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ABSTRACT

This study investigated differences in the writing styles of African American and European American test takers using a portfolio entry assessment as a means of examining writing style, focusing on language choice, rhetorical style, and organization. The portfolio entry was from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Middle Childhood/Generalist certificate. African American and European American cultural indicators and language traits were identified based on the literature. Written commentaries from African American and European American teacher candidates were coded for specific linguistic features. The set contained 64 commentaries by African Americans and 30 by European American candidates, and these were reviewed by 9 trained coders. For the most part, the features that were expected for African American candidates clustered among African American candidates and European American candidates who used Southern White English (SWE), a dialect with considerable overlap with African American Language. Overall, African American candidates had fewer speech code errors (SCEs) than European Americans who used SWE but more than European Americans who used "American English." A possible explanation is that European American canidates had greater training and experience in formal academic writing. Two appendixes contain a subset of coding frames and a summary of results. (Contains 27 tables and 37 references.) (SLD)

Writing Differences in Teacher Performance Assessments: Effects of African American Language Use

By

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Introduction

Due to increased scrutiny on student achievement and teacher assessment, there has been a greater emphasis on teacher assessment at all stages of a teacher's career – from pre-service teaching to master teaching. These assessments cover basic skills, subject matter, and pedagogy, and utilize multiple-choice, constructed-response, observations, video, and portfolios to measure what it is that teachers know and are able to do.

While the debates over the advantages and disadvantages of each type of assessment are numerous, they share one attribute – the differential performance of minority teachers on all forms of teacher assessments. Differential performance results when a specific population subgroup achieves a passing rate which is significantly lower than that of the normative reference group. African Americans do less well, in general, on all types of assessments, including constructed-response tests; this issue must be addressed by all users of test score data and test-makers themselves (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Lam, 1995).

In the case of the portfolio assessment under study, qualitative evidence suggested that some candidates might be using forms of English other than edited American English (including African American Language and speech code errors). As part of the intensive training for assessors who will score the portfolio assessment, there are multiple training activities centered around bias reduction, including specific attention to the influence of writing style. Assessors, like all individuals, hold preferences for specific types and qualities in candidates' writing. Without conscious attention to the demands of the scoring rubric, it is possible for assessors to allow perceptions of a candidate's writing style to influence their overall evaluation of the content. This further highlighted the need to examine the style and form of the candidates' writing, to explore this potential source for the observed differential performance.

The present study is specifically concerned with the writing styles of African American test takers on constructed-response tests, when compared with European American test takers.

Differential Performance of Minority Test Takers

The differential performance of African American test takers is seen across all types of constructed-response tests, including short answer, extended response, and portfolio entries, both within the field of educational assessment and in other professional assessments. While the gap has been decreasing over time, it is by no means closed. Differential performance may be due to factors within the assessment itself, within the scoring design, or with live scorers of constructed-response and performance-based assessments (Bond, 1997). The causes may also lie outside the assessment, in the sample of test-takers, specifically in the educational opportunities provided to the test-taker in grade school, college, and post-graduation professional development. Equity of access to resources such as test preparation materials, release time from work to prepare, and mentoring may also play a role (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Finally, researchers have explored interactional factors in differential performance, including stereotype threat (Steele, 1997) and use of culturally and linguistically distinct modes of expression in the assessment (Irvine and Fraser, 1998; Ball, 1997; Kochman, 1981).

Focus for the research study

This study employs a portfolio-entry assessment as a means to examine more closely the writing of African American candidates – specifically language choice, rhetorical style, and organization. If significant differences are found in the writing of one candidate subgroup versus another, then further analyses can be done to explore the relationship between writing differences and scores achieved on the assessment.

This study uses a portfolio entry from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) Middle Childhood/Generalist (MC/Gen) certificate. Candidates submit ten components including portfolio entries, which focus on various aspects of classroom performance, and accomplishments outside the classroom such as working with students' families and other colleagues and professionals. The validity of the Middle Childhood/Generalist assessment has been documented, demonstrating the appropriateness of the assessment for identifying evidence of accomplished teaching.

Studies have also been completed to document the value of National Board certification in recognizing the skills of accomplished teachers, and specifically the added value that these teachers bring to the classroom (Bond, Smith, Baker, and Hattie, 2000).

The MC/Gen certificate in particular was selected from the array of offered certificates, since it has the greatest number of African American candidates and so provided a larger pool from which to select responses. The specific entry *Writing: Thinking through the process* was selected, as it was one of two portfolio entries that did not require a videotape excerpt of the candidate and students.We wished to select a entry where a candidate's race would be not necessarily be immediately obvious to an assessor. This particular entry requires a candidate to select two writing assignments/prompts to demonstrate how she or he uses writing to develop students' thinking and writing skills for different audiences or purposes. The candidate also is required to select two students from the class and to provide their responses to both writing assignments/prompts. The student work is accompanied by a twelve-page written commentary in which the candidate describes his or her teaching context, the nature of the two assignments, and how they fit into the teacher's overall writing instruction for the year. In addition, the candidate is required to provide an analysis of the two students' writing and reflect on the success of using both assignments/prompts. For the purpose of this study, only the candidate's writing was analyzed and coded; the students' responses to the two assignments/prompts were not considered.

Responses are scored holistically by currently practicing teacher peers, who have successfully completed a rigorous four-day training. The training given to these assessors in preparation for scoring includes emphasis on recognizing and screening out personal and societal biases. Much of the training is devoted to understanding and practicing to apply the four-point score scale (1-4) that is used. Each of the four points on the scale can be modified with a plus (+) or a minus (–) that increases or decreases the whole number score by 0.25, so that the score scale runs 0.75, 1.0, 1.25; 1.75, 2.0, 2.25; 2.75, 3.0, 3.25; 3.75, 4.0, 4.25. The critical point on the score scale is 2.75. For candidates who are not successful, but who choose to retake parts of the assessment, entry scores that are 2.75 or greater can be "banked" and candidates only have to retake entries where the score is below 2.75. For the purpose of this research, the

score scale was divided in half; low scores fall in the range of 0.75 to 2.74, and high scores in the range of 2.75 to 4.25.

In previous studies attempting to examine the sources for the differential performance of minority candidates on this assessment, there has been no evidence of test bias within the content of the assessment, the test directions, or the test questions (Bond, 1998).

Terminology

The terminology for describing the language used by some African Americans has changed rapidly over the last three decades. While recognition of the differences in language between African Americans and other English speakers dates back to the late 18th century in early writings about the language of African slaves, the term "Ebonics" is relatively young (Smitherman, 2000). It was first coined at a conference on language and African American children in 1973. From there, just as descriptors for African Americans have evolved over time, so to have the descriptors for their language. Following the writing of one eminent researcher in this area whose work spans several decades, one can observe these shifts in terminology. Smitherman (1973), in one of her earlier published works, uses the term Black English. In a 1997 article (Smitherman, 1997a), she charts how Black English changed to Black Vernacular English, and then to African American English. In a later article that year (Smitherman, 1997b), the term experienced a further shift to African American Language (AAL).

In consultation with a national panel of linguists experienced in the study of African American Language, it was agreed that the term AAL would be used for the purpose of this research. Similarly, it was agreed that equanimity in naming would best be achieved through the use of "African American" and "European American", rather than "Black" and "White." To indicate cultural ways of knowing, believing, and doing that are specific to a particular racial group, we developed the terms African American Cultural Indicators (AACI) and European American Cultural Indicators (EACI). Examples of these in a teaching context might be the use of directives from teacher to student to achieve a desired behavior (AACI),

versus the use of interrogatives to achieve the same behavioral goal (EACI). This difference in the form of request made by a teacher to their students was documented in Heath (1994).

The final set of terms involves the linguistic categories into which the different language patterns were divided. These included African American Language, Edited American English, and Speech Code Errors. The use of Edited American English indicates emphasis on the edited nature of formal prose, written under the constraints of the assessment directions. The term "standard American English" was avoided, in part, because it privileged American English over other forms of English, including African American Language. Speech Code Errors encompasses errors that are made by either users of African American Language or Edited American English that do not conform to consistent grammatical structures. These categories will be discussed further in the methodology section.

