**Theme: Linguistic Аspects of Black English.**

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**Introduction.**

**Topicality.**

The topic of Black English is very actual in terms of sociolinguistics and language interaction development, in racial relations and ethnic cultures. Through understanding Linguistic Aspects of Black English we can observe peculiarities of language development and culture of people.

Aim.

The aim of this work is to research the linguistic aspects of Black English language.

Objectives of the paper are:

- to analyze the origin of Black English.

- to analyze the development of Pidgin and Creole.

- to consider differences between Black English, Standard English,

British English, and British Black English.

- to investigate the African American Vernacular English and its use in

teaching process.

- to research the phonetic peculiarities of B.E.

- to investigate the grammar peculiarities of B.E.

- to consider the lexical peculiarities of B.E.

Black English is a social dialect of American English, originated and formed as a result of language interaction in the process of historical development.

The topic of the diploma work is to study Black English as a sociolect of American variant of English language, analyze its linguistics aspects, especially phonetic, grammatic, lexical formed in the process of historical development. The historic development and linguistics characteristics make up the core content of work. Black English is the communicative and social system, originally created at the intersection of three dimensions – social class, ethnic and territorial

Black English is a term going back to 1969. It is used almost exclusively as the name for a dialect of American English spoken by many black Americans.

Black English is a variety of English, spoken in America and it is the subject of many controversies, the problem being that of whether considering it a language, a dialect or simply a slang talk. This language variety, also known a Ebonics, is nearly as old as Standard American English, but it has often been misinterpreted as defective, it has never been standardized and has always had lower status compared to Standard American English.

From the 1960’s to the present, African American English has increasingly become also acceptable term for Black English , and the corresponding official name for the language variety used by Africans Americans is thus African American English or African American Vernacular English (AAVE).(15,65)

Black English Vernacular (BEV) as coined by William Labov in 1972 defines the variety American English spoken by Black People. Its pronunciation is in some respects common to Southern American English, which is spoken by many African Americans in the United States and by many non-African American.

Ebonics is a recent and controversial neologism, coined by Robert L. Williams during a 1973 conference in St. Louis, Missouri, “cognitive and Language Development of the Black Child”. It is a blend of ebony (a synonym for black that lacks its pejorative connotations) and phonics (pertaining to speech sounds) and by definition it refers specifically to an African-language-based Creole (from an earlier pidgin) that has been relexified by borrowing from English, resulting in what African Americans now speak in the United States.(34,54)

Black English is complex, controversial, and only partly understood. Records of the early speech forms are sparse. It is unclear, how much influence black speech has had on the pronunciation of southern whites; according to some linguists, generation of close contact resulted in the families of the slaves owners picking up some of the speech habits of their servants, which gradually developed into the distinctive southern ‘drawl’. Slave labor in the south gave birth to diverse linguistic norms; former indentured servants from all parts of the British Isles, who often became overseers on plantations, variously influenced the foundation of Black English. First the industrial revolution then the Civil War disrupted slavery and promoted African-American migration within the U.S., s a result of which slave dialects were transplanted from Southern plantation to the factories of the North and Midwest. There was a widespread exodus to the industrial cities of the northern states, and black culture became known throughout the country for its music and dance.

Many historical events have had an effect on Black English. One of this was the early use of English-based pidgins and creoles among slave populations, as almost all Africans originally were brought to the United States as slaves. Pidgin is a variety of a language which developed for some practical purpose, such as trading, among groups of people who did not know each other’s language. Creole is a pidgin which has become the first language of a social community. (17,124)

Black English was investigated in the USA by D. Crystal (“The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language ”,” English Language”), by C. Baugh and T.Cable (“History of the English Language”) , in Russia by R.V. Reznic, T.S. Sookina, (“A History of The English Language”), by A.D. Schweitzer (“The Social Differentiation of English in The USA.”), in Kazakhstan by F.S.Duisebayeva (“ Linguistics Aspects of Black English”) but there are no monographic research of B.E. in our country. ( 12,8,9,13,1,10)

Theoretical base of research are comprised by the works of D.Crystal, C.Baugh and T.Cable, A.D.Schweitzer, F.S. Duisebayeva and etc.

Theoretical significance.

The investigation of Black English Language and its linguistic aspects contribute for a further development of sociolinguistics theory, American studies etc.

The practical significance.

This material can be used as teaching manual in the process of teaching English Language, Lexicology, History of the English language, Area studies.

Methods of research.

The following methods are used in the paper: comparative, descriptive, analytical.

The structure of work.

The diploma work consists of an introduction, three chapters, conclusion and bibliography.

The introduction covers topicality, aim, objectives, and theoretical base of research, theoretical significance, the practical significance, and methods of research and the structure of work.

Chapter I. Development of Black English presents historical review of Black English, analyses of the origin of Black English, the development of Pidgin and Creole.

Chapter II. Development of the U.S. Black English considers differences of Black English and Standard English, British English and British Black English, A.A.V.E. and its use in teaching process.

Chapter III. Linguistic aspects of B.E analyses the phonetic, grammar, lexical peculiarities of B.E.

Conclusion present the results of the investigation.

Bibliography covers 39 units of materials, used in the diploma paper.

**Chapter I. Historical review of B.E.**

**1. The Origin of Black English.**

According to J.L. Dillard some 80% of black Americans speak the Black English, and he and many commentators stress its African origins. The history of Black English in the United States is complex, controversial, and only partly understood. Black English is a term going back only to 1969. It is used almost exclusively as the name for a dialect for American English spoken by many black Americans. Records of the early speech forms are sparse. It is unclear, how much influence black speech has had on the pronunciation of southern whites; according to some linguists, generation of close contact resulted in the families of the slaves owners picking up some of the speech habits of their servants, which gradually developed into the distinctive southern ‘drawl’. (33,23)

From the early 17-th century, ships from Europe traveled to the West African coast, where they exchanged cheap good for black slaves. The slaves were shipped in barbarous conditions to the Caribbean islands and the American coast, where they were in tern exchanged for such commodities as sugar, rum, and molasses. The ships then returned to England, completing an ‘Atlantic triangle’ of journeys, and the process began again. The first 20 African slaves arrived in Virginia on a Dutch ship in 1619. Britain and the United States had outlawed the slave trade by the American Revolution (1776) their numbers had grown to half a million, and there were over 4 million by the time slavery was abolished, at the end of the United States Civil War (1865).

The policy of the slave-trades was to bring people of different language backgrounds together in the ships, to make it difficult for the groups to plot rebellion. The result was the growth of several pidgin forms of communication, and in particular a pidgin between the slavers and the sailors, many of whom spoke English.

The black slaves who were arriving in Jamestown, Va. In 1619. Manhattan Island in 1635 and Massachusetts in 1638 have used the Afro- European varieties for communication among themselves. In 1692, justice Hathorne recorded Tituba, an African slave from the island of Barbados in the British West Indies, speaking in the pidgin of the slaves. Tituba was quoted as saying “He tell me he God,” The words of the phrase are English, but the structure and grammar of the phrase are congruous with that pf the West African languages that Smitherman identifies. (32, 8)

During the early years of American settlement, a highly distinctive form of English was emerging in the island of the West Indies and the Southern part of the mainland, spoken by the incoming black population. The emergence of slave trade was a consequence of the important of African slaves to work on the sugar plantations, a practice started by the Spanish in 1517.

First the industrial revolution then the Civil War disrupted slavery and promoted African-American migration within the U.S., s a result of which slave dialects were transplanted from Southern plantation to the factories of the North and Midwest. Slave labor in the south gave birth to diverse linguistic norms; former indentured servants from all parts of the British Isles, who often became overseers on plantations, variously influenced the foundation of Black English. There was a widespread exodus to the industrial cities of the northern states, and black culture became known throughout the country for its music and dance. (15, 36). Black English was born of slavery between the late XVI c.- early XVII c. and middle XIX c. and followed black migration from the southern states to racially isolated ghettos throughout the United States.

Slave labor in the south gave birth to diverse linguistic norms; former indentured servants from all parts of the British Isles, who often became overseers on plantations, variously influenced the foundation of B.E.V. first the industrial revolution the Civil War disrupted slavery and promoted African American migration within the United States, as a result of which slave dialects were transplanted from Southern plantation to the factories of the North and Midwest. An artifact not of race but of a speech community, Black English originated as a pidgin (a simplified language used in a commercial context to facilitate communication among speakers of different languages) that the slaves coming from a variety of language backgrounds used to communicate among themselves.

