African American Vernacular English

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Master's thesis / Diplomski rad

2023

Degree Grantor / Ustanova koja je dodijelila akademski / stručni stupanj: **University of Split, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split / Sveučilište u Splitu, Filozofski fakultet**

Permanent link / Trajna poveznica: https://urn.nsk.hr/urn:nbn:hr:172:735888

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Download date / Datum preuzimanja: **2025-02-28**

Repository / Repozitorij:

Repository of Faculty of humanities and social sciences

Sveučilište u Splitu

Filozofski fakultet

Odsjek za engleski jezik i književnost

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Diplomski rad

Split, 2023.

University of Split

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

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Master's Thesis

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Split, 2023

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1. Introduction

"We die. That may be the meaning of life. But we do language. That may be the measure of our lives."

–Toni Morrison, Nobel Banquet speech, 10 December 1993

Defining "vernaculars" as forms of languages spoken by particular groups is, in the context of the African American vernacular, somewhat reductive. African American Vernacular English is the most researched dialect in the United States, and while most vernaculars are known to be geographically determined, AAVE is found across the North American continent as a result of mass migrations to segregated cities of the American North and West in the 20th century. Dubbed the "Great Migration", this large-scale demographic event first triggered by World War I saw African Americans leaving the South for burgeoning US cities in search of opportunity thus producing "a dramatic geographic redistribution of the African American population" (Tolnay, 2003: 210). Sociolinguist William Labov, who dedicated a significant amount of research to AAVE, wrote extensively on the heterogeneity of the vernacular, and the fact that the term AAVE covers a variety of dialects spoken by Black Americans "from the Creole grammar of Gullah spoken in the Sea Islands of South Carolina to the most formal and accomplished literary style" (1972: xiii). Indeed, great literary works by Nobel Prize winner Toni Morrison and other authors were written in AAVE, adding a dimension to those stories that holds an entire identity marked by centuries of struggle. Formerly labeled as "Black English vernacular", and referred to by many as Ebonics (a somewhat politicized portmanteau of "ebony" and "phonics"), the dialect deviates from what is called Standard American English, or SAE, in much the same way other dialects in the country do; however, sociolinguists in the 1970s and 1980s noted that AAVE was often labeled as a problematic linguistic deviation, particularly in schoolchildren, as "such children and teenagers brought new problems to the school systems of the large Northern cities" (Dillard, 1985: 108).

The beginnings of African American Vernacular English can be traced back to the 17th century, although it was not until the 19th century that the dialect began to take shape (Sutcliffe, 1998: 128). The story of the African American community in the US began with slaves imported

largely from West Africa to the first colonies on the American East coast. In the New World, the slaves encountered indentured workers from Britain, which explains certain working class British and Hiberno-English linguistic influences on early Black English (Rickford, 1986: 247). Indenture was a type of labor based on a legal contract stipulating that a person will be working for someone for a certain amount of time and for an agreed salary. This clearly marked a difference between European indentured workers and African slaves, who were considered property and were forced to work. Unfortunately, the following few centuries produced very few sources and samples of recorded Black speech, and the complex and grim history of continued mistreatment and discrimination of the Black community largely contributed to this.

Linguists' opinions on the origins of African American Vernacular English differ; while some strongly advocate for the West African, or Caribbean Creole sources (Dillard, 1972; Winford, 1998; Rickford, 2006), others are more inclined to connect AAVE to British non-standard varieties of English (Montgomery et al., 1993; Poplack, 2000; Mufwene, 2015). Ultimately, looking at all linguistic features of the vernacular, evidence can be found of both of these influences contributing to what would become AAVE and further evolve from there. Wolfram and Schilling, authors of *American English: Dialects and Variation*, strive to emphasize the importance of dialect awareness, revealing that from 1965 until 1993 there were five times as many papers studying the African American dialect than any other, and stating how the three main issues when considering AAVE seemed to be: its relation to Anglo-American varieties, the nature of language change within AAVE, and finally its historical roots and development (Wolfram and Schilling, 1998: 169). Speaking of the relationships between the vernacular explored in this paper and other American dialects, the language convergence/divergence hypothesis is worth mentioning – the recurring debates over whether AAVE shows tendencies of converging, or growing more similar to SAE, or those of diverging or moving further away from the so-called norm.

With *Spoken Soul: The Story of Black English*, a definitive guide to AAVE published in 2000, R.J. and J.R. Rickford brought a comprehensive overview of the vernacular, covering its history and origins, and reflecting on its reputation and linguistic prejudice surrounding it, as well as focusing on the vernacular's linguistic characteristics. The monograph, therefore, proved an invaluable resource for this thesis, joined by various other works in the field of linguistics and sociolinguistics, studies from the 1960s until the present day, reports, online encyclopedia

entries, magazine articles, the Yale Grammatical Diversity Project which continues examining morphosyntactic variation in North American English, TEDx talks and media examples – which usually fall under comedy, a genre that often tackles pressing social issues in a lighthearted but poignant manner – to help create a concise look at AAVE's position within and in relation to American society.

This thesis aims to first describe the origin and evolution of the vernacular from the first American colonies to the present day. Secondly, its various and diverse linguistic characteristics will be enumerated and elaborated on, particularly those relating to grammar, phonetics and phonology, as well as vocabulary and syntax. Finally, the concluding segment will delve into the paradox of AAVE being considered lesser than other American dialects while simultaneously being appropriated by white non-speakers of the dialect across ever-growing social media communities, with some AAVE expressions even being added to dictionaries. This paradox reflects the racial and cultural status quo in the contemporary United States, a society made richer by diversity yet plagued by inequality and prejudice.

2. History and origins of AAVE

In order to bring a satisfactory overview of the development of AAVE through the past few centuries, definitions of several linguistic terms must be explored first, namely those of pidgin and creole languages. Pidgin languages typically arise out of necessity in those parts of the world where different cultures meet and interact for a prolonged time, and where speakers of various languages require a convenient means of communication. This usually results in simplified pidgin languages, with simple clausal structures and an overall lack of complex language or vernacular characteristics, such as grammatical tense, gender and number, subject-verb agreement, and others. Creoles, on the other hand, are those languages that evolved from primitive forms such as pidgins and jargons, the latter being the term for "languages" of particular groups, e.g., business jargon, educational jargon, et al., and it is unsurprising that these languages would often develop in colonies, resulting in creoles based on mostly English, French and Portuguese languages. As Holm (2000: 6) puts it, creoles are often spoken by those communities whose ancestors were "displaced geographically so that their ties with their original language and sociocultural identity were partly broken".

The language of the Gullah, a predominantly Black community populating the Sea Islands off the Southeastern coast of the United States, is an example of a creole language related to African American Vernacular English. As early as 1670, the English settlers arrived in the Sea Islands, where they encountered a community of Native Americans, who disappeared soon after, "as they were killed in war, devastated by European diseases, and subjected to external economic pressures" (Graves, 2010: 37). Holm (2000: 7) offered an umbrella description of the development of communication between Africans brought over to New World colonies from several African countries to work on plantations, stating how the first generation produced pidgins as they spoke different African languages, and the children who received "chaotic and incomplete linguistic input" were the ones who organized this input into creoles. The imported slaves thus acquired language through immersion. However, Rickford and Rickford (2000: 133) also note the possibility that creoles arrived in the US with Caribbean slaves, or with slaves who had already worked in Jamaica, Barbados, and other colonies where simplified languages had formed. Mufwene (2004: 356) insists AAVE did not descend from Gullah; however, he does consider the languages to be related and sharing the status of "socially stigmatized languages".

Mufwene (2004: 371) further explains that "while Gullah makes a good case for studying language divergence, the role of race segregation in its development also makes it an informative window into structural features of colonial English". In any case, the seventeenth century saw the emergence of a vernacular that was never truly apolitical – not in its early development when the slaves sought to separate themselves from the oppressor, nor today, when AAVE is being appropriated while at the same time its speakers are required to code-switch to abide by social norms – and the following text will look at its development from the colonial era until today.

2.1. Early stages: the seventeenth century

In the words of Bryan Stevenson, executive director of Equal Justice Initiative (EJI), a non-profit organization that provides legal representation for unfairly convicted people in Alabama, and the collective behind a thorough report on the Transatlantic Slave Trade, not only was the era of slavery a truly horrific time in human history, the legacy of it includes generational wealth and industries that continue to profit today (EJI, 2018: 7). Seeking to provide the public with an understanding of the scale and scope of the slave trade, Equal Justice Initiative compiled a report on the origins and development of slavery in the Americas, titled *Slavery in America: The Montgomery Slave Trade*. While slavery was not unheard of prior to European powers kidnapping and trafficking millions of African natives, this European involvement brought it to levels that ultimately destabilized the entire African continent and led to an unimaginable number of deaths, as "of more than 12.5 million Africans kidnapped and trafficked through the Transatlantic Slave Trade, only 10.7 million survived the journey" (EJI, 2018: 13).

The Portuguese were the first to capture and enslave people in the Sub-Saharan area in the 15th century, but at that point in time no slave had yet crossed the Atlantic. In the Americas, it was the native peoples that suffered once Europeans arrived; as was stated earlier, Native Americans made up a smaller portion of the enslaved population, as many were displaced before slavery came into full swing. The mistreatment of Native Americans by white settlers, however, is a story unto itself and, as Kevin Waite writes for *The Atlantic*, it is a story that requires greater scrutiny, considering how, at one point, "tens of thousands of Indigenous people labored in bondage across the western United States" (Waite, 2021). Waite (2021) does note that it was not the white settlers who introduced the concept of slavery to Native Americans, just as that concept had not been unknown in pre-colonization Africa.