Literature review of relevant African American Language features

The existence of AAL as an oral language is well documented (Baugh, 1983; Feagin 1997; Linguistic Society of America, 1997). Writings by authors such as Smitherman and Toni Morrison, to name only two, incorporate AAL in their works, but overall less research has been conducted on written forms of AAL over spoken forms. Exceptions to this are studies of AAL in hip-hop and rap music (Smitherman, 1997b) and some work in the area of student writing discussed below.

Qualitative evidence has suggested the presence of some features of AAL and the use of African American Cultural Indicators (Onafowora, 1998) in a subset of written assessments produced by African American teachers. The use of different linguistic codes, specifically African American language, has been well documented in the writing of grade school and college students of color (Blumenthal and Hildenbrand, 1993; Ball, 1992). This use of linguistic codes and cultural references distinct from edited American English and majority-group cultural references (White or European American and middle class) has not been explored extensively in performance-based teacher assessments.

It is important to note that, in general, there has been observed a low frequency of speech-to-writing transference for African American Language features. There are distinct patterns of usage of AAL

within texts that consist of predominantly Edited American English, but the patterns exist at a very low frequency (Smitherman, 1992; Chaplin, 1987). While the use of AAL may be minimal, it still holds the potential to impact the reader and have the undesired effect of producing stigmatization of the writer. Even if a reader is intentionally attempting to overlook grammatical and syntactical features inconsistent with Edited American English, the presence of such features may cause the reader to devalue the content of the text (Santos, 1988).

Smitherman (1992) conducted a longitudinal study of African American student writing on the National Assessment of Progress (NAEP) assessment. Among the range of features that she identified were features such as the absence of the "ed" morpheme in past tense main verbs, perfect tense main verbs, verbal adjectives, and passives; the absence of the "s" morpheme in plural nouns, possessive nouns, and third person singular verbs; hypercorrection; dropped copula; subject-verb agreement; multiple negation; and pronominal apposition.

Fogel and Ehri (2000) conducted a study in which they focused student learning on six syntactic features that differed according to the form of spoken English used by the students. In this study the authors focused on syntactic features since "unlike phonological features, nonstandard syntactic forms tend to stand out and, as a result, can be stigmatizing (Burling, 1973)." In the study, the six standard syntactic features were possessive "s", past tense "ed", third-person present-tense singular "s", plural "s", indefinite article, and subject-verb agreement.

Ball (1998) analyzed a student paper written by an African American Vernacular English (AAVE) speaking high school sophomore. In this writing she identified a number of features that are common to many AAVE speakers, such as not using the third-person singular present tense "s", and a range of semantic and phonological patterns. One pattern of interest was the student's use of the word "willn't" instead of "won't." Ball noted this as potentially an example of what Wolfman and Whiteman (1971) identified as hypercorrection.

> *Hypercorrection results from the writer's attempt to produce academic patterns with which he or she is not completely familiar. Because of this unfamiliarity, the writer*

incorporates items not only where they are appropriate, but in inappropriate places as well. This phenomenon appears in spelling, vocabulary choices and syntactic structures, and is not exclusive to AAVE speakers. (Ball, 1998, p. 235)

Smitherman (1994) and Ball (1995), among others, draw a distinction between syntactic and discourse writing features, both of which are present in the writings of African American students. At the discourse level, typical features are "the use of rhythmic language, anecdotes, parables, and patterns of repetition and call and response" (p. 259). Within the context of the portfolio assessment under study, given that the format is highly structured, the candidates tended to present fewer of these features.

Smitherman extended her work on the NAEP study by drawing some parallels with similar work. In her 1994 article, Smitherman discussed research by Chaplin (1987) who also used African American student writing from NAEP. In that study she noted that some students used what she described as "conversational tone" which she identified as an essay that read like "recorded language or a conversation" (p. 37).

Southern White English

AAL is spoken by a subset of the African American population who has been exposed to it in the home and/or community. Smitherman (2000) estimates that approximately "90% of the African American community uses one or more aspects of the language some of the time." AAL is distributed across the United States and is not limited by socioeconomic boundaries. Southern White English, a localized dialect of American English, is largely constrained to the southeastern United States (Bailey, 1997; Feagin, 1997). SWE has been extensively documented in references such as the *Annotated Bibliography of Southern American English* (McMillan and Montgomery, 1989) and the *Dictionary of American Regional English* (1996), and demonstrates distinctive patterns in grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, naming practices, and word-play. SWE shares many features in common with African American Language.

Support for the idea of cross-fertilization of language between African American and European Americans comes from a study conducted by Botan and Smitherman (1991), which looked at the degree

to which White American industrial workers had familiarity with Black English. The study showed that while White workers varied in their degree of familiarity with Black English depending on employment group, African American workers did not. This study lends support to the notion that while African Americans might learn Black English from a variety of sources (family, peers, work, church), White workers who are not in contact with African Americans speaking Black English are much less likely to do so.

Research Question

The research presented in this paper addresses the following question: Is there systematic evidence of the use of African American Language and/or the use of African American Cultural Indicators in a subset of analytic commentaries of teaching practice (known as written commentaries) written by African American teachers? The research sought to systematically look for language patterns by candidate race and by score, that is: Do language patterns differ for African American and European American candidates, and are there patterns by high and low scores on the entry?

The research presented here is only the first stage of a larger project, since this study in isolation cannot answer the question of whether there is a causal relationship between the presence of language features and scores. In other words, even if AAL language features did cluster for low scoring African American candidates it would not be possible to identify whether the low scores were awarded because of rubric-based decisions (evidence of poor pedagogy) or because the writing influenced the assessors inappropriately.

For the research presented in this paper, a set of 32 written commentaries from both African American and European American candidates was coded for specific linguistic features. The methodology and results are discussed below.

Methodology

In order to develop a coding frame for systematically documenting the presence or absence of African American Language features, a national panel of experts in linguistics and AAL were assembled. Seven experts, including five who were African American, agreed to participate in an initial review of MC/Gen candidate responses to the selected entry.

As a primer to meeting with the experts to develop the coding scheme, a "homework" task was given to them – to review a small sample of race-blind candidate responses, and to consider the language features present in each written commentary. Each expert was asked to "hazard a guess" as to the race of the candidate as a thought experiment. Any written commentaries that they thought contained strong indications that the writer was African American were to be flagged. At this early stage the term "strong indications" was not defined so as not to limit the thinking of the panel. The panelists were asked to identify written commentaries that had rich examples of AAL. These written commentaries then formed the primary materials used in the development of the coding frame.

Developing the Coding Schema

The initial development work on the coding schema was wide-ranging. Working from a set of race-blind written commentaries, the panel of seven experts initially identified any writing features that appeared to be examples of AAL. These features could include micro-level, grammatical or syntactical differences, or macro-level, organizational or tonal differences, for instance.

Then working together, the panel of experts assembled an exhaustive list of all features of the written commentaries that were distinct from edited American English patterns. This list was arranged into three major categories:

- African American Language
- African American Cultural Indicators
- Speech Code Errors

The AAL category included many of the features common to the oral variety of AAL, such as dropped –s when plural is marked elsewhere is the sentence, dropped –ed when aspect is indicated by other syntactic features of the sentence, and dropped –s on third-person singular verbs when meaning was clear from context. More salient features of spoken AAL, including double negatives and the dropped copula ("to be"), were rare or absent in the written texts.

The African American Cultural Indictors (AACI) included features such as use of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1998), socially-conscious curriculum, and "high talk" (Smitherman, 1977). While these features might also be identified in the writing of non-African American candidates, the panel felt that these features, alone or combined with African American Language features, might trigger biases in assessors who were less familiar with African American cultural styles of teaching and communicating.

Speech Code Errors (SCE) was a category that developed unexpectedly from the panel's findings. SCE included errors in grammar and spelling; these errors could be found in the writing of both African American and European American candidates. We had not anticipated this category of codes, but it became apparent that many written commentaries had examples of SCE. It was decided to investigate whether there is a relationship between increased presence of SCE and lower scores across all candidates, regardless of race.