In the XVIII century, more records of the speech of slaves and the representations of their speech were produced. In fact, J.L. Dillard claims that “By 1715 there clearly was an African Pidgin English known on a worldwide scale. In 1744, an ad in The New York Evening Post read: “Ran away … a new African Fellow named Prince, he can’t scarce speak a Word of English.” In 1760, an ad in the North Carolina Gazette read: “Ran away from the Subscriber, African Born, speaks bad English. In 1734, the Philadelphia American Weekly Mercury read: “Ran away …; he’s Pennsylvanian born and speaks good English.” (33, 16)

Quotations from Black English speakers became abundant in the records of Northern states by about 1750, nearly half a century before the earliest records in the Southern colonies were found in Charleston, S.C. (10, 1)

Black characters made their way into show business in 1777 with the comical Trial of Atticus before Justice Beau, for Rape. In this farcical production, "one of our neighbor's," says "Yes, Maser, he tell me that Atticus he went to bus 'em one day, and a shilde cry, and so he let 'em alon". Much like Tituba's statement, the statements above use English vocabulary, yet the structure and grammar of the statements well in keeping with that of the West African Languages.

Other informative evidence in tracing the development of Black English lies in newspaper ads reporting runaway slaves. In locating and identifying a runaway slave, the slaves' speech played an instrumental role. It is important to remember that the slave trade was not outlawed until 1808, and even then it was not strictly adhered to. Smitherman reports that "As late as 1858, over 400 slaves were brought direct from Africa to Georgia". Consequently, there was a constant influx of Africans who spoke no English at all. This produced a community of people with a broad array of mastery of Black English and even Standard English. (32, 84)

This is made clear when we see the newspaper ads that reported runaway slaves. This stratification of language is vital in the development and the development of the perception of Black English, if it is remembered that not all Blacks were slaves in Early America. Successful runaways were likely to be those who attained a relative mastery of Standard English. The mastery of Standard English would prove invaluable to a slave who had to travel a long distance across American soil to win his freedom. Further more, early Black writers, such as Frederick Douglass, wrote in the Standard English of his time. A mastery of Standard English was also beneficial in passing as a free Black. In a very real and disturbing way, Black English became the language of slavery and servitude. (35, 212)

During the Civil war period, abolitionists made the speech of slaves know to all serious readers of that era. Writers such as Harriet Beecher Stowe and Thomas Halliburton produced many works that indicated their knowledge of the existence of Black English. While the Civil War and the emancipation of slaves were significant historical events, their impact was mitigated severely by the Jim Crow era. Although everyone labeled "Negro" by the Jim Crow laws did not speak Black English, it is safe to assume that those Blacks who did speak Black English far outnumbered those who spoke Standard English.

**2. Development of Pidgin and Creole.**

In this part we introduce pidgin languages and their characteristics. A pidgin is a system of communication which has grown up among people who do not share a common language, but who want to talk to it other, for treading or other reasons. The characteristic of a pidgin is that it is no one’s native language: it is a second language for all its speakers. This is true of a pidgin whether it is still in the process of formation or it has been around in a stable form for hundreds of years as West African Pidgin English has. However, it is possible for a pidgin to become a native language for some or all of its speakers.

Pidgins have been variously called ‘makeshift’, ‘marginal’, or ‘mixed’ language. They have a limited vocabulary, a reduced grammatical structure, and a much narrower range of functions, compared to the language which gave rise to them. They are the native language of no-one, but they are nonetheless a main means of communication for millions of people, and a major focus of interest those who study the way languages change.

In many parts of the world pidgin languages are used routinely in such daily matters as news broadcasts, safety instructions, newspapers, and commercial advertising. And the more developed pidgin languages have been used for translations of Shakespeare and the bible. Pidgin grew up along the trade routes of the world- especially in those parts where the British, French and Dutch built up their empires. (8, 36)

Pidgin English’s are mainly to be found in to big families- one in the Atlantic, one in the Pacific. The Atlantic varieties developed in West Africa, and were transported to the West Indies and America during the years of the slave trade. In Africa they are still widely used in the Gambia, Sierra Lione, Liberia, Ghana, Togo, Nigeria, and Cameroon. The Pacific varieties are found in wide sweep across the south- western part of the ocean, from the coast of chine to the northern part of Australia, in such part as Hawaii, Vanuatu, and Papua New Guinea. In the Americas, they are found, in a developed form, in most of its islands and on the mainland, spoken largely by the black populations. Estimates very, but probably about sixty million people speak or understand one or other of these forms of English.

Pidgins often have a very little life span. While the Americans were in Vietnam, a Pidgin English grew up there, but it quickly disappeared when the troops left. In similar way, many pidgins which grew up for trading purposes have ceased to exist, because the countries which were in contact stopped trading with each other. On the other hand, if a trading contact is very likely learn each other’s language, and there will then be no reason for the continued use of the pidgin.

A very significant development then took place. People began to use the pidgin at home. As children were born into these families, the pidgin language became their mother tongue. When this happened, the status of the language fundamentally altered, and it came to be used in a more flexible and creative way.

The term Creole comes from Portuguese cariole, and originally meant a person of European descent who had been born and brought up in a colonial territory. Later it came to be applied to other people who were native of these areas and then to the rind of language they spoke. Creoles are now classified as English based, French based, and so on- though the genetic relation ships of a Creole to its dominant linguistic sector is never straightforward, as the Creole may display the influences of several contact languages in its sounds, vocabulary and stubby. (17, 22)

A Creole is a pidgin language which has become the mother tongue of a community- a definition which emphasizes that pidgins and Creole are two stages in a single process linguistics development. First, within a community, increasing numbers of people begin to use pidgin as their principle means of communication. As a consequence their children hear it more than any other language, and gradually it takes on the status of a mother tongue for them. Within a generation or two, native language use becomes consolidated and widespread. The result is a Creole, or “creolized” language.

Despite the existence of many political and cultural differences, and then considerable geographical distances separating some of the countries involved there are striking similarities among the English based Creole languages of the world. This identity can bee seen at all levels of language structure, but is most dramatic relation to grammar. It can be explained, according to the Creole hypothesis, as a consequence of the way this languages have developed out of the kind of Creole English used by the first black slaves in America and the Caribbean. (17, 36)

This language it is thought was originally very different from English, as a result of its mixed African linguistics background, but generation of contact with the dominant white English population have had an inevitable effect, drawing g it much closer to the standard variety. There are certainly many differences between the various Caribbean creoles and between these and the varieties of Black English Vernacular used in the United States and the English based Creoles of West Africa; but the overall impression is one of a family of languages closely related in structure and idiom.

The switch from language to Creole involves a major expansion in the structural linguistics resources available - especially in vocabulary, grammar, and style, which now have to cope with the everyday demands made upon a mother tongue by its speakers. (18, 55)

The main source of conflicts is likely to be with the standard form of the language from which it derives, and which it derives and with witch it usually coexists. The standard languages have the status which comes with social prestige, education and wealth; the Creole has no such status its roots lying in a history of subservient and slavery. Inevitable, Creole speakers find themselves under great pressure to change their speech in the direction of the standard- a process known as decreolization.

One consequence of this is the emergence of a continuum of several varieties of Creole speech, at varying degrees of linguistics ‘distance’ from the standard- what has been called the ‘post- Creole continuum’ Another consequence is an aggressive reaction against the standard language on the part of Creole speakers, who assert the superior status of their Creole, and the need to recognize the ethnic identity of their community. Such a reaction can lead to a marked change in speech habits, as the speakers focus on what they see to be the ‘pure’ form of Creole- a process known as hyper- realization. (22, 248)

When a pidgin becomes a native language for some of its speakers, it said to become a Creole. This means that it is a language which has passed through a pidgin stage, and has now become the language of a community. Children growing up in that community speak the Creole as their native language. Very often, of course, there are other languages spoken in the community as well. Some children who speak the Creole may also speak other languages.

When a pidgin becomes a Creole, it may change its character somewhat. The differences are subtle and difficult to study, and a great deal has been written on this subject with little agreement being reached. However, we can say that where there are differences between the pidgin and the Creole, these will be related to the new functions which the Creole has taken on. It no longer serves just as a means of communication between adults with no other language in common; it is now a language through which children experience the world, develop their knowledge and mental capacities, and grow up.

Creolized varieties of English are very important throughout the Caribbean, and in the countries to which Caribbean people have emigrated- notably Britain. Black English in the United States is also Creole in origin.

There is often conflict between the Creole and Standard English in these places. The Creole gives its speakers their linguistic, as an ethnic group. Standard English, on the other hand, gives them access to the rest of the English-speaking world. It is not easy for governments to develop an acceptable language policy when such fundamental issues are involved. Social and political circumstances vary so much that no simple generalizations possible- except to emphasize the need for standard English users to replace their traditional dismissive attitude towards Creole speech with an informed awareness of its linguistics complexity as a major variety of modern English. (25,485)

**Chapter II. Development of the U.S. Black English.**

1. **Differences of B.E. and Standard English, British English and British Black English.**

Black English has features unique to its subsystem as well as features of the general system of English grammar. It has its own rules of grammar and phonology. One dominant characteristic is the amount of fluctuation in forms and constructions. Almost every statement about Black English includes a qualification such as "may occur", "sometimes", "often" or "generally." The same speaker will pronounce a plural ending on one occasion and on another occasion will drop it. One sentence will have ainґt for the past negative and the next didnґt or even ditnґt.

