Black English and the teaching of Standard English to users of Black English

James Allan Dreblow

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BLACK ENGLISH
AND THE TEACHING OF STANDARD ENGLISH
TO USERS OF BLACK ENGLISH

by
James Allan Dreblow

A RESEARCH PAPER
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
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(EDUCATION OF LEARNING DISABLED CHILDREN)
AT THE CARDINAL STRITCH COLLEGE

Milwaukee, Wisconsin
1979
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To Lois for all her help, encouragement and understanding. Without her assistance, this paper would not be a reality.

A special thanks also to Dr. Sperry for her assistance.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

One of the major challenges in American education during the seventies was the teaching of standard English to youngsters who spoke Black English. Most black students did not speak standard English and this language handicap created restrictions on their academic success and posed restrictions for their future in both vocational success and social advancement.

Background

Six years ago as a first year regular education teacher in an inner-city school, the author was amazed by the use of what he considered incorrect English. Unaware of the existence of Black English, attempts were made to constantly correct the responses of the youngster, believing that their language model was incorrect and sub-standard. By arbitrarily deciding that his language model was the only one possible and all inclusive, the writer wondered if he not only did himself an injustice, but more important, if he did an injustice to his students. If this was an injustice, has it had a lasting effect on the language development of these youngsters? The author also questioned his first impressions of Black English. Was it a language that was incorrect? Was it a language that was sub-standard?

With the lack of understanding in regard to Black English, the researcher also wondered what the students must have thought of their
teacher. The youngsters were quite possibly thinking, "What wrong with that man? I speaking okay, he not hearing right." Were the students talking and writing within a framework of language development that was correct and meaningful to them? Did the constant corrections of their language by this writer seem as strange to them as their deviations from standard English seemed to this author?

Having been educated in a white middle-class setting, Black English was both new and strange to the writer. The omission of s in the third person singular plus the lack of agreement between subject and verb consistently bothered the author. In addition, the overuse of the verb be, the use of double negatives, and the use of one gender pronouns did not conform to the standard English model of this researcher.

Statement of the Problem Situation

The challenge of educating the black youngster in standard English had to be accepted if America was to meet the needs of a highly industrialized nation. The education of standard English for these youngsters would enable our nation to utilize the hidden talents of these students. All of these youngsters needed to be educated in standard English in order for American society to function properly. With a good standard English education, black students might be better able to become economically independent as adults, to contribute to society and not be dependent on society. They also might develop a feeling of self-worth. Accepting this challenge did not insure its success; however, this was the problem.
Most white middle-class teachers did not have the training or knowledge of Black English which would enable them to more adequately teach the youngsters standard English. The teachers needed to know the available techniques they could employ to teach standard English to Black English users. This understanding was necessary if the pattern of frustration and failure for the black pupil was to be broken.

**Purpose of the Study**

Therefore the purpose of this paper was to acquaint the reader with an understanding of the language of Black English and how it related to educational success in teaching standard English. The understanding of Black English enabled these questions to be answered. Was it a highly structured and meaningful language? Was it a complex system complete with its own rules and formations? Did it have a vocabulary and pattern that was unacceptable and would hinder any chance for success in school? Could it be a useful ally in teaching standard English? Most importantly, the author hoped that by reading this paper, white teachers could determine the best methods for teaching standard English to black students.

**Conceptual Assumptions**

Some authorities within the field stated that Black English represented a problem among children that must be corrected in order for standard English to develop (Bereiter and Engleman, 1966; Bernstein, 1961; Deutsch et al, 1968; Hunt, 1968; Ralph, 1967). This was the traditional point of view which considered Black English simply incorrect or careless. Language instruction was offered in
two ways, 1) continued corrections for pupils every time their response differed from the correct standard English forms, 2) direct instruction in basic responses and concepts (over, down, etc.).

Others rejected this statement by noting that Black English was only different and did not need to be corrected for standard English to develop (Baratz, 1968; Monsees and Berman, 1968; Robinson, 1965; Labov and Cohen, 1967). Standard English was thought of as a second language, and learned much the same way as a foreign language. In other words, instruction was based on the language of the student and the conflicts caused by their language.

**Definitions**

It was necessary to define some terms before a thorough discussion of Black English and its consequences for standard English could be undertaken.

**Language** - Distinctively human use of symbols arranged systematically for the expression and comprehension of ideas. Language is knowledge in our heads. It consists of all the words in the mental dictionary of a person, and all the rules at his (usually nonconscious) command for combining those words into an infinite number of novel sentences and for interpreting the equally novel sentences that he hears. It exists even in moments of silence and sleep (Hendrick, 1975, p. 197).

**Dialect** - A variety of language that differs in sound, grammar, and vocabulary from that variety of the language that is considered standard. The application of the term dialect to a group of speech
habits does not necessarily mean that these habits are either corrupted, underdeveloped, or strikingly peculiar in comparison with some other group of closely related speech habits. These speech habits enable people to get along with other members of their social group (Williamson and Burke, 1971, p. 188).

