AN APPROACH TO TEACHING USERS OF BLACK ENGLISH TO WRITE IN STANDARD AMERICAN ENGLISH

A Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Master of Arts in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

by

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** ** **

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To Chip, Buddy, Sarah, and Oswin
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CHAPTER I

Statement Of The Problem

The late sixties and early seventies were a time of great change within the educational structure of this country. The growth of urban ghettos in northern cities and the movement to desegregate schools throughout the country caused major changes in cities across the United States. Great numbers of black children became students in formerly all or predominantly white schools. Teachers expected to instruct these new students in ways similar to methods they were using to teach their white students; however, in addition to dealing with extreme cultural tension in many areas of the country, a severe breakdown in communication from student to teacher and from teacher to student occurred. As a result of this breakdown in communication, teachers were often frustrated with (and sometimes hostile toward) their black dialect-speaking students, and the black students' grades were consistently poorer than those of their white schoolmates.
The forced recognition of disparities in pupil achievement between Blacks and whites (a fact long kept from public awareness) brought forth large-scale research and remediation efforts funded primarily by the U.S. Office of Education. The failure of most of these efforts to achieve lasting results can be attributed primarily to the failure of educators and researchers to recognize the important cultural and linguistic differences between the Negro and middle-class white communities in this country (Abrahams and Troike 209).

At the heart of this failure in communication rests the fact that many educators do not have a sufficient knowledge of Black English Vernacular dialect (BEV) to teach their BEV-speaking students to read or write because the teachers themselves cannot compensate for the differences between Standard American English (SAE) and (BEV). Black students who used BEV were for a time labelled "less intelligent" by teachers, and I.Q. tests administered to black BEV-users seemed to indicate the truth of the teachers' theory. White students who used BEV were not included in these tests because their dialect was not recognized as BEV. It wasn't until later that educators realized that their tests were biased in favor of Standard American English-speaking middle-class suburban white students.
Another even less complimentary theory, popular until the late 40s, was the notion that black lips and tongues were too thick to enunciate certain Standard English sounds, such as the final /r/ in bar, car, and star. This myth was so popular that in 1949 Gunner Myrdal, a Swedish sociologist, felt it necessary to write an essay dismissing the myth and explaining that BEV is a culturally-transmitted dialect just like all other languages² (McDavid and McDavid in Abrahams and Troike 214).

A final false explanation for the origin of BEV is the cultural deprivation theory. Educational psychologists thought that the language of BEV speakers was a reflection of an impoverished environment. William Labov, Joan Baratz, and Willaim Stewart have each refuted the verbal deprivation theory in their articles on Black English. Joan Baratz says that as a linguistic system, BEV is every bit as viable, complex, and communicative as Standard English (in Spolsky 144). Stewart comments that "such 'Negro' patterns as the 'zero copula,' the 'zero possessive,' or 'undifferentiated pronouns' should not be ascribed to greater carelessness, laziness or stupidity on the part of Negroes, but rather should be treated as what they really are—language patterns which have been in existence for generations and which their present users
have acquired, from parent and peer, through a perfectly normal kind of language-learning process" (in Shores 96-97). William Labov sums up the argument against verbal deprivation as follows:

Unfortunately, these notions are based upon the work of educational psychologists who know very little about language and even less about Negro children. The concept of verbal deprivation has no basis in social reality; in fact, Negro children in the urban ghettos receive a great deal of verbal stimulation, hear more well-formed sentences than middle-class children, and participate fully in a highly verbal culture; they have the same basic vocabulary, possess the same capacity for conceptual learning, and use the same logic as anyone else who learns to speak and understand English (Language in the Inner City 201).

Verbal deprivation developed as an explanation for the poor performance of BEV-speaking students both in the classroom and on achievement tests relative to their white schoolmates. Following a study of the reading ability of users of BEV and users of Standard English, Labov made this comment: "In reading, they (the blacks) average more than two years behind the national norm. Furthermore, this lag is cumulative, so that they do worse comparatively in fifth grade than in the first grade" (in Abrahams and Troike 227).
Table One illustrates the reading score difference between BEV-using readers and the national norms for readers in each age group.

Table I: Reading scores of BEV-users compared with scores of SAE-users.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Reading Score</th>
<th>National Norm</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>J.H.S.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J.H.S.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>120</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.S.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>88</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
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</table>

"Reading Score" indicates the level of reading ability which BEV users tested at against the "National Norm" for the same age group. BEV users are two years behind the average by the ninth grade (in Abrahams and Troike 227).

It was thought that most BEV speakers came from a "verbally deprived" homelife. Labov said that some verbal deprivationists thought that "Negro children from the ghetto area receive little verbal stimulation, are said to hear very little well-formed language, and as a result are impoverished in their means of verbal expression: they cannot speak complete sentences, do not know the names of common objects, cannot form
concepts or convey logical thoughts" (in Abrahams and Troike 226). In preschool programs offered by Carl Borsiter and Siegfried Englemann, two educational psychologists, children were treated as if they knew no formal language! William Labov and many other linguists believed that the educational psychologists who developed the verbal deprivation theory did not realize that BEV speakers came from a highly verbal culture, one rich in verbal games and oral tradition:

Two types of skillful orators have had preeminence in black communities—the preacher and the street corner bard. These seem, at first, to have little in common, and they certainly represent starkly opposing values. One is the embodiment of morality and respectability. The other brazenly defies the values not only of white society but also of the "respectable" elements of black society as well....Both are skilled in the use of language; both use language to impress women....The most skillful preacher is the man who can stimulate his congregation to the fullest participation....The skills of the black preacher have been relatively well known to white America. The skills of the street culture have been almost invisible (Burling 78-79).

Black street culture is what stimulates BEV-speaking school children to play the dozens and to compete in toasts^{a} when they are with their peers. Children who persist in being silent in class become boisterous and talkative on playgrounds and street
corner lots. Obviously BEV speakers are not verbally deprived.

The language barrier between black students and white teachers is not caused by thick lips, lack of intelligence, or verbal deprivation. Black English is different from Standard English because Black culture with its African roots is different from white culture, which has primarily European roots. The forms and variations of BEV have been misunderstood for too long by educators and the public. BEV is a useful dialect in appropriate contexts. Users of BEV need to learn to use SAE and to understand when it is more appropriate to use it than BEV in order to succeed in the United States's present capitalistic society.

Black English is the cause of many students' poor performance in school; therefore, it is essential that BEV-users learn to use Standard English. The educator's responsibility is to ensure that all students have an equal chance to learn material. In the King decision of May 1978, Judge Joiner found that Martin Luther King Elementary School had violated U.S. Code, Section 1703(f) by failing to recognize that Black English is a language barrier which might reasonably cause the students to fail in school (in Language in Society 170). And an even earlier resolution passed in March, 1972, by the CCCC Executive Committee makes the
following ruling:

We affirm the student's right to his own language—the dialect of his nurture in which he finds his identity and style. Any claim that only one dialect is acceptable should be viewed as attempts of one social group to exert its dominance over another, not as either true or sound advice to speakers or writers, not as moral advice to human beings. A nation which is proud of its diverse heritage and of its cultural and racial variety ought to preserve its heritage of dialects. We affirm strongly the need for teachers to have such training as will enable them to support this goal of diversity and this right of the student to his own language.4

Therefore, teachers must understand how BEV's features and grammar work in order to translate BEV's variations to the standard form and teach dialect speakers to do the same. Simultaneously, the teacher should encourage BEV-users to use their original dialect in appropriate situations, and reinforce in the students' minds the cultural value of Black English.