It was the American South that saw the first documented arrival, or rather import, of the first African slaves in 1619. According to Guasco (2017), that year, John Rolfe wrote a letter to Sir Edwin Sandys, describing the state of things in the colony of Virginia and mentioning "20 and odd Negroes", which led to the year 1619 being taught in schools as the start of slavery. He further argues against the focus on this year in particular, stating that it "was not the first time Africans could be found in an English Atlantic colony", and more than one story of Africans providing knowledge about the cultivation of tobacco in Bermuda, rebelling in present-day South Carolina in 1526, and otherwise contributing to this time period, precedes 1619 (Guasco, 2017). Rickford and Rickford (2000: 131), however, mention precisely Jamestown, Virginia, as the place of the official conception of the American slavery system.

At the end of the seventeenth century, there were twelve colonies in the American East and South, and until the turn of the century, most plantation workers were white and European still (Rickford and Rickford, 2000: 132). Rickford and Rickford (2000: 132) mention in their historical overview how it was these workers, mainly coming from England and Ireland, who influenced the earliest Africans' acquisition of the English language, thus extending their native language vocabulary. It is worth noting that the mid-17th century was still a time of colonization of Ireland by England, and the English language only became widespread in Ireland in the 19th century (Mufwene, 2015: 78). On the other hand, in Jamaica and Suriname (Dutch Guiana in South America) Africans made up most of the population, developing their own creoles, which emerged, as they usually do, when language learners "have limited opportunities for contact with target-language speakers, and essentially work out their own norms based on their native languages and universal principles of language" (Rickford and Rickford, 2000: 132).

From this narrative, the Creolist Hypothesis emerged; in the 1960s, the first serious speculations arose as to the source of African American Vernacular English, disregarding the English influences and pidginization, and focusing instead on the Gullah language and Caribbean creoles as the possible source (Stewart, 1967; Dillard, 1972, Rickford, 2006). The Creolist/Anglicist controversy that arose from diverging opinions will be discussed in subchapters 2.2. and 2.3. Rickford (2006: 39), however, conveniently summarized the "roots" debate that has spanned decades and gone through several phases, stating that it would be premature to claim a definite source of the African American vernacular, and calling for more research to be conducted.

2.2. The first records: the eighteenth century

The English language itself could loosely be considered a creole, but in order to label a language a creole, it is necessary to trace its pidgin stages, which is impossible for (Middle) English, as Old English and Old Norse were too similar for the process of pidgnization to even take place (O'Neil, 2019: 127). The process of standardization of English, however, was "relatively arbitrary" (Lauture, 2020: 2). The eighteenth century marked an era of grammar books, as many were published during this time, and among them *Short Introduction of English Grammar* by English bishop and academic Robert Lowth. Lowth's grammar book enumerated several grammatical "errors" that were at the same time becoming staples in African American English overseas, such as the double negative. Double negatives were common in English – even in Chaucer's work – but Lowth ushered in a new era of grammatical correctness (Pereltsvaig, 2010). Centuries later, when one talks of Standard English, a definition is hard to set, as many different varieties exist, and like Nevalainen and Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2006: 310) write, spelling is "the most fully standardized part of standard English: it is shared by all English-writing nations and shows the least national variation.

For the study of AAVE in the eighteenth century, Rickford and Rickford (2000: 134) chose to focus on the American South, as that was where 87 percent of all blacks were by 1750, having outnumbered whites in South Carolina at the beginning of the century already. However, slavery had spread across the United States by this time; Nagl (2013: 8), for example, writes about substantial numbers of slaves in New England in the American North-East, and the Boston merchants who played "a leading role in the slave trade" in the eighteenth century. This time period was also marked by the development of the Gullah language and culture in the Sea Islands region. With the increase in numbers of African slaves came a sense of a growing community, and with that came harsher laws, passed by the oppressor in order to even further subdue the oppressed.

In their second generation, African slaves in America started acquiring linguistic elements not just from whites, but from other blacks as well (Rickford and Rickford, 2000: 134). Rickford and Rickford (2000: 136) also note that this was the century that produced several comments on the language of the Africans; contemporary observers, namely ministers and priests, wrote how "blacks have a language peculiar to themselves". Another significant event

was the American Revolutionary War, or War of Independence, fought between the Americans and the British. It was about this time that the concept of slavery first came under scrutiny, and some Africans even joined the war (Rickford and Rickford, 2000: 13). In the post-war American society, however, the freed slaves barely had any rights, although some managed to flee to Nova Scotia and from there to Sierra Leone and Liberia. Descendants of these ex-slaves were helpful in linguistic research of the 20th century, their speech having been used to "reconstruct the nature of the African American vernacular of the late eighteenth century" (Rickford and Rickford, 2000: 137).

Newspaper ads about runaway slaves were common in the eighteenth century, details of which are solid proof of variation in Black speech, as the slaves were described as either barely speaking English or speaking very good English (Mufwene, 2015: 63). This variation in competence is therefore, in a way, common to both 18th century and present-day AAVE – social circumstances and personal history will always play an important role in the level and amount of standard or dialectal features being employed at any time; only today it is less a matter of competence and more that of social identity. Mufwene (2015: 63) disagrees with the Creolist hypothesis, which entailed that the slaves wanted to move away from the white oppressor by way of establishing a linguistic identity, reminding the reader that the white indentured servants were, in fact, the majority labor force who "perhaps contributed as much to the emergence of earlier American Southern English – probably the ancestor of AAVE – as the Africans did". As was stated in the previous subchapter, different European English dialects from both England and Ireland could be heard on the plantations in the American South; in fact, in the late 18th century, "English among the average Whites was itself predominantly nonstandard and of variable acceptability relative to native British standard norms" (Mufwene, 2015: 63).

Finally, the very end of the century saw the invention of the cotton gin machine, and thus, the turn of the century was marked by a massive increase in the slave population – "from seven hundred thousand in 1790 to nearly four million in 1860" (Rickford and Rickford, 2000: 138). Despite the federal laws of 1794 and 1800 that forbade citizens from "owning, outfitting, investing in, or serving aboard ships" that were carrying enslaved people to ports outside the United States, the trade was hardly near its end (EJI, 2018: 37).

2.3. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries and subsequent sociolinguistic research

The increase in the number of enslaved Africans might seem unusual, considering the fact that the importation of slaves was outlawed in 1807. However, the illegal market was thriving during this time period – as was the slave trade throughout the country – and in addition to that, incentives arose encouraging slave breeding (Rickford and Rickford, 2000: 138). The early 19th century was the start of the spread of African American speech westward, and the expansion would only increase in the following decades. Moreover, the vernacular was beginning to stabilize, with many more sources now, including slave narratives, works of fiction and poetry, travelers' notes, music, and others (Rickford and Rickford, 2000: 141). Following the Civil War between the American North and South in the 1860s, US President Lincoln's 1862 Emancipation Proclamation, and the Thirteenth Amendment of 1865, slaves achieved legal freedom. In the decades that followed, however, they suffered through harrowing economic circumstances and being "overpoliced, criminalized, subjected to Jim Crow segregation, and denied equal housing and educational opportunities" (EJI, 2018: 54).

The era of racial segregation in the first half of the 20th century started with the Great Migration of millions of African Americans to large industrial cities following rapid global industrialization. Historically, the word "segregation" was used in religious contexts, denoting the separation of god-worshippers from the sinners; later, the meaning of the word grew to mainly stand for the enforcement of racial separation and exclusion" (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2022). The new vernacular that now entered the urban environment was starting to gain attention, and the mid-20th century period saw the publication of many research papers on AAVE in large cities, so much so that even today, there seems to be a strong relationship between African American culture and urbanity (Carpenter, 2009: 13).

AAVE research in the second half of the 20th century occasionally delved into discussions on language divergence and convergence. The two main kinds of evidence of separation or divergence of Black and white vernaculars were that the whites were developing new pronunciation that wasn't spreading to the Black community, and the Black community started showing differences in the use of certain grammatical features, depending on how much they interacted with the white community (Rickford and Rickford, 2000: 158). Labov (1986) and others (Myhill and Harris, 1986; Bailey and Maynor, 1987) found that AAVE speakers who had

the least contact with speakers of white dialects were the most divergent grammatically and phonologically. Other authors (Vaughn-Cooke, 1987; Huang, 1996) wrote in favor of linguistic convergence, stating that Labov's methodology lacked time-depth in its data. Proponents of language convergence often interviewed younger speakers to observe the ways in which AAVE might be getting closer to white dialects or even SAE with new generations. Finally, more recent studies (Denning, 1989; Wolfram, 2003, 2006) support the idea of simultaneous convergence-divergence.

Joining the convergence/divergence controversy is the well-known and previously referenced burning debate over the origin of the African American vernacular, a question of whether the dialect arose from African creole languages or if the main source were earlier non-standard English varieties the slaves encountered once on American soil. This ongoing debate has produced countless scientific papers; however, considering the current position of AAVE within the US society, I dare say it should be made a priority to focus more on the future, rather than the past, as we are witnessing the vernacular being trivialized and absorbed into Internet culture.

2.4. Present-day AAVE

In 1996, the Oakland Unified School District in California declared Black English as a second language, which was a continuation of 1990s Los Angeles policies that introduced special programs for Blacks speaking nonstandard English. Prompted by the fact that over 70 percent of all African American students were in special education classes, the Oakland board claimed a dual purpose for this action, "maintaining the legitimacy of the language and helping [the African American students] learn standard English" (Woo and Curtius, 1996). This decision, however, sparked significant backlash and controversy. Prominent Black public figures were also vocal against the proposal, believing that African American children would grow up to face difficulties in finding work if, in their formative years, they were encouraged to preserve their native Black speech (Jackson, 1997: 20). Even though America has moved past the segregation culture, the position of the Black community's vernacular in society cannot be said to enjoy much respect, especially when it comes to education.

