Grammatical Differences Between African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and Standard English (SE) in Black English Vocabulary by Teacher Rodrigo Honorato YouTube Video

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Abstract

This research analyzes the grammatical differences between African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and Standard English (SE). The research involved employs a qualitative descriptive approach. The researcher gathered data by selecting 10 videos from the Black English vocabulary playlist on Teacher Rodrigo Honorato's YouTube account. The collected data will be analyzed according to grammatical differences. This study's results indicate significant disparities between AAVE and SE languages, particularly in phonology, morphology and slang. These discrepancies pose minimal challenges for native speakers; however, they may perplex non-native speakers due to their deviation from well-recognized linguistic conventions.

Keywords: *African American Vernacular English (AAVE); Standard English (SE); Grammatical Differences*

Introduction

Language can be perceived as a facet of an individual's identity and interaction with societal constructs, like ethnicity and class. Language is categorised into two primary forms: standard language and vernacular language (J. A. Arifin & Dewi, 2023). According to Holmes as cited in Arifin & Dewi (2023), standard language is usually employed as a formal means of communication.

Language formally taught at schools is formal, while vernacular language is the other form that is not formal, unfixed, and most often used in day-to-day activities.African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) and Standard English (SE) provide insights into how language reflects culture and societal perspectives. AAVE is predominantly known as Black English or Ebonics. AAVE is a distinct dialect characterized by its phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, and usage systems (Kongsatt et al., 2023). According to Baker-Bell (2020), the black community used language in a distinctive, vibrant, and potent way. However, AAVE usually encounters negative prejudice; some consider it as slang, informal dialect, or broken English at most. As long as the "be" verb is still unconjugated, the habitual "be" still sounds wrong—This may be a system, but it's a broken one! (McWhorter, 2017).

Egas (2020) analyzed the effective utilization of AAVE in Kevin Hart's solo comedy, What Now, to exemplify cultural identity and critique societal norms, challenging negative perceptions about AAVE. Moreover, through Hart's comedic delivery, AAVE served as an effective way to narrate unique experiences and build a strong connection with the audience through distinctive AAVE phonological, syntactic, and lexical features with a comedic tone to illustrate the overall experience with the African American community. Hart emphasizes the vitality and adaptability of AAVE, challenging the notion that AAVE is an "informal" or "low" variant of English, rather than illustrating a broken system in its use. This study highlights that AAVE epitomizes a cultural history and a creative linguistic tool that effectively combines humor with critical social commentary despite prejudice and misinterpretation.

N. Arifin (2017) thesis, "Grammatical Analysis of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) in 'Straight Outta Compton'", supports Egas investigation of AAVE by affirming that AAVE is a genuine and systematic form of English rather than an informal dialect. Arifin analyzes the divergence of AAVE in the film from Standard English, demonstrating that AAVE adheres to its grammatical principles and is not a flawed or erroneous form of English. Both studies contest prevailing preconceptions regarding AAVE as a subordinate variation of English, emphasizing its distinctiveness and versatility in both serious movie contexts and comedic scenarios. AAVE, in both instances, demonstrated its significance in African-American cultural identity, effectively expressing comedy and critical analysis of societal issues.

Although current research predominantly examines AAVE within entertainment, media, or fictional realms, there is a paucity of investigation into its application in academic and non-entertainment contexts. This research will build upon prior research by analyzing the grammatical distinctions between AAVE and

SE while also investigating the grammatical characteristics inherent in AAVE to enhance comprehension of AAVE's adaptability and to contest prejudices regarding its restricted applicability.

Several differences can be seen between the use of AAVE and SE. One example is observable through phonology, commonly referred to as the Study of Sound Patterns (Nugraha & Laili, 2023a) The distinctive phonetic features of AAVE set it apart from other English dialects. It relates to the AAVE pronunciation system that differentiates the appearance of consonant sound combinations, particularly at the ends of words. The reduction of final consonant clusters (e.g., "lis'" for "list") and the removal of post-vocalic /r/ (e.g., "ca'" for "car") are prevalent contexts for consonant deletion (Sapphire & Feby Krismayanti, 2021). In Morphology, AAVE frequently skips the -s ending in third-person verb forms. For example, "John's car" is used in Standard English, while the phrase transforms to "John car" in African American Vernacular English. Moreover, AAVE speakers exhibit distinct word patterns and slang, highlighting grammatical differences between AAVE and Standard English.