Justification for this Thesis

The differences between SAE and BEV are numerous, but not nearly as numerous as the similarities. The most significant differences that mark the dialect as unique are certain aspects of its pronunciation and grammar. The dialect has a highly systematic grammar
which both further refutes the cultural deprivation theory and creates a real dilemma for educators. Past research on the dialect has revealed its possible origins as a developing creole language which is closely linked to Black heritage and culture.\(^5\)

Researchers such as William Labov, Paul Cohen, Robbins Burling, Walter Wolfram, and Roger Abrahams have developed fairly complete catalogs of BEV's features and grammar.\(^6\) Labov has also published extensively on the subject of Black English speakers' reading problems, and suggested methods to improve their reading performance in the classroom.\(^7\)

Educators have suggested that in order to help students who use Black English to improve their grades, their teachers must acquire a working knowledge of BEV's features and grammar. While several discussions of the features and grammar of BEV can be found, and though Labov has published a method for improving BEV speakers' reading ability, on one area of their education researchers have remained conspicuously silent--their writing.\(^8\)

This thesis will provide a catalog of the phonological features and grammatical structure of BEV in Chapter Two, which will form the basis of further discussions of the pedagogy. The features discussed in the chapter occur in both written and spoken Black
English; however, emphasis in the chapter will be on those features which affect the writing of users of BEV. The list will include a description of each item in the catalog and several examples of it which act as an illustration of its common usage. Chapter Three contains discussions of the four previously developed methods of dealing with BEV speakers in the classroom—the eradication theory, the ostrich theory, the do-gooder theory, and the bi-dialectal theory, and also provides a critique of each of these methods. A new approach to teaching BEV speakers to write in Standard English is suggested in Chapter Four. Chapter Five concludes the thesis.

Statement of Methods

Many black freshmen at The Ohio State University and Columbus State Community College use the phonology and grammar of BEV in their speech and writing. Examination of a number of writing samples and a survey of the faculty, instructional staff, and graduate teaching staff at The Ohio State University determined this.

The survey was created specifically to explore the teachers' opinions about the type and frequency of BEV features observed in their students' written drafts, to
explore their feelings about the students' progress during the course, and to assess their satisfaction with the existing pedagogy for BEV speakers. See the appendix for a copy of the survey and its results.

A study made of previous research in the area included the work of William Labov and others, articles on the bi-dialectal theory, and articles on the teaching theory created by several educators to teach the course "English as a Second Language." Completion of a Bachelor of Science in Secondary Education and instruction of five basic college composition courses (with 24 students each) provided the background in basic composition teaching methods required to construct a new pedagogy for BEV writers.
CHAPTER II
The Phonology And Grammar Of BEV

"When we examine the grammar of the two dialects, however, we find that the differences are quite superficial. Whatever can be said in one dialect can easily be translated into the other" (Burling 48).

Before the sixties, many educators and researchers believed that Black English was an undeveloped and undisciplined form of Standard English, and that the users of Black English had a poorly developed capacity for verbal communication. Upon that theory J. L. Dillard comments that the "misunderstanding of the grammatical patterns of the disadvantaged Negro's speech frequently leads to the conclusion that he has no grammar, a completely untenable position from the point of view of any linguist" (273). Because of the involvement of experts such as William A. Stewart and William Labov, much work has been done in listing and describing Black English phonology and grammar. Many features are peculiar only to spoken BEV, such as elongated vowels and syllable stress changes, but many

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others appear in both the written and spoken language.

Educators have had many odd ideas about the nature of Black English Vernacular, and about what the use of BEV means relative to a student's intelligence. Some of the popular theories about BEV's phonological and grammatical features include the idea that no pattern exists for its use, that children who speak using BEV don't know that "things have names," that children who use BEV do not understand prepositions or locational relationships, and that they are slower to see organizational patterns because their native dialect does not follow any patterns of organization (Dillard 273-274).

The task of educators working with BEV speakers now is multi-faceted. First the teachers must familiarize themselves with BEV's phonological features and grammar. Then they must translate the dialect into Standard English. Once they master this skill they can teach their BEV-speaking students to do the same. In this way, BEV users can learn to understand and use SAE, their grades in school will improve, and their native language will not be threatened with eradication.

The phonological and grammatical features of BEV listed in this chapter appear in order of their observed frequency in the writing of BEV-speaking college composition students at The Ohio State University and
Columbus State Community College. Some of the features seem to affect the spelling habits particularly of users of BEV. Although some users of BEV incorporate many features of Black English into their language simultaneously, not all of the phonological features or grammatical features occur regularly in the language or writing of all users of Black English. The features discussed in this chapter are the following:

1. Past Tense Suffix -ed Deletion and Irregular Verbs
2. Third Person Suffix -s Deletion
3. The Possessive -s Deletion
4. The Plural -s Deletion and Plural Forms
5. Multiple Negation
6. "Be-Verb" usage
7. Perfective "been" and "done"
8. Pleonastic Pronouns
9. Questions
10. Existential it
11. Consonant Cluster Reduction
12. th Sounds
13. r and l deletion

1. The Past Tense

The past tense in BEV is often difficult to detect in the speech of Black English users because the final consonant sounds /t/ and /d/ are often lost. BEV also has more verb forms which are alike in both past and present than SAE does:

BEV: present tense of the verb say is say (as in SAE)
BEV: past tense of the verb say is also say, whereas in SAE it is said
Since final consonant sounds are often deleted in BEV (see #11 below), many black school children have a hard time placing the past tense -ed suffix on verbs in both their spoken and written language. "In the oral language of some black children the past tense suffix has been sufficiently weakened that they have difficulty in interpreting the written -ed when first learning to read" (Burling 52).

Although black BEV speakers have trouble with the past tense suffix -ed, their language contains many irregular past forms which are identical to those in SAE—for example, gave, got, sold, ran, rose. Additionally, when the past tense form involves internal vowel changes and the addition of a final consonant sound, the form is the same in both BEV and SAE: leave/left, tell/told, keep/kept.

In their writing it is not unusual to find sentences such as the following:

We play street hockey yesterday.
He say we should go with him.
I walk to school every day last year.
I see him last week.
I brung that with me.

As illustrated, BEV writers do not use the past tense suffix consistently. They do, however, use a past tense form or indicate the past by using adverbs to mark time such as last and yesterday; therefore, it is
incorrect to say that BEV does not have a past tense; it is really quite similar to SAE's past except for a few variations to which users of SAE are quite sensitive.

2. Third Person Suffix -s Deletion

Third person -s is another suffix which is often deleted in BEV. Robbins Burling suggests the following explanation for this feature:

It was not so long ago that English had not only a special marker for the third person singular, but also one for the second person singular as well (thou hast, thou goest, etc.); and as one looks backward through the centuries, English verb forms grow more and more complex. By clinging to the third person singular -s, standard English still stops short of complete regularity, but this is only the final relic of a far more elaborate earlier system. When black speakers drop the -s, they simply take the ultimate step in regularizing the English verb. They lose nothing in meaning (49-50).