Refinement of coding scheme

From the findings of the national panel, a coding frame was developed and subsequently reviewed by a subset of the panel members. Each panelist was sent the coding frame, definitions for each code along with multiple examples from written commentaries that they had studied at the meeting, and additional written commentaries that had not been the focus of discussion at the meeting. The panelists were asked to code these new written commentaries using the coding frame. Comparing across the panelists' work, a number of codes were identified as being applied inconsistently. In addition, the panelists' written comments provided further advice for clarifying both the codes and coding procedures.

The coding frame was modified again in the light of this information. For example, a number of codes were added so that not only speech code errors and AAL features were coded, but also relevant edited American English (EAE) features were included in the coding frame. The coding of EAE allowed for the calculation of the relative frequency of a feature of AAL in relation to the frequency of use for the related EAE feature (Hatch and Lazaraton, 1991). Appendix A provides the subset of the coding frame that is discussed in the results section.

Identification and training of coders

In assembling a group of coders to identify language features across a set of 94 written commentaries, which included both African American and European American passing and non-passing candidates, a group of Masters-level students were sought who would be familiar with basic linguistics, English grammar rules, African American Language rules, and African American culture, specifically the cultural styles of African American teachers. For this reason, we approached professors at a Historically Black University in the southern United States, which has a speech and language Masters level department within its School of Education. Professors recruited Masters students from their speech and language courses. Prospective coders completed a biographical data form, which included questions on educational experience, education courses taken, and language and linguistic courses taken. From the respondents we selected a group of 13 individuals to complete a three-day training session, with the expectation that not all of them would become coders for the study.

The majority of the coders were in the second year of a Masters program in Communication Disorders. Their years of experience in classroom settings ranged from one to seven years, with nine coders having two or more years of experience. Their background in education coursework included the following: Educational Psychology, Clinical Observation, Scientific Methods of Educational Research, Racial and Cultural Minorities, Educational Foundations, Language Arts Instruction, and Human Growth and Development. Their collective background in language and linguistics included: African American Literature I and II, Speech and Dialect, Grammar, Introduction to Phonetics, Child Language Disorders,

Multicultural Issues in Speech-Language Pathology, Introduction to Communication Disorders, Introduction to Linguistics, Early Childhood Language Development, Speech Science, English as a Second Language, and Normal Language Development. Six of the coders self-identified as African American, four as European American, one as Native American, and two as multi-racial/multi-ethnic (African American/European, American/Native American).

The training of coders consisted of three days of intensive review of AAL and EAE grammar, syntax, and rhetorical features, with two major goals: (1) creating a shared understanding among coders of the definition of each feature, and (2) developing a sufficiently high degree of consistency in results among coders for each feature of the coding frame.

Upon completion of the training, each coder completed an independent coding of a single set of written commentaries. This served as a second validation of the coding frame, in support of the findings of the national panel, and also provided an indication of the degree of consistency across coders. Within the categories of grammatical and syntactic-level features, coders demonstrated strong agreement in coding.

Assignment of written commentaries to coders

For the initial review of written commentaries, development of the coding frame, and training of the coders, candidate responses from the 1998-99 cohort were used. For the study itself, candidate responses were selected from the 1999-2000 cohort. The entry directions did not change from the 1998-99 to the 1999-2000 administration. All categorizations by race were made on the basis of candidate self-identification.

Ninety-four written commentaries were selected, consisting of 64 written commentaries written by African American candidates and 30 written commentaries written by European American candidates, matched on gender, geographic locale, and the range of scores received.

The written commentaries were randomly assigned to the 11 coders who performed consistently during training and successfully completed the post-training coding sample. There were three copies of

each of the 94 written commentaries, distributed in such a way that each coder received 26 written commentaries to code. The coders were arranged in such a way that for each written commentary read and coded by three coders, the three coders were not all African American or European American.

Of these 11, two withdrew from the study for personal reasons before they coded any written commentaries. The written commentaries were redistributed among the remaining coders.

Triangulation of results across coders

Each written commentary was coded independently by three coders, to provide a triangulation of results for each feature in the coding frame. In order to provide the greatest degree of accuracy in the coding, the following resolution process was applied. Once the three sets of codes were completed for a particular written commentary, the data was entered into a database and reviewed for outliers or discrepancies in the three coders' results. For codes with low frequency occurrences, any discrepancies were investigated. For codes with a moderate to high occurrence rate, a reasonable degree of discrepancy was tolerated, and the average of the codes across the three coders was used. For example, the instances of plural nouns with –s (Edited American English) in a particular candidate's response were coded as 327, 340, and 337, respectively across three coders. Given the high level of occurrence, the average of the three numbers was used – 335. If a large discrepancy was noted, even at high levels of occurrence, all instances of the language feature were checked across multiple coders. When a discrepancy was clearly the result of a misapplied code, a correction was made to the data set. Occasionally the discrepancy highlighted an important ambiguity in the coding, which was then resolved through consensus among the researchers. This resolution process served to reduce instances of miscoding while still maintaining the integrity of the triangulated data. In no instance did a single coder determine the nature of a particular linguistic feature in the data set.

Data analysis

Of the 94 written commentaries that were sent out for coding, 32 had three sets of codes at the point at which the data analysis was conducted for this paper. The remaining written commentaries had only two sets of codes, thereby limiting the degree of assurance provided regarding the quality of the coding results. Once the triangulation of the data (described above) was completed, the data set from the 32 commentaries was once more cross-checked for accuracy.

The initial data analysis consisted of a series of cross-tabulations of the frequency of usage of each code for African American and European American candidates. This initial analysis resulted in anomalies in data that were difficult to explain. In particular, there were multiple instances of European American candidates who used language features that had been considered primarily AAL features.

Considering overall patterns of usage, four European American candidates in particular were identified. These four European American candidates were all teaching in Southern states (Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina). In order to shed light on the patterns in the data, these four candidates were designated as potential users of Southern White English (SWE), which as discussed in the literature has substantial overlap with AAL. It is important to note, that just as all African Americans do not use AAL, not everyone from the southern states is a speaker of SWE, and there are five other European American candidates from the same states who did not exhibit SWE language features. For the purposes of this study, these codes will continue to be referred to as AAL since the linguistic literature supports their identification as such.

Having identified these four candidates as users of SWE, the data was then disaggregated by candidates' self-identified race (African American and European American), and the category of European American was further subdivided to separate the users of SWE.

Results

The primary research question was to investigate whether there was systematic evidence of the use of African American Language in a subset of written commentaries written by African American teachers. The data set was comprised of 32 candidates, 18 of whom self-identified as African American, the remaining 14 as European American. One European American and two African American candidates were male. Table 1 provides the breakdown by race and entry score of the candidates in the dataset.

Table 1: Breakdown of the 32 candidates by race and entry score

Candidates	Entry score	Number of candidates in group
African American	< 2.75	10
	≥ 2.75	8
European American – SWE	< 2.75	2
	≥ 2.75	2
European American	< 2.75	7
	≥ 2.75	3

Focus of the analysis

The coding frame consists of AAL codes, SCE codes, and EAE codes (at the word and sentence level). In addition, other rhetorical level features were included in the frame – a subset of which will be discussed. In keeping with other findings in the linguistic literature (Smitherman, 2000; Chaplin, 1987), usage of AAL forms in formal, written, academic prose is relatively low. Furthermore, as can be expected given the constraints of the formal academic assessment, SCE are relatively low.

Since the research focus is on whether language features pattern by race or by entry score, the data are disaggregated by race (African American and European American, with European American further sub-divided by those who exhibit patterns of SWE use) and by entry score (divided into less than 2.75 and greater than or equal to 2.75). The following sections will focus on nouns (plurals and possessives), verb tenses, and lexical features. Appendix B provides a summary table of the results.

Nouns

Nouns were coded for features typical to speakers of AAL, as well as common SCE identified by the panel of experts. Table 2 presents an example of each code. Plural nouns with a dropped –s and possessive nouns with a dropped –s and no apostrophe were coded as possible examples of AAL. Plural nouns with an unnecessary apostrophe, and possessive nouns with no apostrophe or an incorrect apostrophe were coded as examples of SCE.