**Black English** - The language associated with economically underprivileged groups in the United States characteristic of Afro-Americans. It has not been accepted as a correct medium of expression by a majority of the people within the United States.

**Standard English** - The language with certain rules, patterns, and words which has been accepted by a majority of people within the United States as a correct medium of expression.

**Non-standard English** - A form of English that is different from standard English but yet quite functional. It is appropriate for a distinct environment and causes no difficulty for communications within this environment (Lerner, 1976, p. 34). **Sub-standard English** as a contrast is considered deficient and non-functional.

**Grammar** - A language study that concerns itself with the combination of words and word parts. It is divided into two areas, morphology and syntax. Morphology is the system of meaning units within a language, inflections are an example. Syntax is a set of underlying rules on how words are strung together to form sentences; word order of a sentence (Wiig and Semel, 1976, p. 196).

**Scope and Limitations**

The literature that was reviewed encompassed the past ten years.
Summary

The purpose of this paper was to give the reader an understanding of Black English and how it related to the teaching of standard English. Two views were mentioned, one which considered Black English to be a problem which must be corrected before the teaching of standard English can begin, while the other stated that standard English should be taught much like a foreign language.

Chapter two reviews the relevant literature on what Black English is and the approaches necessary to teach standard English to Black English users.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RESEARCH

The discussion within this chapter focused on four areas. The first area concerned itself with whether Black English exists or not. The second area investigated the controversy of whether Black English is sub-standard or non-standard. The third area discussed the characteristics of Black English. The fourth area discussed the teaching of standard English.

Existence versus Non-existence

Before any discussion of Black English characteristics can begin, or whether Black English is non-standard or sub-standard, the point should be established as to whether in fact, there is such a thing as Black English. Critics deny the existence and point to variations found in the speech of blacks throughout the country. They find it difficult to believe that specific features can be isolated to prove the existence of Black English.

Cullinan in 1974 stated several factors to account for the denial of Black English:


2. Black English shares many features with other non-standard dialects.

3. Many black people do not speak Black English.

4. Blacks who do speak a dialect may be bidialectal to varying degrees, that is, they may use forms from both standard
English and Black English or may be able to speak consistently in either standard English or Black English.

5. It takes a good deal of training and experience in phonology and syntax to make valid observations about dialect distinctions.

6. There is also variation among individuals and among the different styles of one individual.

Research conducted at the Center of Applied Linguistics in Washington, D.C., indicates that there is a Black English dialect. Baratz, in her study of the language of black youngsters in Washington, D.C. (1969), reported the existence of Black English which was both structured and meaningful to the speakers.

Fasold and Wolfson (1970) and Shuy (1971) observed the speech of black inner-city youngsters in Detroit and found that there was a dialect of Black English which was different from standard English in both pronunciation and grammar.

Denial of the existence of Black English was reported to be caused by ignorance on the part of the listener (Labov, 1972). In his study of street gangs in New York City, he determined that Black English indeed existed in a form that was complex; complete with its own rules and formations.

Sub-standard versus Non-standard

With the existence of Black English generally considered a valid phenomenon today, the question then is whether it is a non-standard or sub-standard form of English.
Many teachers feel that Black English is deficient and interferes with the learning of standard English. Destefano (1972) reported that standard English models were used by teachers in urban schools regardless of the language models of the children. It was felt that Black English was not productive and the teachers were more comfortable with a standard English model within their classroom.

It is hard for most teachers to accept the idea that Black English is not just "sloppy talk" (Seymour, 1973, p. 63). It was stated by Johnson (1971, p. 124) that some teachers felt Black English to be a "lazy lips and lazy tongues language." Many teachers felt that it did not have a form or structure that was good. Adding to this, Haskins and Butts (1973) reported that the traditional language program was one that treated Black English as being inferior.

Vail reported in a study in 1970, that teacher attitudes towards the usefulness of Black English to be one of disbelief. Vail went on to defend this position with the idea that language responses of children in standard English should be encouraged, anything less insured failure.

A view offered by Eskey (1976) was that standard English was here to stay and the use of Black English was considered a mistake and should not be encouraged. He reported that standard English was the useful and normal part of education.

Some educators feel that because Black English causes interference in learning standard English, Black English is inferior. In 1975, Dorsey reported that to use standard English, you had to under-
stand the grammar of standard English; and because Black English interfered with this understanding it was necessarily inferior i.e., sub-standard.

Baratz disagreed with the statement that interference necessarily made a dialect inferior and offered her 1969 experiment as proof. Baratz concluded that black children showed interference from their dialect when they attempted to use standard English, however she noted that there was a lack of evidence to prove that this interference made Black English inferior. She further added that Black English was a legitimate language system, complete with its own set of rules, pronunciations, and formations.

The suggestion that Black English is a legitimate language system was also advanced by Fox (1972). Fox reported that she found Black English to be quite legitimate because of its complex system, complete with its own highly structured formations.