The deletion of third person -s creates a situation in which no distinction is made between third person and first or second person in written and spoken language. Sentences such as the following are common:

We do it today.
He do it today.
He walk to the store.
He go all the time.
She eat cake.

In school, speakers of BEV sometimes overcompensate for their language by placing a third person suffix in places where it does not belong. This occurs because users of Black English often hyper-correct since they aren't sure which verbs need the -s.

We needs to go to the store.
They likes to play ball.
I drives the car.

3. **Possessive -s Deletion**

The possessive -s is another deleted suffix in BEV. Its loss, however, does not indicate that the possessive is lost in BEV, only that it is formed in other ways instead. One way speakers and writers of BEV show possession is to use a marker like of, as in:

The bark of the dog.
The color of the horse.

Another way that BEV speakers can show possession is to place that which is possessed directly after that which possesses it:

The dog toy.
The girl purse is on the sofa.
The teacher desk is by the window.
The man car is loud.

4. The Plural -s Deletion and Plural Forms

The only -s suffix which has survived nearly unchanged in BEV is the plural -s, which in regular noun plurals is similar to SAE in form. The irregular plural form is variable. Sometimes BEV speakers will call the plural of man men, and at other times the plural will be mens; the same holds true for nouns such as fish/fishes, deer/deers, and children/childrens. Certain variations are the result of other features' interference with the form, such as consonant cluster reduction, which deletes the final consonant sound from words:

Desk in SAE becomes 'des' in BEV.
Test in SAE becomes 'tes' in BEV.
Fist in SAE becomes 'fis' in BEV.
The plural forms of these are desses, tesses
and fisses.

In special cases Black English speakers drop all endings from the plural form. When a number indicates clearly that a plural case exists, there is no ending in BEV where there would be an ending regardless of number indicated in SAE. This situation arises in phrases such as:
I only got five dollar.
You gimme ten cent.
My dog is six year old.

5. Multiple Negation

Multiple negatives occur often in the speech and sometimes in the writing of BEV users. They are the result of the use of what is called the "Right-Copy Rule" of negation (Burling 58). In Robbins Burling's right-copy rule, "A negative may be copied from the auxiliary or from an earlier indefinite into a later indefinite" (58). In other words, a negative, once it has been established in a sentence, can be repeated anywhere in the rest of the sentence as many times as the speaker can manage:

"Nothing wouldn't happen.
"Nothing don't never go right."
"I don't want nothing to do with helping none of those guys to get no job nowhere at no fancy salary nohow" (Burling 58)

The explanation for the occurrence of multiple negatives in BEV has nothing to do with Standard English rules. "The reason is that there is basically only one negative in 'He doesn't know nothing' which is expressed in more than one place in the sentence. Standard English allows negatives to be expressed only once; nonstandard dialects have no such restrictions" (Fasold
and Wolfram in Shores 76).

6. The "Be-Verb"

Variations of the verb "to be" are very common in BEV. In standard English the verb is used in one of five inflected forms: is/are, am/was, and were. In Black English the verb is used as "be" regardless of its subject. Two explanations exist for this feature. The first is suggested by Robbins Burling, who says:

...'be' often implies a general state, or a habitual or intermittent action, rather than a single event. Thus 'he be tired' might mean 'he is tired often' or 'he is tired most of the time,' while 'he is tired' could suggest instead 'he is tired right now.' This use of 'be' provides a concise way to indicate a meaning that can be communicated only by several varied and larger constructions in standard English (69).

While this solution is logical, it is not very complete. Fasold and Wolfram agree with Burling, but take the explanation one step further by including not only Burling's theory but also the following statement in their discussion of this feature:

Since be begins with a labial consonant, the 'll contraction of will is often absent before be. This is fairly common in Negro dialect, but also happens occasionally in standard English, giving sentences like He be here pretty soon. The contracted form of would is'd, which can merge with the b of be or be
removed by the final δ elimination rule (in Shores 72).

The addition of this suggestion helps to complete the description of this feature. Since will deletion is a feature of the future tense in BEV, the similarity of these two features suggests the validity of the Fasold and Wolfram explanation.

7. Perfective "been" and "done"

Some features of BEV have been mistakenly identified as purely black speech patterns. These features characterize black speech to standard speakers and are used extensively by the entertainment industry (movie scripts, etc.) as a means of characterizing blacks as ignorant and backward. The fact that features of BEV are also present in the speech of many whites in the South and in the northern ghettos is not widely known. One such "characteristic" feature of BEV is the insertion of perfective been or done. In Standard English, the perfective tenses are formed by placing an auxiliary verb before the main verb, as in the following: I have been there, I have seen that movie, I have had that class.

In BEV, perfect tenses occur regularly and include
an auxiliary verb; however, unlike SAE, BEV uses been and done to indicate completed action.

In the following examples, been and done are used to indicate various times in history.

Remote Past: I been had it 3 year ago.
Emphatic Remote Past: I been done seen that movie.
Less Remote Past: I done seen that before.

Notice that in the remote past, the plural suffix -s is absent from year, which further differentiates this sentence from the standard form. Since perfective been and done sound quite different from the standard forms, they are noticed more regularly by speakers of Standard English in the speech of users of BEV, and have thus become stereotyped as BEV features.

8. Pleonastic Pronouns

A pleonastic pronoun is one which appears in a sentence after an established subject which the pronoun renames.

The man came in he is my brother.
That woman she be fat.
The dog that ran away he came back.

Several attempts have been made to explain why BEV contains this unusual, and to standard speakers, redundant feature. Fasold and Wolfram describe the
feature as follows:

Pronominal apposition is the construction in which a pronoun is used in apposition to the noun subject of the sentence....It seems likely that the length of the modifying material which intervenes between the noun and the pronoun has an effect on acceptability; the more intervening material, the more acceptable the pronoun in apposition. For example, pronominal apposition in a sentence like *That man that I met on the train to Chicago last week, he turned out to be a Congressman* is more acceptable than in a sentence such as *My mother, she's here now.* ...It has been suggested that the use of pronominal apposition is related to the entry and re-entry of participants in a narrative, but this hypothesis has not been thoroughly investigated (in Shores 84).

Although their description of the pleonastic pronoun, which they refer to as a "pronominal apposition," is accurate as a description, it does little to clarify why BEV contains this feature. Riley B. Smith has the following to say about the matter:

To the speaker of NNE (Negro Non-standard English), the SE (Standard English) string *My sister plays the piano* may reflect not a sentence, but a noun-phrase with an embedded relative clause, i.e., *My sister who plays the piano.* The pleonastic pronoun is usually present in NNE, as in *My sister she play the piano,* to disambiguate the two structures. Thus both intracode and cross-code ambiguity militate against the NNE speaker's learning to leave out the subject pronoun pleonasm, which seems to have more a grammatical than strictly stylistic function in his dialect....Optionally deletable markers occasionally, though rarely, perform such a disambiguating function in Standard English. *I see the man*
do it is ambiguous in SE, reflecting phrase-markers which are clearly different when we pronominalize the men: 1) I see they do it, and 2) I see them do it. But the SE speaker normally disambiguates with the clause marker that when he wants to reflect the structure of 1): I see that the men do it (in Abrahams and Trolke 294)

Thus Smith believes that the pleonastic pronoun serves to clear up ambiguity within sentences in Black English. He further explains that in Standard English the same thing occurs with a relative pronoun such as that. Smith goes on later to say the following about the teacher's role in dealing with this feature: "...the English teacher, in her struggle against "ungrammatical" forms, should begin to recognize that some of her students' failures may be identical to her own, resulting from a blockage of understanding of the grammatical structures of the unfamiliar dialect because of ambiguity across dialect boundaries (in Abrahams and Trolke 294).