The misconception that AAVE is "broken English" has been perpetuated throughout history, from the beginning of the rise of slavery until today. What is interesting, however, is that it is precisely African American Vernacular English that makes up the majority of the slang vocabulary of today's American youth. And while social media platforms and even tabloids and news outlets have been using and appropriating more and more AAVE expressions, the Black community still regularly faces the same problems daily – blatant displays of racism and constant reminders of racial inequality, whether in the form of microaggressions or acts of systemic mistreatment and institutionalized discrimination.

In the 1960s, Claude Brown coined the term "Spoken Soul" for Black English; Brown explained the name came from the inherent lyrical quality of the vernacular (Rickford and Rickford, 2000: 3). Indeed, the musicality that is tied to African culture brought the world some of the greatest musical genres, from jazz and blues to reggae to modern-day r&b (rhythm and blues), rap and hip-hop. The nascence of rap music coinciding with rapid globalization led to the genre exploding and reaching all corners of the world; with this, many AAVE features suddenly became popular, particularly among younger generations. Present-day AAVE thus tells a story of a vernacular's duality – simultaneously being looked down on and appropriated as "cool", and the details of this dual nature will be explored in the following text.

3. Characteristics of AAVE

Initial research of the linguistic features of AAVE was highly influenced by the social factors and the inequalities that plagued American society in the 1960s and, one could argue, continue to do so today. In 1966, William Labov published his *Social Stratification of English in New York City*, a benchmark in the field of sociolinguistics. Several years later, the sociolinguist decided to focus more on African American Vernacular English, pioneering the notion that the vernacular was more than simply "bad grammar", that it was a language in its own right, with unwritten grammar rules and phonetics that were intrinsic to its speakers. Stating that educational psychologists of the time, who claimed that children from Black communities had poor verbal expression due to the environment they had been growing up in, were ill-equipped to discuss such matters, Labov (1972: 201) emphasized that the children "have the same basic vocabulary, possess the same capacity for conceptual learning, and use the same logic as anyone else who learns to speak and understand English".

Linguistic bias in education remains an issue to this day. In her 2021 TEDx talk, speech-language pathologist Camille Byrd O'Quin discusses educators viewing AAVE speech as "disordered" and erroneous, noting that Black students in the United States are 2,5 times more likely to receive special education services (TED, 2021), a statistic that mirrors teachers' views from decades ago. Much like Labov, O'Quin (2021) makes it known that AAVE has its own grammar rules, as well as semantics, syntax, and phonetics. The speech pathologist disagrees in no way with the norm of teaching Standard English in schools, but rather condemns educators' use of AAVE sentences as examples of incorrect sentence structures. In 1981, Ralph Fasold conducted a thorough survey of the phonological and grammatical structures of AAVE and, comparing them with similar Anglo-American varieties, enumerated those features that are unique to Black English, including copula and auxiliary verb deletion, the invariant *be*, the stressed *BIN*, absence of possessive *–s*, consonant cluster reduction, and others, as summarized by Wolfram and Schilling (1998: 171). Most of the features listed refer to the distinctive grammar of the African American vernacular, and they will be explored further in the following subchapter. It should be noted that the grammar features, as well as other features of AAVE are variable; not all AAVE speakers use the vernacular and its features to the same degree. In fact, not all African Americans speak the vernacular to begin with.

Vocabulary items unique to Black English have been compiled several times. In her explanatory notes prefacing the lexicon titled *Black Talk: Words and Phrases from the Hood to the Amen Corner*, Geneva Smitherman (1994: 39) argues against the "slang" label being applied to AAVE vocabulary, and states that African American Vernacular English "has a lexical core of words and phrases that are fairly stable over time and are familiar to and/or used by all groups in the Black community". That same year, Viking published Clarence Major's *Juba to Jive: A Dictionary of African-American Slang*, another dictionary that covers "Black slang" from the 18th to the 20th century. Lisa Green (2002: 32) references these two lexicons in order to present African American Vernacular English "as a unified system with a lexical component as well as other components". Discussions about AAVE vocabulary often include pronunciation, as this factor also speaks to the uniqueness of the vernacular, so one might notice consonant cluster reduction, nasalization, vocalization, variations in stress placement and other phonological features.

The subchapters that follow will explore grammatical and phonological characteristics of African American Vernacular English, supported by examples. Many grammatical and phonological deviations from Standard English are shared between AAVE and other non-standard American English varieties, so the following pages will provide insight into those that could be considered stereotypical for the vernacular.

3.1. Grammar

African American Vernacular English is an emphatic and dynamic dialect. When studying its unique grammatical features, or at least those shared with other Southern American dialects, it becomes apparent that a large portion of linguistic deviations from Standard American English is a result of the intent to convey emotion with greater intensity. It is important to consider the history and development of African American Vernacular English, and the grueling conditions under which it emerged, with oppressed people creating and developing their own language as an expression of identity separate from that of the oppressor. In his essay summarizing the aims of the Yale Grammatical Diversity Project, Shoulson (2020) touches on AAVE's (in Shoulson's text referred to as AAL, or African American Language) grammar and systematicity, noting how harmful the notion of the vernacular being "grammarless" is – this notion being held even by some AAVE speakers. Shoulson (2020), like Labov (1972) decades

before him, stresses that AAL is "unquestionably and indisputably governed by systematic grammatical rules, even if they differ in many ways from those of [SAE]". The subsequent subchapters will provide a closer look into and supporting examples of some of the most prominent grammatical features of the vernacular. It is vital to keep in mind that not all speakers will employ these features; as was highlighted earlier, the African American vernacular is variable, or in other words, "it is a resource or commodity that speakers exploit or avoid, depending on their social backgrounds, relations, and attitudes, on what they want to achieve, and on how they want to come across in each interaction" (Rickford and Rickford, 2000: 128).

3.1.1. Zero copula

One of many distinct grammatical features of AAVE that has attracted significant attention and is often the topic of research is the absence of the copula, usually a form of the verb "to be" that links sentence subjects to subject complements, mostly noun phrases and adjectives. Often in the African American vernacular, sentences lack copulas altogether; while, for example, in Standard American English, the sentence communicating agreement *You right* is missing the auxiliary "are", a copular verb in this particular phrase, in AAVE this sentence is considered acceptable. Copula absence, known as "zero copula" or "null copula" is not, however, unique to AAVE. This occurrence is a staple in the newspaper headline jargon, or *headlinese*.

This characteristic could be considered a direct opposite of the invariant *be*, as the latter is never omitted, but rather stressed. Additionally, forms that are never omitted in AAVE include the past tense *was* and *were*, the first person present tense *am ('m)*, as well as the auxiliary in *it's, what's* and *that's*. The zero copula also cannot occur at the end of a sentence, or in tag questions (Parsard, 2016). To quote Rickford and Rickford's (2000: 115) example, the sentence *He been doin it since we was teenagers, and he still doin it* clearly demonstrates how the past form is necessary to establish the time of the action, while in the second part of the utterance, the copula is freely omitted. These rules once again point to a grammar system within AAVE, and none of them were formally taught to AAVE speakers, but are nevertheless followed in their daily speech (Rickford and Rickford, 2000: 115). Labov (1972: 223) noted decades prior that "the adult or child who uses these rules must have formed at some level of psychological organization, clear concepts of tense marker, verb phrase, rule ordering, sentence embedding, pronoun, and many other grammatical categories which are essential parts of any logical system".

Both through learning and teaching English as a second language, I have observed how articles and verb conjugation are one of the first and foremost aspects of second language acquisition when it comes to this particular language. During the era of pidgin- and creole-forming in the Americas, the high saturation of both articles and auxiliaries in any stretch of English speech was therefore likely what led to Africans or target-language learners dropping these words, thus eliminating potential errors but still conveying meaning with no issue. One might argue that neither articles nor auxiliaries hold meaning as much as they provide sentence structure prescribed by grammarians. Labov (1969: 721) observed the null copula in relation to contraction, and saw copula omission as a possible extension of it explained by phonological processes, i.e. the shortening of *He's tired* to *He tired* occurs because the auxiliary *is* and its contraction *'s* are more easily omitted phonologically than, for example, *was* or *were*, which do not contract. In conclusion, Labov (1969: 722) stated that "wherever SE can contract, [AAVE] can delete (…) and vice versa, wherever SE cannot contract, [AAVE] cannot delete".

Table 1. Copula deletion in different grammatical environments across different groups of speakers
(Rickford and Rickford, 2000: 116)

Copula form and AAVE group studied	Copula deletion before noun ("He Ø a man")	Copula deletion before adjective ("He Ø happy")	Copula deletion before *gon(na)* ("He Ø gon go")
is, New York City Thunderbirds (teenage gang)	23%	48%	88%
is + are, Detroit working class (all ages)	37%	47%	79%
are, Los Angeles (all ages)	.25	.35	.64
is + are, Texas youngsters	.12	.25	.89
is + are, East Palo Alto, California (all ages)	.27	.45	.83
is + are, 1930s ex-slaves (mainly from South)	12%	29%	100%

Decades later, Sidnell (2002: 12) summarized these findings and decided that both grammatical and phonological environments play a key role in copula deletion. Additionally, observing the frequency of copula deletion in different grammatical environments, most notably before "going to" or *gonna*, across several groups of AAVE speakers, Rickford and Rickford (2000: 116) decided this was proof of AAVE's strong connections to Creole English languages in Jamaica, Barbados, Hawaii, Guyana, and Liberia. Even Mufwene (2015: 72), who leans more towards the Anglicist theory of origin, admits the creole influence in the particular case of zero copula, as well as that of negative inversion, which will be discussed later, and adds how AAVE "undoubtedly bears influence from African substrate languages".