A study describing the speech of twenty black youngsters by Levy (1973) again showed that Black English is a legitimate and functional language. Levy concluded that Black English users had adequate skills to communicate in an orderly manner. In another study (Labov, 1970) it was discovered that young blacks, who were classified as retarded in standard English test measures, could engage in non-standard English conversations and verbally expressed themselves in an adequate fashion.

Levy in her 1973 study further stated, that the assumption that Black English was a simple language was for discussion purposes, simply a waste of time when one considered the complex nature of Black
English (Levy, 1973, p. 58). Besides saying that it was anything but simple, Johnson and Simmons added that, "Black English is anything but sloppy talk and lazy pronunciations" (Johnson and Simmons, 1973, p. 43), a view held by many people who regard Black English as non-standard. Johnson and Simmons regarded Black English as a systematic language that had both order and meaning. Shuy (1971) in his study of Detroit teenagers to see if Black English was careless, awkward and inconsistent, found it to be systematic, graceful, and regular.

A study by Labov (1972) concerning meaning with Black English, found that users of Black English were capable of perceiving and understanding the meaning of many English terms, even though they were not able to reproduce the language in its standard form.

Although Black English differs from standard English this does not necessarily mean that it is inferior according to Dillard (1973). Rather than being a deficient language model, Dillard felt that it was highly structured and meaningful. Misunderstandings of the patterns frequently lead to the conclusion that Black English was deficient, which Dillard felt was a faulty conclusion.

Following the belief that white teachers must learn to listen in Black dialect, Rystrom (1972) tested the hypothesis that the race of the tester had a significant effect on the decoding scores of black students. The hypothesis was upheld and the researcher concluded that white teachers who were not familiar with the range of dialect differences often misinterpreted the response of black children.
Characteristics

The fact that Black English is functional rather than useless, that it is a highly complex language system comprised of its own rules and formations, and that it merits the categorization of non-standard as opposed to sub-standard, is further illustrated by an indepth inspection of Black English characteristics.

In the dialect of spoken Black English, the sounds at the ends of the words may not be the same as what the written symbols represent. The final consonant sound may be weakened or in some cases left off. The Black English dialect exhibits a high degree of r-lessness. The final sound represented in writing by the letter r often is left off. Listed below are some standard English words that end in r and then examples of how they would be pronounced in Black English.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard English</th>
<th>Black English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>door</td>
<td>dough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>store</td>
<td>stow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>floor</td>
<td>flow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>four</td>
<td>foe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the medial position, the sound of r is sometimes omitted. When a consonant precedes the r and a vowel follows, the r sound may not be present:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard English</th>
<th>Black English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>threw</td>
<td>thoo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, before front vowels the r is normally retained:
The same speaker may not pronounce the r between vowels:

**Standard English**

- interested
- Carol

**Black English**

- 'interested'
- Ca'ol

The l sound is very similar to the r-lessness sound in that it may also be left off words even though it is represented in its written form:

**Standard English**

- tool
- pail

**Black English**

- too
- pay

This sound is sometimes also omitted when it occurs in the medial position:

**Standard English**

- help
- fault

**Black English**

- hep
- fought

The weakening of other final consonants are not as regular as the r-lessness and l-lessness for the consonants t, d, b, g, k, and p:
One of the most complex features of Black English is the tendency to simplify consonant cluster sounds at the ends of words to single consonant sounds. The most frequent clusters deal with the consonants t, d, and s.

The chief t and d clusters that are affected are: st, ft, nt, nd, ld, zd, and md.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard English</th>
<th>Black English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>past</td>
<td>pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rift</td>
<td>riff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meant</td>
<td>men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wind</td>
<td>wine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hold</td>
<td>hole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>raised</td>
<td>raise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aimed</td>
<td>aim</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The t and d clusters also comprise inflectional endings that are not pronounced.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard English</th>
<th>Black English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>he missed</td>
<td>he miss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he called</td>
<td>he call</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The $s$ cluster includes the possessive form:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard English</th>
<th>Black English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tom's house</td>
<td>Tom house</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$s$ clusters can also be simplified as in the adverbial form:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard English</th>
<th>Black English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>besides, he knew them</td>
<td>beside, he knew them</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Clusters ending in $s$ also include contractions. The $t$ is lost in Black English to produce:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard English</th>
<th>Black English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>that's hot</td>
<td>tha's hot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>let's go</td>
<td>le's go</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Grantow, 1972, p. 32-33 and Fryburg, 1974, p. 193).

Several beginning sound clusters are pronounced differently in Black English. Examples for $thr$, $shr$, and $str$ are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard English</th>
<th>Black English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>throw</td>
<td>trow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shrimp</td>
<td>srimp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>street</td>
<td>shreet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Fryburg, 1974, p. 194).

Another characteristic of Black English, besides omission of sounds, is the substitution of sounds. The letter $d$ is substituted for the voiced $th$ at the beginning of words:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard English</th>
<th>Black English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>that</td>
<td>dat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The letter \( f \) is substituted for the sound of \( th \) at the end of words:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard English</th>
<th>Black English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>with</td>
<td>wif</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mouth</td>
<td>mouf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>path</td>
<td>paf</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When the \( th \) sound occurs in the medial position, \( v \) is sometimes substituted:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard English</th>
<th>Black English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mother</td>
<td>mover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brother</td>
<td>brover</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Johnson, 1971, p. 123).