9. Questions

Users of Black English form many questions in exactly the same way that users of Standard English do. The easiest questions to create in either form of English are those in which an auxiliary verb is moved to the beginning of the sentence and is followed by the
subject.

*John has gone to the store* becomes *Has John gone to the store?* when it is an interrogative. This formation is done by the "flip-flop" rule.9

If a sentence has no auxiliary verb, *do, did, or does* must be placed in the position an auxiliary would have taken.

*They drove to the store* becomes *Did they drive to the store?* with the addition of *did* as the "initiator" of the interrogative.

Both types of English form questions without the flip-flop rule in colloquial speech. A simple rising tone of voice at the end of a sentence indicates a question just as effectively as the previous rule.

The statement *We're going to the store,* when spoken with a rise in tone after the verb becomes an easily understood interrogative in either Standard or Black English.

Where simple questions are concerned, the only difference between Black English and Standard English is that users of Black English more often omit the auxiliary and *do, did,* or *does,* which are required to mark an interrogative in Standard English.

In forming questions which require the "question words" such as *who, what, where, when* and *why,* users of
Standard English still employ the flip-flop rule after inserting one of these wh- words. Users of Black English form these questions the same way; however, they frequently do not employ the flip-flop rule after inserting a wh- word.

In Standard English wh- questions look like this:
Why can't I play outside?
When can we eat supper?
What are you making?

The same questions in Black English may look like this:
Why I can't play outside?
When we can eat supper?
What you are making?

In Standard English, embedded questions, those which are part of longer sentences, are formed by inserting if or whether at the head of the simple question within a sentence. The flip-flop rule is not applied to this kind of question, so the subject comes before the auxiliary.

The standard form of an embedded simple question like Will he go? is created like this: Ask him if he will go. In this sentence, if is inserted to indicate an interrogative, and the subject occurs before the verb.

Users of Black English form their embedded
sentences differently. Instead of inserting a word to indicate an interrogative, they simply employ the flip-flop rule to embed the simple question.

Embedded questions in Black English look like this:

Ask him will he go?
I wonder will it rain?
I asked my sister did she have a dollar?

When Standard English speakers want to embed a wh-question, they do it in exactly the same way that they create other embedded simple questions (without using the flip-flop rule). Users of Black English create embedded wh-questions both ways; sometimes they do not use the flip-flop rule, other times they do. In general terms, users of Black English create questions more freely than users of Standard English. "Clearly the two dialects of English are different in their details, and some questions used by nonstandard speakers strike the standard ear as deviant. Yet there is a close equivalence between the forms of the dialects. As in the case of negations, whatever can be said in one dialect can be readily translated into the other (Burling 68).

10. Existential "it"
In an expletive or existential function, *there* in Standard English and *it* in Black English mean the same thing. For most speakers of Standard English, the difference between *there is a turtle on the grass* and *it is a turtle on the grass* is minor. Fasold and Wolfram point out that occasionally the difference in meaning between *there* and *it* can cause confusion as in the following:

For example, a television advertisement for a brand of powdered soup contained the line *Is it soup yet?* This was intended to mean something like *Has it become soup yet?* and was no doubt so understood by the standard English speaking audience, except possibly in parts of the South. But speakers of Negro dialect might well understand the same sentence as something like *Is there any soup yet* (in Shores 84)?

11. **Consonant Cluster Reduction**

Consonant cluster reduction occurs at the ends of words which have a final consonant pair which agree in voicing and when the second is a stop. Users of Black English often delete the last consonant, only pronouncing one of the consonant pair. Reduction of consonant pairs occurs in two different basic situations, depending upon whether each member of the pair is from the same "base word." If both consonants are from the same base word, the second consonant is deleted—for example, desk/des, test/tes, and so on.
The other situation is somewhat more complicated and is best explained by Fasold and Wolfram:

...reduction also affects final t or d which results when the suffix -ed is added to the "base word." In all varieties of English, the -ed suffix has several different phonetic forms, depending on how the base word ends. If it ends in d or t, the -ed suffix is pronounced something like [d] (e.g. wanted, counted); otherwise it is pronounced as t or d. When the word ends in a voiced sound, it is pronounced as d, so that words with -ed like rubbed or rained are actually pronounced as rubd or raind respectively....If the base word ends in a voiceless consonant, the cluster ends in t, so that messed and looked are actually pronounced as mest and loopt, respectively....In Negro dialect, when the addition of the -ed suffix results in either a voiced or voiceless cluster, the cluster may be reduced by removing the final member of the cluster. This affects -ed when it functions as a past tense marker (e.g. yesterday he move' away), a participle (e.g. The boy was mess' up) or an adjective (e.g. He had a scratch' arm), although its association with the past tense is the most frequent (in Shores 55-56).

They continue that in both Black English and Standard English each consonant in the pair must be voiced or each must be voiceless; otherwise, no deletion is possible.

In colloquial Standard English, consonant reduction occurs only if the word following the consonant cluster begins with a consonant. This restriction does not apply to Black English.

Consonant cluster reduction takes place in the
plural as well as in the singular form of words in Black English dialect. The reduction of plural forms takes place following a regular pattern, as follows:

In Negro dialect, words ending in s plus p, t or k add the -ess plural instead of the -s plural. Thus, words like desk, ghost, wasp, and test are pluralized as desses, ghoses, wasses, and tesses. Because p, t, and k are so often removed by the rule discussed above, these plurals are formed as if desk, test, and wasp ended in s, instead of sk, st, or sp. It is essential to understand that this is a regular pluralization pattern due to the status of final consonant clusters in Negro dialect (Fasold and Wolfram in Shores 57-58).

12. th Sounds

Another important phonological feature of Black English is the pronunciation of th sounds in different positions within words. In Standard English, th can be either voiced or voiceless, following no particular pattern. In Black English, th is pronounced in various ways depending upon its position in the word and what sounds accompany it.

At the beginning of words, th can be pronounced as d, t or f, or as the voiceless th sound by speakers of Black English. Frequently the voiced th sound (as in they) is pronounced d, which creates the sound dev. When the th sound is voiceless initially, as in thin, users
of Black English will sometimes pronounce the \textit{th} sound as a plain \textit{t} sound as in \textit{tin}; however, at other times they will pronounce the same word as \textit{thin} (as it would be pronounced in Standard English), which indicates that \textit{th} and \textit{t} are both acceptable pronunciations in some words. When the \textit{th} sound is followed by an \textit{r}, as in \textit{threat}, speakers of Black English may pronounce the \textit{th} sound as either a \textit{th} or an \textit{f} (i.e., \textit{threat} or \textit{froat}).

In the middle of words, users of BEV pronounce \textit{th} in three ways: as an \textit{f}, as a \textit{v}, or as a \textit{t}, depending upon the context of the word. For the Standard English voiceless sound in \textit{nothing}, the \textit{th} is replaced with an \textit{f} to produce the word \textit{nufin'}. The Standard English voiced sound in \textit{rather} is at times pronounced as a \textit{v} in Black English, creating the sound \textit{raver}, and when the voiceless \textit{th} is followed by a nasal like \textit{m} or \textit{n}, the \textit{th} sound becomes a \textit{t} as in \textit{aritmetic}.

