they appeared to be as relaxed in her presence as with a black interviewer. This is illustrated when at one point a child mistakenly addresses her using the name of a female Negro interviewer, (121 MJ). This relaxed atmosphere was not apparent in conversations involving the white male interviewer; conversations in which he was present show the lowest percentage of multiple negation correlated with interviewer characteristics.

TABLE 11  
MULTIPLE NEGATION, BY CHILD

Child	BS	MJ	JD	AP	GJ
Age	6	10	11	10	10
Sex	F	M	F	F	M
Potential	4	18	18	7	17
Percentage Realized	100	94	88	71	64

TABLE 12  
MULTIPLE NEGATION, BY INTERVIEWERS

Interviewers Present	None	Negro male	White female	Negro female	White male	Negro and White females
Potential	5	5	21	24	6	no potential
Percentage Realized	100	100	87	75	66	—

*Summary*

Tables 13 and 14 summarize the percentages of all nonstandard features considered. Table 13 summarizes them according to the child who used them and Table 14 by the presence or absence of adult interviewers and by interviewer characteristics.

For the four features considered, the absence of an adult interviewer participating in the conversations (column I, Table 14) correlated with a higher average percentage of non-standard realizations. For two of the four features (third singular marker and multiple negation), such non-standard realization was one hundred percent. However, the youngest child involved in the conversations was present in this one conversation involving no adult participation, and the higher percentages of non-standard features in her speech were undoubtedly influenced by her age as well as by the absence of an adult participant.

TABLE 13  
PERCENTAGES OF NON-STANDARD FEATURES, BY CHILD

Child	BS	MJ	AP	GJ	JD
Age	6	10	10	10	10
unmarked plural	55	8	0	11	7
unmarked third singular	100	81	75	80	85
no possessive suffix	25	86	no potential	12	8
multiple negation	100	94	71	64	88
potentials for all features	28	125	33	136	135
averages	75	34	33	25	24

TABLE 14  
PERCENTAGES OF NON-STANDARD FEATURES,  
BY INTERVIEWERS

Interviewers	None	Negro male	White female	Negro female	Negro and White females	White male
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
unmarked plural	38	3	3	17	19	Ø
unmarked third singular	100	89	90	62	62	67
no possessive suffix	25	20	33	37	no potential	Ø
multiple negation	100	100	87	75	no potential	66
potentials for all features	34	35	183	128	27	50
averages	62	43	31	28	18	12

There are considerable differences in the average percentages of non-standard features in conversations involving a white interviewer as compared to those not involving one. The average percentage of non-standard features involving no white interviewer (columns I, II, and IV, Table 14) is 44%; for conversations involving a white interviewer (III, V, and VI) it is 20%. In addition, the only four non-standard possessive pronouns and the only two examples of non-standard embedded questions in the corpus occurred in the absence of any white interviewer.

On the other hand there is evidence that the particular white person present might make a great deal of difference in terms of realization of non-standard features. The average percentage of non-standard features in the children's speech was greater with a white female interviewer present than with a Negro female interviewer present (columns III and IV, Table 14). The white female interviewer was well known to the children and they appeared relaxed in her presence; at one point a child mistakenly addresses her using the name of the female Negro interviewer as was noted above. Undoubtedly this familiarity with the white female interviewer affects the speech of the children. We might speculate that this is reflected in their use of a higher percentage of non-standard features with her present than in the presence of the white male interviewer. When the latter was present an average of only 12% of the potential of non-standard features was realized (column VI, Table 14), as compared with 31% when the white female was present.

When the percentages of non-standard features used in situations with Negroes alone as interviewers (columns II and IV, Table 14), are compared with conversations with only white interviewers present (columns III and VI, there are also considerable differences evident. When with Negro interviewers alone, the children produced an average of 36% of the potential non-standard features; with white interviewers alone they produced 21%.

At least two factors may in part account for the low average percentage of non-standard features used by the children where both Negro and white females are present (column V, Table 14). First is the fact that there was no potential for two of the non-standard features, one of which (multiple negation) showed a high percentage of realization in all situations in which there was a potential for it. Second, the Negro female interviewer is the mother of the one child involved; she begins the interview by scolding the boy for bad behavior in school. This appears to have had an effect on the boy's performance and might well help account for the higher percentage of standard forms in his speech in this conversation.

The speech of BS, the youngest child in the conversations (Table 13), reflects a 75% occurrence of the four non-standard features, while the average for the other four older children is 28%. It must be noted again that this child took part in only one conversation, which involved no adult interviewer, and this fact as well as her age undoubtedly had some effect on her use of the higher percentage of non-standard features.

It can be suggested then, with the reservations noted above, that use of the four non-standard features considered varied depending upon the following factors:

- 1) Age of the child, with a higher percentage of non-standard features being used by the youngest child.
- 2) Presence or absence of adult interviewers, with absence of an interviewer correlating with a higher percentage of non-standard features.
- 3) Sex and racial characteristics of interviewer, with
  - a) presence of a white interviewer alone correlating on the average with a lower percentage of non-standard features and presence of a Negro interviewer alone correlating with a higher percentage.
  - b) presence of a "familiar" white female correlating with a higher percentage of non-standard forms than presence of a white male.

In spite of the relatively small sample in this study and the geographical distance involved in the comparison, the results noted above in terms of percentages of nonstandard features in the speech of black children in Washington are similar to those noted by Wolfram in his study of Detroit speech.<sup>5</sup> Three of the four features examined for the 10 and 11 year olds in the present study showed nonstandard realization within nine percentage points of those for Wolfram's lower working class black informants, ages 10-12, in Detroit. (The larger spread in percentages for possessive marker absence between the two studies may be due in part to the smaller number of potential realizations in both). The results of the comparisons are shown below.

TABLE 15  
MEAN PERCENTAGES OF -Z ABSENCE AND  
MULTIPLE NEGATION

	<i>Washington</i>	<i>Detroit</i>
Third singular marker absence	80	81
Possessive marker absence	29	45
Plural marker absence	7	7
Multiple negation	81	90

<sup>5</sup> Walter A. Wolfram, *A Sociolinguistic Description of Detroit Negro Speech*. (Washington, D. C.: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1969), pp. 150, 163.