Table 2: Examples from candidates' written commentaries of the AAL and SCE codes

noun, regular plural -s has been dropped	"I may touch on sentences that go on and on as well as looking at various way_ to end of piece." "They were both able to produce a complete paper that met the goal_ that were set"
noun, regular plural, unnecessary apostrophe is added	"Good writer's research their topic" "the area's of reading"
noun, singular or plural, possessive, both –s and apostrophe have been dropped	"On the personal narrative, Nickie__ work demonstrated similar abilities." "Whitney_ responsibility was to copy her letter with the correction..."
noun, singular or plural, possessive, -s is used but apostrophe has been dropped	"students ability....students experiences....persons life....students understanding"
noun, singular or plural, possessive, -s is used but apostrophe has been placed incorrectly according to EAE rules	"The one girls' coat got stolen last night." "Twenty boy's permission slips arrived today in the mail."

Table 3 shows the percentage and number of African American and European American candidates who had one or more instances of each of the five noun codes (presence), by entry score and by race. Table 4 gives the total number of instances of that code for each group.

Table3: Presence of AAL and SCE noun features

	Code	African American				European American-SWE				European American			
		<2.75		≥2.75		<2.75		≥2.75		<2.75		≥2.75	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Plural nouns	Dropped –s	6	60%	5	63%	2	100%	2	100%	4	57%	0	0%
	Unnecessary apostrophe	3	30%	2	25%	0	0%	2	100%	1	14%	0	0%
Possessive nouns	No apostrophe, no –s	1	10%	1	13%	0	0%	1	50%	0	0%	0	0%
	No apostrophe	6	60%	3	38%	2	100%	1	50%	2	29%	0	0%
	Incorrect apostrophe	3	30%	7	88%	2	100%	0	0%	2	29%	1	33%

Key: N=number of candidates who exhibited the language feature one or more times, %=percentage of candidates out of all candidates in a racial grouping.

Table 4: Instances of non-EAE noun features

	Code	African American		European American-SWE		European American	
		<2.75	≥2.75	<2.75	≥2.75	<2.75	≥2.75
		N	N	N	N	N	N
Plural nouns	Dropped –s	14	24	15	9	9	0
	Unnecessary apostrophe	3	8	0	3	1	0
Possessive nouns	No apostrophe, no –s	1	1	0	1	0	0
	No apostrophe	10	5	10	10	2	0
	Incorrect apostrophe	7	17	2	0	8	1

Key: N=number of instances that a language feature was used by all the candidates in a racial grouping.

Looking at the data in Tables 3 and 4, it is clear that the rates at which these language features are used vary considerably. The feature "no apostrophe, no –s" is rarely used compared to the other possible AAL language feature of indicating a plural without an –s.

Grouping multiple codes together, Table 5 shows the number of instances of AAL codes (plural with a dropped -s, possessive with no apostrophe and no -s) according to entry score and race classification. For each group of candidates, the table presents the total number of instances that the codes were used, the number of candidates who exhibited the features, and the range of instances per candidate.

Table 5: Instances of AAL noun features

Candidates	Entry score	Number of instances of AAL codes in nouns	Number in group	Range
African American	< 2.75	15	7 of 10	1-4
	≥ 2.75	25	5 of 8	1-13
European American – SWE	< 2.75	15	2 of 2	4, 11
	≥ 2.75	10	2 of 2	2, 8
European American	< 2.75	9	4 of 7	1-4
	≥ 2.75	0	0 of 3	0

The European American users of SWE and the African American candidates both used multiple examples of AAL features as they relate to possessive and plural nouns; in general these features were not used by European American candidates. The pattern of AAL features does not strongly cluster by high or low entry scores for African American or European American candidates.

Table 6 shows the combined number of instances of SCE codes (plural with an unnecessary apostrophe, possessive without an apostrophe, and a possessive with an incorrect apostrophe) according to entry score and race classification.

Table 6: Instances of SCE noun features

Candidates	Entry score	Number of instances of SCE codes in nouns	Number in group	Range
African American	< 2.75	20	7 of 10	1-7
	≥ 2.75	30	8 of 8	1-10
European American – SWE	< 2.75	12	2 of 2	4, 8
	≥ 2.75	13	2 of 2	1, 12
European American	< 2.75	11	4 of 7	1-8
	≥ 2.75	1	1 of 3	1

SCE are writing features generally exhibited by novice writers, and as anticipated, both African American and European American candidates exhibited such features. However, the rate at which the European American candidates displayed these features is lower than for the African American candidates and the European American candidates who used SWE.

In order to obtain a measure of how frequently candidates use non-edited American English (a combination of AAL and SCE) noun forms, the data were collapsed across all noun features. Table 7 shows the number of instances of combined noun codes according to entry score and race classification.

Table 7: Instances of non-EAE noun features (collapsed across AAL and SCE)

Candidates	Entry score	Number of instances of non-EAE codes in nouns	Number in group	Range
African American	< 2.75	35	8 of 10	1-7
	≥ 2.75	55	8 of 8	1-18
European American – SWE	< 2.75	27	2 of 2	8, 19
	≥ 2.75	23	2 of 2	3, 20
European American	< 2.75	20	2 of 7	2-12
	≥ 2.75	1	1 of 3	1

Combining all the codes that exhibit non-edited American English usage for plural and possessive nouns shows some clustering of features among African American candidates with high entry scores and among all European American candidates who used SWE.

Two of the African American candidates and seven of the European American candidates had no non-EAE features. Of the 23 candidates who had displayed some of these features, all but four had fewer than ten. The four who had ten or greater instances of non-EAE features are listed in Table 8.

Table 8: Candidates who had 10 or more non-EAE features

Candidate	Entry score	Number of features
European American user of SWE	≥ 2.75	20
African American	≥ 2.75	18
African American	≥ 2.75	12
European American user of SWE	< 2.75	12

Verbs

Verb features identified by the expert panel as significant either for AAL or SCE were dropped –ed in past tense verbs, non-EAE forms of past tenses for irregular verbs, dropped –s in the third person singular present tense, and subject-verb discords. Summaries of the codes for each of these categories are presented below. Table 9 presents an example of each code.

Table 9: Examples from candidates' written commentaries of the AAL and SCE codes

regular verb, simple past tense, -ed ending has been dropped	"Step two, she design__ her drafting her story (composing), Step three, she used editing to refine what she had written."
irregular verb, simple past tense, EAE form is not used	"Yesterday the students run out of the classroom, despite the teacher's request not to. "[ran]
regular verb, present/past/future perfect tense -ed ending has been dropped	"We have revise_ the models we wrote together as a class to model for my students how to go back and dress up the ideas they were able to put down in their first drafts."
irregular verb, present/past/future perfect tense EAE form is not used	"I wish Brian could have showed supporting details ..."
regular verbal adjective (verb in participle form used as an adjective) -ed ending has been dropped	"When David is asked to add more detail, he gets discourage__ because he does not know what to write..."
irregular verbal adjective (verb in participle form used as an adjective) EAE form is not used	"I asked Matt if I could see the re-wrote paper from yesterday." [re-written]
regular verb, passive voice -ed ending has been dropped [be + V – ed]	"The students are expect__ to articulate the message that they are trying to relay, who do they expect to read this piece when it is finish__ and question themselves on the clarity of what they have written."
irregular verb, passive voice EAE form is not used [be + V – EAE irregular form]	"The paper was wrote by a pair of students." [written]
regular verb, present tense, 3rd person singular -s ending is not used	"Administration usually keep_ the second graders with the same teacher for third grade."
irregular verb, present tense, 3rd person singular -s ending is not used	"He don't understand how to do this problem."
Other non-EAE verb forms, excluding S-V concord	"He wants to go straight to writing without given some thought about what he is going to write." "I realize he is a writer that has being responsible for his own learning."

Dropped –ed in past tenses

A feature common in spoken AAL is indicating past tense (simple past tense, present/past and future perfect tenses, verbal adjectives and passive voice) for regular verbs without the Edited American English -ed. A parallel feature for irregular verbs is that they are not conjugated in the EAE form. The literature does not definitively identify this feature as AAL, and so for the purpose of the analysis it is designated as a speech code error. As for the regular verbs, this occurrence could be found for irregular past tense, perfects, verbal adjectives and passive verbs. Table 10 shows the number of African American

and European American candidates who had one or more instances of each code (presence). Table 11 presents the total number of instances for each group.