3.1.2. The invariant or habitual *be*

The second most notable AAVE characteristic is the "invariant" or unchanging *be*. Referring to the consistent use of the infinitive form "be" in place of conjugated Standard English verb forms (*am*, *is*, *are*), this feature has both structural and sociolinguistic implications, shedding light on the unique linguistic system and cultural identity of AAVE speakers. In terms of syntax, the invariant *be* usually appears with noun phrases (*He be the crazy one*), adjectives (*They be angry*), locatives (*We be at the house*), and with *–ing* forms (*She be telling stories*). Semantically, the invariant *be* denotes habitual and repeated behaviors, which is why it is also sometimes referred to as "habitual *be*". However, this is not always the case, as this common AAVE feature reflects many speakers' states and feelings; in those cases, "be" is heavily emphasized.

In the previously referenced TEDx talk, O'Quin (2021) provides a number of similar, yet different sentences containing various uses and forms of the verb "to be" and looks at their semantic properties.

He calling me on my cell phone.
He be calling me on my cell phone.

O'Quin (2021) goes on to explain the first sentence, where the verb "to be" is entirely omitted, as describing a one-time event of a person receiving a phone call at the exact time of the utterance. The following sentence, with invariant or habitual *be* preceding the *–ing* form, denotes a

recurring event or a person calling someone on their phone repeatedly. This sentence could be rephrased as *He calls me on my cell phone all the time*.

Moreover, this invariant form of the verb "to be" will sometimes appear with "*do* support", creating sentences such as *She do be running*, thus adding further emphasis to the sentence. Rickford (1986: 262) traced this habitual marker to Hiberno-English, spoken in Ireland, and provided examples by the poet William B. Yeats (i.e. *They do be cheering when the horses take the water well*). More recently, a popular phrase containing this form circulated the Internet – *It do be like that*, a sentence that went viral online, is used to convey understanding and empathy when something common and/or relatable happens. The "do support" will remain stable in question forms; rephrased as a question, the viral sentence would be *Do it be like that?*. This example is one of many displaying the popularity of AAVE structures in American slang and Internet culture. American rapper Kendrick Lamar, in one of his most popular songs titled *Humble*, uses the habitual "be" in several instances. Both of the following lyrics indicate either continuous states or habitual behaviors, i.e. Lamar remains the greatest rapper even if he steps back from his profession, while most of the competition is steadily disingenuous in their craft.

If I quit this season, I still be the greatest, funk.
I don't fabricate it, ayy, most of y'all be fakin', ayy.

Sidnell (2002: 8) references research conducted by Beryl Bailey in 1990s rural and urban Texas, where subjects were divided into four groups – urban teens and preteens, rural teens and preteens, elderly rural and urban informants, and a group of former slaves born from 1844-1864. The rural versus urban factor hardly played a role; it was the generational differences in the use of the habitual *be* that stood out, with children using either habitual *be* or omitted auxiliary verb for habitual actions and actions of limited duration, respectively (*She be working* = She works all the time; *She working* = She is at work right now), while the elderly population used both forms interchangeably, or irrespective of context (Sidnell, 2002: 9). It is clear that with the emergence of Internet and a strong influence of hip-hop on younger generations, habitual *be* is common today not just among AAVE speakers.

3.1.3. Perfective *done*

In grammar, the perfective or aoristic aspect describes past completed actions. Aspect should not be confused with tense, as the latter denotes the time of the action, while grammatical aspect relays just how the verb relates to time. The perfective aspect is used with completed actions, while the imperfective or progressive aspect describes ongoing or repeated actions in the past, present, or future. Sometimes referred to as "perfect aspect", it is found with tenses such as present perfect, past perfect, and future perfect. Observing examples of all three of these tenses, it is clear that what they have in common is that all the actions are considered, temporally, as whole and complete, each in their respective time.

Table 2. Examples of the perfective aspect in SAE for past, present and future tenses

past	*He had eaten lunch.*
present	*He has eaten lunch.*
future	*He will have eaten lunch (by then).*

African American Vernacular English often departs from Standard English in tense and aspect use. Sidnell (2002: 3) brings a comprehensive table comparing verb forms for perfective and imperfective in AAVE and Standard English. Sidnell's table (see Table 3) illustrates how, in AAVE, verbs do not necessarily show person and number agreement in the present tense. With present progressive, copula may be omitted, which is not the case with past progressive – copula deletion only occurs with present tenses. However, with perfect or perfective aspect, a new lexical item is introduced – the marker "done". *Done* in these cases usually denotes completion, which is why it is considered a perfective. If we wanted to transform the previously used sentences "He has eaten lunch" and "He had eaten lunch" in such a way that they contained the perfective *done*, the end results would be:

He done ate lunch.
He had done ate lunch.

Table 3. Verb paradigms for perfective and imperfective in SAE and AAVE (Sidnell, 2002: 3)

	SE	AAVE
present	He walks	He walk
past	He walked	He walk(ed)
present progressive	He is walking	He (is) walking
past progressive	He was walking	He was walking
perfect	He has walked	He done walked
past perfect	He had walked	He had done walked

This perfective structure can be found in other US dialects as well, particularly in the South, but its origin is likely in AAVE. In *Variation and Change in Alabama English: A Sociolinguistic Study of the White Community*, Feagin (1979: 122) wrote about what he called the "preverbal" or "quasi-modal" *done*, calling it a Southern White Nonstandard English occurrence that came from the mesolect (a phase in the development of a creole where unique grammatical features have already developed) Black creole during the era of slavery. Feagin (1979: 149) mentions the double meaning of *done*, perfective and "intensive", the latter implying *done* could in those instances be paraphrased as "already" or "completely". An example of this is found in a popular comedy sketch by Keegan-Michael Key and Jordan Peele on their show *Key & Peele*. The *Substitute Teacher* sketch includes several instances of Key addressing students in his classroom, mispronouncing their names, culminating in an angry outburst, and the utterance "You done messed up, A-A-Ron" remains frequently quoted on the Internet years later. *Messed up* being an informal way to say a mistake had been made, together with the perfective aspect marker *done* it conveys a notion of a serious offence. The teacher character uses AAVE, and the manner in which *done* is utilized here is an example of Feagin's "intensive" meaning of the marker.

Among other aspect markers used by speakers of the African American vernacular is the marker *steady*, placed before the –*ing* verb forms. When preceding a verb, *steady* indicates an activity that is being carried out in a consistent and continuous matter, which is why it could not appear with, for example, the verb "to have" (Green, 2002: 71). Green (2002: 71) provides an ungrammatical example: *They steady having money*, clarifying that the *steady* marker is

incompatible with states, unlike the habitual or invariant *be*, with which *steady* could otherwise be interchangeable. A fitting instance of *steady* is found in the 2008 song "Live Your Life" by rapper T.I. and featuring Rihanna, wherein a chorus line states *You steady chasin' that paper*, describing a person persistently trying to earn money. The difference between this lyric and Green's example above is the active versus inactive aspect.

Table 4. Properties of the habitual *be* and the *steady* marker (Green, 2002: 73)

Properties of *be* and *steady*		
Marker	Meaning	Compatibility with states
be	indicates activity/state recurs	compatible with states (in that it forces states to take on an activity readingg
steady	indicates activity carried out in intense/continuous manner	incompatible with states (in that it describes actions associated with activities or events

3.1.4. Stressed *BIN*

Much like the aspect marker *steady*, the stressed *bin* feature is more or less unique to African American Vernacular English (Harrris and Wood, 2011). In her TED talk, O'Quin (2021) added a third sentence example to the two previously mentioned (*He calling me on my cell phone* and *He been calling me on my cell phone*); the third contains the stressed BIN feature, and O'Quin highlights how the stressed "been" or *bin* "marks initiation of an event as in for a long time".

He been calling me on my cell phone.

This utterance describes a recurring event that has been happening for an extended period of time. The caller is and has been insistent on trying to reach the person uttering this phrase, and it is highly likely that the person holds negative emotions towards the repeated attempts. In Standard English, this present perfect continuous form would have to include "have" between *He*

and *been*, but this rule is not relevant for AAVE, wherein "have" in present perfect continuous structures is often omitted. Additionally, the stress in *He has been calling me on my cell phone* and *He BIN calling me on my cell phone* is vastly different. Another example, "I *been* workin' on my thesis" could be translated into SAE as *I started working on my thesis a while back and I am still working on it*. This sentence conveys a sense of arduous work, whereas a simple "I have been working on my thesis" would not convey the emotion in quite the same way. Often, in papers researching the stressed BIN, the word will appear capitalized to convey that the word is always stressed when uttered (Harris and Wood, 2013). Green (1998: 133) dubs it a remote past marker, echoing Labov's and Rickford's thoughts, meaning that the main characteristic of the stressed BIN is to "[situate] the initiation of a state in the remote past, [when] the state continues up until the moment of utterance". It is not, however, jus the remoteness factor that distinguishes the stressed BIN from the regular past participle "been", but also the emphasis that is put deliberately on the marker to convey the meaning.