The situation for final \textit{th} sounds is even more complicated. Fasold and Wolfram explain it as follows:

At the end of a word, \textit{f} is the predominant pronunciation of \textit{th} in words such as \textit{Ruth}, \textit{tooth}, and \textit{south}, which are pronounced as \textit{Ruf}, \textit{toof}, and \textit{souf}, respectively. When the preceding sound is the nasal sound \textit{n}, \textit{t} may occur so that \textit{tenth} and \textit{month} are pronounced as \textit{tent'} and \textit{mont'}, respectively. The stop \textit{t} or \textit{d} may also be used with the preposition \textit{with}, so that it is pronounced as \textit{wit} or \textit{wid}. Next to the nasal \textit{n}, it is also possible to have no consonant at all present. This means that \textit{month} and \textit{tenth} may be pronounced as \textit{mon'} and \textit{ten'} (in Shores 61).
13. *r* and *l* Deletion

Post-vocalic *r* and *l* deletion occurs at the ends of words in BEV. In some regions of the United States, word-final *r* is deleted regularly as a feature of regional Standard English. Because *r* deletion is accepted as a regional Standard English feature, the post vocalic *r* and *l* deletion of users of Black English is not as stigmatized as some other phonetic features.

The final sound is pronounced in many regions of the country as a Standard feature while in BEV the final *r* or *l* sound is often reduced to an *uh* sound.

In such items as *steal*, *sister*, *nickel*, or *bear*, only a 'phonetic vestige' of *r* or *l* is pronounced, so that we hear *steauh*, *sistuh*, *nickuh*, and *beauh* respectively. Preceding a consonant in a word (e.g. *wart*, *tart*) some speakers do not have any phonetic vestige of *r* or *l*; this means that *help* and *hep* and *taught* and *torte* may be pronounced identically by these speakers (Fasold and Wolfram in Shores 61).

**Closing Comments**

The preceding features comprise the list of those features which occur most often in the writing of users of BEV. Many other features of the grammar and phonology exist; however, they either do not occur in the writing of users of BEV or they occur individually
and not as an empirically testable pattern in the writing of most users of BEV.

Once educators are familiar with the dialect spoken by their students, they can decide how to proceed in the classroom. Researchers studying BEV have settled upon two basic points of view about the linguistic competence of users of BEV:

The systematic research on the language of lower-class Negro children has produced two general conceptual vantages concerning their verbal abilities. One camp, composed generally of psychologists and educators, has tended to view the language of black children as defective, i.e., the language of Negro children is underdeveloped or restricted in some way. These experimenters attribute the deficit to environmental factors, frequently observing that the mother doesn't interact with the child enough, doesn't read books to him, etc. The other camp, composed mainly of linguists, has viewed the language of lower-class Negro children as a different yet highly structured, highly developed system (Baratz in Spolsky 140).

When educators first became aware of the plight of non-standard speakers in school, and it was determined that the students must be given an equal chance at an education, educational researchers came up with a variety of methods for dealing with the non-standard dialect speaker in school. However, even with the development of many methods of dealing with non-standard in school, users of Black English continue to have difficulty in doing well or sometimes even completing
school. J.L. Dillard explains what one educator discovered about her students who used BEV but "knew" Standard English:

She found—not surprisingly when all the implications are concerned—that those whose language was most nearly Standard English made the lowest grades. Those whose writing had few or no Non-Standard structures tended to put down very little real anthropological material on the three-hour written examination....The reason does not seem difficult to determine: the ones who let themselves go grammatically and concentrated on what they wanted to say managed to get in some anthropology, if not much 'grammar' by the standards of the average English teacher. Those who struggled with the unfamiliar system of Standard English were unable to concentrate on anything else and thus succeeded in writing very little (276).

Other linguists have reported similar findings. In the forward to Chapter Five in *Language and Cultural Diversity in American Education*, Abrahams and Troike comment as follows:

...those Black students who do best in school may not be the most intelligent, while those possessing the greatest intelligence may be among the poorest in terms of grades. This seeming paradox presents a major challenge to education, for it shows that the schools have failed in their efforts to reach such students, and that traditional approaches have actually been counterproductive, for they have alienated the most competent students and left them to focus their energies on achievement within their peer group (211).
Some methods of teaching the users of BEV to write, read, or speak in Standard English are more successful than others, although educators are dissatisfied with most methodologies. Chapter three discusses the four basic approaches developed in the past twenty-five years and points out their various strengths and weaknesses.
CHAPTER III
Current And Previous Methods Of Dealing With BEV In Schools

"Upon hearing non-standard English, millions of Americans conclude that the speaker is uneducated and perhaps even lacking in intelligence. They discriminate against him both in school and in employment. In the face of this discrimination one may wonder why nonstandard speakers do not simply shift to the standard forms that are so similar to their own" (Burling 74).

Teachers, administrators, politicians, linguists, and psychologists have been arguing since the late sixties about what to do about the problem of nonstandard-users in schools. They have fallen into four groups which have each developed a method for teaching the users of non-standard dialects like BEV to read, write, and speak in Standard English. The dissention among the groups is caused by basic differences in the ideology of each method which will be described in this chapter.
One group of theorists suggests that the best way to handle Black English is to wipe it out completely in the schools. This suggestion has been called the "eradication method." A second group would like to "achieve dialect uniformity by teaching non-standard English to standard speakers" (Burling 130). This method will be called the "do-gooder" method. The third group believes that since the dialect exists, society should accept it, and do nothing to change the language of its speakers. This group behaves like an ostrich by burying its head in the sand at the least sign of dissent, and their philosophy will therefore be called the "ostrich" method. The last prominent method suggests that educators encourage bidialectalism with the understanding that non-standard speakers will use the proper form of English in the appropriate context. This method is called "bidialectalism."

In creating their various methods, how much regard has each group given to the identity of the person whose language is considered deviant? For some time, the individual's reaction to pedagogy that was developed just to teach him/her to speak more like everyone else has been given little thought. In his article "On Not Teaching English Usage," James Sledd said the aim of the teacher in dealing with usage in the classroom should be "to cultivate literacy and
humanity, not to encourage the quest for status or the judgment of human beings by the color of their vowels" (698). Why, then, are users of Black English still having trouble in schools? William Stewart believes that "A basic reason why so many Negro children fail in school is not that they are unteachable, but that they are not being taught efficiently or fairly" (in Florida FL Reporter 14).

The goal of any group trying to develop an effective pedagogy is of course to help students to develop skills which they will need to live successful lives. In creating a pedagogy to alter the language of users of Black English, many theorists ignored an important concept—that an individual's identity is linked closely to her/his language.

People of any culture are believed to be born with a capacity to learn any language without formal teaching. What is necessary for children is a model after which to shape their early language; whether it is Standard English or Black English makes no difference (Dillard 267, Moffet 64-65). Whatever the child's native dialect, it is normal for his or her home community. "Although a home language or dialect is as good as any other kind of dialect, it has been an almost worldwide tradition for centuries that the school should concern itself with teaching the language to be used out
side the home. Even most 'primitive' cultures have long known what super-modern American linguistics keeps telling itself—that the physiologically normal human being learns the language of his home circle and peer group without assistance from the school" (Dillard, in Shores 290).