The mean number of potential realizations of these features for each informant in the two studies were:

	Washington (5 informants)	Detroit (48 informants)
Third singular marker:	15	28
Plural marker:	60	83
Possessive marker:	6	7
Multiple negation:	13	15

#### *Some Notes for the Classroom*

The results of this study clearly support a number of suggestions previously advanced by several investigators. The nature of the context in which speech takes place, including factors such as topic, and race and age of participants in a conversation, cannot be overlooked as influences upon speech. An intimidating situation is likely to affect speech. The interview situation is often intimidating, and the black child may thus be less inclined to uninhibited speech in such a setting. He should not, as a result, be labeled "non-verbal" any more than the middle class child should be so labeled if he were less than verbose upon finding himself the sole representative of his generation at an adult cocktail party.<sup>5</sup>

It is likely that the speech characteristics noted for the children in this study of black children from a lower socioeconomic group in Washington, D.C. will be found in the speech of such children elsewhere. It has been noted that percentages of -Z suffix absence and of multiple negation in the speech of the children in this study are with one exception close to the percentages found by Wolfram in the speech of black children in Detroit. If it does turn out that this uniformity is widespread, it should assist educators in planning language arts programs for such children.

The children's productive as well as their receptive control of standard English should not be underestimated. Even with a category such as the third person singular suffix, which showed an average 84% absence for all children, we find in the speech of one child with a 91% absence of this suffix, such sentences as:

we wen' on na thiŋ da' go down and den goes right back  
aroun' (121 MJ)

Clearly the child is here utilizing alternately a standard with a nonstandard "zero" realization of the third singular marker. This alternation is common for other features in these conversations and implies a degree of productive as well as receptive control of standard English.

There is a wealth of readily accessible data on the language of the five black children in the Loman text in addition to that utilized in this paper. The tapes and transcriptions of these fourteen conversations, available at the Center for Applied Linguistics, are a rich source of further information about the language of these children. Further examination of these materials and others can help us better understand the characteristics of the language of black children and to work more effectively with them.

<sup>5</sup> Bereiter and Engelmann in *Teaching Disadvantaged Children in the Pre-School* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1966) have advanced the view that the lower socioeconomic group black child is "non-verbal" and even that he has an "illogical" language. These views have been effectively refuted by William Labov in *The Study of Nonstandard English* (Champaign, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1970).



## VERBAL INTERACTION AND VERBAL ABILITY: RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

Davenport Plumer

### *Research and Practice — The Case of Standard Dialect*

The relationship between research and practice in education — particularly any form of language teaching — is elusive at best and sometimes non-existent. This is not to suggest that language education or education in general is uniquely flawed; medicine may be much the same. In some cases there are entire research libraries on a particular field, as in the case of reading. Yet much of this research is conflicting and the actual practice in a given school often depends as much on the vagaries of academic politics as on the accumulation of unequivocal evidence. In fact, book salesmen and publishers often have schools and regions mapped out as to the reading philosophy of the teachers — based on the influence of a given professor of reading and how many proteges he has in key decision making positions. In this regard, Jeanne Chall's book *Reading — The Great Debate*, (1967) for all its thorough scholarship, can be expected to have a disproportionately small effect on the teaching of reading because Dr. Chall has not trained sufficient numbers of followers to influence statewide adoptions.

In other cases teachers seem to persist in the face of virtually incontestable evidence — as with the teaching of grammar. Braddock's (1963) study of the effect of teaching grammar — all kinds — on children's writing ability showed no effect: teaching grammar of any kind with any method over any period of time does not improve students' writing. *The lack of effect* of this study is predictable since it does not pose an alternative that can be developed by publishers. When, on the other hand, the "new grammar" appeared several years after Braddock we saw a diverse array of new texts and statewide adoptions led by the Roberts series.

Some of the same relationships between research and politics and the teachers' need for "material" are evident in programs for teaching the middle-class white or school dialect to speakers of non-standard English. The research thus far (e.g. Lin, 1965) has shown that dialect instruction can not be done effectively, yet teachers and others continue to insist that it should be done. There appear to be at least three somewhat questionable reasons for this insistence. The first is that there are alleged to be large numbers of white middle class employers who refuse to hire men and women who do not speak the local version of the standard dialect. If this particular received opinion has been investigated in the years since 1940 when C. C. Fries pointed out the failure of standard dialect instruction, I am not aware of it. If the notion of the language purist employer is a projection of the pedagogical mentality, we should know about it. This should not simply be a case of "everybody knows."

The second reason for the persistence of the view that the standard dialect should be taught is that it helps students learn to read and write. Labov's work (1967) with reading and a non-standard Harlem dialect sug-

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gests that this concern may be exaggerated, that children apprehend the concepts of e.g., past, possessive, and third person even though they themselves may fail to produce the appropriate inflections.

Finally, teachers feel impelled to teach the standard dialect in part because they see students learning it and they know that some adults have command over both the standard and non-standard dialect. If people can learn it, why shouldn't we teach it in school? The answer brings us back to the issue of research and practice in education. Leaving aside for the moment the important and often highly volatile question of whether the standard dialect *should* be taught to speakers of the non-standard form, a principal reason that so many attempts to teach the standard form have failed is that they have proceeded from incorrect assumptions and inadequate research.

Pattern practice, which seems to have achieved satisfactory results with foreign language teaching, has been assumed to be an appropriate model for teaching standard dialect. When faced with the failure of pattern practice drills to overcome the negative associations of the standard dialect the advocates of pattern practice seem inclined to urge more and better practice rather than to question the efficiency of their chosen model. But since they lack alternative procedures and materials, teachers who must, for whatever reasons, teach the standard dialect have little choice but to persist with what is available.