3.1.5. Negation

Earlier in this paper, it was mentioned how, prior to the eighteenth century, double negation was a frequent occurrence in the English language. Robert Lowth then proposed and followed a prescriptivist approach to language, stating that there is only one absolute correct use of, in this case, English – and double negation, as was previously mentioned, was not in accordance with Lowth's rules (Pereltsvaig, 2010). Double negatives are not considered an issue in a multitude of languages; in fact, the name for the use of double negatives is "negative concord", and it is very much present in, for example, Slavic and Romance languages (van der Auwera, 2021). In the 1960s, Orin Dale Seright (1966: 125) made a case for double negatives in English, disagreeing with language purists and listing three instances where negative concord occurs and is acceptable: when two negatives truly result in a positive (i.e. "it's not impossible"), when only one negative results in a positive (i.e. "Is that not right?"), and when double negation serves to intensify the negative aspect (i.e. "*neither* this *nor* that").

One of the most recognizable traits of AAVE is precisely negative concord. As is the case with many unique AAVE features, negative concord is often seen, much like in Seright's (1966) third example, as an intensifying detail. Speakers will sometimes even go one step further, and employ negative inversion, producing sentences such as *Can't nobody beat 'em*, and these

statements will often be emphatic (Rickford and Rickford, 2000: 124). On negative inversion, Labov et al. (1968: 288) wrote: "[it] is an optional process which gives additional prominence to the negative, and takes different forms in different dialects (…) It has a strongly affective character wherever it occurs."

Ain't nobody loves me better
Makes me happy, makes me feel this way

In the 1983 global hit song by Chaka Khan & Rufus, *Ain't Nobody*, the first line of the chorus ("Ain't nobody loves me better") contains double negation *ain't + nobody*. "Ain't", a contraction for all of the following – *am not*, *is not*, *are not*, *has not* and *have not* – is a frequent occurrence in non-standard varieties of English (Doyle, 2015: 2). Rarely, and only in African American Vernacular English, *ain't* may also replace "do not" or "did not". In *Ain't Nobody*, it serves to intensify the negative "nobody", not meaning "somebody", but rather "truly nobody". *Ain't* appears in a wide array of structures, i.e. *It ain't right* ("It isn't right"), *We ain't got time* ("We haven't got time"), or *I ain't goin' nowhere* ("I'm not going anywhere"). The latter example supports Labov's (1968) theory, according to which negative concord is acceptable and perfectly understood. Negative concord is thus added to a long list of grammar rules within AAVE that are followed by most speakers of the vernacular.

3.1.6. Pronouns

The pronominal system of AAVE, although under-researched, has received some attention from linguists such as Washington and Craig (1994) and Wolfram (1991). G.R. Brown (2017: 8) lists several pronoun patterns common in AAVE that have been explored over the years: the reflexive pronoun *hisself* formed on the genitive case of the pronoun *he* instead of the objective case (i.e. *He did it all hisself*), the use of personal datives, demonstrative *them*, pronouns with objective case (*him, her, me*) being used as subjects in compound noun phrases (i.e. *"Me and Mrs Jones, We got a thing goin' on"* from Billy Paul's *Me and Mrs Jones*), and pleonastic or appositive pronouns. Additionally, *they* is added to and will sometimes replace SAE possessive pronouns (i.e. *It's they business*), and more so than some of the others, this

pronominal feature "usually distinguishes AAVE from benchmark European American vernacular" (Wolfram, 2004: 125).

Personal datives are pronouns occurring immediately after those verbs whose subjects and pronouns are co-referential, or referring to the same person, and only when the verbs have direct objects (Huang and McCoy, 2011). The following examples clearly illustrate this, showing also that the reflexive suffixes *–self* or *–selves* are also omitted in these structures.

I love me some popcorn.

"I know you got you a man…"

The latter is a lyric from the song *Video Girl* by American rapper Don Toliver, and in Standard English, the sentence would be "I know you got yourself a man", or shorter even, "I know you got/have a man", implying the rapper's awareness of a person's romantic involvement. The *–self* suffix is omitted, and the second *you* in the phrase is considered a personal dative. The former example is a phrase widely popular in youth culture ("*I love me some…*"), used to describe a strong liking of something. Therefore, the Standard English version of the first example would be "I really love popcorn". Here, there was no omission of the *–self* suffix, whereas a sentence such as "*I got me some popcorn*" does indeed have a reflexive suffix in its SAE form. Both of these structures are acceptable in AAVE.

The role of demonstrative pronouns in English (*this*, *those, that…*) is to point to specific people or things. In AAVE, the personal pronoun "them" will occasionally replace the demonstrative *those* (Smits, 2020). Hazen et al. (2011: 75) list several other vernacular dialects that use the demonstrative "them", particularly in the Appalachian region and other areas in the United States, in the British Isles and the Caribbean. The authors note that the reason why *them* will sometimes replace *those* but not *these* lies in the proximal, or distal semantic division between the two – *those* implies greater distance from the observed object, and has entered the English language quite late, which is why many dialects originally used the established *them* in place of *those* (Hazen et al., 2011: 79).

Appositives usually refer to sets of nouns or noun phrases appearing in succession and referring to the same person or thing (i.e. *Joe Biden, the president of the United States*). Appositive or pleonastic pronouns are not as frequent, but consistently appear in urban AAVE. A

pronoun corresponding to the noun in the utterance will be inserted after the noun and thus create a double subject (i.e. *My mother, she told me*) (Rickford and Rickford, 2000: 125). Rickford and Rickford (2000: 125) contrast this adding of extra words to accentuate the subject with frequent omissions of relative pronouns, such as *that* or *who*. Wolfram (2004: 126) calls this "null subjective relative pronoun in embedded sentences", providing the example *It's a man come over here talking trash.*

3.1.7. Deletion

Looking at the listed grammatical features that occur frequently in AAVE, it becomes apparent that lexical and syntactic features are often omitted, or deleted, resulting in somewhat simpler phrases, the meaning of which remains clear despite the deviations from Standard English. These omissions appear in accordance with a set of rules that are understood by all speakers of the vernacular as well as non-speakers. The absence of the copula, the omission of the reflexive suffix *–self* and even the invariant *be* all share a trait of somewhat simplifying the syntactic structure without altering its semantic properties. These features are joined by other examples of deletion, such as the absence of the third-person singular suffix /-s/ for present verb forms. It has been established that AAVE does not adhere to the tense and aspect marker rules of SAE, so a sentence like *He walk* is considered grammatically correct in the African American vernacular (Sidnell, 2002: 6).

Following this rule, the negation *do + not*, Sidnell (2002: 7) writes, will in this dialect be realized as "don't" for third-person singular instead of "doesn't" (i.e. *She don't know*). As the /-s/ suffix is often absent, *has* and *does* therefore frequently remain as *have* and *do*, i.e. *He have his own problems* or *He do the right thing* (Sidnell, 2002: 7). However, when "have" is part of a present perfect continuous structure (*have + been +* verb + *-ing*), it is freely omitted – this was also evident in the examples of the use of the stressed *BIN* (see 3.1.4.). This feature seems to follow Labov's rule of "wherever SAE can contract, AAVE can delete", mentioned in 3.11. For example, in SAE *We have been talking* can be paraphrased through contraction to *We've been talking*, and then in AAVE deletion will leave *We been talking*. This will also happen with the informal expression of possession common in all varieties of English "have got", i.e. *We have got a problem > We've got a problem > We got a problem*.

Another instance of deletion of the inflectional /-s/ is found with possessive forms. This feature, producing sentences like *The girl dress was pink*, is "relatively stable" in AAVE and rare in other English vernaculars in the US (Wolfram, 2004: 125). Since this feature only occurs part of the time, "linguists have not found any significant internal grammatical constraints (…) which makes it difficult to determine linguistic patterns in the behavior of this variable" (Ezgeta, 2012: 14).

3.1.8. Other grammatical features

The future tense in African American Vernacular English is expressed in several unique ways. To start with features found in other varieties of American English, the "going to" form is commonly pronounced as *gonna* in informal communication, much like *wanna* for "want to". The difference between *gonna* in SAE and in AAVE is that, in the latter, the form will be joined by the zero copula feature (i.e. *We gonna* instead of *We're gonna*) (Sidnell, 2002: 7). The *gonna* form is also frequently even further shortened when following the subject *I*, so *I'm gonna* can be pronounced as either *I'mana*, *I'mon* or *I'ma* (Sidnell, 2002: 7). The final *I'ma* has become a staple in Internet slang, spelled "Imma". Once again, where SAE can contract, so can AAVE.

Joining the *Imma* form online, especially in the domain of Internet memes and humorous content, is the form *fixin' to* or *finna*, used to place events in the immediate future, with implied intentionality. Sidnell (2002: 9) brings an example of *He finna go* as an AAVE version of the sentence *He's just about to go*. Here, again, there is no copula with third-person subjects, demonstrating consistency in the rules of the vernacular. Other non-standard varieties might use the preverbal marker *boutta* (a form of "about to") to communicate intent in the immediate future, and the difference between *finna* and *boutta* does lie in the ethnic factor, Thomas and Grinsell (2012: 2) conclude. African American artists, for example, will sooner use *finna*, as this variant "indexes cultural and ethnic identity" and thus the artists "may achieve more bang for their buck in creating this ethnically-indexed style when they push the boundaries of grammatical acceptability" (Thomas and Grinsell, 2012: 2). Naturally, these artists will, in addition to consciously selecting unique grammatical features, rely also on t-he vernacular's distinguishable phonological features, some of which will be covered in the next subchapter.