AAVE contains distinctive grammatical characteristics, such as the removal of the copula ("He happy" instead of "He is happy"), the employment of the regular word "be" ("He be running" to denote habitual behaviour), and the application of double negative for emphasis ("I ain't never seen him"). These characteristics prove that AAVE is not merely a language with a faulty word order but a language with a structure similar to other languages.

As stated above, AAVE is not an infernal language under any circumstance but is a language like SE with its structure. Consequently, in the analysis, the researcher will identify grammatical variation between AAVE and SE in terms of phonological features or syntactic features. The idea behind this study is to contribute to other works done about some of the differences between AAVE and SE, why they are present.

Method

A descriptive qualitative research design will be used in this study to analyze the grammatical differences between Standard English (SE) and African American Vernacular English (AAVE). Qualitative research begins with assumptions and the use of interpretive/theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The research focuses on 10 videos in the Black English Academy playlist on teacher Rodrigo Honorato's YouTube account. (https://youtu.be/iX8NtSoz3a4?si=Q7dJYwdHSFAWwozO). The dialogues in the videos reflect natural AAVE usage, offering insight into its grammatical characteristics and differences. The selected videos serve as a representative sample of AAVE because they depict real-world examples of the dialect. In addition,

the data in this account's videos are complete, and the explanations are easy to understand, sufficient to represent videos from different accounts. However, this study acknowledges limitations, especially the potential bias of using content from one YouTube channel, which may represent regional variations of AAVE. Since AAVE varies across regions, this focus may not represent all dialect differences. Therefore, the author uses several previous journals as references to fill in the gaps in data. The data collection technique used is library research. The research findings will be described qualitatively and structural analysis will be carried out.

Result

Grammatical Differences

1. Phonology in AAVE

The phonology of AAVE is characterized by unique sound patterns that set it apart from SE. Consonant cluster reduction is one of the most distinctive features, as it simplifies final consonant clusters, particularly when followed by a word that begins with a consonant. The researcher found 7 aspects of morphological features, which are classified by Thomas & Bailey as cited in Nugraha & Laili (2023).

Table 1. Types of Phonological Features of AAVE
in Teacher Rodrigo Honorato YouTube Video

Types	Total
The loss of final stop /d/	3
The loss of final stop /t/	7
-Ng Lessness	43
L-lessness	5
R-lessness	5
Mutation of /str/	6
Metathesis of /sk/	2

Word-final consonant cluster reduction

According to Thomas as cited in Nugraha & Laili (2023), word-final cluster reduction as defined, is nothing but the removal of the last stops /t/, /d/, /k/, and /p/. For example, the term "*test*" may be pronounced as "*tes*'" and "*hand*" as "*han*'". This pattern is most prevalent in words where the final two consonants share the same voicing, such as "*cold*" being pronounced as "*col*'" (Rickford, 1999). This simplification is a natural linguistic process that occurs in numerous

languages and is not indicative of "error," but instead of discourse efficiency.

The loss of final stop /d/

Researchers found that teacher Rodrigo honorary pronounced the loss of final stop /d/ 3 times in his video. The dialogue below is one example of how this feature is used.

> *Teacher Rodrigo: If you really want to be fluent, all you have to do is, you have to work **hard**.*

The word "hard" is pronounced as /hɑrd/ in SE, with the final /d/ being distinctly articulated. However, in AAVE, it is frequently pronounced as /hɑr/, with the concluding /d/ sound omitted.

The loss of final stop /t/

Researchers found that Teacher Rodrigo pronounced the loss of final stop /t/ 7 times in his video. The dialogue below is one example of how this feature is used.