#### *An Alternative Focus for Research*

One means of achieving an alternative strategy is to redirect research into the process of first language acquisition. Rather than measuring with ever-increasing precision the relative effectiveness of pattern practice drills, future research should place greater emphasis on the language (dialect) learning process as it occurs naturally in the home and elsewhere. This is not to say that the natural process should or could provide a programmatic basis for more formal instruction. As an important pre-condition for formulating methods of instruction, however, it should be known in some detail.

Although the research to date into the language acquisition process has not stressed dialect *per se*, it does provide two useful insights into that process, insights which, it would seem, should illuminate the teaching of a second dialect. First, research into the language acquisition process (e.g. Ervin, 1964) has shown that imitation is not a sufficiently powerful concept to explain the creative aspects of first language acquisition. A child may learn a set of vocabulary items, but by imitation alone he will not achieve the complex set of understandings enabling him to organize the morphemic constituents of his language in a consistent manner in unfamiliar contexts. The same thing is true of the process of expansion which more closely resembles the idealized model of behavioral learning. Studies by Cazden (1967, 1968) have indicated that even the process of expansion does not produce marked changes in children's language performance. In this connection it should be noted that the process of expansion is, in fact, based upon a type of widely observed mother-child interaction.

#### *A Naturalistic Study of Parent-Child Verbal Interaction*

The study reported below investigates one aspect of adult-child verbal interaction which is intended to provide a model for more systematic language instruction. The study is based on the assumption that while all physically and psychologically normal children are equivalent in what Chomsky calls language competence, each child's home language environment exerts a marked influence on the development of his performance in reading, writing, giving and understanding oral explanations, etc. The pur-

pose of the study is to isolate those features of adult-child dialogue which are associated with high verbal ability. The study does not deal with vocabulary and syntax. Instead, it records and analyzes adult-child dialogues, seeking answers to such questions as— Who initiates adult-child dialogues? Are adult-child dialogues in the families of the able boys any shorter or longer than those in the average families? And, what are the parents' attitudes toward school success and general verbal proficiency?

To answer these and other questions, the study tape records twenty-one, twenty-minute conversations in the homes of twelve 7½ to 8½ year old boys. The researcher is not present at the time of recording and there are no set tasks or topics, the only constraints being those imposed by the presence of the tape recorder. Each of the 54,000 utterances was assigned to one of five categories of Moves or four categories of Stops. A Move is an utterance which initiates or advances a dialogue. A Stop is an utterance which inhibits or attempts to inhibit a dialogue. Utterances vary in length and complexity from a single word or even "un huh" to several sentences spoken by a single speaker. All dialogues were coded directly from the tapes, each move or stop being identified by a code letter placed in a column below the speaker's name. The sample coding sheet below shows the focal child initiating a short dialogue with his mother and sister and terminating the dialogue himself.

Focal Child	Mother	Sister
A		
	B	
C		
		D
	C	
X		

#### Four Ways of Treating the Data

Once the data was available on coding sheets, the dialogues of the twelve families were grouped in the following manner for analysis. A. *Total Sample*: Since the total sample contained different total amounts of dialogue for each of the twelve families, the analysis of this data was carried out using percentages of particular moves and stops that occur in the dialogues of a long dialogue are. Do these dialogues, for example, owe their momentum B. *Sub-Sample of 500 Consecutive Utterances*: This sub-sample was taken from the middle of a family's taping session to provide a check on the conclusions derived from the total sample and to provide for samples of identical length that would offset any bias inherent in the fact that the total sample for each family differed markedly from family to family. C. *Longer than Average Dialogues*: These dialogues vary in length because "average" in this case means the average for each family, not the group, since some families showed only a handful of dialogues above the group average. This measure shows potentially two things. First, whether there are group differences in length of dialogue — not only based on ability groups but, also on factors like family size and ordinal position. Second, what the characteristics of a particular class of speakers, a particular family, or group of families, to adult or child moves? Who starts and finishes them? D. *Adult-Child Dialogues*: These dialogues included any dialogue involving an adult and a child as contrasted to adult-adult or child-child dialogues. Again the purpose was to identify any group differences that might exist and to characterize

the adult-focal child dialogues in terms of who initiates, extends, and terminates such dialogue. In each of the four data groupings the statistical treatment was the same: a *t* test was used to gauge the significance of the differences between group means.

Two other ways of characterizing the language environment in the two groups were used. First, one adult, usually the mother, from each family was interviewed (using a questionnaire adapted from Basil Bernstein) regarding such issues as — the degree of parental encouragement for discussion, the amount of parental tutoring, the typical mode of discipline, etc. Second, each family was treated in individual case studies that covered, e.g., typical topics of conversation, the extent to which adults set standards for children's explanations and arguments and the kinds of activities done jointly by adults and children.

#### *Findings*

One side effect of the study was to throw into question several traditionally held notions about nurturant home environments. Father absence, which has often been tied to poor verbal development, was shown to have no deleterious effects in terms of either average length or average number of adult-focal child dialogues. It should be understood, of course, that the father-absent families in this sample were relatively small and the children actually seemed to benefit from having the mother's undistracted conversational attention. This would most likely not be the case in a family with more children. Hence, the issue of father absence must be assessed within the context of other aspects of what the family *is* and *does*. The same is true of the two status features of family size and the ordinal position of the focal child. Neither was related to length or number of adult-focal child dialogues. While it is true that adult-child dialogues do not entirely summarize the language environment of a given home, they must be considered at least straws in the wind. As such, they do indicate that ordinal position and family size do not regularly exert a strong and direct influence on the home language environment. This indicates that there are certain important variables in the home environment that can offset an otherwise disadvantageous situation: the middle child in a large family with no father can, through the operation of these variables, receive verbal nurturance from his environment. The following section outlines some of these variables as they emerged from the research reported above.

Since the research uncovered very few statistically significant differences the findings reported below are based instead on trends that remain consistent over several different treatments.

