

African american vernacular english (aave)



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The dialect called African American Vernacular English, also known as Black English, Black Vernacular, and Black English Vernacular, is certainly one of the most popular vernacular dialects of U. S. English. Very few controversies about language are capable of producing the kind of heat, enthusiasm, and even outright anger brought about by discussions of AAVE, particularly with regard to educational issues.

Today, AAVE has significant educational implications for American public schools. Many teachers, sociologists and researchers have raised grave reservations and anxieties about school policies regarding AAVE. The concerns that have been formulated usually include debates about the nature and origins of AAVE, its formal recognition in educational institutions, and, possibly most important, its effects on student education.

This paper presents a literature review regarding the social, linguistic, and educational aspects of AAVE, as well as possible educationally relevant responses to the presence of large numbers of speakers of AAVE in the public schools.

Literature Review

In his book, Richardson (2003) has presented the study of literacies and rhetorical practices of African America through the examination of its poetry, novels, folklore, and vernacular significant arts, from the periods of Enslavement, Reconstruction, Jim Crow, Harlem Renaissance, Civil Rights, Black Power, and Hip Hop.

The author analyzes the struggle about liberty, equal access to resources, and the right of Black people to determine their own form of government. Despite the fact that this is not an essential interpretation of the study of African American language, it is a valuable aspect that helps to distinguish it.

The focus of the book then shifts to equality in terms of language and culture. This is the point of this book.

William Labov's work (1985) on Black literacy focuses on reading. In addition, it has extended beyond a straight AAVE knowledge model to incorporate relevant and engaging reading materials, combining language and cultural knowledge and appreciation.

While the author believes that educators must have an understanding and appreciation of the linguistic system, he also gives emphasis to the fact that the reading materials must be engaging and have direct relation to the lives of learners of color. In the 1980s, Labov's analysis showed that the fact that AAVE is developing in a different direction than White vernaculars is proof that segregation and poverty continue to isolate a significant proportion of the African American students.

Rickford (1998) presents arguments for the use of AAVE in teaching academic English reading in public schools, as does Labov. Rickford's book demonstrates that teachers can take advantage of the fact that AAVE is phonologically systematic and that knowing this system can help when teaching black students to read by training them to associate letters with their phonetic values.

This information may appear to be particularly useful to Kindergarten where lessons teach the basics.

Linguists, such as Saville-Troike (1982), have offered such important concepts as the “ ethnography of speaking/ communication.” This concept helps approach AAVE more broadly giving emphasis to epistemology in communicative practices.

The author shows how the language and literacy theorist can explore the relationship between language and knowledge making. In applying AAVE epistemology to literacy education the guiding fundamental element comprises searching out the ways that Black Americans have understood, believed, approached, and used the English language to form their identities and control their environments.

Use of this information in a contemporary context helps learners establish connection between African American culture of struggle and literacy for social transformation.

Although Kochman’s book (1981) on this topic was written in the 1980s, it nevertheless presents useful information to AAVE education by analyzing those areas in which Black and White styles clash.

Using the ethnography of Black American speech behavior, the author demonstrates that the speech behavior of African Americans must be assessed within the context of their culture, history, social environment, and the context of the learner’s situation. Presented information may be very useful in the teaching of composition.

Taylor (1991) elaborated an approach to teaching writing to AAVE students. The approach is grounded in a bi-dialectal philosophy. The author focused on acknowledgment of AAVE as a dialect enjoying full linguistic rights. In her book, the author demonstrated the possibility of Black learners' achievement in a predominantly White school environment.

Taylor's approach grounds on identifying her learners' use of AAVE in their writing.

Redd's (1993) book focused on an approach motivating learners to read, write, and analyze using an Afrocentric approach to composition. It is her belief that the Afrocentric reader in a composition class for Black students would encourage more writing, thinking, and action on behalf of Black learners.

Redd presented results of her research indicating that most student participants reported feeling better about writing and reading. The author also found that the greater number of learners who enjoyed writing, about the topics suggested in the reader, were the learners who felt they had something true and reliable to say about the topic. Writing about the Afrocentric topics made most learners analyze more carefully issues of the Black experience.

In another work in this area, Redd (1995) examined African American learners' use of African American rhetoric and the effects of audience in written work. The author found that when a Black audience is allocated, Black learners may use Black rhetorical examples in writing that they usually do not use.

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Redd recommended that learners be given the opportunity to write for Black audiences in order to develop their AAVE. Redd also suggested that teachers may be able to help students learn language more effectively.

Ball (1992) studied the effects of “ Modeling Orality” on the writing development of Black learners. In the study, learners imitated the rhetorical strategies of African American oral texts as a method of improving their writing abilities.

For example, the learners imitated the repetition schemes of anaphora, antithesis, chiasmus, and parallelism. Ball drew on African American rhetorical tradition. The author concluded that the learners when drawing on the oral forms presented in speeches produced more qualities associated with clearness of expression and elegance.

Osborn (2005) conducted research on AAVE and composition. The author explored how AAVE has been used by learners and how it has been received and assessed in academic circles, and also how it may be used in the future.

It is important to note that the author suggested that the use of AAVE is helpful in teaching composition as it helps to develop a more erudite writer, while demonstrating that AAVE usage is a valuable and rewarding resource in the educational institutions.

Osborn has also suggested that there is a need to build a bridge between the discourse practices of African American culture and those of the school. In theory, a culturally appropriate approach to teaching literacy to African

Americans would be based on an examination of the ways in which African Americans have used English to improve their life in America.

This includes an examination of African American rhetorics, set of beliefs, and discourse practices.