3.2. Phonology

All non-standard dialects are phonologically distinct from the standard variety; phonological features, or the differences in pronunciation, are usually first detected in verbal communication. AAVE pronunciation is, for the most part, not too dissimilar to white Southern dialects, although variation does exist within African American Vernacular English (Thomas, 2007: 460). This variation, when it comes to the use of all the main phonological features of AAVE, such as consonant cluster simplification, pronouncing voiceless consonants as voiced, et cetera, is a result of migrations, social class, and other factors. However, Rickford and Rickford (2000: 106) state that studies show that, in their most informal moments, African Americans will use most of the distinctly AAVE features, despite not using them as much in, perhaps, their respective work environments. This is called code-switching, a technique that will be explored later in the text, together with its social implications. Unfortunately, the case of AAVE pronunciation is, as was mentioned earlier in the text, a problem in the US educational system, wherein it is often seen as erroneous. Thomas (2007: 471) concludes his overview of phonetic and phonological characteristics of AAVE by stating that a fuller understanding of the distinctiveness of AAVE pronunciation could aid speech therapists in distinguishing "pathological problems from dialectal features".

Moreover, just like with the rule-governed use of grammatical features by AAVE speakers, it is not hard to discern phonological rules either. Green (2002: 119) points out that "the sound system in AAE operates according to set rules, so speakers do not delete and add sounds haphazardly. What may sound like ignorant and uneducated speech to those who are unfamiliar with the variety or who have some preconceived notions about the people who use this variety is actually rule-governed language use". Phonological features of AAVE explored in the following text include consonantal variables and other phonological patterns, as well as a look at prosody, or stress and rhythm that are central to the uniqueness of the vernacular.

3.2.1. Consonantal variables

Consonant clusters, known also as consonant sequences or compounds, are groups of consonants within words with no vowels between them. Those appearing at the ends of words are dubbed final consonant clusters. While it is common in other dialects and even in Standard

English varieties to "reduce" final consonant clusters, meaning to not pronounce all sounds, in AAVE this happens variably and systematically (Green, 2002: 107). Plosives, or stop consonants, are those consonants that are formed by completely stopping airflow, like /k/, /t/, or /p/. Thomas (2007: 455) notes that in AAVE, when the second consonant in a cluster is a stop consonant, it is not pronounced (i.e. *tes'* for *test*, *ac'* for *act*). While both in AAVE and in standard varieties the final stop consonant will often be dropped if the next word starts with a consonant (i.e. *wes' side*), only in AAVE will it be dropped even if the next word begins with a vowel (i.e. *Wes' Avenue*) (Thomas, 2007: 455). Voicing, or vibration produced when articulating sounds, plays an important role in consonant cluster reduction or simplification. Voiced consonants (/b/, /d/, /g/, /j/, /l/, /m/, /n/, /r/, /v/, /w/, /y/, and /z/) are those that require the use of vocal cords to produce the sounds they represent, while voiceless or unvoiced consonants (/f/, /h/, /k/, /p/, /s/, /t/, /x/, /qu/, and digraphs /ch/, /sh/) produce no vibration when pronounced. In order for consonant cluster simplification to take place, the consonants must share voicing properties (i.e. *col'* for *cold*, *han'* for *hand*, *des'* for *desk*, *lef'* for *left*) (Pollock et al., 1998). Therefore, in words such as *milk* or *lamp* no cluster simplification will take place in most variations of AAVE.

The interdental fricative *th*, extremely common in English but rare in most other languages, can be both voiced (i.e. *the*, *that, they*) or unvoiced (i.e. *think, thought*). If a word starts with a voiced *th* sound, the sound will in AAVE regularly be pronounced as /d/ (i.e. *dat*, *dey*). If the initial *th* sound is followed by *r*, *th* will occasionally be pronounced as /f/ (i.e. *frow* for *throw*). The same can happen with the unvoiced sound in the middle of words, such as *nufn* for *nothing*, while the voiced sound in the middle of the word will result in a *v,* i.e. *bruvah* for *brother* (Thomas, 2007: 454). The /f/ sound at the ends of words is quite common, i.e. *souf* for *south* (Sidnell, 2019). Green (2002: 119) wishes to dissuade those readers of her textbook *African American English: A Linguistic Introduction* who think that AAVE speakers cannot produce the interdental fricative *th*, stressing how they do, in fact, pronounce the sound at the beginnings of words the same way as in standard varieties.

Table 5. Production of *t/d* and *f/v* in AAVE (Green, 2002: 119)

AAE	Phonetic transcription	
a. thing	[θin]	"thing"
b. think	[θiŋk]	"think"
c. dese	[diz]	"these"
d. dat	[dæt]	"that"
e. baf	[bæf]	"bath"
f. wif, wit	[wɪf], [wɪt]	"with"
g. mont, monf	[mʌnt], [mʌnf]	"month"
h. Beflehem	[bɛfləhɪm]	"Bethlehem"
i. bave	[bev]	"bathe"
j. smoove	[smuv]	"smooth"
k. mova	[mʌvə]	"mother"

The first example in Table 5 shows the word *thing* as being pronounced with a clear *ng* [ŋ]. However, when it comes to the suffix *–ing* in infinitive forms of verbs, the final sound will in AAVE often be realized as *n*, i.e. *walkin'*, *thinkin'* (Green, 2002: 121). Green (2002: 122) adds that this is not exclusively an AAVE feature – but rather than appearing only in other non-standard varieties, it is also found in Standard English in unstressed syllables (i.e. pronouncing *nothing* and *something* when the final syllables are unstressed will result in *nothin* or *somethin*) in Standard American English utterances.

R-lessness or non-rhoticity is a systematic consonantal variable within AAVE. The deletion of /r/ sounds at the ends of words, or their replacement with /ə/ sounds (*fo* or *fou* for *four*) was previously common in white dialects in the American Northeast and parts of the South, although nowadays it is mainly present in Black speech, and "becomes less frequent as social level increases and as speaking style becomes more formal" (Thomas, 2007: 453). Non-rhoticity, Thomas (2007: 453) elaborates, is mostly present with unstressed syllables (i.e. *over, brother*) and will not occur in stressed, syllabic positions (i.e. *work, stir*). Green (2002: 120) calls this phonological process liquid vocalization. In the English language, the consonants *r* and *l* are considered liquid consonants, meaning the tongue produces a partial closure in the mouth which

results in a "resonant, vowel-like consonant" (The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, 1998). In AAVE, when liquid consonants follow vowels, they are either not pronounced or they are pronounced as unstressed vowels (schwa ə or *uh* sound) (Thomas, 2007: 454).

Table 6. Examples of liquid vocalization in AAVE (Green, 2002: 120)

AAE	Phonetic transcription	
a. cout	[kot]	"court"
b. bea	[bæə]	"bear"
c. brotha	[brʌðə]	"brother"
d. toe	[to]	"tore"
AAE	Phonetic transcription	
a. bea	[bɛə]	"bell"
b. pia	[pɪə]	"pill"
c. coo	[ko:]	"cold"

Consonant clusters in AAVE are also susceptible to movement, or rearrangement. This occurrence is called metathesis, and usually signifies two sounds in a word being pronounced in a different order than they would usually be pronounced (Thomas, 2007: 452). Thomas (2007: 452) notes the most well-known example in AAVE, the pronunciation of "ask" as *aks*, deemed incorrect in Standard English when the word has only undergone the process of metathesis, which has a long history in the English language. Cole et al. (2022) blame "linguicism", or language- or dialect-based discrimination, stating how *aks* is simply an alternative mispronunciation (not unlike "economics" being pronounced in different ways, as *eekonomics* or *eckonomics*). The authors go on to trace the origin of this form of "ask" back to Old English and Germanic, mentioning the example of the first English Bible wherein the formal written form of "ask" at the time was used in the phrase "Axe and it shall be given to you" (Cole et al., 2022). In late 19th century South Louisiana, Pearce (1890-96: 71) noted the use of *aks*, writing how it is "[c]ommon among the ignorant, particularly those of English descent (…) It of course [sic] dates back to Anglo-Saxon days". Thomas (2007: 453) concludes that it is unclear whether this

particular example of metathesis came from British dialectal forms or appeared spontaneously in AAVE.

3.2.2. Other phonological features and prosody

Certain consonant cluster peculiarities present in AAVE have received less attention due to their infrequency; nevertheless, the following example is worth mentioning. Speech pathologists, unsure whether it was a dialectal feature or a speech disorder, found the cluster *skr* appearing in place of the initial cluster *str* with young AAVE speakers somewhat concerning (Green, 2002: 122). To provide an example, words like *street* or *stretch* are occasionally pronounced as *skreet* and *skretch*. Green (2002: 233) observed a situation wherein a student was tasked with reading a text containing both words and, failing to pronounce them in accordance with SAE rules, was met with stern corrections, ultimately feeling discouraged and refusing to read the rest of the text. The conclusion to this story is one in tone with previously addressed musings on the inadequate approach to features of non-standard varieties, especially African American Vernacular English, being employed by students in the US education system. In the words of van Keulen et al. (1998: 185): "Calling on teachers to desist from correcting students' language errors is not a call for acceptance of poor performance. More than anything, it is a call for teachers to be very careful not to miscommunicate to students a dislike or disdain for an integral part of their identity and self-concept."

As for vowel variations, Thomas (2007: 457) starts off with lexical-specific variants, namely the pronunciation of *aunt* with an initial [ɑ] sound, like in "lot". It is believed that this pronunciation of *aunt*, or the "broad *a*" in general was considered prestigious on Southern plantations, where the sound was heard in words such as *pasture* or *master* (Thomas, 2007: 457). Additionally, unstressed vowels in initial syllables are susceptible to deletion, i.e. *'nough* for "enough" or *'head* for "ahead"; although Thomas (2007: 459) put this feature among the "older" features of AAVE, I would argue that, at least in online culture, it is very much present with all generations. Expressions like *nuff said* (for "enough said") and *go 'head* (for "go ahead") are widely used. Deletion of entire syllables, however, could be considered dated, like *'come* for "become" or *'spect* for "respect" (Thomas, 2007: 460).