The majority of the findings indicate that adult-focal child dialogues are pivotally related to the verbal ability of the focal child. This conclusion is based in part upon five measures which give a combined adult-focal child interaction score. While no one of these scores correlates with verbal ability, the five combined predict high or average verbal ability in eight out of twelve cases. The measures are: (1) percentage of adult extensions — the percentage of total utterances that constitute attempts by adults to promote further conversation. (2) percentage of adult extensions and indirect responses — same as above but combined with utterances which are not solicited and which do not solicit. (These were included and scored high largely for methodological reasons.) (3) percentage of dialogues of eight or more utterances. This was simply an arbitrary measure of how long an adult and a child talked to each other in each family. A high percentage was given a high score. (4) percentage of two-utterance dialogues. This was an arbitrary index of minimal verbal interaction. A high percentage was given a low

score (5) average length of adult-focal child dialogues. High ratings were given to families in which there was extended adult-focal child dialogue.

According to these indices what are the characteristics of a home that is likely to have a child with above average verbal ability? First, this predominantly middle class sample showed no between group differences in over-all number of utterances. It appears to be the case, however, that the able families do become involved in longer dialogues between adults and focal child than is the case with less able families. Moreover, the trends in measures of adult-child verbal interaction indicate that these longer dialogues have an identifiable set of roles and interaction patterns. The table below summarizes some of the features associated with high verbal ability.

#### INDEX OF COMPARATIVE VERBAL ACTIVITY

	Average Focal Child	Able Focal Child	Average Mother	Able Mother
— Initiates the largest percentage of all utterances than-average dialogues				X
— Largest percentage of mother initiations followed by focal child direct responses				X
— Focal child emits larger percentage of larger-ances than the mother		X		
— Lowest percentage of all utterances				X
— Most productive focal child group		X		
— Focal child exceeds parents only in direct responses	X			
— Conversational leader in average group			X	
— Exceeds all others in direct responses		X		

What appears from this table is that the mothers of the able boys typically initiate a conversation with their sons and when they have evoked a direct response (typically an answer to a question), encourage the focal children to continue without further prompting. This contrasts to the typical practice in less able homes in several ways. First, while the average focal children produce more direct responses than their mothers, average mothers are in all other respects the uncontested conversational leaders in the average homes. Able mothers, on the other hand, are considerably less active than their sons; though in relation to the average mothers they do start more dialogues by requiring a direct response from their sons. Second, despite the able mother's secondary conversational role, she is responsible for initiating the largest percentage of longer-than-average dialogues in the able families. Thus, she seems able to direct the conversational momentum

so that the topics she raises receive a full discussion, though not a lecture by her. Finally, the able focal child exceeds his average counterpart in all moves except extensions. That is, the average focal child produces a larger proportion of utterances designed to advance the dialogue than does the able boy. That this difference is not reflected in the average length of dialogue indicates that others do not always respond to his attempts to extend the dialogue and that others are not extending as frequently as he is.

Stated in terms of verbal ability, the following picture emerges. Above average verbal ability seems to be associated with a situation in which the mother initiates but then assumes a secondary conversational role. In families where the mother takes the conversational lead in terms of percentages of all utterances, the focal child can be expected to show average verbal ability. This characterization is borne out indirectly by the answers of the two groups to the questionnaire-interview. The bulk of the questions about child rearing practices and attitudes did not produce consistent differentiation between the two groups. However, in eleven out of twelve cases the following question did sort the focal children into two consistent groups. "Should children ever have the opportunity to influence their parents or change their minds on a particular subject?" The able parents, with one exception, said "yes" and the average parents said "no." Thus, those parents who feel their children should be allowed to influence them also provide the conversational and expectational framework in which this transaction can take place.

#### *Implications for Schools*

Two seemingly conflicting activities seem to characterize the optimum language learning environment: direct verbal interaction with a more mature speaker, a quantity of verbal output on the part of the learner which exceeds that of the teacher. In school terms — the teacher must talk directly with the learner, not to a whole class of which the learner happens to be a member; and the ground rules must encourage the learner to talk more than the teacher. This is, of course, not substantially different from saying that a child learns best by exercising the ability he is attempting to develop. It is, however, quite different from what goes on in many schools. Whole weeks can go by during which a child neither converses directly with an adult, nor speaks for anything like the amount of time his teacher does. The implications for the role of para-professionals in the classroom and for the kind of training they should receive are strikingly obvious.

It is also apparent that standard dialect instruction would profit by incorporating the two principles enunciated above: (1) The standard dialect teacher should interact *directly* with the student and (2) The student should be encouraged to use the dialect he is learning in a school setting. Teachers who have the help of para-professionals are better able to create optimum conditions. Those who do not should seriously consider other approaches to the problems of reading and social mobility. One approach might involve a translation project involving taped material from one dialect that must be translated to the other. Another could be a dialect study of a particular area or representative segment of the school. Although these activities would not teach students the standard dialect, they would make them aware of differences and thus better able to decide about changes they might make.

No matter what the teacher's decision about dialect teaching, if he is teaching children with language problems he must campaign vigorously for an environment in which students interact directly with more able speakers and talk often and extensively about topics that challenge them to use their language more precisely, more concretely, more elaborately, etc. At least they must do this until someone shows that the ideal way for children to

develop their verbal ability is to sit in a group and listen to someone else talk.

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### AUDITORY DISCRIMINATION AND THE "DISADVANTAGED:" DEFICIT OR DIFFERENCE

Robert L. Politzer

It is generally assumed on a "common sense" as well as research basis that there is a relationship between auditory discrimination ability and reading readiness as well as performance in reading tasks. The relationship between auditory discrimination and reading achievement has been demonstrated in various research studies (Bond 1935, Wepman 1960, Wheeler and Wheeler 1954, C. P. Deutsch 1967). Poor and retarded readers tend to have auditory discrimination scores which are lower than those of other pupils.