A device called "sweet talk" also appears in Black English. This means that new forms are often created to fit a particular setting or situation. In the rules of Standard English grammar "sweet talk" would be considered bad English because of its ignorance of grammatical rules. In Black English "sweet talk" serves to establish a verbal superiority: he who masters the language can control the communication and will thus also control the personal or group relationships of the situation. It is easy to see the connection between "sweet talk" and the language games often played on street corners by black children or the "rap battles" which are a part of current popular culture.

Another device is known as "eye dialect". This refers to changing the spelling of words without changing their sound, in order to characterize a speaker. For example, "was" can be spelled "wuz", although both are pronounced the same. The "wuz" spelling characterizes one as the speaker of a particular dialect, with its particular social connotations.

-British Black English.

 In the 1950s and 1960s people from the Caribbean migrated to Britain in relatively large numbers. Most of these settled in cities, especially in the large English cities, and in most of these communities people from Jamaica were more numerous than people from other parts of the Caribbean. Although the Caribbean is made up of many different islands and mainland territories, including many where an English Creole is not spoken, British Black English is most similar to Jamaican Creole, because of the larger number of Jamaicans who settled in this country.

 Linton Kwesi Johnson is probably the best known poet in Britain who is currently using Creole. His verse is spoken against a musical background (dubbing) and distributed on records, tapes and CDs. The poem "Sonny's Lettah", appeared in print in his anthology "Inglan' is a Bitch" (1980) and was recorded on his album Forces of Victory. (34)

“Mama, a jus couldn't stan up an no dhu notin so mi juk one ina im eye an him started to cry mi tump one ina him mouth an him started to shout mi kick one pon him shin an him started to spin mi tump him pon him chin an him drop pon a bin an crash an DEAD. Mama more police man come down an beat mi to di groun' dem charge Jim fi sus dem charge mi fi murder”

Now here is the same passage written in a phonemic orthography devised by Le Page and Cassidy for the Dictionary of Jamaican English (1980):

“Mama a jos kudn stan op an no du notin so mi juk wan ina him ai an him staatid to krai mi tomp wan ina him mout an him staatid tu shout mi kik wan pan him shin an him staatid tu spin mi tomp him pan him chin an him drap pan a bin an krash an DED. Mama Muor pliisman kom doun an biit mi tu di groun dem chaaj Jim fi sos dem chaaj mi fi morda.” (34)

People of Afro‑Caribbean descent who have been born in Britain nearly always learn the local variety of British English as their first language. Usually, they speak and understand Creole as well (though how well they know it varies from person to person) but use it less often than British English. Especially in private, informal conversations, both British English and Creole may be used. When a speaker "switches" from one language variety to another in the course of the same conversation ‑ sometimes even within one sentence ‑ this is called code switching. It is common behaviour among bilinguals of all kinds (though in some communities, it is frowned upon).

The following is an extract from a conversation among some young women in London. Most of the conversation is in British English but the speaker B. switches twice into Creole (underlined):

B it's that same guy that you go back to and have the

best life cause you know that guy you know [ what

C [ yeah

B to expect you two can sit down and (.) sort out

Where you went wrong=

C = yeah that's it, yeah

B an' you might end up marryin' that guy me know who

me want marry a'ready! [softly] so, you know it's

just [ \* \* \* [inaudible]

C [ \* \* \* [inaudible] gonna marry

J you see this is what I'm saying about Graham right,

I don't really know but you know when you see

someone and I tell you I did like Graham from the

First time I saw him, I mean it does take time

gettin' to know the right person

B Let me tell you now wiv every guy I've been out wiv,

it's been a ‑ a ­whole heap o' mont's before I move

wiv the nex' one!

J Next one, yeah!

The two switches to Creole by speaker B are both marked by a noticeable change in the pronunciation (not shown in the transcription), for example, "whole" is pronounced /h l/. In the "British English" parts, the speakers have fairly strong London accents (e.g. "with is pronounced" /w v/) but in the "Creole" parts, the phonemes and intonation patterns are pronounced as in Creole.

Linguists have identified many reasons for code switching. One persuasive theory is that in some bilingual communities, the language which has a longer association with the community (in this case Creole, which has its origin in the Caribbean) is used as a sign of solidarity, to signal membership of a group and show closeness to other group members. Research has shown that in the Afro-Caribbean community, Creole is often used to emphasise an important point (only in informal, personal conversations). There is no "right" or "wrong" answer to the question of why a speaker switches at a particular moment (usually they are not aware of switching). If you know any bilingual speakers, you might try recording them in conversation with other bilinguals to see whether, when, and in what ways they code switch. (16. 37)

The following Creole creative writing narrative was written by a London school pupil of Caribbean descent.

“Bull, Babylon, the Wicked

One manin in January me and my spars dem was coming from a club in Dalston. We didn't have no donsi so we a walk go home. De night did cold and di gal dem wi did have wid we couldn't walk fast. Anyway we must have been walking for about fifteen minutes when dis car pull up, it was this youthman ah know and him woman. We see sey a mini cab him inna. Him sey "How far you ah go?”(30,335)

Me sey "Not far, you ketch we too late man”.

Anyway before me could close me mout de two gal dem jump inna de car, bout sey dem nah walk no more. Me an Trevor tell dem fi gwan. And de car pull way.

Next ting me know me is about 50 yards from my yard and is the wicked dem just a come down inna dem can. At first me wanted fi run, but Trevor sey "run what" "After we no just kool". We don't have no weed or money pon us. Dem can't do notin. (30, 336)

Next ting we know dem grab we up anna push we into dem car. Me and Trevor put up a struggle but after a few licks we got pushed in. "Now then you two "Rastas" been ripping off mini cabs haven't you?” "We aren't "Rastas" and we don't know what you are talking about". "Save all that until we get to the station Rastus my son". Den him get pon him radio, and tell the station that him ketch the two responsible for that hold up of the mini cab. Trevor luk pon me I could see that he was worried.”

Thus we define the differences between Creole and British English:

 Glossary

manin : morning

spar : friend

donsi : money

gwan : go on

yard : home

weed : marijuana (drug)

Rasta : Rastafarian

List 1: sound differences - where the sound of the Creole (as shown by the spelling) is different from the sound you would expect in a British variety of English.

List 2: grammar differences - where the grammar seems to be different from standard.

List 3: vocabulary differences - words which are unfamiliar or which you think are Caribbean in origin.

Here is a list of British English equivalents to the Creole items.

Example:

List 1 (sounds) deze these

bes' best

helt' health

List 2 (grammar) dem waak they walked

him belly his belly

mi kick I kicked

List 3 (vocabulary) fi to

pan for

t'ief (to) steal

FEEDBACK: Creole is different from British English at these three levels.

BRITISH BLACK ENGLISH.

What is usually referred to as 'Black English' in Britain, is the Jamaican [Creole](http://www.eng.umu.se/city/weronica/linguistic_paper/creole.htm) or Patois, which is spoken by the Black Caribbean community living mainly in London , but other parts of GB too, even though the London community are the largest. There are obviously other black ethnic groupings in Britain, but none of the same magnitude. Jamaican Creole – the verb system by Sara Vestman, British Black English by David Sutcliffe, London Jamaican by Mark Sebba and Sociolinguistics – an introduction to language and society by Peter Trudgill. Some features in Jamaican Creole

1) [Personal pronouns](http://www.eng.umu.se/city/weronica/linguistic_paper/JC_personal_pronouns.htm) 2)  [The verb system](http://www.eng.umu.se/city/weronica/linguistic_paper/JC_verb_system.htm) 3) [The negative](http://www.eng.umu.se/city/weronica/linguistic_paper/JC_negative.htm)  4) [Tense and aspect](http://www.eng.umu.se/city/weronica/linguistic_paper/JC_tense_and_aspect.htm) 5)  [The phonology](http://www.eng.umu.se/city/weronica/linguistic_paper/JC_phonology.htm) 6) [Stress and tone](http://www.eng.umu.se/city/weronica/linguistic_paper/JC_stress_and_tone.htm)

For a long time, JC and other Creoles have been regarded as non-standard varieties inferior to Standard British English and the question of whether JC is a dialect or in fact a language, still has not been resolved. Regardless of that, JC has been recognised as an independent variety with its own grammar-system and vocabulary – as systematic and rule-governed as any other language – joined with SE by means of a [dialect continuum](http://www.eng.umu.se/city/weronica/linguistic_paper/dialect_continuum.htm).