Table 10: Presence of AAL and SCE codes for verb tense

Code	African American				European American-SWE				European American			
	<2.75		≥ 2.75		<2.75		≥ 2.75		<2.75		≥ 2.75	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Simple past regular, dropped –ed	3	30%	1	13%	2	100%	2	100%	0	0%	0	0%
Simple past irregular, non EAE form	2	20%	0	0%	1	50%	1	50%	3	43%	0	0%
Perfect tenses, regular, dropped –ed	0	0%	0	0%	1	50%	1	50%	0	0%	0	0%
Perfect tenses, irregular, non EAE form	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	33%
Verbal adjective, regular, dropped –ed	3	30%	1	13%	0	0%	2	100%	0	0%	0	0%
Verbal adjective, irregular, non EAE form	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Passive voice, regular, dropped –ed	2	20%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Passive voice, irregular, non EAE form	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	14%	0	0%

Key: N=number of candidates who exhibited the language feature one or more times, %=percentage of candidates out of all candidates in a racial grouping.

Table 11: Total number of instances of AAL and SCE codes for verb tenses

Code	African American		European American-SWE		European American	
	<2.75	≥ 2.75	<2.75	≥ 2.75	<2.75	≥ 2.75
	N	N	N	N	N	N
Simple past regular, dropped –ed	4	2	2	4	0	0
Simple past irregular, non EAE form	2	0	2	4	4	0
Perfect tenses, regular, dropped –ed	0	0	1	1	0	0
Perfect tenses, irregular, non EAE form	0	0	0	0	0	1
Verbal adjective, regular, dropped –ed	3	1	0	2	0	0
Verbal adjective, irregular, non EAE form	0	0	0	0	0	0
Passive voice, regular, dropped –ed	2	0	0	0	0	0
Passive voice, irregular, non EAE form	0	0	0	0	1	0

Key: N=number of instances that a language feature was used by all the candidates in a racial grouping.

Although these four verb types were coded separately, an assessor reading a candidate response would not make such linguistic distinctions. Instances of these codes were few, but by combining all dropped –ed codes and non-EAE conjugations together it is possible to identify patterns (Table 14). Table 12 shows the combined total number of instances of AAL codes (dropped –ed for regular verbs in simple past tenses, present/past/future perfect tenses, verbal adjectives and passive voice) according to entry score and race classification. For each group of candidates, the table presents the total number of instances that the codes were used, the number of candidates who exhibited the features and the range of instances per candidate.

Table 12: Instances of dropped –ed in past tense verbs

Candidates	Entry score	Number of instances of AAL codes in verbs	Number in group	Range
African American	< 2.75	9	5 of 10	1-4
	≥ 2.75	3	2 of 8	1, 2
European American – SWE	< 2.75	3	2 of 2	1, 2
	≥ 2.75	7	2 of 2	3, 4
European American	< 2.75	0	0 of 7	-
	≥ 2.75	0	0 of 3	-

There are more instances of low scoring than high scoring African American candidates using dropped –ed in their writing (although the total number is very low – 12 instances across 7 of the 18 African American candidates). The reverse is true for the European American users of SWE. None of the European American EA users displayed this feature.

Table 13 shows the combined total number of instances of SCE codes in irregular verbs (non-EAE forms of irregular verbs in simple past tenses, present/past/future perfect tenses, verbal adjectives and passive voice) according to entry score and race classification.

Table 13: Instances of SCE in irregular past tense verbs

Candidates	Entry score	Number of instances of SCE codes in verbs	Number in group	Range
African American	< 2.75	2	2 of 10	1
	≥ 2.75	0	0 of 8	-
European American – SWE	< 2.75	2	1 of 2	2
	≥ 2.75	4	1 of 2	4
European American	< 2.75	5	3 of 7	1-2
	≥ 2.75	1	1 of 3	1

Overall, SCE in irregular verb forms was much less frequent than the dropped –ed in regular verbs. Table 14 below shows the number of instances of combined regular and irregular verb codes according to entry score and race classification.

Table 14: Instances of non-EAE form (AAL and SCE) of regular and irregular past tense verbs

Candidates	Entry score	Number of instances of non-EAE codes in verbs	Number in group	Range
African American	< 2.75	11	5 of 10	1-5
	≥ 2.75	3	2 of 8	1, 2
European American – SWE	< 2.75	5	2 of 2	1, 4
	≥ 2.75	11	2 of 2	3, 8
European American	< 2.75	5	2 of 7	1, 4
	≥ 2.75	1	1 of 3	1

African American candidates exhibited non-EAE verb usage predominantly in the low scoring responses. However, European American users of SWE exhibited non-EAE verb usage more in the high scoring responses.

It is of interest to note that for the African American candidates, the use of the AAL verb forms was much less frequent that the use of AAL noun forms. Sixteen of the 18 African American candidates used AAL noun forms compared to 7 of 18 for the verbs.

Dropped –s in 3rd person singular present tense verbs

An additional verb form that was coded on the basis of being a common occurrence in spoken AAL was the presence of a dropped –s in third person singular present tense for regular verbs. In addition, non-EAE forms of the third person singular present tense for irregular verbs was coded; only one African American candidate had an instance of this form. Table 15 provides the breakdown by race and score for the regular third person singular present tense AAL forms that were coded.

Table 15: Instances of dropped –s in the 3rd person singular present tense of regular verbs

Candidates	Entry score	Instances of AAL form of regular 3rd person singular present tense	Number in group	Range
African American	< 2.75	10	7 of 10	1-3
	≥ 2.75	9	3 of 8	1-6
European American – SWE	< 2.75	4	2 of 2	1, 3
	≥ 2.75	2	2 of 2	1, 1
European American	< 2.75	0	0 of 7	0
	≥ 2.75	0	0 of 3	0

As expected from the literature, the European American candidates who use American English did not exhibit this feature. Both African American and European American who use SWE exhibited this feature in relatively similar proportions (regardless of entry score).

Subject-verb discord

Two codes were created to identify subject-verb discords – in copula and non-copula verb forms. These features were of interest because it is a pattern of AAL to identify number from context; adding endings to the verb to indicate number would be redundant. However, it is also a common SCE to produce subject/verb discords particularly when the verb is separated from the subject by multiple prepositional phrases. Table 16 provides the number of instances of both forms of discord.

Table 16: Subject-verb discord

Candidates	Entry score	Instances	Number	Range
African American	< 2.75	18	8 of 10	1-3
	≥ 2.75	11	4 of 8	1-6
European American – SWE	< 2.75	0	0 of 2	-
	≥ 2.75	2	2 of 2	1
European American	< 2.75	1	1 of 7	1
	≥ 2.75	2	1 of 3	2

The European American candidates, both those who used SWE and those who used only American English had very few subject-verb discords; the majority of the discords were found in African American candidates' written commentaries.

Other irregular verb forms

A final code that was included was for "other non-EAE verb forms" – that is, other irregular uses of verbs that were not accounted for by any of the earlier codes. There is nothing in the linguistic literature to suggest that these verb usages pattern in any way as part of AAL, and so they are designated as SCE. The instances of these verb forms are shown in Table 17. For each group of candidates, the table presents the total number of instances that the codes were used, the number of candidates who exhibited the features and the range of instances per candidate.

Table 17: Other non-EAE verb forms

Candidates	Entry score	Instances of other non-EAE verb forms	Number in group	Range
African American	< 2.75	2	2 of 10	1
	≥ 2.75	5	2 of 8	2, 3
European American – SWE	< 2.75	5	1 of 2	5
	≥ 2.75	4	1 of 2	4
European American	< 2.75	2	2 of 7	1
	≥ 2.75	1	1 of 3	1

Lexical features: Morphemes, prepositions and connectors

A series of codes were collected together under the composite heading of lexical features. Five codes exist in this category: dropped final letters; other spelling errors; missing or incorrect prepositions; other missing words; and incorrect use of connecting words. Table 18 presents examples of these codes.