It is, no doubt, for the above mentioned reason that recent research has concerned itself with the auditory discrimination ability of pupils who are generally classified as "socio-economically" or "culturally" disadvantaged. Since these pupils belong to a group that is characterized by low achievement in reading and language arts generally speaking, we might expect that they would also perform badly in auditory discrimination tasks. In

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general, research has confirmed that hypothesis. Thus, Martin Deutsch found in a well-known study that lower auditory discrimination scores are associated with both socio-economic status and race (M. Deutsch 1967, p. 365). The next logical step seems to be a look for environmental factors that would account for this lower auditory discrimination ability. Cynthia P. Deutsch suggested that the noisy slum environment may be responsible for the auditory discrimination deficit of the Disadvantaged. "... it may well be that lower-class children who live in very noisy environments do not develop the requisite auditory discrimination abilities to learn to read well—or adequately—early in their school careers" (C. P. Deutsch 1967, p. 275).

The concept of the disadvantaged child that has auditory discrimination difficulties,—and associated with them problems in reading and perhaps even speaking—was rather quickly and widely accepted in the literature dealing with the language problems of the Disadvantaged. Thus, the author of a paper on "Teaching the Disadvantaged" (published by the National Education Association in the series of "What Research Has to Say") states that "considerable information is already available concerning undetected and untreated defects in very young children. These include unintelligible pronunciation, faulty vision and deficient hearing, all of which block learning to read, spell and write . . ." "Many children do not hear final syllables unless the teacher articulates clearly and trains them to listen" (Noar 1967, p. 16). The idea that the inability to hear and to discriminate correctly may be responsible for all language problems of the Disadvantaged can be found in the work of scholars like Carl Bereiter and Siegfried Engelman who assert that "many disadvantaged children are so 'deaf' to the segmental character of English sentences, in fact, that they cannot even detect the difference between "John is ready" and "Ready is John . . ." Little wonder then that these children "do not know how to talk in loud, clear voices. They either mumble almost inaudibly or else they yell raucously" (Bereiter and Engelman, n.d., p. 7). The picture of the disadvantaged child emerging from this discussion is that of a semi "deaf" and as a result linguistically handicapped individual.

The possibility that the auditory discrimination problem of the disadvantaged child may reflect a language difference is occasionally alluded to in the literature dealing with the so-called "deficit phenomena." Thus Martin Deutsch states that "it is important to note that the correlation with the Wepman auditory discrimination test is associated with both SES and race. What might be operative here is the presence of dialect variations in the Negro group, influencing and limiting the communication possibilities in school . . ." (M. Deutsch 1967, p. 365). However the suggestion that dialect difference may be responsible for the consistently lower auditory discrimination performance of Blacks and lower SES groups is never thought through to its logical conclusion, namely that the so-called "deficit" in auditory discrimination may be a mirage created by a misunderstanding of the task involved in the auditory discrimination test.

The instrument most widely used in the testing of auditory discrimination is the Wepman test. In the manual of directions, the author assures that "every possible match of phonemes used in English was made in phonetic categories" (Wepman 1958). The test is, in fact, based on having the pupil recognize the differences in a series of so-called minimal pairs (words differentiated by only one phoneme) of standard English, e.g., *leg/led*; *dim/din*; *tothe/clove*, etc. The task involved in having to decide whether a pair like *dim/din* is made up of identical or different items looks deceptively simple. It is not. The entire problem of how speech sounds are perceived is complex and subject to continuous and largely unresolved debate (e.g., see Lane 1966; Liberman, Cooper, Shankweiler and Studdert-



Kennedy 1967; Studdert-Kennedy, Liberman, Harris and Cooper 1970). Why is it, for instance, that we perceive the identical words uttered by different individuals as the "same," in spite of the fact that they are spoken by different voices? Why do we recognize easily the underlying "sameness" of dialectally different pronunciation of the same word? To discuss the complex problems of perception of speech sound goes beyond the scope of this article. It will suffice to point out that the decision of whether two utterances are the same or different is a complex and ambiguous task. It involves at least the following steps: (1) The utterances have to be heard. (2) They must be "perceived," in other words they are identified so that they can be retained in auditory memory. (3) They must be stored in a short term auditory memory, so that they can be compared. (4) Finally a decision must be made as to whether they belong to the same or to different categories. In other words, what is involved in each item of the auditory discrimination test is hearing, perception, auditory memory, categorization.

That performance in auditory discrimination tests is influenced by the native language of the subjects has been known to linguists for quite some time (Polivanov 1931-34). In the words of Sapon and Carroll, "The probability of perception of a given sound in a given environment is related to the language of the listener . . ." "where errors in perception occur, the direction and magnitude of many errors are systematically related to the language spoken by the listener . . ." (Sapon and Carroll 1955, pp. 67-68). This statement does not make it clear, however, just what the "error in perception" consists in. What seems most likely is that errors in perception caused by native language backgrounds are simply errors in categorization.

To give a simple example: English has two i-phonemes; /i/ as in *beat* and /i/ as in *bit*. If a speaker of English is asked whether or not *beat* and *bit* are the same, he will quite naturally respond that they are not. Spanish, however, has only one i-phoneme. When asked whether English *beat* or *bit* are the same, speakers of Spanish will often give an affirmative answer. Those speakers of Spanish are then said to be unable to "discriminate" between /i/ and /i/, or to have difficulty in "hearing" the difference between /i/ and /i/. But to say that they have difficulty in "hearing" amounts to a rather loose or at least very figurative use of language. Obviously there is no reason to assume that speakers of Spanish "hear" any worse than speakers of English (in other words are more likely to have defective hearing). Nor is there any reason to suspect that their failure to discriminate between /i/ and /i/ has anything to do with a lesser auditory memory span. Speakers of Spanish "hear" and "discriminate" (in the strict sense of the term) just as well as speakers of English, but their native language has exposed them to years of practice in neglecting all differences between sounds in the [i-i] range and in classifying all of them in the same category. The result is, of course, that a speaker of Spanish may hear a pair of words like *bit/beat* classify the /i/ of *bit* in the same category as the /i/ of *beat*—and then pronounce *beat* and *bit* alike. It is for this reason that foreign language teachers have been using so-called auditory discrimination exercises as part of pronunciation training. In other words, speakers of Spanish must be taught to differentiate /i/ and /i/—this means to assign them to different categories—before they can learn to pronounce them correctly as different sounds.