The discussion about how to classify JC may seem to be of little importance, but if it were to be regarded as an English dialect comparable to Cockney or any other variety of English, it would be difficult to claim its relevancy as a school subject, since no other dialects are being taught in British schools. However, the situation for JC speakers seems to be rather different than that of 'normal' dialect speakers. JC speakers experience more difficulties in [code switching](http://www.eng.umu.se/city/weronica/linguistic_paper/code_switching.htm), thus are more inclined to make mistakes in writing and speaking SE. JC should be regarded as a language rather than a dialect, since the JC structure is so prominent that it becomes an obstruction to its speakers' use of SE. Sutcliffe claims that the degree of intelligibility between JC and SE is more comparable to that of Swiss German vs. Standard German and Catalan vs. Castilian Spanish, than to that of SE and even the broadest Scottish dialect. (39)

Seeing how great the diversity between JC and SE is, it would be of great importance to JC speakers to be able to learn their mother-tongue in school, alongside with SE. by learning JC in a similar way that they learn SE, the pupils would become better at distinguishing between the two, and thus the code-switching would come more natural to them.

One problem (amongst many) which is still to be solved is the fact that there is no accepted written standard. Attempts have been made to change this, and it is my beliefs that but still, the JC writings differ greatly with regards to spelling.

Another problem that must be overcome is the fact that the whole state education system is predicated on British SE. As I mentioned earlier, non-standard varieties of English have traditionally been regarded as inferior, and the school has disregarded and even penalised non-standard usage. This is slowly beginning to change, and with a newly awakened awareness of the important role that JC – as well as other language varieties – play in the maintaining of a child's identity, the demand for a curriculum that includes JC has been put forward. (39)

**2. African American Vernacular English and its use in teaching process.**

African American Vernacular English (AAVE) – also called African American English or Black English, Black Vernacular, Black English Vernacular (BEV), or Black Vernacular English (BVE); or controversially [Ebonics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ebonics) – is an [African American](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_American) [variety](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Variety_%28linguistics%29) ([dialect](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dialect), [ethnolect](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnolect) and [sociolect](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sociolect)) of [American English](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_English). Its [pronunciation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pronunciation) is in some respects common to [Southern American English](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southern_American_English), which is spoken by many African Americans and many non-African Americans in the United States. There is little regional variation among speakers of AAVE. ( 22, 547 )

African American Vernacular English (AAVE) is the variety formerly known as Black English Vernacular or Vernacular Black English among sociolinguists, and commonly called Ebonics outside the academic community. While some features of AAVE are apparently unique to this variety, in its structure it also shows many commonalties with other varieties including a number of standard and nonstandard English varieties spoken in the US and the Caribbean. AAVE has been at the heart of several public debates and the analysis of this variety has also sparked and sustained debates among sociolinguists.

It is extremely difficult to say how many people speak AAVE because it is not clear what exactly this would mean. Some speakers may use some distinctive aspects of phonology (pronunciation) and lexis (vocabulary) but none of the grammatical features associated with the variety. Many sociolinguists would reserve the term AAVE for varieties which are marked by the occurrence of certain distinctive grammatical features some of which are discussed below.

Even so it may still be difficult to say with any exactitude how many AAVE speakers there are since such grammatical features occur variably, that is, in alternation with standard features. Such variability in the speech both of groups and individuals reflects the complex social attitudes surrounding AAVE and other nonstandard varieties of English and it was this variability which initially attracted the attention of sociolinguists such as William Labov.(34, 214)

The history of AAVE and its genetic affiliation, by which we mean what language varieties it is related to, are also a matter of controversy. Some scholars contend that AAVE developed out of the contact between speakers of West African languages and speakers of vernacular English varieties. According to such a view, West Africans learnt English on plantations in the southern Coastal States (Georgia, South Carolina, etc.) from a very small number of native speakers (the indentured laborers). Some suggest that this led to the development of a rudimentary pidgin which was later expanded through a process of creolization.

Others who advocate a contact scenario for the development of AAVE suggest that the contact language (an early Creole-like AAVE) developed through processes of second language acquisition. According to such a view West Africans newly arrived on plantations would have limited access to English grammatical models because the number of native speakers was so small (just a few indentured servants on each plantation). In such a situation a community of second language learners might graft what English vocabulary that could be garnered from transient encounters onto the few grammatical patterns which are common to the languages of West Africa. (28, 49)

What linguists refer to as universal grammar (the law-like rules and tendencies which apply to all natural human language) would have played a significant role in such processes as well. This kind of thing seems to have taken place in the Caribbean and may also have happened in some places, at some times in the United States. For instance Gullah or Sea Islands Creole spoken in the Coastal Islands of South Carolina and Georgia seems to have formed in this way.

The demographic conditions in the US and the Caribbean (where restructured Creole languages are widely spoken) were really quite different and that the conditions necessary for the emergence of a fully fledged Creole language were never met in the US. These scholars have shown on a number of occasions that what look like distinctive features of AAVE today actually have a precedent in various varieties of English spoken in Great Britain and the Southern United States. It seems reasonable to suggest that both views are partially correct and that AAVE developed to some extent through restructuring while it also inherited many of its today distinctive features from older varieties of English which were once widely spoken.

As mentioned above AAVE is a matter of some public controversy as was seen most recently in the debate over the Ebonics ruling by the Oakland School Board. More than anything this debate made it clear to sociolinguists that they had failed in one of their primary objectives -- to educate the public and to disseminate the results of over twenty-five years of intense research.

Unfortunately, many public policy makers and sections of the public hold on to mistaken and prejudiced understandings of what AAVE is and what it says about the people who speak it. This matter is compounded by the fact that, with the AAVE-speaking community, attitudes towards the language are complex and equivocal. Many AAVE speakers contrast the variety with something they refer to as "Talking Proper". (23,78)

At the same time these same speakers may also express clearly positive attitudes towards AAVE on other occasions and may also remark on the inappropriateness of using Standard English in certain situations. While the situation in this case is made more extreme by the context of racial and ethnic conflict, inequality and prejudice in the United States, it is not unique. Such ambivalent and multivalent attitudes towards nonstandard varieties of a language have been documented for a great many communities around the world and in the United States.

American society has made concessions for many groups of people with special interests, such as animal activists, environmental activists and a host of ethnic groups. Tough animal rights laws have been passed to ensure the safety and future of a variety of species ranging from the domestic cat to the bald eagle. The development of Wetlands has been curtailed in an effort to protect our swamps and forests from extinction.

Educational system has implemented a program known as, English as a Second Language, which lends itself to the special needs of immigrants in our school systems. This program offers extra tutoring and extra time on tests for immigrants who primarily speak a language other than English. Dudley Scholarship and Bethel Foundation Scholarship, along with over twelve-hundred others, have been created exclusively for minorities in an effort to encourage furthering their education. A list of these scholarships can be found in Directory of Financial Aids for Minorities, 1993-1995.

In an effort to promote equal opportunity in the work place, the United States Government adopted the Affirmative Action Program, which forces companies to place a certain number of minorities within their work force. Now, some politicians and educators in this country want to make concessions for those Americans who have grown up learning to speak what some people call street slang, as opposed to speaking Standard English, which at last was still America's primary language. (31,71)

According to Caroline Boarder, a political columnist, a program known as Ebonics has been introduced in Oakland, Ca. as a way to bridge the gap between Black English or bad English-speaking students and standard English-speaking students in an effort to raise reading and writing test scores of African Americans. She also states that the Oakland school board contends that this bridge is necessary because the speaking of Ebonics is genetically related to African Americans. This hypothesis suggests that black students are incapable of learning the English language through conventional teaching methods, and we must devise an easier way to teach them.

Having grown up in the American school system, both public and private, was exposed to people from various ethnic groups who had poor reading and writing skills, most of whom were black. The one thing about these fellow students is that they shared a common speech deficiency including incorrect pronunciation, subject verb agreement and problems with general sentence structure. It was no surprise that they could barely read or write; they couldn't or wouldn't even speak, and other classmates felt the same way. (29, 55)

For example, Floyd Brown was one of these students. One day he was going after school, and he replied:

"Ima fi'n na go to da crib n axe ma fo some bread." –

“You think that he was going to kill his mother who was in a baby crib (obviously a midget) and take her food. But it is he was going home to ask his mother for some money”.

Ebonics had been coined for this speech deficiency in 1973. A dissection of the word Ebonics, which you will not find in the dictionary and should not find in any classroom in American school systems, yields a definition based on its two syllables. Ebo means black, and nics, which is taken from phonics, means sounds. This breaking apart of the word Ebonics simply yields its meaning as, black sounds.