Table 18: Examples of lexical features

Deletion of final letter or letters e.g., "an(d)" "a(n)" "the(y)" "the(m)" "glad(ly)"	"10 Caucasian, 3 Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, one on medication an_ 1 who suffers from moderate hearing loss." "a_ ongoing experience" "Having the_ think about and expressed how the slaves felt, would bring to them a better understanding of what the slaves went through."
Other spelling errors	"The students have been practicing exposity writing for the past several weeks."
Missing or incorrect preposition	"I had been planning to update my lesson plans to align with the new state standards of students."
Other missing words	"A noun is a ___ used to name a person, place, thing, or idea."
Incorrect use of connecting words (yet, but, and, so, therefore, because, since, while, etc.)	"Shannon chose to become the prime number one hundred, one. She wrote that she became a movie title and the grade on a students paper. Shannon did therefore forgot to state the difference between a prime and a composite number in her paper which was a requirement of the assignment."

Table 19 shows the number of African American and European American candidates who had one or more instances of each code (presence). Table 20 presents the total number of instances for each group.

Table 19: Presence of missing or incorrect morphemes, prepositions, and connectors

	African American				European American-SWE				European American			
	<2.75		≥2.75		<2.75		≥2.75		<2.75		≥2.75	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Dropped final letters	6	60%	4	50%	1	50%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Other spelling errors	8	80%	4	50%	2	100%	2	100%	4	57%	2	67%
Missing or incorrect preposition	6	60%	6	75%	2	100%	2	100%	3	43%	1	33%
Other missing words	7	70%	4	50%	2	100%	2	100%	5	71%	2	67%
Incorrect use of connecting words	5	50%	1	13%	0	0%	0	0%	1	14%	0	0%

Key: N=number of candidates who exhibited the language feature one or more times, %=percentage of candidates out of all candidates in a racial grouping.

Table 20: Instances of missing or incorrect morphemes, prepositions, and connectors

	African American		European American-SWE		European American	
	<2.75	≥2.75	<2.75	≥2.75	<2.75	≥2.75
	N	N	N	N	N	N
Dropped final letters	7	6	2	0	0	0
Other spelling errors	19	16	21	15	10	2
Missing or incorrect preposition	11	13	3	7	6	1
Other missing words	11	16	5	4	11	2
Incorrect use of connecting words	8	2	0	0	1	0

Key: N=number of instances that a language feature was used by all the candidates in a racial grouping.

The pattern of dropping final letters from words in spoken AAL is identified in the linguistic literature as an additional form of reducing the language to its essential communicative elements. It was therefore anticipated that this reductive pattern would be specific to users of AAL, if it appeared at all in written form. On the other hand, both spelling errors and missing words could be expected to appear evenly distributed across all racial groups. As seen in Table 19 the percentage of candidates with both of these SCE is fairly constant across groups. The incorrect use of connecting words is found predominantly in the African American candidates' writing, and the missing or incorrect prepositions also seem to occur more strongly among African American candidates. Neither of these two features has been identified in the AAL literature, but the patterned presence of these features in this data set may warrant future study. Table 21 combines the two SCEs (spelling errors and other missing words) together and the two other codes (missing/incorrect prepositions, incorrect connectors).

Table 21: Instances of lexical features

Candidates	Entry score	Spelling errors and other missing words			Missing/incorrect prepositions, incorrect connectors		
		Instances	Number in group	Range	Instances	Number in group	Range
African American	< 2.75	30	10 of 10	1-5	19	7 of 10	1-3
	≥ 2.75	32	5 of 8	1-18	15	5 of 8	1-8
European American – SWE	< 2.75	26	2 of 2	10, 16	3	2 of 2	1, 2
	≥ 2.75	19	2 of 2	7, 12	7	2 of 2	3, 4
European American	< 2.75	21	5 of 7	1-7	7	3 of 7	1-3
	≥ 2.75	4	3 of 3	1-2	1	1 of 3	1

Combined non-edited American English usages at the lexical level

While losing the specific characteristics of the individual codes, it is useful to combine codes across all categories of nouns, verbs, and sentence level features, in order to get a measure of the overall effect of non-EAE instances within a given set of written commentaries. The following codes were combined for the purposes of this analysis:

AAL codes

- Dropped -s in plural nouns
- Dropped -s, dropped apostrophe in possessive
- Regular verb, simple past tense, dropped -ed
- Regular verb, present/past/future perfect tense, dropped -ed
- Regular verbal adjective, dropped -ed
- Regular passive voice, dropped -ed
- Regular 3rd person singular present tense, dropped -s
- Zero copular
- Aspectual or invariant be
- Dropped final letters

SCE codes

- Unnecessary apostrophe in plurals
- No apostrophe in possessives
- Incorrect apostrophe in possessives
- Irregular verb, simple past tense, non-EAE form
- Irregular verb, present/past/future perfect tense, non-EAE form
- Irregular verbal adjective, non-EAE form
- Irregular passive voice, non-EAE form
- Irregular 3rd person singular present tense, non-EAE form
- Conjugated be, non-EAE form
- Subject-verb inversion
- Subject-verb discord
- Other non-EAE verb forms
- Other spelling errors
- Missing or incorrect preposition
- Other missing words
- Incorrect use of connecting words
- Noun-pronoun discord
- Pronominal apposition
- Homophones

While many of the codes had low occurrence rates, combined with others, they contribute to the overall impression that is given to a reader. Several of these, specifically noun-pronoun discord,

pronominal apposition, homophones, non-EAE forms of copula and subject-verb inversion were not discussed individually above, due to their relative scarcity in the data pool.

Tables 22 and 23 present total number of instances of AAL and SCE features. Only features that were fully identified in the literature as aspects of AAL were included in the composite AAL code. Table 24 presents the total number of AAL and SCE features across all the written commentaries, with range and means (instances/number in group).

Table 22: Total number of instances of AAL features

Candidates	Entry score	Number of instances of AAL codes	Number in group	Range	Mean
African American	< 2.75	43	10 of 10	1-9	4
	≥ 2.75	46	8 of 8	1-24	6
European American – SWE	< 2.75	24	2 of 2	8, 16	12
	≥ 2.75	19	2 of 2	6, 13	10
European American	< 2.75	13	4 of 7	2-4	3
	≥ 2.75	0	3 of 3	-	-

Table 24: Total number of instances of SCE features

Candidates	Entry score	Number of instances of SCE codes	Number in group	Range	Mean
African American	< 2.75	101	10 of 10	4-21	10
	≥ 2.75	106	8 of 8	2-40	13
European American – SWE	< 2.75	50	2 of 2	22, 28	25
	≥ 2.75	56	2 of 2	13, 43	28
European American	< 2.75	50	5 of 7	2-17	10
	≥ 2.75	10	3 of 3	2-5	3

Table 25: Total number of instances of non-EAE (AAL and SCE) features

Candidates	Entry score	Number of instances of all non-EAE codes	Number in group	Range	Mean
African American	< 2.75	144	10 of 10	5-24	14
	≥ 2.75	152	8 of 8	2-64	19
European American – SWE	< 2.75	74	2 of 2	30, 44	37
	≥ 2.75	75	2 of 2	19,56	38
European American	< 2.75	63	5 of 7	2-21	13
	≥ 2.75	10	3 of 3	2-5	3

There is clustering of codes for the African American and European American candidates who use SWE. The frequency at which they use both AAL and SCE features is greater than for the European

American candidates. It is important to note that clustering is not associated with high or low scoring responses.

Hypercorrection and oral language

Three features were identified by the expert panel that existed at the discourse level and focused on the "over-application" of particular grammatical rules from EAE, resulting in errors or awkward phrasing, and oral language. Hypercorrection (error producing) occurs when the writer over-applies a grammatical rule to a situation where it is not required, leading to an error. Hypercorrection (without errors) occurs when a writer is overly prescriptive with grammatical rules, but is technically accurate, resulting in text that is disfluent. The final feature identified in this set is defined as "oral language." This occurs when a sentence or phrase is not grammatically correct in a formal writing situation, and yet if read aloud, the meaning of the phrase or sentence is completely clear. Smitherman (1994) refers to this as "conversational tone." Many instances of oral language could be classified as run-ons, examples of dialogue that is lacking punctuation, or use of colloquialisms. Table 25 presents examples of these three codes.