In view of the fact that in foreign language training, the influence of the native language has for some time been accepted as an important factor influencing the categorization of speech sounds, it seems rather astonishing that much of the literature dealing with the Disadvantaged continues to treat their auditory discrimination problems as related primarily to "hearing," "auditory memory span" or "faulty perception." The possibility that

hearing, perception and auditory memory span may somehow be affected adversely by low socio-economic status (e.g., noisy slum environments) does exist, of course, though it seems rather remote. By far the most plausible explanation of the auditory discrimination deficit of the Disadvantaged is simply that the categorizations (same vs. different) which are expected on the testing instruments are those of standard English and simply do not correspond to the social dialect of blacks and/or lower socio-economic status groups.

That the Fatamorgana of the auditory discrimination deficit is simply the result of different language backgrounds can be demonstrated most easily with Mexican-Americans who actually speak Spanish at home and whose English is heavily influenced by Spanish speech habits. In an experiment recently conducted at the Stanford University Center in Research and Development in Teaching, an auditory discrimination test was administered to a group of Mexican-Americans (presumably lower socio-economic status) children and to monolingual English control groups. The tests consisted of pairs of nonsense syllables. Pairs were either alike or differentiated by only one sound, and the subjects were asked to make the "same or different" judgment. The test had three parts. Differences in Part 1 were based on distinctions utilized in the French Phonemic pattern (e.g., a/ã, oe/œ, y/u, etc.). Part 2 relied on phonemic differences of English (r/i; u/v, ə/a), and Part 3 in distinctions used in Spanish (r/R; -r/-õ-; g-/gw-, etc.). On Part 1 of the test, there was no difference in the performance of the two groups. The monolingual English speakers outperformed the Mexican-Americans in Part 2. The Mexican-Americans won on Part 3 (Politzer and McMahon 1970).

The phonological and grammatical features which differentiate lower socio-economic status social dialect in general and Black English from standard speech have been described in various publications (e.g., McDavid 1967, Labov 1967). A brief comparison of features of Black English with standard English on which the Wepman test is based leads one to suspect that many speakers of Black dialects might categorize the following pairs which the Wepman test categorization assumes to be "different" as "same."

Form I of the test:

Items: 4. leg/led, 13. thread/shred, 17/pat/pack, 18 dim/din, 25. clothe/clove, 28. sheat/sheaf, 33. shoal/showl, 40. pin/pen.

Form II:

Items: 12. gall/goal, 14. let/lick, 15. bud/bug, 20. fret/threat, 22. bum/bun, 23. lave/lathe, 36. wreath/reef.

It would be an interesting experiment to administer the Wepman test or other auditory discrimination tests to speakers of different social dialects and to determine (1) whether groups speaking different dialects perform differently on specific test items and (2) whether these differences in performance reflect differences in the speech pattern of the groups. Especially elementary school teachers involved in the teaching of children speaking non-standard dialects could then use auditory discrimination tests for becoming aware of the specific language problems of these children. (The author had hoped to include in this article some data concerning differential auditory discrimination performance of children coming from different language backgrounds as measured by the Wepman test. Unfortunately the data could not be collected in time for inclusion in this article, because the author was informed that it seemed difficult to find an "adequate" sample of children from Mexican-American or Black families in the school district in which he intended to collect the data because a large percentage of those children appeared to suffer from speech and/or hearing problems . . .).

The difference in auditory discrimination between Disadvantaged and Non-disadvantaged tends to disappear as children progress through the school (M. Deutsch 1967, p. 365). It could be only too tempting to interpret this fact in terms of retarded maturation on the part of the disadvantaged group. What seems more likely however is that eventually the increased contact with the standard dialect teaches the non-standard speaker just what categorization he is supposed to be making. By the time he learns to make these categorizations the harm caused by not diagnosing the discrimination problem in the early grades has already been done.

The auditory discrimination problem is only a small but very concrete instance in which the language "deficit" of the disadvantaged turns out to be a simple "difference." Whether the disadvantage consists in a "deficit" or a "difference" seems, at first, relatively unimportant. Thus both W. Labov (who considers the phenomena discussed here as difference) and Cynthia P. Deutsch who speaks about auditory discrimination deficits come to similar pedagogical conclusions: "A certain amount of attention given to perception training in the first few years of school may be extremely helpful in teaching children to hear and make standard English distinctions" (Labov 1967, p. 25). "It would be possible for children with such deficiencies" (in auditory discrimination)—"or immaturities—to fall far behind in many respects of their school work and thus be unable to catch-up even when the deficiency is overcome. This could, of course, underline the importance of training in auditory discrimination early in the school career" (C. P. Deutsch 1967, p. 276). However, there are practical differences between the results of a "difference" and a "deficit" approach. First of all, the difference approach enables us to distinguish clearly the areas in which auditory discrimination problems exist from those in which no such problems are present. It makes it possible to focus instruction more intelligently and economically. The clear-cut awareness that we are dealing with a difference and not a deficit may also lead us to the conclusion that we should simply not expect certain auditory discriminations from students not speaking standard dialect and that we should accept certain pronunciation mergers in their speech. Perhaps most important however is the difference of attitude implied in the difference between the two approaches. "Deficit" puts the blame on one party—"difference" implies no such judgment. It takes two to make a "difference." Martin Deutsch says that it is one of the goals of education "to program stimulation in increasingly less amorphous ways and with methods that are approximate to basic learning capabilities, so as to vitiate the effects of unfavorable environments" (M. Deutsch 1967, p.369). The difference approach recognizes the possibility that unfavorable environments may also be created by the school.