According to Jane Hill, a political columnist for the Chicago Tribune, Ebonics was first recognized in America in the 1800's when African slaves were first brought to America. These slaves did not speak Standard English because they were not taught to do so. They spoke a form of what some people now call Ebonics, because they did not know any better, but African Americans in today's school systems have been taught better and should know better. (35, 33)

Education is best built upon what we already know, but if what we already know is incorrect English, then we must discard it and learn from correct tutorial tools. This includes practicing reading, writing and speaking with adherence to English grammar rules. Strong reinforcement of Standard English through repetitious reading and writing exercises is one solution to the problem of illiteracy in ethnic groups in America. When necessary, another solution may be speech therapy.

This is the kind of learning structure we need in the classrooms in their country. They must demand it of their teachers, and they must deliver. They should be culturally sensitive to all ethnic groups in an educational setting, but let's not lose sight of the goal in the process, which is mastery of the English language. Any incorporation of non-standard use of the English language could make it harder for all students to learn Standard English. What is worse is that these bad English-speaking students may become complacent with Ebonics and feel that they now have their own identifiable language and not attempt to learn Standard English. If students transfer nothing other than proper English to their long-term memory during their education, they will at least have the basis for success in the general population. Good communication skills are a must in almost every occupational field. (33, 56)

Who will lose as a result of a mandatory incorporation of Ebonics into our school systems? First, those students in English as a Second Language programs will feel the effects of such a fiasco. Funding for Ebonics will most likely come from this area and as a result, necessary, commendable programs such as this could be short-changed. Secondly, teachers who have spent their careers attempting to condition the tongues of their students to English discipline will have to concede to bad English. Lastly, the students who are placed in these classes will suffer the greatest loss. Ebonics classes will be composed primarily of students who belong to various ethnic groups, which will contribute to segregation and racism, and American history has proven that segregation in any form can only serve to keep minorities down.

While it is true that many of the words Americans speak today come from African origin, those words are clearly pronounceable and are understood by most Americans. Some of these words are: jubilee, banana, jumbo, gumbo, jazz and banjo. These words are not slang. According to Connie Eble, a member of the linguistic association of Canada and the US, slang can be defined as the dropping of a consonant at the end of a word and attaching it to the next word. The following is an example of slang: (working last) translated into slang as (workinlas). This is a common combination that some people believe composes parts of Ebonics. This type of slang has artistically contributed to the film industry with productions such as Roots and Glory, but that only makes it marketable, not correct. It as exploitation of inadequate education of both the characters in the film who speak it, and the viewer who pays to see it.

In Martin Luther's speech “I Have a Dream”, and in his writings such as “Letter from Birmingham Jail”, you can’t find one word of what may be deemed improper English or Ebonics. If Martin Luther King could speak and write this clearly without the aid of Ebonics to bridge the gap, this must surely dispel any theory of the speaking of bad English being genetically connected to African Americans. I believe that if he could hear the arguments supporting Ebonics he would roll over in his grave. Ebonics was not part of his dreams for black Americans; he hoped for educational boundaries to be broken not re-created as Ebonics has the potential of doing

The list of prominent figures in society who oppose Ebonics includes Jessie Jackson who openly speaks on television broadcast shows and in various publications about his contempt for Ebonics. United States Secretary of Education Richard Riley has publicly declared Oakland's program of Ebonics ineligible for federal funding. Bill Cosby calls Ebonics "Igmo-bonics." An urbanized version of the English language which if allowed evolving will leave only body language as a common standard language to the next generation. (34, 144).

As a society interested in the future of our youth we must realize that there is no substitute for hard work and study in the classroom, and there are no shortcuts to learning the English language. The educational system must strive to make children mainstream communicators. Ebonics is a misguided, ill represented, detrimental shortcut that will only create confusion and disappointment in the classroom. It is a cancer that must be sent into permanent remission by the clear and coherent voices of Americans.

**Chapter III. Linguistic Aspects of Black English.**

**1. Phonetic peculiarities**

AAVE and Standard English pronunciation are sometimes quite different. People frequently attach significance to such differences in pronunciation or accent and as such the study of phonology (the systematic a patterning of sounds in language) is an important part of sociolinguistics. It should be noted that phonology has nothing to do with spelling. The way something is spelt is often not a good indication of the way it "should be", or much less is, pronounced.

When two consonants appear at the end of a word (for instance the st in test), they are often reduced: the final t is deleted. This happens, to some extent, in every variety of English including standard ones. In AAVE the consonant cluster is reduced variably (i.e. it does not happen every time) and systematically.

Sociolinguists have shown that the frequency of reduction can be expressed by a rule which takes account of a number of interacting facts. Crucially, the frequency of reduction depends on the environment in which the sound occurs. The following two factors, among others, have been found to affect the frequency of reduction in consonant clusters

If the next word starts with a consonant, it is more likely to reduce than if the next word starts with a vowel. For example, reduction is more likely to occur in west side (becoming Wes side) than in west end.

A final t or d is more likely to be deleted if it is not part of the past tense -ed than if it is. (The past tense -ed suffix is pronounced as t or d or Id in English depending on the preceding sound.) For example, reduction is more likely to occur in John ran fast (becoming John ran fas) than in John passed the teacher in his car.

The th sounds: The written symbol th can represent two different sounds in English: both an "unvoiced" sound as in thought, thin and think, and a "voiced" sound as in the, they and that. In AAVE the pronunciation of this sound depends on where in a word it is found.

At the beginning of a word, the voiced sound (e.g. in that) is regularly pronounced as d so 'the', 'they' and 'that' are pronounced as de, dey and dat. AAVE shares this feature with many other nonstandard dialects, including those of the East Coast of United States and Canada.

Less common in AAVE is the pronunciation of the unvoiced sound as t. Thus 'thin' can become tin but rarely does. This however is a very common feature of Caribbean creoles in which 'think' is regularly pronounced as tink, etc. When the th sound is followed by r, it is possible in AAVE to pronounce the th as f as in froat for 'throat'.

Within a word, the unvoiced sound as in nothing, author or ether is often pronounced as f. Thus AAVE speakers will sometimes say nufn 'nothing' and ahfuh 'author'. The voiced sound, within a word, may be pronounced v. So 'brother' becomes bruvah, etc.

At the end of a word, th is often pronounced f in AAVE. For instance 'Ruth' is pronounced Ruf; 'south' is pronounced souf. When the preceding sound is a nasal (e.g. n or m) the th is often pronounced as t as in tent for 'tenth'; mont for 'month'. (10, 69)

The sounds l and r:

When they do not occur at the beginning of a word l and r often undergoes a process known as "vocalization" and are pronounced as uh. This is most apparent in a post-vocalic position (after a vowel). For instance 'steal', 'sister', 'nickel' become steauh, sistuh, nickuh. In some varieties of AAVE (e.g. in the Southern US), r is not pronounced after the vowels o and u. The words door and doe, four and foe, and sure and show can be pronounced alike.

Vowels. /Nasalized vowels:

When a nasal (n or m) follows a vowel, AAVE speakers sometimes delete the nasal consonant and nasalize the vowel. This nasalization is written with a tilde (~) above the vowel. So 'man' becomes mг.

Nasals consonants and front vowels:

In many varieties of English, including standard varieties, the vowels i in pin and e in pen sound different in all words. In AAVE, these sounds are merged before a nasal (like n or m). So in AAVE pin and pen are pronounced with the same vowel. Most Southern US varieties of English merge these vowels too, so this is only a distinctive feature of AAVE in the northern United States.

**Diphthongs:**

Some vowels like those in night and my or about and cow are called "diphthongs". This means that when the vowel is pronounced, the tongue starts at one place in the mouth and moves as the vowel is being pronounced. In AAVE the vowel in 'night' or in 'my' is often not a diphthong. So when pronouncing the words with this diphthong, AAVE speakers (and speakers of Southern varieties as well) do not move the tongue to the front top position. So 'my' is pronounced ma as in he's over at ma sister's house.

**Stress:**

AAVE s from some other varieties in the placement of stress in a word. So, where words like police, hotel and July are pronounced with stress on the last syllable in Standard English, in AAVE they may have stress placed on the first syllable so that you get po-lice, ho-tel and Ju-ly.

**Sounds:**

Creole has some characteristics which are associated with regional and working-class varieties of English and some others which are found only in Caribbean Creole. Some of the most important differences:

The vowel of CUP is like the vowel of British English COP /kVp/

The vowel of ALL is like the vowel of British English ARE /a:l/

The vowels of DAY and HOME are diphthongs /dI@/ and /huom/

The first consonant of THESE /Di:z/ is /d/: /di:z/

the first consonant of THUMP /TVmp/ is /t/: /tVmp/ (16,128)

**2. Grammar peculiarities**

Some of these characteristics, notably double negatives and the omission of certain [auxiliaries](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Auxiliary_verb) such as the has in has been are also characteristic of general colloquial American English.