Psychologist George Herbert Mead believed that an individual's identity is really made up of several selves, each of which perform a specific function. The selves which produce thought and speech function in harmony. Mead said that thought is an "inner conversation" which one has to conduct before uttering the processed thought to an audience (Mead, in Moffet 66-67). James Moffet carries Mead's theory beyond the level of thought/language connection in his discussion of teaching theory and non-standard English. Moffet says that

In a very meaningful sense, people speak and write incorrectly only when they deviate from the regular practices of the speech community from which they learned their dialect. Inasmuch as ain't and he go now represent consistent usage in some dialects, they are incorrect only in relation to the norms of standard dialect. In other words, learning to write "correctly" involves a shift of dialect and hence the very sensitive moral and psychological matter of joining a new speech community, that is, the speech community of which standard dialect is preferred.

In this view, teaching a prescriptive body of rules designed to induce correctness appears blandly technical and humanly naive. The student is being asked, in effect, to
prefer the dialect of a speech community to which he does not belong and to disavow, in some measure, the way of talking that he learned from his parents and from other people upon whom his sense of personal and social identity depends (156-157)

Thus Moffet and Mead establish that a person's language and identity are closely linked, and when forced to "shift" to Standard English, the user of Black English may thus find the task both difficult and repugnant.

The Eradication Method

Part of America's early educational theory is the concept that a correct form of English exists, and although not everyone knows exactly what is correct in all circumstances, a correct form may be found by consulting a handbook (Burling 130). Grammar school's principle task was to teach the prescribed rules to students, thereby initiating them into the use of the Standard Form. The eradicationists continue to believe that a "best" form of English exists, and that other dialects of English are, therefore, inferior.

James Sledd criticizes the eradicationists' justification for dealing with BEV because he says it stems from their view of the economic basis of our
country. "One group that speaks up from time to time, speaks for Big Brother, telling us that we should make our students speak and write alike since a standardized language is a necessity for an industrial society" (701). Sledd says later that another basis for the eradicationists' theory of wiping out all non-standard dialects is "that we must build into every boy and girl 'the language habits of the socially acceptable of most of our communities,' 'the language habits in which the major affairs of the country are conducted,' for otherwise the child will 'be handicapped in his struggle for social progress and recognition' and may not 'rise to the highest positions'" (701). Sledd recognizes that the motivation of the eradicationists may be human interest, but their methods are culturally inhumane.

The primary concern of the eradicationists is to give the speakers of non-standard English a better chance for success as adults. One spokesman for the eradicationists is Dr. Max Rafferty, whose article on the subject appeared in the San Diego Union (September 10, 1967). Part of his comments read as follows:

It is precisely education's job to deal in rights and wrongs. Because a child may count on his fingers and toes at home is no reason for his arithmetic teachers to let him keep doing it at school. And because a bigoted neighborhood may revel in racism doesn't make it okay for the civics instructor to neglect teaching the Bill of Rights to
youngsters who call that neighborhood home.

Neither does the fact that mom and pop say "De cat ha just split" when they mean "The man has just gone" make it right, any more than my Irish great-grandfather was permitted by his American teachers to go around voicing such Old Sod barbarisms as "Shure and begorra, 'tis a foine spaleen ye are, bad cess to ye."

After his teachers had finished with him, great-granddad spoke good English, and he was thankful for it all his life. His parents went to their graves speaking brogue (in Shores 279).

Unfortunately, in their attempts to improve the situation for users of Black English the eradicationists did not take into account the variability of Standard English forms or the subtlety of some of the distinctions between Standard English and Black English. Most experts agree that the assumption that learning a dialect different from one's native language is fairly easy is wrong. "In some ways it is easier to learn an entirely new language than to learn a different dialect of the same language. With a separate language one must start from the beginning, and one always knows that he is on alien ground. Old habits never work. With a new dialect, most of the old habits are still needed, and it is extremely difficult to learn exactly which old habits are to be retained and which discarded" (Burling 74). William Stewart applies this problem specifically to reading when he remarks that:

"for many Negro pupils, the problem is made
more difficult by the fact that they are unfamiliar, not only with the sound-spelling-meaning correspondences of many of the words, but even with the grammatical patterns which these words make up in their reading lessons. Consequently, the reading achievement of these children becomes dependent upon their own success in deciphering standard English sentence structure" (in Florida FL Reporter 14).

Because of the insensitivity of their methods of dealing with cultural and native-dialect issues, and the unrealistic expectations placed upon users of BEV in schools, the eradicationists' methods have been a dismal failure in public schools. Now, due to the King decision described later, the eradicationist method is also illegal.

The Do-Gooder Method

The Do-Gooders took the opposite view from that of the eradicationists concerning the problem of non-standard in the classroom. They thought that if the users of Black English could not learn Standard English easily, then we, as the more privileged Standard speakers, should learn non-standard English and make non-standard the "standard" form of English.

In order to help out the poor and the burdened,
this group felt their method was the fairest solution to the problem. In the interest of creating a uniform language, it also seemed like a good idea.

This method never became popular because it is too ridiculous to contemplate seriously. The number of Standard English speakers is far greater than the number of non-standard speakers, and by sheer force of size, the speakers of Standard English would win any debate on the subject.

The Ostrich Method

Educators in this group believe that spoken language should be left alone. Robbins Burling says that the Ostriches point out that this country is made up of diverse groups of people, and that each group has a slightly different dialect. Instead of spending valuable class time teaching language users to use Standard English, teachers should practice reading skills and other subjects that should be taught in schools. Individuals from this group, including James Sledd, observe that it is possible to study geography, mathematics, and physics in any dialect, and that Frenchmen and Japanese can talk about many subjects in their languages, so why can't users of Black English use their native dialect? (Burling 132).
The difficulty with this method is that users of Black English find it very difficult to learn to read because most printed material is written in Standard English. Also, in some situations, Black English phrases have an entirely different meaning from the identical phrase in Standard English. For example, the Black English existential it does not always create the same meaning as the Standard English use of it, (see Chapter Two page 27). Additionally, our society usually demands the use of Standard English at the workplace. Users of Black English may find it as hard today to find employment as they have in past decades because their dialect is not Standard. John Baugh, a professor of linguistics and anthropology, says that, "Employers were seeking 'articulate' blacks (and other minorities) to fill management trainee positions... 'articulate' speech in this instance translates into proficiency with standard English.... Most business managers are concerned with communication" (118). Later, Baugh goes on to say, "When street speakers see standard English as a tool rather than as a rejection of black culture, it will be easier to face the conflicts that bidialectal pressure can exert" (124).

The trade-off in learning Standard English does not have to be the loss of Black culture. Black English can still be used appropriately at home, with friends,
and in personal writing. Taught correctly, Standard English would not threaten Black English with extinction.