Table 25: Examples of hypercorrection and oral language

Hypercorrection (error producing)	"I would have each student generated his/her list by themselves." "both students are gifted and abled writers" "It was graded by two kids and myself"
Hypercorrection (without errors)	"primary difficulties, seem to relate to reading and _ lack of the capacity to organize ..." "I also wanted the students to use successfully the steps to the writing process.... Allowing children to write daily and make the connections in their reading to real life, help them to become independent writers with a purpose.... This presents a challenge to me because I have to remind constantly him of detail."
Use of oral language in written form	"Keisha's writing required few revisions or edits; however, it was difficult to impossible to convince her to re-write anything unless is was using the computer." "She is a very sensitive girl, creative, and talented."

Table 26 shows the number of African American and European American candidates who had one or more instances of each code (presence). Table 27 presents the total number of instances for each group.

Table 26: Presence of hypercorrection and oral language

	African American				European American-SWE				European American-AE			
	<2.75		≥2.75		<2.75		≥2.75		<2.75		≥2.75	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Hypercorrection (with error)	1	10%	7	88%	0	0%	0	0%	1	14%	1	33%
Hypercorrection (without error)or	5	50%	6	75%	1	50%	1	50%	1	14%	1	33%
Oral language	10	100%	6	75%	1	50%	2	100%	6	86%	3	100%

Table 27: Instances of hypercorrection and oral language

	African American		European American-SWE		European American-AE	
	<2.75	≥2.75	<2.75	≥2.75	<2.75	≥2.75
	N	N	N	N	N	N
Hypercorrection (with error)	2	12	0	0	1	1
Hypercorrection (without error)	11	18	1	1	1	1
Oral language	48	83	5	15	28	6

Although instances of hypercorrection with error were very few, seven of the eight high-scoring African American candidates had one or more instances of this feature. The related feature of being overly prescriptive (hypercorrection without errors) also clustered strongly in the group of African American candidates, both high and low scoring. Similarly, the use of phrases and sentences that were appropriate in oral but not written format clustered strongly in the African American candidate group. Of the thirty-two candidates, both African American and European American, five had more than ten instances of this feature; four of those were high-scoring African American candidates.

The use of oral language is a possible indication that the individual is a novice writer. The patterns of oral language use closely mirror the total number of noun, verb, and discord errors presented earlier in the analysis (a correlation of 0.69). The two candidates with the greatest number of oral language instances were ranked first and third for greatest number of grammatical errors – both high scoring African American candidates.

Discussion and conclusions

From the results presented above it can be seen that for the most part the features we expected African American candidates to exhibit as examples of AAL cluster mostly among African American candidates and European American candidates who use SWE, a dialect that has considerable overlap with AAL. The European American candidates who use American English (AE) tend not to have employed any AAL features.

However, comparing the use of AAL and SCE, speech code errors are more numerous than African American Language features. Overall, African American candidates have fewer SCE than European Americans who used SWE, but more than European American candidates who used AE.

Both low and high scoring written commentaries from African American candidates exhibit non-EAE (AAL and SCE) features. Some of these, such as verbs with dropped -ed, seem to cluster more among candidates with low scores, but across all codes it is fairly evenly divided: that is, the presence of non-EAE forms of writing does not cluster by entry score. European American users of SWE had even more features of non-EAE, but with only two in each score group, it is difficult to make meaningful conclusions. Low scoring European American candidates have more errors than high scoring European American candidates, but many fewer than the other two groups (African American candidates and European Americans who used SWE). High scoring European American candidates had the fewest errors.

These results prompt the additional question of why the occurrence of SCE is less frequent for the European American (non-SWE user) candidates. One possible hypothesis is that greater training and experience in formal academic writing for European American candidates could be a contributing factor. It has been hypothesized in the literature that African American (and Latino) children may be more likely to receive a less adequate K-12 education, given that they are more likely to attend under-funded urban schools and may be more likely to be taught by teachers teaching outside their certification area (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1999).

To further explore the hypothesis that the African American candidates who displayed more non-EAE language features had less experience in formal academic writing, a reasonable correlate was sought

among the limited background data available. Candidates provide information on highest degree earned. An assumption could be made that candidates with a Bachelors degree would have had less formal, academic writing experience than candidates who had a Masters degree or higher. Furthermore, it was hypothesized that those candidates with only Bachelors degrees would be the ones with greater non-EAE features in this particular entry. However, when the data were examined, twelve of the 18 African American candidates have a Masters level or higher qualification, compared to seven of the 14 European American candidates. In particular, for the African American candidates who had high scores on this particular entry, and yet who had significant numbers of SCE and uses of oral language, seven out of the eight have Masters degrees.

Looking at highest degree earned, therefore, as a measure of formal writing experience does not explain the data. Potentially, there may be an interaction between audience and purpose of the writing and the presence of non-EAE features. If a person knows that a piece of writing is for an academic audience or for public/professional dissemination, he or she may tend to write in a manner that meets those purposes or expectations. The National Board assessments explicitly communicate to candidates that writing, per se, does not count, in that it is not a scoreable feature of their submissions. What is important is that the content of the written commentary is clear enough to convey to an assessor (teacher-peer) the standards-relevant evidence of the candidate's pedagogical choices and practices.

The particular context of writing for the National Board assessment may, in fact, result in candidates being more relaxed about their writing, and therefore, producing writing in a more informal style. This may be quite unlike what they would write in another context. A further avenue for study might be to examine other writings from candidates to explore their training in and use of formal writing.

In terms of the research question that prompted this study, it is evident that there are some variations across African American and European American candidates in terms of language features. The patterns by high and low scores are less clear. It is certainly not evident that, for example, only low scoring African American candidates display certain language features. To reinforce what was said initially, causal relationships cannot be drawn between language features and scores, nor can it be posited

that there is an overall dampening effect on scores due to the presence of non-edited American English (AAL or SCE).

Although the high-scoring African American candidates did demonstrate use of AAL and SCE in their writing, this alone cannot be used to definitely rule out the impact of potential assessor bias due to non-EAE writing features. For the cohort of candidates from which the data set came, calculating the mean scores on this entry for African American and European American candidates, approximately a half-point difference is observed between the two groups. This is consistent with results from previous cohorts. It is possible that some of this differential performance could be due to the construct-irrelevant effect of the writing features used by African American candidates. A potential means of examining this hypothesis would be to re-write and re-score selected candidates' responses, to determine if language features appear to contribute to score tendencies.

In the second phase of this research study, selected written commentaries which displayed African American Language features will be "re-written" to employ only Edited American English. Similarly, selected commentaries written in EAE will be re-written with the help of linguists experienced in the production of AAL, to employ some African American Language features. These candidate responses will be re-scored by trained assessors, who will not be aware of the changes made to the texts. Scores from the altered responses will be compared to the scores earned for each original response.

Long-term goals for this study include focusing on constructed-response assessments which candidates produce "on-demand," rather than portfolio-based assessments which candidates prepare over several months. Also, it may be fruitful to examine whether the presence of certain linguistic or cultural features are perceived similarly by assessors of different racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Differential performance for African American test takers has been documented across all assessment types for several decades. "There are urgent needs in this country for a systematic cultural-linguistic review of testing and assessment devices to be used with African-American[s]" (Hilliard, 1980). While the differential performance gap is slowly decreasing, more work must be done to uncover sources of this difference and to further reduce their effects.