The linguist [William Labov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Labov) carried out and published the first thorough grammatical study of African American Vernacular English in 1965.(37)

The [copula](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Copula) BE is often [dropped](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zero_copula), as in [Russian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_language), [Hebrew](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_language), [Arabic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arabic_language) and other languages. For example: You crazy! ("You're crazy") or She my sister ("She's my sister"). The phenomenon is also observed in questions: Who you? ("Who're you?") and Where you at? ("Where are you (at)?"). On the other hand, a stressed is cannot be dropped: She is my sister. (37)

The general rules are:

- Only the forms is and are (which in any case is often replaced by is) can be omitted

- These forms cannot be omitted when they are pronounced with a stress (whether or not the stress serves specifically to impart an emphatic sense to the verb's meaning).

- These forms cannot be omitted when the corresponding form in Standard English cannot show contraction (and vice-versa). For example, I don't know where he is cannot be reduced to \*I don't know where he because in Standard English the corresponding reduction \*I don't know where he's is likewise impossible. (Though I don't know where he at is possible.)

Possibly some other minor conditions apply as well.

Present-tense verbs are uninflected for number/person: there is no -s ending in the present-tense third-person singular. Example: She writes poetry ("She writes poetry"). Similarly, was used for what in Standard English are contexts for both was and were.

The word it or is denotes the existence of something, equivalent to Standard English there in "there is", or "there are". This usage is also found in the [English of the US South](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southern_American_English). Examples Is a doughnut in the cabinet ("There's a doughnut in the cabinet") and It ain't no spoon ("There isn't a spoon", also "They ain't no spoon").

Altered syntax in questions: In “ Why they ain't growin'?” ("Why aren't they growing?") and “Who the hell she think she is?” ("Who the hell does she think she is?") lack the inversion of standard English. Because of this, there is also no need for the auxiliary DO. (29, 48)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| GRAMMAR AND STRUCTURE RULE IN WEST AFRICAN LANGUAGE, | BLACK ENGLISH |
| construction of sentences without the form of the verb to be | He sick today. They talkin about school now. |
| Repetition of noun subject with pronoun | My father, he work there. |
| Question patterns without do | What it come to? |
| Same form of noun for singular and plural | one boy; five boy |
| No tense indicated in verb | I know it good when he ask me |
| Same verb form for all subjects | I know; you know; he know; we know; they know |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Sound Rule in West African Languages | Black English |
| No consonant pairs | jus (for just); men (for mend) |
| Few long vowels or two-part vowel (diphthongs) | rat (for right); tahm (for time) |
| No /r/ sound | mow (for more) |
| No /th/ sound | substitution of /d/ or /f/ for /th/; souf (for south) and dis (for this) |

Copula Deletion with "To Be" and Other Characteristics

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Example | Name | [SE](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Standard_English) Meaning / Notes |
| He workin'. | Simple progressive | He is working [currently]. |
| He be workin'. | Habitual/continuative aspect | He works frequently or habitually. Better illustrated with "He be workin' Tuesdays." |
| He stay workin'. | Intensified continuative | He is always working. |
| He been workin'. | Perfect progressive | He has been working. |
| He been had dat job. | Remote phase ([see below](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_American_Vernacular_English#Remote_Phase_Marker#Remote_Phase_Marker)) | He has had that job for a long time and still has it. |
| He done worked. | Emphasized perfective | He has worked. Syntactically, "He worked" is valid, but "done" is used to emphasize the completed nature of the action.[[25]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_American_Vernacular_English#cite_note-24#cite_note-24) |

One of the most famous grammatical characteristics of Black English is the use of the verb to be. Omission of the verb to be, or copula deletion, is very typical of Black English. The "is" can be omitted completely ("He Michael, too"). On the

other hand, in sentences where the is or other forms of be are not contracted in general Standard English usage, it is not deleted in Black English

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| He finna go to work. | Immediate future | He's about to go to work. Finna is a contraction of "fixing to"; though is also believed to show residual influence of late 16th century archaism "would fain (to)", that persisted until later in some rural dialects spoken in the Carolinas (near the [Gullah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gullah) region). "Fittin' to" is commonly thought to be another form of the original "fixin' (fixing) to", and it is also heard as fitna, fidna, fixna, and finsta.[[26]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_American_Vernacular_English#cite_note-25#cite_note-25) |
| I was walkin' home, and I had worked all day. | [Preterite](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Preterite) narration. | "Had" is used to begin a preterite narration. Usually it occurs in the first clause of the narration, and nowhere else. |

The aspect marked by stressed 'been' has been given many names, including perfect phase, remote past, remote phase this article uses the third. Been here is stressed; in order to distinguish it from unstressed been (used as in Standard English), linguists often write it as BIN. Thus the distinction between She BIN running ("She has been running for a long time") and She been running ("She has been running")

With non-[stative verbs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stative_verb), the role of been is simple: it places the action in the distant past, or represents total completion of the action. A Standard English equivalent is to add "a long time ago". For example, She been told me that translates as, "She told me that a long time ago".(35)

However, when been is used with stative verbs or [gerund](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gerund) forms, been shows that the action began in the distant past and that it is continuing now. Linguist [John R. Rockford](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_R._Rickford) suggests that a better translation when used with stative verbs is "for a long time". For instance, in response to "I like your new dress", one might hear Oh, I been had this dress, meaning that the speaker has had the dress for a long time and that it isn't new. To see the difference between the simple past and the gerund when used with been, consider the utterances:

I been bought her clothes means "I bought her clothes a long time ago".

I been buyin' her clothes means "I've been buying her clothes for a long time".

Negation

Negatives are formed differently from standard American English:

Use of [ain't](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ain%27t) as a general negative indicator. It can be used where Standard English would use am not, isn't, aren't, haven't and hasn't, a trait which is not specific to AAVE. However, in marked contrast to other varieties of English in the U.S., some speakers of AAVE also use ain't in lieu of don't, doesn't, or didn't (e.g., I ain't know that). Ain't had its origins in common English, but became increasingly stigmatized since the 19th century. See also [amn't](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amn%27t).

Negative concord, popularly called "double negation", as in I didn't go nowhere; if the sentence is negative, all negatable forms are negated. This contrasts with Standard English, where a double negative is considered a positive (although this wasn't always so; see [double negative](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Double_negative)). There is also "triple" or "multiple negation", as in the phrase I don't know nothing about no one no more, which would be "I don't know anything about anybody anymore" in Standard English. Black English also employs a pattern of multiple negation. Where negation is repeated throughout the clause or sentence. For Standard English "I didnґt see anything like that anywhere", Black English has " I ainґt see nothinґ like dat no place". The use of the negative contraction ainґt is distinctive of Black English, especially as a single past negative (I ainґt see for I didnґt see or he ainґt gonna do it). Multiple negation often implies emphasis.

In a negative construction, an indefinite pronoun such as nobody or nothing can be inverted with the negative verb particle for emphasis (eg. Don't nobody know the answer, Ain't nothin' goin' on.) (12, 54)

While these are features that AAVE has in common with Creole languages, Howe and Walker use data from early recordings of African Nova Scotian English, Samanб English, and Ex-Slave recordings to demonstrate that negation was inherited from nonstandard colonial English.

The use of "invariant be" is almost only found in Black English. This refers to repeated actions over a considerable extent of time, and the distinction between he walk, he walkinґ, he be walkinґ has no exact parallel in Standard English. These three verb forms have different negatives: He donґt walk, he ainґt walkinґ, he donґt be walkinґ. One might say 'He rich' instead of 'He is rich'; and 'Dey ugly' for 'They are ugly', and so on. (14,447) A brief version is:

In [African-American Vernacular English](http://everything2.com/title/African-American%2520Vernacular%2520English) you may omit forms of the copular verb 'be' provided all of the following conditions are met.

It must not be accented. You never leave 'is' out of something like 'There already is one!'

It mustn't end the sentence. You never say, 'I don't know what it is' without the 'is'.

It mustn't begin the sentence. You never leave out the 'is' in a question like 'Is dat right?'

It mustn't be an infinitive. You never leave out 'be' in something like 'You got to be strong' or an imperative like 'Be careful', or in one of those habitual aspect cases like 'He be laughin'.'

It mustn't be in the past tense. You never leave out 'was' or 'were'.

It mustn't be negated. You never leave out 'ain't' from something like 'He ain't no fool.'

It mustn't be first person singular. You never leave out the 'am' of sentences like 'I'm yo' main man.'

The frequency of inclusion has been shown to depend on a variety of factors. Here are some examples:

In future sentences with gonna or gon (see below):

I don't care what he say, you \_\_ gon laugh.

...as long as i's kids around he's gon play rough or however they're playing.

Before verbs with the -ing or -in ending(progressive):

I tell him to be quiet because he don't know what he \_\_ talking about.

I mean, he may say something's out of place but he \_\_ cleaning up behind it and you can't get mad at him.