The pronunciation of vowels also follows certain patterns in Black English. There is no distinction between \( i \) and \( e \) before nasals in a great majority of cases: the words \( pin \) and \( pen \) are pronounced the same. We also find little difference in sounds when \( i \) or \( e \) precede \( r \) or \( l \): \( beer \), \( cheer \), and \( chair \) are pronounced the same as are \( peel \) and \( pail \). Words that have \( o \) or \( u \) in front of \( r \) are pronounced the same: \( poor \), \( pour \), \( sure \), and \( more \) all rhyme in Black English. The diphthong \( oi \) also undergoes a change in Black English; \( oil \) and \( all \) have the same pronunciation (Labov, 1972, p. 20).

To further investigate the characteristics of Black English, verb
forms of Black English are shown to be unique and in some instances, without a counterpart in standard English.

For regular verbs in the present tense, one verb form is for all subjects:

**Standard English** | **Black English**
---|---
chocolate milk looks good | chocolate milk look good
the baby looks like he does | the baby look like he do
that boy walks home | that boy walk home

(Gladney and Leaverton, 1971, p. 132).

Omission of agreement between subject and verb in present tense is one of the most frequent features of Black English. Omission of the *s* in third person singular present form of Black English has this form:

**Standard English** | **Black English**
---|---
He walks the dog. | He walk the dog.

However, *s* is added to third person plural present tense verbs when the subject is *they*:

**Standard English** | **Black English**
---|---
They talk the same. | They talks the same.

Sometimes *s* is also added to first person singular and plural tense verbs:

**Standard English** | **Black English**
---|---
I talk. | I talks.
We talk. | We talks.

One verb form is also used for all regular verbs of the past
tense:

Standard English | Black English
---|---
Somebody knocked that down. | Somebody knock that down.
Yesterday I played my drum. | Yesterday I play my drum.

The Black English past tense form is comparable to standard English present tense forms (Gladney and Leaverton, 1971, p. 132).

The past tense and past participle forms of some irregular verbs are reversed. Simple past tense is made up by past participle forms of irregular verbs. For example the sentences:

Standard English | Black English
---|---
My father took a bus to work. | My father taken a bus to work.
He went to the game. | He gone to the game.

(Labov, 1972, p. 47).

The past tense form instead of the past participle form of some irregular verbs is used in the present perfect tense:

Standard English | Black English
---|---
He has taken a bus. | He have took a bus.
He has gone to the game. | He have went to the game.

Other irregular verbs that are reversed in this manner are: write, do, see, and run (Golub, 1972, p. 196).

Some irregular verbs have the past tense ending sound represented in writing by the letters _ed_ added to their base forms in the past and present perfect tenses:
Future tense is simply expressed:

**Standard English**  
He is going to go.  
I am going.  
He will see you tomorrow.

**Black English**  
He gonna go.  
I'm a go.  
He see you tomorrow.

The word *done* is sometimes substituted for *have* in present perfect tense.

**Standard English**  
I have walked to school.  
I have gone to school.

**Black English**  
I done walked to school.  
I done gone to school.

Often, the substitution of *done* for *have* makes a statement emphatic (Shuy, 1973, p. 8).

In Black English the non-standard use of *to be* is common. The difference in the use of the forms *to be* are so great in Black English that it is impossible to put them all under one heading. The form *was* is used in the first, second, and third persons, singular and plural past tense. Examples of this are:

**Standard English**  
we were

**Black English**  
we was
In the present perfect tense, the word have is omitted in sentences like:

**Standard English**
- I have been here.
- The meals have been cooked.

**Black English**
- I been here.
- The meals been cooked.

The future perfect tense has as its form be done instead of will have.

**Standard English**
- We will have gone.
- I will have been to school.
- I will have gone.

**Black English**
- We be done gone.
- I be done been to school.
- I be done gone.

(Labov, 1972, p. 55).

In the present and present progressive tense, the standard form of to be is omitted. The sentences that follow are examples of this:

**Standard English**
- He is going.
- Mary is running.
- He is busy.
- He is here.

**Black English**
- He going.
- Mary running.
- He busy.
- He here.

The sentence, *(He busy.)* means he is busy at this moment; the sentence, *(He here.)* means he is here at this moment. To show that someone is regularly busy or here at a particular time, Black English has the following form: *He be busy. He be here.* To show that someone is continually busy or here, that is all the time, Black English has this
form: He bes busy. He bes here. (Labov, 1972, p. 51).

Not only are various verb forms different in Black English, pronoun forms are also different. They is substituted for their:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard English</th>
<th>Black English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They left their books.</td>
<td>They left they books.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Them is substituted for those:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard English</th>
<th>Black English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Give me those books.</td>
<td>Give me them books.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Williamson and Burke, 1971, p. 502).