Prosody deals with acoustic and rhythmic elements of speech, and so prosodic studies will normally concern word stress, intonation, and timing. Green (2002: 124) mentions the

concepts of "sounding black" and "sounding white", and how it is sometimes possible to identify speakers' ethnicities based solely on their speech patterns, although this brings into the picture another set of complications and leaves room for more prejudice. The author goes on to say that it is likely that, while not all AAVE speakers will employ grammatical and phonological features listed in the previous subchapters and chapters of this thesis, they "will use intonational and rhythmic patterns associated with AA[V]E" (Green, 2002: 125). Continuing, Green (2002: 126) speculated it might just be the prosodic features of AAVE that will, once given more attention, provide a definite answer to the question of the origin of the vernacular. In any case, prosodic features of African American English have been hinted at in chapters discussing AAVE grammatical and phonological features; it has been established that the vernacular is highly dynamic, with deliberate omissions, deletions and stressing of certain syntactic features in order to convey emotion with as much precision as possible.

The lyrical and emphatic quality of AAVE speech is surely one of the reasons why this vernacular, more than any other non-standard variety, has such a hold on audiences of all races and backgrounds, and why its features have become inseparable from 21st-century Internet culture, spilling over into the material world and leading to controversy and varying opinions on whether this is acceptable behavior or culture theft. This issue will be examined further in the following chapter.

4. The modern AAVE paradox

A look at present day African American Vernacular English provides valuable insight into social dynamics on a much grander scale. In 2022, rap and hip-hop music was once again the best-performing genre in America, as noted by Insanul Ahmed for *Billboard*, a long-standing music and entertainment magazine. Ahmed (2022) stated that, even though the growth of the genre was slowing, it remained overwhelmingly popular, and even the genres catching up to it have been heavily influenced by hip-hop. In the same vein, the reality show *RuPaul's Drag Race,* wherein contestants – drag performers from all over the United States – are competing for the title of "America's Next Drag Superstar", produced numerous phrases that made their way into the mainstream, speaking to its cultural significance. Drag is a performance art form based on exaggerating features of a certain gender identity, usually of the female sex. This type of performance art has a long history but reached unprecedented levels of popularity with *Drag Race*, with audiences of vastly different backgrounds tuning in and incorporating LGBTQIA+ slang into their vocabularies. Many contestants using the slang being persons of color, and RuPaul – the creator of the show himself – being Black, the slang that is appropriated by audiences belongs to both the Black and queer communities, the same communities that face discrimination and are often victims of hate crimes across the country.

In 2020, The Black Lives Matter movement erupted and spread across the United States and the world following the tragic death of George Floyd, an African American man who lost his life while being restrained by a white police officer in Minneapolis, Minnesota. This was not the first, or unfortunately the last, murder of a Black person by police officers in the United States, but this documented and rapidly shared instance of excessive violence ignited thousands of protests across the country and subsequently the world, all in the midst of a global covid-19 pandemic. Questions were raised about police funding, inclusivity and racial equality, spawning among others a discussion on African American Vernacular English. Linguist Chi Luu, in her article for JSTOR Daily titled *Black English Matters*, tackled several issues already mentioned in this paper, such as the use of double negatives being viewed as uneducated speech, together with habitual *be* or perfective *done,* and people harboring negative assumptions about those that speak different dialects and languages (Luu, 2020). In her 2017 TED talk, tech entrepreneur Chandra Arthur, noted her own incident with the US law enforcement, when a neighbor falsely reported a

suspected break-in in Arthur's home, when in fact, it was just the homeowner inside the house. Arthur wonders if, had she not presented herself as a collected, well-spoken woman while facing the guns pointed at her on her own property, she would even have lived to tell the story – code-switching, unfortunately, probably played a life-saving role in this situation (TED, 2017).

Considering all of the above, subchapters 4.1. and 4.2. will look at code-switching and cultural and linguistic appropriation respectively, as the two create what the author of this thesis calls "the modern AAVE paradox".

4.1. Code-switching

Code-switching, or shifting between linguistic codes within a single stretch of speech, is a common occurrence among bilingual and multilingual people, as well as speakers of various language dialects, especially when social contexts require them to use standardized language (Morrison, 2023). Bilingual and multilingual people will often admit to switching from one language to another within a single utterance, occasionally even assuming slightly different personalities with each language or code, i.e. more relaxed or confident. Ezeh et al. (2022: 106) provided a definition of codes as specific language varieties or dialects when they looked at code-switching and code-mixing in teaching and learning English as a second language. The authors thus joined the long tradition of studying code-switching in the context of second language acquisition; it was only fairly recently that researchers began looking into code-switching among minorities, particularly speakers of the African American vernacular.

People code-switch for a number of reasons: sometimes it makes it easier for them to express themselves, or they might wish to share a secret or something confidential in a public space and avoid it being overheard and understood by people around, or it can happen by complete accident. However, the reasons minorities in the United States will probably name for their own use of code-switching is – fitting in, presenting themselves as non-threatening, or increasing their chances of employment and social acceptance. As Young (2009: 50) states on the topic of the relationship between AAVE and Standard American English in education, "code-switching is not about accommodating two language varieties in one speech act (...) it's not about the practice of language blending, rather, it characterizes the teaching of language conversion".

The first person to ever use the term code-switching was Lucy Shepard Freeland, an American linguist who studied the language of the Sierra Miwok people of California in 1951

(Salazar, 2020). Seventy years later, Danica Salazar (2020) wrote an article on code-switching for the Oxford English Dictionary blog, prompted by a recent revision of the dictionary entry for this very term. Salazar noted the stigma around code-switching, and the social issue of insisting on language purity, remembering how, as a child, she was "fined a few cents for every Filipino word that came out of [her] mouth in English class" (Salazar, 2020). Salazar (2020) additionally commented on code-switching among AAVE speakers, noticing how, on top of modifying their speech, they needed to do the same with their appearance and manner, which is why she calls for a reconsideration of the very definition of code-switching, implying the need for its expansion.

The two dominant models within the study of the sociolinguistic aspects of linguistic code-switching are Giles's Speech Accommodation Theory, or Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles, Bourhis and Taylor, 1997), and Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model, or Rational Choice Model (Myers-Scotton and Bolonyai, 2001). The former is listener-centered and based on "convergence", or the innate human need to adapt their speech and behavior patterns to others when seeking social approval or attempting to improve interaction. The Rational Choice Model, on the other hand, focuses on the speaker rather than the listener and observes the bigger picture, meaning that this model abides by the macro-societal linguistic conventions that ultimately determine the speaker's speech style; in other words, the speaker bases their speech on the purposes they have in given communicative events (Hlavac, 2012: 49). On this matter, a Pew Research Center study found that younger college-educated Black Americans were most likely to (feel the need to) code-switch around people of different racial or ethnic backgrounds (Dunn, 2019). This demographic having first-hand experience with the requirements of a specific job market they were about to enter following graduation likely caused them to pick up on social cues that pointed them in the direction of assuming separate identities in order to come across as more presentable, knowledgeable, and therefore employable.

Bukowski (2019: 18) writes, in his study of the perception of code-switching among African American males, how shifting between codes was common during the generation of slavery and how enslaved Africans would develop codes to evade suspicion from slavers – "once these words were identified or decoded, they were immediately dropped from the vernacular". Throughout history, it was common for oppressed groups to devise communication systems to distinguish themselves from the oppressor, and AAVE likely evolved much the same way (Rickford and Rickford, 2000: 139). Bukowski aimed to answer the question of whether the

interviewed African American men considered code-switching to be a requirement or a choice, considering the social dynamics in the United States. In *Sorry to Bother You - the perception of code-switching among African American males*, Bukowski (2019) sought to understand whether the interviewed African American males were able to identify and explain why they code-switch, leading to the following results: all subjects either had experience or knew of situations where code-switching to SAE helped in building professional relationships, whereas AAVE discourse would become useful in relating Black professionals with their Black clients (Bukowski, 2019: 66).

Nelson (1990) examined the patterns and significance of code-switching in oral life narratives of African American women. Interviewing 30 women, Nelson attempted to gauge the subjects' views on "role multiplicity, a consequence of contemporary social and economic pressures as well as a historical model dating back at the least to the plantation when demands for the women's labor at an early age were not restricted to traditionally defined female roles" (Nelson, 1990: 144). Nelson, a Black woman herself, found that the participants would start off the interviewing process in Standard English, considering the academic nature of the conversation, but would gradually relax and switch to AAVE, encouraged by the shared cultural backgrounds of interviewer and interviewee. Nelson used conversation tactics called cosigning and completing, common in Black culture and stemming from customs of Black churches and sermons, where a congregation would agree with the pastor in unison (cosigning), or respond by finishing a statement, whether it is answering a rhetorical question or talking spontaneously with the speaker (completing) (Nelson, 1990: 148). Like Bukowski's study participants, Black women in Nelson's study emphasize the lack of emotion in Standard English, and the connections that are formed when engaging in a conversation with Nelson in AAVE. The fluency of these women in both the dominant language and their community's vernacular presents a challenge to the linguistic hegemony of the United States. Nelson (1990: 154), approaching the matter from an educator's point of view, concludes that it is, in fact, educators who have to "release [their] own hegemonic assumptions regarding public discourses", which will bring society closer to "developing strategies which utilize the particular propensities of ethnic-based vernaculars to assist students in diversifying their linguistic repertoires".