Before adjectives and expressions of location:

He \_\_ all right.

And Alvin, he \_\_ kind of big, you know?

She \_\_ at home. The club \_\_ on one corner, the Bock is on the other.

Before nouns (or phrases with nouns)

He \_\_ the one who had to go try to pick up the peacock.

I say, you \_\_ the one jumping up to leave, not me.

The dropping of the inflectional plural suffix is another feature of Black English ("He hab two dog.") The number itself (two) carries the plural. Speakers of Black English make "mooses" the plural of "moose", or "fishes" the plural of "fish". Words like "childrens", "foots" or "womens" are also not unusual in Black English.

The optionality of the plural is also a grammatical feature of Black English, and a similar feature is the optionality of the past tense. The same form of the verb is sometimes used for both present and past. Because of the weakening of final clusters it is impossible to decide whether a verb form is the present tense used for the past or a past tense form with the final -d or -t dropped in pronunciation.

American Black English does not possess the third-person singular present tense marker (-s). "He walk " is acceptable Black English grammar. In the case of words like "have" and "do", Black English uses the full forms of "have" and "do" ("He have my name"). (17, 57)

The articles "a" and "an" seldom appear in the speech of young Blacks, especialy those who have not had a Standard English education. They do appear, especially the "a", in the speech of Blacks who have come in contact with Standard English.

There is also a phenomenon called "semantic inversion" which appears in Black English. A Black "dude" who is considered to be "bad" by those "on the street" has a lot to be proud of. A true semantic inversion would equate "bad" in Black English with "good" in Standard English. However, quite often the meaning is not completely opposite, and in fact may be on different levels.

The study of American Black English remains controversial. Attempts to wipe out Black English have failed, and so have attempts to give Black English a universal acceptance. Black English (or Black Vernacular English) has grammatical characteristics similar to other English based creoles, such as the English creole spoken in parts of the Dominican Republic that still retain a population of ex-slaves from the US.

There exists a continuum between [Black Vernacular English](http://everything2.com/title/Black%2520Vernacular%2520English) and [Standard English](http://everything2.com/title/standard%2520English), as usually occurs with post-creoles and their "parent" languages. Individuals have large ranges of variance between their ethnic dialect and Standard English. (30, 66)

Black Vernacular English is often unintelligible to speakers of Standard English. Cross-cultural misunderstanding, arising from wrong assumptions, often occurs when a speaker of Standard English encounters Black Vernacular English. The majority of English speakers tend to think Black Vernacular English, apart from the special slang; it is simply an impoverished version of English with a lot of grammatical mistakes.

There is a difference between making grammatical mistakes in Standard English and speaking correctly in a different variety of the language, one with a slightly different [grammar](http://everything2.com/title/grammar), as is the case with Black Vernacular English which indeed has a regular, systematic grammar of its own.

Standard English varieties mark grammatical agreement between the subject and predicate in the present tense. If the subject is third person singular (he, she, it or the name of a person or object), an -s appears at the end of a regular verb. (E.g. John walks to the store). In AAVE the verb is rarely marked in this way. When regular verbs occur with such -s marking, they often carry special emphasis. Standard English also has agreement in a number of irregular and frequently used verbs such as has vs. have and is vs. are and was vs. were. In AAVE these distinctions are not always made. (38)

Tense and aspect

The verb in AAVE is often used without any ending. As is the case with the English creoles, there are some separate words that come before the verb which show when or how something happens. These are called "tense/aspect markers".

Past tense:

 In Standard British English, nearly all verbs have specially marked forms for the past tense, e.g. look-looked, come-came, go-went. In Creole the past tense is often left unmarked, so that it has exactly the same form as the present, e.g. a police van pull-up (Standard pulled up), out jump t'ree policeman (jumped), Jim start to wriggle (started).

Past tense may be conveyed by the surrounding discourse (with the help of adverbials such as, for example, "last night", "three years ago", "back in them days", etc., or by the use of conjunctions which convey a sequence of actions (e.g. "then"), or by the use of an ending as in standard English. The frequency with which the -ed ending occurs depends on a number of factors including the sounds which follow it. (25, 359)

Some past events are conveyed by placing been before the verb. Speakers of Standard English may mistake this for the Standard English "present perfect" with the "have" or "has" deleted. However the AAVE sentence with been is in fact quite different from the Standard English present perfect. This can be seen by comparing two sentences such as the following:

Standard English present perfect: He has been married.

AAVE been: He been married.

In the Standard English sentence the implication is that he is now no longer married. However, in the AAVE sentence the implication is quite the opposite: he is still married.

Sentences equivalent to Standard English perfects such as discussed above may be conveyed by the use of done in AAVE. For example the standard sentence "He has eaten his dinner" can be expressed as He done eat his dinner.

Future tense:

Future events and those that have not yet occurred are marked by gon or gonna (see above).

Events in progress:

Besides using the verb with the ending -ing or -in to convey that an event is in progress, AAVE has a number of other words which add particular nuances. For instance, if the activity is vigorous and intentional, the sentence may include the word steady. The item steady can be used to mark actions that occur consistently or persistently, as in Ricky Bell be steady steppin in them number nines.

Events that occur habitually or repeatedly are often marked by be in AAVE as in She be working all the time. (39)

Negatives

AAVE has a number of ways of marking negation. Like a number of other varieties of English, AAVE uses ain't to negate the verb in a simple sentence. In common with other nonstandard dialects of English, AAVE uses ain't in Standard English sentences which use "haven't". For example standard "I haven't seen him." is equivalent to AAVE I ain't seen him. Unlike most other nonstandard varieties of English, AAVE speakers also sometimes use ain't for standard "didn't" as in the following examples

I ain't step on no line.

I said, "I ain't run the stop sign," and he said, "you ran it!"

I ain't believing you that day, man.

As the first sentence above shows, AAVE also allows negation to be marked in more that one position in the sentence (so called double or multiple negation). In this respect, AAVE resembles French and a number of other Romance languages and also a number of English creoles. Certain kinds of nouns actually require negative marking in negative sentences. In so far as the negation must be expressed with indefinite nouns (e.g. "anything", "anyone" etc.), this is a form of agreement marking. (E.g. I ain't see nothing). (9, 56)

AAVE also has a special negative construction which linguists call "negative inversion". An example from Toni Morrison's Song of Solomon follows:

Pilate they remembered as a pretty woods-wild girl "that couldn't nobody put shoes on."

In this example (in the part in italics), a negative auxiliary (couldn't) is moved in front of the subject (nobody). Some other examples illustrate this:

Ain't no white cop gonna put his hands on me.

Can't nobody beat 'em

Can't nobody say nothin' to dem peoples!

Don' nobody say nothing after that. (Ledbetter, born 1861)

Wasn't nobody in there but me an' him. (Isom Moseley, born 1856)

At the level of grammar there are important differences between Creole and Standard English. Here are some of the main ones:

The pronoun system

Standard English has separate forms for subject, object and possessive pronouns. Creole has just one form for all three: sometimes this form is derived from the subject and sometimes from the object form in British English.

STANDARD ENGLISH PRONOUN SYSTEM

1. Subject pronouns

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | sing. | plural |
| 1st | I | we |
| 2nd | y o u | |
| 3rd | he/she/it | they |

STANDARD ENGLISH PRONOUN SYSTEM

1. Object pronouns

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | sing. | plural |
| 1st | me | us |
| 2nd | y o u | |
| 3rd | him/her/it | them |

STANDARD ENGLISH PRONOUN SYSTEM

1. Possessive pronouns

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | sing. | plural |
| 1st | my | our |
| 2nd | your | |
| 3rd | his/her/  its | their |

JAMAICAN CREOLE

PRONOUN SYSTEM

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | sing. | plural |
| 1st | me | we |
| 2nd | you | unu |
| 3rd | him | them |

See how Standard British English has 18 different pronoun forms while Creole has only 6. Creole is much more "compact", more "efficient" in using the available forms to cover the range of meaning. But Creole has two forms for "you", one (/yu/) for singular and another (/unu/) for plural. Standard English is rather unusual in not having such a distinction, so in this respect Creole could be said to be more "universal". (10, 256)

Plurals

In Standard British English, nearly all nouns have specially marked plural forms, e.g. book-books, woman-women. Creole usually does not mark plural in this way, so that plural nouns often have exactly the same form as the singular, as in: t'ree policeman. Sometimes dem is added after a noun (especially one referring to people) to show plural, e.g. di gyal-dem, "the girls".