Another word substitution is ain't for isn't and didn't:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard English</th>
<th>Black English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>He isn't here.</td>
<td>He ain't here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He didn't do that.</td>
<td>He ain't do that.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Williamson and Burke, 1971, p. 499).

Extensive use of pronouns as double subjects is another characteristic of Black English:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard English</th>
<th>Black English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My mother went shopping.</td>
<td>My mother she went shopping.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The car lost its brakes.</td>
<td>The car it lost its brakes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Shuy, 1973, p. 9).

Double negation is also found in Black English:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard English</th>
<th>Black English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You don't have a book.</td>
<td>You don't got no book.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nobody knows anything.</td>
<td>Nobody don't know nothing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Brandes and Brewer, 1975, p. 335).
Plural patterns that are unique are also found in Black English. There is an addition of a plural sound to irregular plurals:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard English</th>
<th>Black English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>children</td>
<td>childrens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>men</td>
<td>mens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>women</td>
<td>womens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feet</td>
<td>feets</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Words that form irregular plurals may have different forms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard English</th>
<th>Black English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>wives</td>
<td>wifes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knives</td>
<td>knifes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wolves</td>
<td>wolfs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>loaves</td>
<td>loafs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Golub, 1972, p. 195).

Leaving off final consonant sounds causes Black English users to form plurals of some words in a non-standard way. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard English</th>
<th>Black English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>desk</td>
<td>des</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>test</td>
<td>tes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wasp</td>
<td>was</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, the Black English plural endings are formed in the standard English way:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Black English Singular</th>
<th>Black English Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>des</td>
<td>desses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tes</td>
<td>tesses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
was wasses

(Brandes and Brewer, 1977, p. 287).

In addition there are many individual words that differ in pronunciation from standard English pronunciation. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard English</th>
<th>Black English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>credit</td>
<td>credick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ask</td>
<td>ax</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>children</td>
<td>chilerun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>whip</td>
<td>whup</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Common word groups and phrases are sometimes blended into pronunciations that are unique to Black English:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard English</th>
<th>Black English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I don't know.</td>
<td>Iowno.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I told him.</td>
<td>Itoim.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Come here.</td>
<td>Commere.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What did he say.</td>
<td>Whaeesay.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Labov, 1972, p. 25).

In addition to the pronunciation and grammatical features of Black English, one other feature characterizes Black English as being different from standard English. Black English has many slang words that make it unique. Black English slang is constantly changing, old words are dropped and new ones are added constantly. Even at the time of the writing of this paper, some of the examples may have changed or been replaced by others. Known examples of slang at this
time are:

1. Gravy - Someone with gravy is into a lot of money.
2. Unass me - Get your hands off me.
3. Funk - Body odor.
5. Swab - To whip somebody in a physical encounter.
6. Chip - To steal.
7. Cow - A girl.
10. Flying backward - Sad.
11. I am full of the joy of being upfront - I am disgusted with my circumstances.
12. Out of sight - Term of approval.

(Dillard, 1977, pp. 3-17).

Johnson (1972) feels this is one of the biggest reasons why people deny that Black English has any pattern or structure; they do not understand the slang words and therefore have a difficulty in understanding Black English.

Teaching of Standard English

Now that the unique characteristics of Black English have been identified, the methods for successful teaching of standard English to Black English users can be discussed. Because Black English had unique patterns that differed from standard English, Labov stated that, "an interference called structural conflict occurs" (1972, p. 6).
This was simply an interference based on a mismatch set of linguistic structures. When Black English users attempted to learn standard English, a conflict occurred because Black English rules and patterns got in the way of learning standard English.

What then is the best way to teach standard English, when one is aware of the interference caused by Black English. It was suggested by Feigenbaum (1970), Stewart (1969), and Johnson (1971) that the approach necessary to teach standard English, in view of the interference problems, would be one that considered standard English to be a foreign language. Interference was described by Johnson to be a "tendency of individuals to make a foreign language conform to the sound and structure of their native language" (1971, p. 122). Individuals who learn a foreign language learn by a method which employs the points of interference between the two languages as the teaching strategy. Where interference occurs systematic drill is used to overcome the interference.

The approach to determine the interference points of Black English should encompass a contrast-comparison analysis according to Brandes and Brewer (1977), and Fasold (1970). The first step in the comparison-contrast analysis approach was for the teachers to accept the language of the pupils. The next step in this approach was to diagnose the speech of the pupil to determine what areas are to be the focus of instruction. Determination should be made of the most deviant and frequent non-standard features of the student's speech. After the sound or grammatical item to be taught is selected, emphasis should be
on hearing the sound or recognizing the grammatical structure.

The child should be told the sound or pattern of standard English he is to be hearing. This means the student must be made aware of the substitution that he makes in contrast to the standard English feature being taught. At this point, the teacher determines if the student is causing interference. Oral drills are suggested for emphasizing the reproduction of the standard feature.