> *Teacher Rodrigo: Man but, maybe if I'm taking a **test**, this is not going to happen.*

The word "test" might be said more informally, with a softened "t" and a less stressed "s," sounding more like "tes." By comparison, in SE, it is evident with a crisp "t" and a distinct "s" sound.

-Ng Lessness

Ng-lessness is a prevalent phonological characteristic of AAVE, which indicates a more fluid and casual articulation style in contrast to the formal enunciation in SE. In teacher Rodrigo's video, the realization of [ŋ] as [n] occurs 43 times. This dialogue below is one of examples of the use of this feature.

*Teacher Rodrigo: What's **crakin'** cuz?*

In SE, words ending with -ing are pronounced with the velar nasal [ŋ], such as "cracking" pronounced as /ˈkrækɪŋ/. In AAVE, this is often realized as [n], changing the pronunciation to "crackin'" as /ˈkrækɪn/.

L-lessness

Researchers found that Teacher Rodrigo pronounced L-lessness 5 times in his video. This dialogue below is one of examples of the use of this feature.

*Teacher Rodrigo: What's hatnin' **foo'**?*

In AAVE, the phrase "*What's hatnin' foo'*?" is pronounced in a simplified manner. The "e" and "g" are omitted from "hatnin'," and the "l" sound is omitted from "fool." In contrast, the words would be pronounced as "What's happening, fool?" in Standard English (SE). The "e" in "happening" and the "l" in "fool" are distinctly articulated.

R-lessness

Another unique characteristic of AAVE is the absence of post-vocalic /r/, which is the sound that is lost following a vowel sound. Researchers found that Teacher Rodrigo pronounced it 5 times. This dialogue below is one of examples of the use of this feature.

*Teacher Rodrigo: I **work** 24-7.*

Labov (1973) have also noted this characteristic in non-rhotic dialects, including certain British and Southern American English varieties. It emphasizes how AAVE maintains its distinctive identity while sharing similarities with global linguistic phenomena.

Mutation of /str/

The mutation of /str/ refers to changes or simplifications of the "str" sound cluster in specific languages, such as AAVE. In this instance, the "str" phoneme may be articulated as a more straightforward "skr" or "sk" sound. The researcher found that teacher Rodrigo pronounces it 6 times. This dialogue below is one example of the use of this feature.

*Teacher Rodrigo: Filler number two is very simple and very **straight** to the point, naahmean.*

In AAVE, "straight" is sometimes pronounced "skrait," or "skreight" with a softened "t." Meanwhile, SE has it spoken clearly as "stray-t" with a definite "t" sound.

Metathesis of /sk/

The researcher discovered that teacher Rodrigo said the word "ask" as [aeks] 2 times. This dialogue below is one of examples of the use of this feature.

*Teacher Rodrigo: Naahmean is a question that we **ask** when you want to know whether the person is paying attention to what you're saying or not.*

2. Morphology in AAVE

The morphology of AAVE is defined by unique grammatical structures that contrast with Standard English. Linguists identify several elements of AAVE, including the use of invariant "be" for habitual acts, the removal of the copula (e.g., "is" or "are"), and markers for tense and aspect, such as "been" to denote past actions. According to (Labov, 1973)these features represent a unique form of English with its consistent grammar rather than faults or inconsistencies. Similarly, Smitherman (2006) claims that AAVE's morphology is not wrong but rather a legitimate variation within the larger English language system. The researcher found 6 aspects of morphological features, which are classified by (Green, 2002).

Table 2. Types of Morphological Features of AAVE
in Teacher Rodrigo Honorato YouTube Video

Types	Total
Negation	8
Subject-Verb Agreement	7
Copula/Auxiliary Absence	12
Invariant Be	9
Non-standard pronoun y'all	10

Negation

In grammar, negation is the process of changing a proposition to communicate its opposite or reject its veracity. According to Howe in Arifin (2017), AAVE's negation form is focused on three prominent structures in its negation system: ain't, negative concord, and negative inversion. "Ain't" is used instead of "is/am/are not", "has/ have not", and "did not", and "won't" for "wasn't" and "weren't". Researchers found that Teacher Rodrigo pronounced it 8 times in his video. This dialogue below is one example of the use of this feature.