The Bi-Dialectalist Method

The bi-dialectalists believe in the viability of Black English as a useful language. Their argument is that for practical purposes, such as employment and writing, Standard English is a better choice of dialect considering the society of the United States. Their goal is not to replace BEV, but to supplement it with Standard English in appropriate contexts. A. Barbara Pilon points out that in schools, certain dialectal expressions can be ridiculed by classmates and teachers. She urges teachers to instruct users of BEV to be sensitive to context and adjust their language appropriately: "Those expressions that may hurt children if they use them in certain settings must be identified, and effective teaching methods must be set up so that alternate patterns of expression can become so familiar to the children and sound so right to them that they actually will use the expressions as substitute methods of communicating" (in Spolsky 132). She makes the point further that all speakers adjust their
language to satisfy specific situations, and that it should be no hardship for users of BEV to do the same.

If bi-dialectalism is taken to be the best of the four methods, it still has many problems. For example, it has already been established that speakers of BEV will have a very difficult time learning to read, write, and speak in Standard English because learning a new dialect is far more difficult than learning a new language (Burling 74, Stewart 14). Also, how do teachers begin to instruct students to read if most printed material is written in Standard English, the alien dialect? Another drawback is that if schools require teachers to instruct students to communicate in Standard English, does that mean in all the classes in the school, or just in English classes? Finally, what about the children themselves? Their reaction to being taught another dialect is crucial to the success of this program. If they resist, little will be accomplished. The previous considerations are just a few of the issues which will be addressed in chapter four as a closer look is taken at pedagogy.
CHAPTER IV

An Approach To Teaching Users Of BEV To Write In Standard English

"Many are the teachers who derive a kind of compensation for their limitations from the belief that they are superior to their students in their 'better' grammär" (Dillard 272).

The grammatical structure of Black English Vernacular has been recognized by linguists as being complex, organized, and useful to its users. In previous chapter, the phonological and grammatical features have been listed and described according to current research by many experts. The methods of dealing with BEV by educators have also been described and compared. What is crucial to the successful education of users of BEV in learning to speak, read, and write in SAE, however, is the teachers' approach to the subject.

Few university courses address the issue of nonstandard dialects in classroom situations, so even teachers educated in the 80s go into their classrooms ill-prepared to help nonstandard users to learn Standard
English. Many experienced English teachers find teaching nonstandard speakers, especially those in ghetto schools, to be 'humiliating, irksome, and monotonous,' and even some supposedly well-informed university administrators at largely Black universities have faulty theories about language learning—for example, "language, being a learned activity, can be learned badly" (Dillard 267). The 'blame,' when it is assigned, often falls on the heads of the black students, rarely on the shoulders of the 'better informed and educated' white administrators. The luxury of denying responsibility for student failure cannot continue; logic and equity demand that the current chain of events be broken. This time, responsibility must be accepted by new teachers as well as the schools which graduate them.

Certain desirable qualities should be associated with new teachers of English in schools which attempt to teach SAE to users of BEV. The following discussion; however, is based upon ideals, not upon reality. In a later section of this chapter, a more realistic set of goals will be outlined.

**Ideal Qualities for Teachers of SAE as a Second Dialect**

1) The new teacher should be well trained in many aspects of linguistics, including syntax, phonology, language acquisition, as well as social factors which influence language usage.
and acquisition.

2) The teacher should be very familiar with the dialect spoken by the community in which he/she teaches.

3) The new teacher should have a theoretical background in teaching English as a Second Language, and if possible have some experience working with students from foreign language communities.

4) The new teacher should have an open mind and a healthy respect for the people he/she teaches and their culture. There is no place for prejudice in the classroom regardless of who is being taught.

5) New teachers must pass rigorous evaluations of their teaching technique before they graduate and begin to teach, and after each year that they teach.

6) New teachers, involved in instructing dialect users in learning SAE, must be committed to teaching as a career rather than as just an "easy ride" through college, as it has been viewed by some in the past. What education in this country needs is commitment.

In the past, the study of linguistics has made up a very small percentage (often less than 5 credit hours in a 90-hour program) of the core of secondary English degree programs at most universities. Without straining too hard, it is easy to see that this is inadequate preparation for the teaching of SAE to Standard users, so it is an impossibly small amount of preparation for teaching users of non-standard dialects. Roger W. Shuy, a well-known linguist, remarked that "the linguistic preparation of prospective English teachers is woefully
inadequate" (11). The purpose of studying linguistics is to learn as much as possible about the units of language which make up English, its history, its relative-languages, and its usage throughout the world. Understanding linguistic principles will also help to broaden the attitudes of teachers toward language. Not only do teachers have to know the basic grammar and usage of Standard English but, as Erika Lindemann, Director of Composition at the University of North Carolina comments, "To teach English requires a second kind of knowledge, a 'conscious understanding' of linguistic principles" (100). Without such a study, a complete understanding of the English language is impossible.

Because dialects vary so much from city to city and geographic area to area, concentration on the dialect community in which a new teacher wants to teach is imperative. Many phrases, catch words, and connotations of words are unique to small community areas, and students expect their teachers to be familiar with these various meanings. Without this familiarity, teachers will not fully understand their students, and students will have even less reason to respect and cooperate with their teachers. Considering the nature of the subject, respect, trust, and cooperation are at a premium. Rudolph C. Troike comments:
...teachers simply lack any receptive competence in their students' dialect (though inasmuch as the students can understand their teacher, their receptive competence clearly exceeds that of the teacher). Since a teacher can achieve greater rapport (not to speak of communication) with her students if she can understand them, it might well be desirable to devise materials to help teachers acquire an adequate receptive, if not productive, competence in the dialect of their students. Such an experience might, if nothing else, impart a greater respect for the students' achievement, and an appreciation of the difficulties involved in learning to speak a second dialect (309-10).

One way to become familiar with a small dialect area is to spend a few weeks as a teacher-in-training in the company of an experienced teacher. From listening to the students of the experienced teacher, a new teacher could add to her knowledge of basic linguistics those features which are peculiar to the dialect community. Such a practice does not, however, mean to encourage teachers to imitate the speech of their students; it would simply help the teachers to be able to understand their students' language. At first, few teachers will qualify for the title of 'experienced teacher' where dialects are concerned; however, with time and consistent effort, all teachers will learn the phonology and grammar of their students' language. In the long run, such a practice could only benefit all concerned.

ESL programs have been closely associated with
teaching new dialects for some time. Many aspects of these programs are similar—for example, the approach the teacher takes to the material and to the students is related. Although learning a new dialect is more difficult than learning some foreign languages, the same systems of evaluation, preparation of materials, and orientation of students in the new language exist between the two. For those reasons, new teachers should be familiar with and if possible have some experience in teaching English as a Second Language.

Language and culture are closely related; as has been noted by language experts for years. "Most linguists define language as 'a learned system of sounds that have an arbitrary value and meet a social need to communicate'" (Lindemann 104); therefore, a working knowledge of Black culture, obtainable in anthropology courses, is necessary when teaching users of BEV. Teachers' interest in and respect for students' heritage becomes apparent in classrooms, and can help students to accept both their teachers and the lessons being taught. William Labov believes that "It is widely recognized that the teacher's attitude towards the child is an important factor in his success or failure" (in Abrahams and Troike 252). Dillard has commented that, "In order for the teaching procedure, especially in the vital early years, to be fitted to the child's own cultural
background, it is obviously quite important for the teacher to know something of that background" (289).

In the past, teachers graduated from colleges and began to teach in schools without any type of objective evaluation by an agency outside the college from which they graduated. To this day no substantial national teacher evaluation system exists. The present system of teacher instruction is extremely naive and inadequate. If teachers had to pass rigorous tests of their teaching technique both before they graduated and after each year of work, the quality of our teachers could only improve. Sets of tests should be developed for experienced teachers as well, tests which could evaluate their knowledge of the material as well as their classroom technique.