Not until after the student can discriminate between the selected feature of Black English and standard English, is he expected to be able to reproduce the standard English feature. Stewart (1970) suggested a systematic drill method, students repeat the sentences which contain the feature being taught. The final step is to have the students use standard English in their speech.

**Summary**

This chapter first discussed if the existence of Black English was indeed a fact. Studies in Detroit, New York and Washington, D.C., supported the contention that Black English existed. The next consideration discussed if Black English was non-standard or sub-standard. Evidence showed that Black English was a useful and legitimate language system, that conveyed meanings to its users and was quite the opposite of being described as non-functional.

An investigation of the characteristics of Black English noted these features:

1. A high degree of r-lessness.
2. A high degree of l-lessness.
3. Simplification of the t, d, and s clusters.
4. Substitutions of sounds; d and f for th, etc.
5. Many vowel sounds are pronounced the same.
6. Regular verb forms in the present tense use one form.
7. Omission of agreement between subject and verb.
8. One verb form is used for regular verbs in the past tense.
9. The past tense and past participle forms of some irregular verbs are reversed.
10. Some irregular verbs have the past tense ending added to their base forms.
11. Done is sometimes substituted for have.
12. The non-standard use of to be is common.
13. The standard form of to be is omitted.
14. Some pronouns may be substituted for others.
15. Pronouns are used as double subjects.
16. There is the use of double negation.
17. Unique plural patterns make up many words.
18. There is a difference in pronunciation of certain words.
19. Some phrases are blended together.
20. Slang is an important part of Black English.

Finally the discussion of Black English as an interfering agent when teaching standard English was mentioned. The teaching approach using foreign language techniques through a comparison-contrast method was suggested.

In the next chapter, the discussion will concern itself with developing strategies to use in the teaching of standard English.
CHAPTER III

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter concerned itself with the discussion of a second language approach for teaching standard English to Black English users. Strategies were suggested and specific methods were offered.

Second Language Approach

The second language approach is necessary first due to the fact that Black English is a language that indeed exists. This existence was reported by Labov (1972), Stewart (1969), Shuy (1971), Fasold and Wolf from (1970). The denial of the existence of Black English was suggested as due to ignorance on the part of the listener.

The second language approach is also necessary because Black English is a functional language for its users. Johnson (1971), Vail (1970), Destefano (1972), and Dorsey (1975) suggested that the idea of Black English being sub-standard was caused by teacher attitudes. It was stated (Fox, 1972; Baratz, 1969; Levy, 1973) that Black English was a complex and highly structured language. That it was a meaningful language was supported by Dillard (1973), Labov (1972). A discussion of the characteristics of Black English also suggested that the language was pattern oriented, rule governed, highly complex, and functional.

Because Black English exists and because it is a language that has its own rules, formations, and meaning, a second language approach is necessary. Various authorities in the field, Haskins and Butts
(1973), Brandes and Brewer (1977), Fasold (1970), Johnson (1971), Stewart (1970), Feigenbaum (1970), suggested that the most efficient way to have Black English users learn standard English, was to use a foreign language approach. This approach took into consideration the interference problems that Black English caused when its users tried to learn standard English.

The interference problems arise when Black English users impose the phonological rules and grammatical patterns of Black English upon the standard English system, a system that has different rules and patterns than Black English.

The acknowledgment that Black English works as an interfering agent does not mean that this makes it deficient however. What it does mean is that there is a valid reason for the difficulty of teaching standard English to Black English users. Teachers having the knowledge that interference exists stand a better chance of successfully teaching standard English to Black English users.

It was suggested that the best approach to determine the interference points should use a contrast-comparison analysis (Baratz and Fasold, 1970; Brandes and Brewer, 1977). The contrast-comparison analysis allows the students to learn the rules for both standard English and Black English and the interference points between the two. The approach has the student translating from one system to the other and vice versa. The end result is to be able to produce a form in either system, depending upon the cues given.
Strategies

In comparing both systems, the students learn that Black English and standard English have different word endings and verb forms. They also learn that both systems are systematic, rule governed and complex.

It is very important that the student be made aware that although standard English and Black English may have different forms, neither is incorrect. Both forms are used within the classroom so that an understanding of both systems can be achieved.

Teachers must not reject Black English for if they do, they are rejecting the student's culture, friends, and relatives. This acceptance is necessary if the student is to accept a second or foreign language (standard English); in other words, Black English must be accepted by others if he is to accept standard English.

In the comparison-contrast analysis approach, determination must be made of the most deviant and frequent non-standard patterns of the student's speech. To determine the most frequent and deviant features of the pupil, a tape recorder can be an invaluable aid. Recordings can be replayed by the teacher to ascertain non-standard items. The non-standard features of language are often carried over into writing. Non-standard features can also be diagnosed through oral reading. After the non-standard features are identified, instruction can focus on these areas, so that expression in standard English may ensue.

For the determination to be made, the teacher must know the rules of Black English and standard English and be able to identify them in the student's speech. The teacher must also be able to set priorities
and determine which characteristics deserve attention i.e., the teacher must know what features to control.