It is important, finally, to stress the toll that mandatory code-switching takes on anyone. Marion Williams, who studied attribution theory – individuals' perceptions of everyday

experiences – in the context of second language acquisition, wrote in her essay *Motivation in Foreign and Second Language Learning: An Interactive Perspective* how language was part of "a person's social being: it is part of one's identity, and is used to convey this identity to other people. The learning of a foreign language (...) involves an alteration in self-image, the adoption of new social and cultural behaviors and ways of being, and therefore has a significant impact on the social nature of the learner" (Williams and Burden, 1997: 115). This, I believe, applies to Black American code-switching, which carries with it undeniable psychological effects and mental and emotional strain, despite it being a bonding vessel for Black speakers of the vernacular as well. Due to the academic insistence on the mastery of Standard American English, Black Americans are, in a sense, bilingual, and bilingual people will often report different perceptions of themselves depending on the language they use in certain situations. W.E.B. DuBois, a notable African American intellectual and activist, thus described in 1897 a notion of Black people's "double consciousness", or a "sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others that leaves them with a longing to merge their double selves into "a better, truer self" (DuBois, 1897). Bell hooks (1992: 22) will, a hundred years later, use the term "Otherness" in a similar way, although the "Other" is perceived as such from outside, by the whites, who participate in "commodity culture", trivializing Blackness and especially Black women's bodies.

4.2. Appropriation

In Latin, *ad + propriare* stands for "to make one's own" – herein lies the root of the English verb "to appropriate", used often today to describe taking elements of a different culture and claiming them as your own, regularly without showing any respect for said culture. This is a fairly recent development of the word's meaning. In mid-20th century conceptual art, appropriation stood for experimenting with different media and deconstructing the notion of fine arts. Mishan (2022) emphasizes how cultural appropriation is anything but a fair trade, and mentions Minh Ha T. Pham's term "racial plagiarism", deeming the expression more fitting for this discourse, and adding how African American cultural elements, when removed from their context, become "explicitly non-Black".

Two other types of exploitative and discriminatory behavior are often mentioned in the discussion of AAVE and cultural appropriation. Commodification, or taking a certain culture out of its context and making it into something consumable, was explored thoroughly by author and

activist bell hooks. In her philosophical essay *Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance* hooks (1992: 22) writes of what she calls Otherness, referring to the Black identity, and of the level of fascination with Otherness due to its inherent exoticism. After centuries of outright racial repudiation, it is almost as if a new form of racism emerged, with the dominant white culture sensualizing and appropriating curated elements of Black culture to the point of fetishization. Hooks (1992: 21) observes how "within commodity culture, ethnicity becomes spice, seasoning that can liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture". In the context of the African American vernacular, Anna Lehn (2020), in her critical observation of the commodification of Black culture, points out that the "white use of AAVE vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation without relationship, attribution, or historical critique is a form of appropriation that reinforces white hegemony".

The second term often mentioned alongside commodification is *blackfishing*, or a trend of "appearing black", usually for attention or popularity, hence why it is normally employed by public figures. Cherid (2021: 263) adds onto hooks' analysis of cultural appropriation as especially detrimental to Black women, who are being viewed as sexual objects, by stating how "Black womanhood has been essentialized into the Black female body in a way that is curated to be consumed by White audiences". Pop and rap music artists like Ariana Grande and Iggy Azalea have been accused of blackfishing after altering their physical appearance, mannerisms, and patois (speaking in a so-called "blaccent"). Public and pop culture figures being role models for their often young and impressionable audiences, it is anything but surprising that this behavior would be replicated by music fans across the country and worldwide. Another global pop-star with Albanian heritage, Rita Ora, has also been confronted for presenting herself as racially ambiguous, even openly admitting to enjoying this ambiguity as it "gets her places" (Milan, 2020).

Bucholz (1999) examined the experience of a white middle-class European American boy who identified with Black culture and, therefore, freely used AAVE in communication. The author posited that the subject's "crossing" into African American Vernacular English was "in conjunction with other discursive strategies, a semiotic resource for the construction of identity (…)" (Bucholz, 1999: 444). The identity in question stems from the common association of Black masculinity with hyperphysicality, Bucholz (1999: 444) writes, and the desire of the study subject to appear more threatening. It should, however, be noted that it is important to distinguish

appropriation from natural language acquisition; growing up in predominantly working-class Black communities, members of other races, including white, will employ AAVE linguistic features, as observed in various studies (Hatala, 1976; Sweetland, 2002). What distinguishes appropriators from authentic users – Bucholz's study subject from Hatala's and Sweetland's – is information on where the speaker is from, where they reside, their ethnicity as well as the class they belong to (Petrov, 2021: 19). The widespread appropriation of AAVE across social media can therefore not be considered authentic, or even respectful of the culture.

Shammet (2021) mentions several expressions and phrases found in Black and queer communities – "yas queen", "periodt", "chile", "woke", "I feel you" – expressing her dissatisfaction with these and other phrases being "swallowed into Internet culture". Indeed, the author of this paper has, over the years, become familiar with all of the above examples: *yas queen* is an expression of enthusiastic support, *periodt* (pronounced as "period") is added at the ends of statements to communicate there is nothing more to be said, *chile* is a somewhat patronizing form of the word "child", *woke* indicates social awareness and being politically conscious, and *I feel you* is an idiomatic expression of empathy and understanding. Some of the words listed have become so commonplace that their definitions have been added to official dictionaries. Semiotician Yuri Lotman's 1984 theory of semiospheres could be applied here – as Lotman (2005: 225) wrote: "after entering a specific general culture, a given culture begins to cultivate its own originality in a more acute fashion". Only, whether this outlook sees AAVE as a mere enrichment of the American English language is not clear; this would be reductive, as it would effectively strip the vernacular of its long and complex history.

5. Conclusion

African American Vernacular English is one of many dialects in the United States of America, yet none of the other vernaculars sparked nearly as much debate and controversy. Much has yet to be explored, starting with the very beginnings of the vernacular, as no consensus has ever been reached with regards to the true origin of the African American vernacular, named so for the millions of African slaves who were brought over against their will to the 17th-century colonies in the American South. The South is where Ebonics first emerged, spreading later to other parts of the US and leading to geographical and class variation within the vernacular. Numerous unique grammatical, phonological, and syntactical features are the likely key to the mystery of the vernacular's origin, as much as they are a phenomenon in the current age of social media. Black English vocabulary, pronunciation, and syntax have for decades been present, if not front and center, in pop culture and social media, joined by phrases originating from drag culture and LGBTQIA+ slang.

From the earliest known records of Black speech in the US – newspaper ads for runaway slaves in the 18th century, through the era of intensive linguistic research of the vernacular from the mid-20th century onward – prompted in part by the shortcomings of and prejudice across the educational system – all the way to present day, AAVE has been under scrutiny, as has the entire Black community. The year 2020 reignited the call for equality; the Black Lives Matter movement brought to light systemic issues within the American society and started many important conversations, some of them pertaining to African American Vernacular English. People have increasingly been calling out instances of cultural appropriation, or the act of taking ideas, customs, and styles from the Black community and using them, leading to the commodification of Black culture and identity as a whole.

Racial and cultural appropriation on their own would perhaps not be as problematic and could potentially be seen as borderline respectful if, on the other hand, the American society was not simultaneously characterized by glaring racial and cultural inequality. The Black and queer communities whose expressions and phrases have even been making their way into English dictionaries continue to be considered as lesser than their straight white counterparts, and members of the oppressed and marginalized communities are often left with no choice but to code-switch in various social and professional environments to minimize judgment and

sometimes even to stay safe. While searching for the elusive origin and missing links from the earliest days of AAVE is undoubtedly important, looking into solutions for more pressing social issues that are stopping this poetic and emphatic vernacular from receiving the respect it deserves, and applying these solutions through education should absolutely be made a priority.

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Summary

The aim of this paper is to lay out the centuries-long history of the African American vernacular, its development not only as a dialect but as an expression of identity, unique in its grammar, phonology and vocabulary. A concise timeline of the vernacular that simultaneously diverged from and converged with Standard American English is joined by an enumeration of its unique linguistic features and an examination of sociolinguistic studies, as this dialect garnered significant attention from the 20th century onward. Finally, a paradox related to AAVE is explored, wherein on the one hand, the Black community has to perpetually fight the systemic inequalities starting in and spreading from the education system, and on the other their vocabulary and grammar are continually being appropriated by white non-speakers of the dialect.

Key words: African American Vernacular English, AAVE grammar, code-switching, appropriation

Sažetak

Ovaj rad ima za cilj donijeti povijesni pregled afroameričkog vernakulara, njegova lingvističkog i društvenog razvoja, kao i njegovih jedinstvenih gramatičkih i fonoloških karakteristika. Rad prati pojavu i širenje afroameričkoga dijalekta koji se, ovisno o geografskim i klasnim okolnostima, istovremeno približavao standardiziranom američkom engleskom jeziku i od istog se udaljavao. Nadalje, iznesen je pregled nekih sociolingvističkih istraživanja koja su se ovim dijalektom često bavila od dvadesetog stoljeća naovamo. Naposljetku, cilj je rada također istražiti zanimljiv paradoks vezan uz afroamerički vernakular – danas se afroamerička zajednica mora, s jedne strane, kontinuirano boriti za jednakost u američkom društvu u kojem su njeni pripadnici redovito prisiljeni prebacivati kôd, odnosno mijenjati način na koji komuniciraju, dok su s druge strane jedinstveni afroamerički izrazi nerijetko predmetom aproprijacije od strane bijelaca u Americi i svijetu.

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IZJAVA O POHRANI I OBJAVI OCJENSKOG RADA (DIPLOMSKOG RADA)

Studentica: Lea Tomić

Naslov rada: African American Vernacular English

Znanstveno područje i polje: Humanističke znanosti, filologija

Vrsta rada: Diplomski rad

Mentorica rada: doc.dr.sc. Ivana Petrović

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