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Nouns	
1A	**noun, regular plural** -s has been dropped **[N – s]**
1B	**noun, regular plural** -s is used **[N + s]**
1C	**noun, regular plural,** unnecessary apostrophe is added **[N + 's]**
2A	**noun, singular or plural, possessive,** both –s and apostrophe have been dropped **[N – 's] [N – s']**
2B	**noun, singular or plural, possessive,** -s is used but apostrophe has been dropped **[N + _s] [N + s_]**
2C	**noun, singular or plural, possessive,** -s is used but apostrophe has been placed incorrectly according to EAE rules **[N + _s] [N + s_]**
2D	noun, singular or plural, possessive -'s or –s' is used according to EAE rules **[N + 's] [N + s']**
3	**Noun/pronoun discord** [the pronoun does not agree in number with its corresponding noun]
4	**Pronominal apposition** (a noun or noun phrase placed with a pronoun as an explanatory equivalent, both functioning in the same role)
5	Homophonic form substitution **(words that sound the same but are spelled differently)**

Verbs	
6A	**regular verb, simple past tense,** -ed ending has been dropped **[V – ed]**
6B	**regular verb, simple past tense,** -ed ending used **[V + ed]**
6C	irregular verb, simple past tense, EAE form is not used **[V – EAE irregular form]**
6D	irregular verb, simple past tense, **EAE form is used** **[V + EAE irregular form]**
7A	regular verb, present/past/future perfect tense **-ed ending dropped** **[have + V – ed], [had + V – ed]** **[will have + V – ed]**
7B	regular verb, present/past/future perfect tense **-ed ending used** **[have + V + ed] [had + V + ed]** **[will have + V + ed]**
7C	irregular verb, present/past/future perfect tense EAE form is not used **[have + V – EAE irregular form]** **[had + V – EAE irregular form]** **[will have + V – EAE irregular form]**
7D	irregular verb, present/past/future perfect tense **EAE form is used** **[[have + V + EAE irregular form]** **[had + V + EAE irregular form]** **[will have + V + EAE irregular form]**

8A	**regular verbal adjective** (verb in participle form used as an adjective) -ed ending has been dropped **[V – ed]**
8B	**regular verbal adjective** (verb in participle form used as an adjective) -ed ending used **[V + ed]**
8C	**irregular verbal adjective** (verb in participle form used as an adjective) EAE form is not used **[V – EAE irregular form]**
8D	**irregular verbal adjective** (verb in participle form used as an adjective) EAE form is used **[V + EAE irregular form]**
9A	**regular verb, passive voice** -ed ending has been dropped **[be + V – ed]** [Note: use feature 12 to code the copula "be"]
9B	**regular verb, passive voice** -ed ending is used **[be + V + ed]** [Note: use feature 12 to code the copula "be"]
9C	**irregular verb, passive voice** EAE form is not used **[be + V – EAE irregular form]** [Note: use feature 12 to code the copula "be"]
9D	**irregular verb, passive voice** EAE form is used **[be + V + EAE irregular form]** [Note: use feature 12 to code the copula "be"]
10A	**regular verb, present tense, 3rd person singular** -s ending is not used **[V – s]**

10B	**regular verb, present tense, 3rd person singular** -s ending is used **[V + s]**
10C	**irregular verb, present tense, 3rd person singular** -s ending is not used **[V – s]**
10 D	**irregular verb, present tense, 3rd person singular** -s ending is used **[V + s]**
11 A	**zero copula** ["be" is dropped altogether]
11B	**aspectual or invariant *be***
11C	**conjugated *be*** [use of "be" in **any non-EAE form**]
11 D	**conjugated *be*** [use of "be" in **any EAE form**]
12	**Subject-Verb inversion** in indirect questions and statements
13	Use of **double negatives**
14	**Other non-EAE verb forms**, excluding S-V concord

Sentence level features	
15 A	**Subject/verb discord for copula verb forms** [subject-verb disagreement for "to be" verbs]
15B	**Subject/verb discord for non-copula verb forms** [subject-verb disagreement for other verbs]
16 A	Deletion of final letter or letters e.g., an(d), a(n), the(y), the(m), glad(ly)
16B	**Other spelling errors**
16C	**Missing or incorrect preposition**
16 D	**Other missing words**
16E	**Incorrect use of connecting words** (yet, but, and, so, therefore, because, since, while, etc.)

Rhetorical features	
24A	**Overapplication of Edited American English (EAE) rules**, resulting in errors e.g., Double-marking of a verb as past tense (would have + -ed); Use of possessive instead of objective case after a preposition
24B	**Use of highly prescriptive EAE**, resulting in rhetorical dis-fluency (does not result in errors) e.g., Overuse of the definite article "the"; Highly restrictive adverb-placement rules; Avoidance of splitting an infinitive
26	Use of **oral language in written form**, resulting in dis-fluency or errors (text sounds fluent when read aloud, but is incorrect according to rules for written academic English)

Code	Presence												Instances					
	African American				European American - SWE				European American				African American		European American-SWE		European American	
	<2.75		≥ 2.75		<2.75		≥ 2.75		<2.75		≥ 2.75		<2.75	≥ 2.75	<2.75	≥ 2.75	<2.75	≥ 2.75
	N_1	%	N_1	%	N_1	%	N_1	%	N_1	%	N_1	%	N_2	N_2	N_2	N_2	N_2	N_2
Dropped –s for plurals	6	60%	5	63%	2	100%	2	100%	4	57%	0	0%	14	24	15	9	9	0
Unnecessary apostrophe	3	30%	2	25%	0	0%	2	100%	1	14%	0	0%	3	8	0	3	1	0
No apostrophe, no –s for possessive	1	10%	1	13%	0	0%	1	50%	0	0%	0	0%	1	1	0	1	0	0
No apostrophe for possessive	6	60%	3	38%	2	100%	1	50%	2	29%	0	0%	10	5	10	10	2	0
Incorrect apostrophe	3	30%	7	88%	2	100%	0	0%	2	29%	1	33%	7	17	2	0	8	1
Simple past regular, dropped –ed	3	30%	1	13%	2	100%	2	100%	0	0%	0	0%	4	2	2	4	0	0
Simple past irregular, non EAE form	2	20%	0	0%	1	50%	1	50%	3	43%	0	0%	2	0	2	4	4	0
Perfects, regular, dropped –ed	0	0%	0	0%	1	50%	1	50%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0	1	1	0	0
Perfects, irregular, non EAE form	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	33%	0	0	0	0	0	1
Verbal adjective, regular, dropped –ed	3	30%	1	13%	0	0%	2	100%	0	0%	0	0%	3	1	0	2	0	0
Verbal adjective, irregular, non EAE form	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0
Passive, regular, dropped –ed	2	20%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	2	0	0	0	0	0
Passive, irregular, non EAE form	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	14%	0	0%	0	0	0	0	1	0
3rd p. present sing., regular, dropped -s	7	70%	3	38%	2	100%	2	100%	0	0%	0	0%	10	9	4	2	0	0
3rd p. present sing., irregular, non EAE	1	10%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	0	0	0	0	0
Subject-verb discord, copula	3	30%	3	38%	0	0%	1	50%	1	14%	1	33%	6	7	0	1	1	2
Subject-verb discord, non-copula	7	70%	4	50%	0	0%	1	50%	0	0%	0	0%	12	4	0	1	0	0
Other non-EAE verb forms	2	20%	2	25%	1	50%	1	50%	2	29%	1	33%	2	5	5	4	2	1
Dropped final letters	6	60%	4	50%	1	50%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	7	6	2	0	0	0
Other spelling errors	8	80%	4	50%	2	100%	2	100%	4	57%	2	67%	19	16	21	15	10	2
Missing or incorrect preposition	6	60%	6	75%	2	100%	2	100%	3	43%	1	33%	11	13	3	7	6	1
Other missing words	7	70%	4	50%	2	100%	2	100%	5	71%	2	67%	11	16	5	4	11	2
Incorrect use of connecting words	5	50%	1	13%	0	0%	0	0%	1	14%	0	0%	8	2	0	0	1	0
Hypercorrection (with errors)	1	10%	7	88%	0	0%	0	0%	1	14%	1	33%	2	12	0	0	1	1
Hypercorrection (without errors)	5	50%	6	75%	1	50%	1	50%	1	14%	1	33%	11	18	1	1	1	1
Oral language	10	100%	6	75%	1	50%	2	100%	6	86%	3	100%	48	83	5	15	28	6

N_1=number of candidates who exhibited the language feature one or more times
%=percentage of candidates out of all candidates in a racial grouping.

N_2=number of instances that a language feature was used by all the candidates in a racial grouping.

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