The author suggests that there are certain syntactic features of Black English that are the most important for students to control. Wolfram (1970) listed the following features:

1. -s third person singular (e.g., he go);
2. multiple negation (e.g., didn't do nothing);
3. -s possessive (e.g., man hat);
4. non-standard use of be (e.g., he be home);
5. linking verb absence (e.g., he nice);
6. been auxiliary in active sentence (e.g., he been ate the food);

It was felt by the author that in achieving competency in these areas the youngster would adequately be able to cope with the demands of standard English.

Certain steps follow the selection of the features that cause the greatest interference. Each lesson should deal with only one interference at a time, although all previously learned material should be reviewed in each new lesson.

When the specific feature is chosen, emphasis should be on hearing the sound. A tape recorder can be used to enable the student to hear the sound or pattern being taught. One reason for this is that, a recorder is able to repeat the feature being taught without variation, it can be repeated exactly, again and again.

The student is told the feature that he is to hear so that he becomes aware of the substitution that he is making in contrast to the
feature being taught. In other words, through comparing Black English forms to standard English forms and then contrasting them, the student is made aware of the nature of the conflict.

The comparison and contrast is necessary for the student to understand that there are variations in features between the two systems. "Speakers tend to hear themselves saying what they want to hear themselves say," stated Brandes and Brewer (1977, p. 148) and "they generally hear themselves express meaning in the conventional language they are accustomed to hear, rather than in the particular dialect they speak." Unless the instructor shows the student that a contrast exists between the language he uses and standard English, he remains unaware of the differences and thus does not learn standard English satisfactorily.

In stressing to the student that there are contrasts in the two language systems, Gladney and Leaverton (1971, pp. 132-133) used the terms "everyday talk and school talk." When contrasting the features, everyday talk referred to Black English and school talk referred to standard English. These two terms can be very helpful when attempting to convey to the student that his language may be in contrast with standard English. By the use of the two terms, no decision is made as to the correctness of either form, just the admission that both exist. In stressing whether a feature is in everyday talk or school talk the student is able to note the feature that is to be isolated so that instruction on this point may begin.
Methods

At this point, if the student is unable to identify and pronounce the feature, oral drills are suggested. One activity is to have the student discriminate the same two words in a series of three. For example: mother, mover, mother. If the student selects the first and last words in this series, he is able to discriminate between the standard English pattern and the Black English pattern that is interfering. Another activity is to give a list of words and the student has to determine if each individual word is everyday or school talk.

If the student discriminates between the selected feature, he is expected to be able to reproduce the school talk feature. To achieve this certain drills are suggested. For example, if the feature being taught was the addition of the linking verb is; the student hears various sentences using the linking verb feature. After each sentence is heard, the student repeats it before going on to the next sentence. If the sentence, (Tom is home.) is used, the student hears the sentence, then the instructor pauses allowing the pupil to repeat the sentence. If this is done correctly, the procedure of hearing another sentence, a pause, and then a response on the part of the student follows.

Another activity has the students hearing the sentence in Black English and repeating it in standard English. For example: hearing "Tom late" is restated by the student in standard English, making it, "Tom is late."

Another way of having the students reproduce the standard sound
is through pattern practice (Mantell, 1974, p. 55). For example, if the ending th sound is being taught, sentences like the following are used: "The moth with cloth was on the path." The interfering sound is not included in these patterns. When the students reproduce this sound, sentences with the interfering sound are then introduced. The interference for the ending th sound is the substitution of an f sound. An example of the sentence then to be repeated is: "The moth fought the path fire."

The final step is to have the students use standard English in their speech. This is best achieved by having the pupils take part in role playing situations. Role playing is a helpful technique because it represents a situation in which the pupils are less self-conscious about the two language systems, and it gives the students situations where standard English is needed.

Comparison-contrast analysis offers a method for teaching standard English that traditional approaches have neglected. Traditional approaches have focused on, on the spot corrections in a random fashion. Following is a hypothetical example to show why the traditional spot correction has not been successful in teaching standard English to Black English users:

The student is experiencing difficulty with the third person singular present tense agreement sound at the end of verbs in the standard English form. The student has been saying, he are. The teacher corrects the response by saying, he is. The student then generalized by saying the
following: I is, you is, we is, they is.

Using the contrast-comparison method, a problem such as just mentioned would not occur. Following is an example of how the third person singular present tense problem would be taught.

1. Pairs of sentences would be repeated in the standard English form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Black English</th>
<th>Standard English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>He sing a song.</td>
<td>They sing a song.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She like candy.</td>
<td>We like candy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Children are to tell the difference between the two underlined words. The idea is to get them to recognize that an ending sound is added to the underlined word in the second sentence of each pair.

3. Use one verb in a number of sentences. The aim is to note the ending sound for the verbs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Black English</th>
<th>Standard English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>He draw.</td>
<td>I like to draw, but he</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>draws badly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When we draw, he draws</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>with my crayons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They draw horses, he draws</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>cars.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>He draws.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Next could be another drill where questions could be answered using the correct tense form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Black English</th>
<th>Standard English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I plays ball everyday.</td>
<td>I play ball everyday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary ride a bike.</td>
<td>Mary rides a bike.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What does he do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What does she do?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Fasold and Wolfrom, 1970, pp. 41-86). These are just a sample of various drills that could be used within a comparison-contrast approach.