*Teacher Rodrigo: We about to tell you something that you **ain't** gonna see in the books.*

"Ain't" takes the place of "are not" in this phrase. Substituting this term for the negative auxiliary verb—which in SE calls for a particular auxiliary verb (are) paired with not—eliminates the existence or presence of a person.

Subject-Verb Agreement

Subject-verb agreement is a grammatical rule involving several subjects' involvement in the subject, which is (singular/four), and the person first, second, or third affects the verb form. Subject-verb agreement is one of the most frequently researched features of AAVE and is related to verbal -s marking (Egas, 2020). In the simple present tense, the third person singular (he, she, it) is distinguished from other subjects like "I," "you," "we," and "they." In the third person singular, -s is generally appended to the verb. In certain instances, -es is appended, or -y is substituted with -i before adding -es. This rule is not applicable in African American Vernacular English (AAVE). Verbs stay invariant irrespective of the subject, signifying the absence of -s, -es, or other alterations. This phenomenon is called the lack of number-person agreement and constitutes a grammatical trait of AAVE. Researchers found that Teacher Rodrigo pronounced it 7 times in his video. This dialogue below is one example of the use of this feature.

> *Teacher Rodrigo: So the simple sentence "I **watch** TV" could be used for he, she*
> *It. For example "She **watch** tv" or "He **watch** TV".*

Instead of adding -es for the third person singular (She watches TV). AAVE maintains the verb form consistently, irrespective of the subject.

Copula/Auxiliary Absence

Copula or Auxiliary Absense is another pattern found in the AAVE verbal system. According to Labov in Egas (2020), If you can contract "be" in Standard English, you can delete it in AAVE. Researchers found that Teacher Rodrigo pronounced it 12 times in his video. This dialogue below is one example of the use of this feature.

> *Teacher Rodrigo: **What you doin'** right now?*
> *: **I'm** dancin'*

In AAVE, the word "be" (are, is) is frequently deleted in sentence forms, leading to a simpler construction of [Person + verb(in')]. For example, rather than the SE construction, "What are you doing right now?" AAVE condenses it to "What you doin' right now?". Nonetheless, a significant exception exists for the first-person singular pronoun "I." When "am" is used as the copula or auxiliary verb, it is still a part of AAVE. This distinction shows that AAVE has a syntactic structure in which the deletion of be is not random regarding

different subjects. For instance:

> SE : *"**I am** dancing."*
> AAVE : *"**I'm** dancin'."* (where *am* is contracted but not entirely omitted).

Invariant Be

The habitual "be" is another essential aspect of AAVE. It is referred to as "habitual" since it designates a behavior that happens regularly and consistently. Because the copula is not conjugated and used as be for all subjects, this property is also known as invariant be. Researchers found that Teacher Rodrigo pronounced it 9 times in his video. This dialogue below is one example of the use of this feature.

> *Teacher Rodrigo: He always be tellin' people what to do (AAVE)*

Based on the example above, In SE "He always tells people what to do", the simple present ("verb-s/es") denotes habitual behavior, but the present continuous tense ("is/are + verb-ing") often denotes activities that are occurring at the moment. However, this difference needs to be clarified in AAVE. [Person + be + verb'in] might denote ongoing or habitual conduct.

Non-standard pronoun y'all

The last morphological characteristic of AAVE is the utilization of the word "y'all," which serves as the second person plural form, abbreviated from "you all." Researchers found that Teacher Rodrigo pronounced it 10 times in his video. This dialogue below is one example of the use of this feature.

> *Teacher Rodrigo: What's up **y'all!** How you doin'?*

3. Sound Modification or Omission in AAVE

Sound modification or omission in AAVE refers to specific phonological changes distinguishing it from SE. A prevalent characteristic is sound merging, exemplified by the fusion of particular phonemes, as in "with you" becoming "witchu". One of the producible shifts is a sound deletion wherein specific phonemes are left out; for instance, the switch from the sound combining "th" and "n" of the word "nothing" to the sound of "nu'in." These alterations are developed to improve the tune and intonation that is characteristic of AAVE, the racial language identity. According to Hamilton (2020), the written symbol 'th' at the end of words may be articulated as /f/ or /v/."