These grammatical differences between Creole and Standard have given rise in the past to the idea that Creole speakers have "wrong" or "sloppy" grammar. However, as you can see (especially from the pronoun example) Creole grammar is systematic and has its own logic. Most Creole words look like words of English but they are combined using grammar rules which belong to Creole alone. (38)

**3. Lexical peculiarities**

For the most part, AAVE uses the lexicon of SAE, particularly informal and southern dialects. There are some notable differences, however. It has been suggested that some of this vocabulary has its origin in West African languages, but etymology is often difficult to trace and without a trail of recorded usage the suggestions below cannot be considered proven, and in many cases are not recognized by linguists or the [Oxford English Dictionary](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxford_English_Dictionary).

dig from [Wolof](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wolof_language) dлgg or dлgga, meaning "to understand/appreciate"

jazz

tote

bad-mouth, a [calque](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calque) from [Mandinka](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mandinka_language) (38)

AAVE also has words that either are not part of Standard American English, or have strikingly different meanings from their common usage in SAE. For example, there are several words in AAVE referring to white people which are not part of mainstream SAE; these include the use of gray as an adjective for whites (as in "gray dude"), possibly from the color of [Confederate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confederate_States_of_America) uniforms, possibly an extension of the slang use for "Irish", "[Ofay](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Ofay&action=edit&redlink=1)," which is pejorative, is another general term for a white; it might derive from the [Yoruba](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yoruba_language) word ofe, spoken in hopes of disappearing from danger such as that posed by European traders. However, most dictionaries simply refer to this word as having an unknown etymology. Kitchen refers to the particularly curly or kinky hair at the nape of the neck, and siditty or [seddity](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seddity) means snobbish or bourgeois. (39)

Past Tense Markers

Phonological Features

Consonant Cluster Simplification, or Reduction

Final Consonant Simplification, or Deletion

Final and Post-vocalic -r Variation

[I] + [n] is realized as [ж ] and [I] + [nk] is realized as [жnk]

[theta] > [f] in Word/Syllable-final Position

[р] > [d] in Word/Syllable-inital Position

[р] > [v] in Word/Syllable-medial Position

Remote phase marker

VOCABULARY

AAVE does not have a vocabulary separate from other varieties of English. However AAVE speakers do use some words which are not found in other varieties and furthermore use some English words in ways that differ from the standard dialects.

A number of words used in standard English may also have their origin in AAVE or at least in the West African languages that contributed to AAVE's development. These include:

banana (Mandingo)

yam (Mandingo)

okra (Akan)

gumbo (Western Bantu)

A discussion of AAVE vocabulary might proceed by noting that words can be seen to be composed of a form (a sound signal) and a meaning. In some cases both the form and the meaning are taken from West African sources. In other case the form is from English but the meaning appears to be derived from West African sources. Some cases are ambiguous and seem to involve what the late Fredric Cassidy called a multiple etymology (the form can be traced to more than one language -- e.g. "cat" below).(10,252)

West African Form + West African Meaning:

bogus 'fake/fraudulent' cf. Hausa boko, or boko-boko 'deceit, fraud'.

hep, hip 'well informed, up-to-date' cf. Wolof hepi, hipi 'to open one's eyes, be aware of what is going on'.

English Form + West African Meaning:

cat 'a friend, a fellow, etc.' cf. Wolof -kat (a suffix denoting a person)

cool 'calm, controlled' cf. Mandingo suma 'slow' (literally 'cool')

dig 'to understand, appreciate, pay attention' cf. Wolof deg, dega 'to understand, appreciate'

bad 'really good'

In West African languages and Caribbean creoles a word meaning 'bad' is often used to mean 'good' or 'alot/intense'. For instance, in Guyanese Creole mi laik am bad, yu noo means 'I like him alot'. Dalby mentions Mandingo (Bambara) a nyinata jaw-ke 'She's very pretty.' (literally 'She is beautiful bad.'); cf. also Krio ( a creole language spoken in West Africa) mi gud baad.

Black English also emplys a d sound for the voiced Standard English th at the beginning of the words such as the, that, those, there; which are replaced by duh, dat, dose, dere, and dey. Black English has the "d" mostly at the beginning of the words, but otherwise v for the voiced th. For example "other" may be pronounced as "ovvah". Another phonological characteristic is "r-lessness," or the dropping of rґs after vowels. At the end of the words that is shown by -ah, as in "evvah" for the word "ever" and "remembah" for "remember."

Black English also often simplifies or weakens consonant clusters at the ends of words. This tendency is quite strong; some words are regularly pronounced without the final consonant, such as jusґ and rounґ. Nouns that end in a cluster such as -s, -p,-t or -k in Standard English will change in Black English so that those clusters are dropped and an "-es" is added in the plural. Thus "desk" becomes "desґ" and the plural becomes "desses"; "test" becomes "tesґ" and the plural becomes "tesses." (11, 78)

The most common application of elision or loss of unstressed word-initial syllable is the loss of the schwa in word-initial position, as in ґbout (about), ґgree (agree), ґlow (allow). The unstressed word-initial syllables themselves may be lost, as in ґbacco (tobacco), ґcept (accept) and ґmember (remember). (18.47)

**Loan Translations:**

Another interesting set of vocabulary items are called loan translations or "calques". In such cases a complex idea is expressed in some West African language by a combination of two words. In AAVE these African words appear to have been directly translated and the same concept is expressed by the combination of the equivalent English items

bad-eye 'nasty look', cf. Mandingo, nyE-jugu 'hateful glance' (lit. 'bad-eye')

big-eye 'greedy', cf. Ibo. anya uku 'covetous' (literally 'big-eye').

Any discussion of AAVE vocabulary must take note of the many recent innovations which occur in this variety and which tend to spread rapidly to other varieties of English. Most recent innovations are not enduring. These lexical items give regionally and generationally restricted varieties of AAVE their particular texture.

AAE is definitely not the only nonstandard vernacular spoken in the USA. Its excessive stigmatization and the related commitment on the part of some to eradicate it may have to do with negative attitudes inherited from the American colonial past, the period since which African Americans have been thought of as less intelligent. The very fact that vernaculars of the White middle-class have typically been identified by fiat as standard, although only some of them are close to it, reflects that prejudice, some tacit consensus in the overall society that everybody should adapt to White middle-class norms.

It is true that socio-economic stratification has imposed a system in which command of either standard or White middle class English has become part of the requirements for success in the professional world. However, developing proficiency in these norms need not be at the cost of abandoning one’s vernacular for all communicative functions. Vernaculars have their own social identity functions; and many speakers are not ready, least of all eager, to renounce that social-indexical role of their vernacular.

As observed by A. Delpit (12, 454), they see in the humiliations of excessive corrections and in the very style of the corrections themselves, aggressions of their own ethnic and cultural identities. The children’s negative reactions to inadequate approaches to the Standard English proficiency problem foster lack of enthusiasm, which in turn produces poor performance not only in Standard English but also in the classroom in general, especially when they become self-conscious linguistically.

It remains imperative that school systems teach Standard English more successfully to AAE-speakers. What hopefully we have presented in this paper is that this effort should be consistent with the development of diverse non-standard English vernaculars in North America since the colonial period. AAE is only one subset of such varieties out of many others. Perhaps excessive concern with AAE is in itself a negative factor that has ethicized the more general question of how to teach standard English efficiently to speakers of non-standard vernaculars in general without bruising their speakers’ self esteem nor eroding their enthusiasm and interest in being educated.(38)

**Conclusion.**

In our diploma paper we have researched the linguistic aspects of Black English. Black English is very actual in terms of sociolinguistics and language interaction development, in racial relations and ethnic cultures.

The Black English historic development and its linguistic characteristics make up the core content of work. This diploma paper has considered historical review, development of contemporary Black English in the US and its linguistic aspects

We have observed Black English as a social dialect of English language, reviewed the historical development of Black English - its origin and development in the framework of Pidgin and Creole. We have considered the present characteristics of the U.S. Black English, differences between Black English, British English, and British Black English, investigated Black English contemporary development and its use in teaching process. We have also studied linguistic aspects of Black English, especially its phonetic, grammar, lexical peculiarities which have been formed in the process of language interaction.

This material can be used as teaching manual in the course of English Language, Lexicology, History of the English language, Area studies( UK/USA).

Black English is the communicative and social system, originally created at the intersection of three dimensions – social class, ethnic and territorial. Black English has existed as a social dialect since XVII century, but the term goes back only to 1969. At present 80% of Black Americans speak Black English.

Black English is widely used in modern literature (fiction and non-fiction), music, mass media ( news broadcasts, newspapers, commercial advertising) and in such daily routine matters as safety instructions, everyday conversations etc.

Black English also called African American English, or African American Vernacular English, Black Vernacular, Black English Vernacular, or controversially Ebonics - is an African American Variety (sociolect/social dialect, ethnolect).

Black English has been used in many parts of world: the USA (Hawaii), Great Britain, in Africa (Gambia, Sierra, Leone, Liberia, Ghana, Togo, Nigeria, Cameroon), West Indies, Vanuatu, Papua New, Guinea, in the northern part of Australia, in Vietnam etc.

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