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## SOME PROBLEMS IN STUDYING NEGRO/WHITE SPEECH DIFFERENCES

Roger W. Shuy

In a recent caricature of the relationship of anthropologists to the American Indians whom they study, Vine Deloria, Jr. in his new book *Custer Died for Your Sins*, rather humorously but accurately portrays the annual, summer ritual of the scholarly community to the golden southwest.<sup>1</sup> Exactly when the ritual began remains a mystery but Deloria feels that Indians are certain that all ancient societies of the Near East had anthropologists at one time because those societies are all now defunct. Of greater concern, however, is the author's conviction that the essential mes-

<sup>1</sup> Vine Deloria, Jr. "Custer Died for Your Sins," *Playboy*. (August, 1969). pp. 181-182. 172-176.

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sage of all these observations, reports, and books on the American Indian says the same thing year after year and the say it in a mildly offensive, sloganeering way. "... Indians are a folk people, whites are an urban people, . . . Indians are between two cultures, Indians are bicultural, Indians have lost their identity, . . . Indians are warriors." (p. 132).

It is not our purpose here to pursue further Deloria's thesis about his fellow American Indians, but rather to use it as a point of departure for examining our own approaches to the study of minority groups in the field of language, social dialects in particular.

#### *The Unfulfilled Promises of Research*

Of course it is hardly appropriate for linguists to look down on other disciplines in matters which involve the study of people. If we have not been criticized adequately, it is probably only from our lack of activity so far. For example, the serious study of the speech of economically and educationally disadvantaged Negroes has only just begun and has hardly caused a stir in a world of race-relations which has not yet fully conceived of language as part of the battle ground.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the developing relationship of linguistics to matters of current social concern, especially as it relates to the study of minority groups. The September (1969) annual meetings of the American Psychological Association (APA), the American Sociological Association (ASA) and the American Political Science Association (APSA) may provide considerable weighty warning about the road ahead in the study of social dialects in our country. Just as Deloria scored anthropologists for their alleged compilation of useless knowledge for knowledge's sake and for their heady but empty determination to preserve their own species, so current research practices of the disciplines of psychology, sociology and political science have been uncerimoniously attacked by their own membership with statements like the following one made by Robert L. Green, co-chairman of the Association of Black Psychologists: who observes that the black community has served as a research colony for white psychologists and white sociologists.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, in his presidential address at the ASPA, David Easten proclaimed: "A new revolution is underway in political science. Its battle cries are *relevance* and *action*. Its objects of criticism are the discipline, the professions and the universities."<sup>3</sup>

From the unrest apparent in the disciplines of psychology, sociology and political science, and from certain feedback from the as yet limited research done by linguists in minority group speech, two problems have emerged for which solutions must be immediately devised:

1. Should the speech of minority groups be studied at all?
2. If justification is found for studying such speech, what should be required of it?

The most ardent detractors from the study of social dialects seem divided on both issues. There may be some, for example, who argue that it is pointless to do research on non-standard speech. They may regard it as unattractive and of little value and argue that researchers might better spend their time on studying more useful things. But such an argument can be rejected from the perspective of almost any discipline. Non-standard speech is interesting psychologically, anthropologically, historically, linguistically and, most certainly, pedagogically. More important, these and other disciplines can provide helpful assistance to speakers of such dialects if the

<sup>2</sup> Robert L. Green, in *Washington Evening Star* (September 3, 1969), p. A 22.

<sup>3</sup> *Newsweek*, September 15, 1969, p. 42.

researchers can free themselves from their enchantment with basic research and move along to practical matters as well. The latter may be the most convincing of all, since it is virtually impossible to plot an educational strategy by knowing only the desired end results. One must certainly also know the learner's beginning points.

#### *The Researcher vs. the Researched*

In recent months we have heard further criticism of the study of non-standard speech. These cries are made from quite defensible grounds and with convincing logic. They go something like this: "Why single us out for research? Why not study some other groups of people?" Unfortunately, researchers were not always ready with acceptable answers to these questions and, no matter how well motivated they really were, their responses easily could be taken as, at best, patronizing and, at worst, discriminatory. Thus unthinking answers such as "We are studying you because you have such a great problem" or "We are studying you because you are so interesting from the view point of my discipline" lead only to what Desmond Morris might call "The Human Zoo syndrome." Subjects may be thought of as freaks or, at least, as peculiar. Even our scholarly use of the designators, *informants*, *subjects*, *populations*, etc. smack of a cold impersonality with which no lay reader could be expected to sympathize. Deloria's complaint undoubtedly will be answered, to some extent, by anthropologists who are probably not as badly motivated as he makes them out to be but who are also not as conscienceable as they themselves think they are. Deloria rightly attacks the useless knowledge for knowledge's sake and concludes, "why should tribes have to compete with scholars for funds when their scholarly productions are so useless and irrelevant to life?" (p. 174)

#### *The Danger of Knowing*

This attack, namely, that researchers stop far short of providing information which can be translated into a useful program to help alleviate the problem they are supposedly studying, is a serious one. In fact, Deloria observes, the basic research data, unless seen in light of concrete action, can contribute seriously to the demise of a minority group. Thus the anthropologist's explanation that the Indian's dilemma at being between two worlds leads him to excuse his excessive drinking on the grounds that he does it because he is in a dilemma between two worlds. Or, in another setting, Daniel P. Moynihan's observation that ghetto Negro families suffer from being female dominated can provide the ghetto Negro male all the excuse he needs to shirk his family responsibilities. The danger, of course, is not in these facts by themselves (assuming that they are accurate), but in seeing these facts in isolation rather than as part of a larger continuum.

For those of you who have been wondering whether or not I was ever going to get to the topic implied by the title of this paper, let me now begin to put you at ease. In order to study differences between the speech used by any two groups of people, it is necessary to have done considerable thinking about what the knowledge of this comparison will do for the people being studied as well as for the fields of scholarship involved. The people whose speech is being studied, however, care very little about how well linguists can solve linguistic problems involving language change, ordered rules or the discovery of underlying forms. They care not a whit about how well language features can be used as a measure of social stratification or to determine historical influences, linguistic assimilation or variable rules. Any research project which proposes to use minority group subjects today must fully realize that the days of the responsive informant are growing numbered. He wants to know why we are doing what we are doing and what it all leads to. The linguist involved in such projects

can no longer aim only at a scholarly journal to his research, even though his professional status argues that he should. He must worry, at every stage of his research, about the ultimate end product. In short, the modern situation argues for research projects with broad scopes, not narrow ones, and for practical outcomes, not merely theoretical ones.