Table 3. Phonological Features

AAVE	Means in SE
Whaddup witchu?	What's up with you?
What's good my G?	What is good my G(brother)?
Wa gwaan?	What's going on?
Same ol' same ol'	Same old shit going on
Nu'in much, man!	Nothing much, man!
Lemme tell ya somn!	Let me tell you something
Naahmean?	Do you know what I mean?
Naahmesayin'?	Do you know what I am saying?

AAVE Slang in public

Slang used in public includes cultural practices and or popular trends and is used by people with common social backgrounds to converse informally. It is most often used in dialogues, informal communication, advertisements, and social networks because of its universality. According to (Liu et al., 2019), although using slang, especially Internet slang in the public domain, such as in advertisements, can elicit attention and identification appeal, using professional words may only sometimes give a professional outlook.

> *African American slang can be understood in two different ways. In a wider sense, it includes slang expressions coined and used by African Americans such as diss ("disrespect"), motherfucker ("a contemptible person") or soul brother ("a fellow African American"), but also those expressions coined by other ethnic groups though used by African Americans, the old Anglo-Saxon shit ("excrement"), fart ("pass gas from the bowel via the anus") or booze ("alcoholic drink"), for example. In other words, it comprises all slang expressions used by African Americans, irrespective or their origin.* (Bembe & Beukes, 2006)

Table 4. AAVE Slang in Public

AAVE Slang	Means in SE
No cap	no lie
Capping	lying
Stan	crazy fan
Savage	wild
Thirsty	turn on
Lame	not cool
Lit, Dope, On feet	cool
Sketchy	suspicious
Tea on	gossip
Cringy	embarrassing
Diss	Disrespect
Beef	have a conflict
Squash	resolve things
Give Props	give recognition
Grown Folks	Adult

AAVE unearths slang with culturally or historically relevant connotations that construct and reflect in-group bisociation. Such terms as 'lit' – fabulous, 'cap' – lie and 'diss' – disrespect is part of the more significant sociolinguistic phenomenon of slang usage within subjugated society as a countercultural defiance (Smitherman, 2000). The relationship between slang and grammar summarizes AAVE's multifunctional role: language and culture. Green (2002) said AAVE encompasses their real-life existence, constituting a critical part of African American cultural practice.

Discussion

The researcher applied Thomas (2007) theory to classify phonological data and used Green (2002) theory to classify morphological data. The researcher identified 71 utterances that serve as phonological features, which include the loss of final stop /d/, the loss of final stop /t/, the realization of [ŋ] as [n], deletion of /l/, deletion of /r/ following a vowel, substitution of /str/ for /skr/, and substitution of /sk/ for /ks/. Teacher Rodrigo's most frequently employed phonological feature is the realization of [ŋ] as [n], occurring 43 times. The researcher identified 46 utterances that serve as morphological features, including negation, subject-verb agreement, copula/auxiliary absence, invariant "be," and the

non-standard pronoun "y'all." Teacher Rodrigo utilized the phonological feature of Copula/Auxiliary Absence 12 times, making it the most frequently employed feature. Additionally, researchers identified 8 data points of sound modification or omission in AAVE, and the use of slang in AAVE encompasses 15 data points.

Conclusion

Based on the result and discussion, AAVE is an informal variety of colloquial English with some grammatical, phonological and morphological variants from standard English. The primary data source in this research is ten videos from Teacher Rodrigo Honorato's "Black English Vocabulary" playlist. The findings reveal 3 points, which include Phonological in AAVE, Morphological in AAVE, and AAVE Slang. The researcher hopes that future research will further investigate the role of AAVE in other situations, including education, media, and identity formation. Research on its interplay with different dialects and its impact on mainstream language trends, particularly in digital culture, will yield significant insights.

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