Programs

To fully understand the teaching of standard English to users of Black English, various programs are appropriate for primary, intermediate and junior high students.

In the primary grades, the emphasis should be on finding positive ways to expand the language to include standard English while maintaining proficiency in Black English (Cullinan, 1974, p. 44). This means that the language program includes many activities that elicit verbal responses from the children. Activities that stimulate verbal responses are field trips, role playing, and working with puppets. Through these activities, the children can think about their own language and gain concepts in their own language.

Cullinan, Jaggar, and Strickland (1974) have had success in expanding language for primary grade children through a practice of using a puppet approach to develop specific language patterns. The method they used was called "Peter Parrot". The sequence of the method
was as follows:

1. Introduce a story.
2. Present the story.
3. Talk it over.
4. Teacher presents parrot puppet. The puppet (teacher) explains that he usually repeats things after people, however, this time he would like to turn things around and have people repeat things after him. Being a fussy parrot, Peter insists that children repeat everything exactly the way he says it. He asks children to repeat sentences from the story or based on the story. Class may repeat in unison or individuals can take turns.

The purpose of the puppet activity and all other activities in the primary grades is one which encourages the children to talk and to think about their own language system.

In the middle grades, the emphasis should be on the discrimination sounds of Black English and standard English. Inflectional endings, consonant clusters and medial sounds should be stressed through listening activities. The listening activities should center on interference points between Black English and standard English. Extended use of the tape recorder is used as part of the listening activities.

The teacher should form a core of knowledge about each student and his usage of both Black English and standard English. Role playing and discussions of photographs, books, movies, and television programs can help to develop this knowledge. The instructor should also develop an awareness of grammar differences in the youngsters.
"Discovering the difference game" was a strategy suggested by Mantell (1974, p. 62) to develop this awareness. The students are given two examples of speech, one Black English and one standard English.

Black English - When I walk down the street people say, "Here come Duke. He cool. He got heart."

Standard English - When I walk down the street people say, "Here comes Duke. He is cool. He has heart."

The teacher asks the students to determine the differences between the two selections.

In junior high the emphasis should be on helping students speak standard English. Stressed should be the sound discrimination between the two languages in addition to the features that cause interference. Foreign language techniques can be utilized at this level.

A contrastive analysis program called Talkacross has been developed by Crowell and Kolba (1974) which has proved useful in teaching junior high students. The program had three components, cassettes, activity books and Language Master cards.

The sequence of the program starts with the students listening to a dialog between a Black English speaker and a standard English speaker. Both voices are black speakers who change places on the different tapes. The students are instructed to listen for specific contrasts. Following the dialog there is a brief section of notes. Next is a written response in the activity book from an oral cue on the tapes. The
program also allows the response to be oral instead of written if so chosen. After this, comes oral responses from the student writing a standard English sentence emphasizing the contrast being studied from an oral cue.

Future Implications

There is one final area that needs to be discussed in regard to teaching standard English to Black English users. What are the implications for the future? Will the learning of standard English remain a no win situation for black students? What directions should instruction take for the future? Will teachers change their attitudes and approaches for the teaching of standard English to Black English users?

Until teachers accept Black English as a functional language that has merit, little hope for success can be forecast. Teachers must acquire an understanding of Black English because ignorance on the part of the teachers has mainly been responsible for the failure of Black English users to learn standard English.

New approaches must be utilized. The second language approach is an approach that merits acceptance. Research is necessary in this area to find other approaches that may insure success. Traditional approaches should be discarded, they have not worked anyway.

Universities in urban areas must share the blame for the failure of Black English users to learn standard English. They have not prepared the teachers. Teacher preparation courses must include coursework that will give the beginning teacher a thorough understanding of Black English and how it relates to the teaching of standard English.
Until these changes occur, the Black English user will continue to experience failure.

Summary

This chapter discussed the approach to teaching standard English using a second language approach. This method centered on the interference caused by Black English and used a comparison-contrast analysis approach to teach standard English. It was important that the student realized that neither language form was deficient.

The most deviant patterns of a student's speech was selected in the comparison-contrast analysis approach. Only one feature was emphasized at a time. By comparing and contrasting the feature, the student was made aware of the nature of the conflict. Everyday talk and school talk were suggested to help facilitate the determination of the contrast.

Certain activities and drills were suggested to help the student discriminate the feature selected. A puppet activity called "Peter Parrot" which was used for language expansion on a primary level was discussed. Differences in grammar utilizing an activity called, "Discovering the Differences," was discussed for the middle grades. "Talkacross" was mentioned as a way to increase standard English speaking for junior high students.

The last point dealt with what the future holds for the teaching of standard English to users of Black English. Mention was made that teachers must have an understanding of Black English and how it related to the teaching of standard English.
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**Materials**