#### *Easy-Believism*

Recent times have witnessed a number of educational easy-believisms all which have come short of the glory of success. Recent reports of the failure of Title I funds to accomplish what they set out to do have pointed out, much to our embarrassment, that benefit to the school's problems does not accrue from merely making large amounts of money available. In fact, a recent report by economists at the First National City Bank of N. Y. showed that there is little correlation between improvement in reading skills in black schools and the amount of money poured into these classrooms.<sup>4</sup> The next easy-believism is likely to be that all we really need is a lot more teachers or tutors, then children will learn to read and write. It has been suggested, in fact, that a cadre of lay people can be used effectively to teach literacy in this country (oddly enough, it has never been suggested, to my knowledge, that a large cadre of lay people be formed to aid in the problems of dentistry or law). Of course money is useful and no program can operate without willing and altruistic people but this line of thinking neglects a far more major problem—"What is the content of the subject to be taught?" What this suggests is that the exact reverse of the relevance principle so aptly advocated by Deloria may also lead to meaninglessness to the minority group. To a certain extent, this principle underlies the Regional Educational Laboratory movement in this country. For several years now such laboratories have concentrated heavily on converting vast amounts of basic research into viable classroom practices. The results of their efforts have not been earthshaking, despite every good intention and, in some cases, because of it. The dangers of picking up another man's research and running with it should be immediately apparent without documentation, since the literature is now growing on the subject. But oral language materials for secondary students should offer a plethora of examples. The New York City Board of Education, for example, used the work of William Labov and Beryl Bailey as a base for constructing the NCTE's publication *Non-Standard Dialects*. In doing so, it managed to misunderstand a great deal of what these excellent scholars have written. Likewise, one of the better regional educational laboratories has been using oral language materials originally written for Spanish speakers with Southern Negro children. Yet the ludicrousness of teaching black children such things as the aspiration of their word initial voiceless stops should be apparent to anyone. What I am saying is that if researchers can be scored for not carrying their research to practical ends, likewise the practical people can be criticized for not doing the research. Both can be well meaning and, to a limited extent, accurate, but neither sees the whole picture that is becoming an absolute requirement in our times. And we have been led to this not by the insights of our own disciplines, not by a sudden re-discovery of Francis Bacon's Renaissance Man who argued that "all knowledge should be our province." Instead we have been led to it by the very people we are studying. They are telling us, "Don't study me or my speech if it won't help me. I've got enough problems as it is and I don't have time for that kind of game-playing. If it will help me, show me how." But even then there is no guarantee that he will cooperate with us. And we

<sup>4</sup> Karl E. Meyer. "Money as School Cure-All Questioned." *The Washington Post*, Tuesday, November 25, 1969. p. A6.

can't blame him if he refuses. Our track record is far from clear. The various disciplines that have been studying Negro speech in this country have said enough damaging things already to produce an uncrossable gulf. Early childhood educators have told him that he is non-verbal, that he has defective hearing and that his language signals cognitive deficits. Speech people have told him that he is deficient and suffering from a kind of pathological weakness. English teachers have dismissed him as inarticulate and ignorant of the most fundamental aspects of grammar and pronunciation. Reading teachers have considered him illiterate. Psychologists have observed that he deviates from the prescribed norm. Linguists have described his speech in order to observe sound change, historical origins and underlying grammatical forms. Where do we begin to repair the damage? Or was there any point to studying his speech in the first place?

#### *Inadequate Research Design*

We have briefly discussed the problems of the researcher vs. the researched, the unfulfilled promises of research and the dangers of knowing. Other problems in studying Negro-white speech differences stem from the misassessing of facts by scholars, a partial or incomplete knowledge of the facts, and an inadequate research design for ascertaining these facts. It is the latter problem to which I wish to address myself in the remainder of this paper.

Historically it has been difficult for linguists to observe the speech differences between the races because their tools for measuring social class were imperfect, often leading their results astray. That is, Negro-white differences tend to be minimized in the upper middle classes but become increasingly evident as one moves down the social scale. Evidence of this minimizing can be clearly observed from the C.A.L. research, *Sociolinguistic Factors in Speech Identification* when, from stimuli containing as little as 20 to 30 seconds of continuous tape recorded speech, listeners could accurately identify the race of the speaker in all but the upper middle class stimuli.<sup>6</sup> The taped speech of upper middle class Negroes was identified by race accurately only 17.8% of the time by Negro listeners and only 8.2% of the time by white listeners. Listeners judged the racial identity of the taped voices of all other classes, however, with an overall accuracy of approximately 95%. This sort of information seems to make it quite clear that researchers must be very careful to get a rather complete spectrum of social class representation of both races when studying Negro-White speech differences. This is, of course, easier said than done. The relatively unbiased random sample which the Detroit Dialect Study carried out in that city in 1966 turned up a population which showed that only 15% of all Negroes are found in the upper half of the social status spectrum in contrast to 40% of the white population which is found in that category. Likewise, at the lower end of the socio-economic spectrum, it is often difficult to find whites who are as poor as the poorest Negroes, especially in the South.

One thing we are warned against, by facts such as these, is that it is dangerous to say anything about Negro-white speech differences on the basis of language data evidence from only the middle class Negroes. Equally dangerous, however, is the opposite of this situation. The early research of the Urban Language Study was carried out on a relatively small population in Washington, D. C. Considerable effort was made to avoid the bias of dialectologists in their wide-meshed studies. Rather early in the research, however, an obvious question arose: Just how representative is the speech

<sup>6</sup> Shuy, Roger W., Joan C. Baratz and Walter A. Wolfram, *Sociolinguistic Factors in Speech Identification*, NIMII Project No MH 15043-01, Final Report.