By making graduation from Colleges of Education more difficult, schools could improve the level of commitment among the graduates. Many Colleges of Education have high grade point averages, which reflect the relatively low quality of evaluation occurring in coursework. Some students, whose interest in getting through college outweighs their interest in a career they would really enjoy, choose to graduate with a Bachelor of Science in Education simply because it is an easy degree to earn. Students with this low level of commitment are not appropriate teachers for users of
BEV or any other students. A testing system and a more demanding curriculum, rich in linguistics, anthropology, and ESL coursework, would ensure better educated and committed teachers, which is of course the ultimate goal of any program.

**Realistic Goals for Today's Teachers and Education Degree-Granting Curriculums**

The learning problems of non-standard dialect users have existed for many years. The previous section described ideal goals for teachers and Education curricula, which, while they are valid, desirable goals, are presently unattainable for many obvious reasons. This section will suggest more attainable goals, and discuss some of the benefits these goals will have for students immediately upon implementation.

One of the most basic changes that teachers will have to make is in their view of languages. Galvan and Troike suggest that,

"Teachers must be trained to take a sociolinguistic view, recognizing systematic social and cultural differences, and the correlated linguistic modes for their expression. Teachers must learn to accept, intellectually as well as emotionally, the validity of various pattern of behavior, realizing that they fill significant adaptive and emotional needs of those who possess them. Culturally, as well as linguistic, relativity must be a part of the teachers basic approach if he is to effectively reach those who differ
in language or culture" (Abrahams and Troike 304).

Farr and Daniels agree as follows: "Both preservice and inservice teachers should be exposed to the research on language variation, and they also should develop (or be helped to develop) a descriptive understanding of any non-standard dialects used by the students they teach" (49). The reason that Galvan, Troike, Farr and Daniels believe teachers must understand basic linguistic theory is best expressed by Lindemann as follows:

Because we all value language as a means of expressing ourselves, we naturally make value judgements about what 'sounds good' and 'looks right.'...Like all matters of taste, our assumptions of what language should and shouldn't be reflect personal and cultural values...As teachers our best defense may be acknowledging the problem. Students need to know that all writers make choices based on what they believe constitutes 'effective English.' They can't make those choices freely if we treat language as absolute, as a system of right and wrong rules (104).

One way that school systems could help their teachers to appreciate the culture of nonstandard-speaking students and the related modes of expression in the dialect, is for schools to set up seminars and workshops on those topics as a Professional
Development option. Many universities and colleges provide public and corporate education seminars taught by faculty who are qualified and recently graduated. These seminars could be taught by linguists, anthropologists, historians, ESL teachers or experts in dialectology, or a combination of several individuals in a team-teaching session.

Teachers also need to know how to motivate their students to learn Standard English. This indicates that teachers need to be familiar with some of the most realistic reasons to use Standard English.

1) In order to add immediacy to the program, one good motivator is to explain the following tactfully and in the appropriate language to the students: It has been suggested by experts that children who come to school with less competence in Standard English often fall behind in all subjects because they don't understand their teachers; therefore, they seem to fail at a much higher rate than Standard users do. The farther along they manage to go in school, the more their grades seem to deteriorate. This is also an excellent motivator for the parents if they care about their children's performance in school.

2) Users of Black English should be reassured that their identity as members of a separate and valuable culture is not being threatened in any way as a result of learning to use Standard English in appropriate contexts. Dillard has discussed this thought at length in Chapter Six of Black English. Part of his discussion goes as follows:

For the relatively upward-mobile Negro who somehow survives the cultural and linguistic mismatches of his schooling--especially of reading instruction--and finally gets through
high school and into college with a nearly Standard brand of English under his control, there remains the important necessity of continuing to identify with his own group. Most of these people rely heavily on ethnic slang; it is the recourse of the Black who is not phonologically nor grammatically like his ethnic group but who wishes to retain some linguistic similarity (239).

This passage should not be quoted to all student-users of BEV; however, it is a useful reference, and the kernel theory—that users of BEV can continue to use that dialect freely should they like to—probably ought to be expressed.

3) One reason for learning to use Standard English which has been beaten to death is the, "You can't get a job unless you talk right" theory. By the time students reach seventh grade many of them have probably heard this reason a dozen times. It is a valid concern; however, a more useful approach might be to explain why such a theory is true using examples. A) Since many, many positions (especially in sales- or service-related jobs) require good communication skills, and most Americans speak some form of the dialect chosen to be called Standard English, it is a good idea to be able to converse with them in that dialect. B) If a salesperson wants to persuade customers to buy merchandise, that salesperson must be able to apply effective skills of persuasion to make sales. One of the principals of persuasion is to establish common ground for respect and agreement with a customer. Psychological studies have proven that if the salesperson doesn't speak the same dialect as the customer, his/her job is harder. C) In positions of authority, people need to speak as if they expect respect. The dialect recognized by most Americans as commanding respect is Standard English. Again, the job is easier if the individual already knows how to use Standard English.

4) Some students raise the objection that they can learn Standard English by listening to the radio or watching television, so why should they be forced to use Standard in school? Dillard commented on this issue as follows:
"One of the clear facts which emerges from a great deal of research in dialectology is that people are often exposed to dialects over long periods of time without learning them" (285). The reader might consider trying to learn to use non-standard English by listening to users of non-standard, how quickly or easily could you become fluent in a foreign dialect? The student's theory simply does not work. An appropriate response might be to test the student's ability to use Standard after one or two days of "studying with the radio."

5) Real applications for the work that students produce in class is another excellent motivator. Farr and Daniels describe this motivator as "The opportunity to write for real, personally significant purposes" (53). They go on to list six purposes for writing in schools at present: (1) Writing to show learning; (2) Writing to master the conventions of writing; (3) Writing to learn; (4) Writing to communicate; (5) Writing to express self; and (6) Writing to create (53). Basically only the first two purposes are used with great frequency. Because of the irrelevance of writing topics to life, many students see writing "as another hurdle on the track of schoolish trivialities" (54).

Having better-informed teachers and motivated students will help to improve the success rate of users of non-standard dialects like BEV in schools. Because the lessons which users of BEV must learn are so closely linked to their psychological, cognitive, and emotional identity, special care must be taken by the teacher to ensure a positive atmosphere in the classroom. If the teacher's attitude says to the students, "We're licked before we start," the students obviously will feel the
task is too great. The best approach to teaching a second dialect is to be understanding, enthusiastic, patient and firm. "Non-mainstream students need to have a relationship with the kind of writing teacher Perl describes: a person who recognizes that the pupil arrives in English class as a rather accomplished user of language, and who views the main task as helping the student along toward the next stage of linguistic growth (Farr and Daniels 49). The students must respect the importance of the lessons and feel that they can master them:

Obviously the teacher of Standard English as a second dialect stands in a very delicate relationship to the students in the class. The students need acceptance and approval; yet there comes a time when the teacher must let them know their English usage is not acceptable under all circumstances, must help them face certain disagreeable facts—the fact that they have yet to master the kind of English required for success in school, the fact that there are new speech habits to be acquired, the fact that important decisions may go against them if they do not learn another way to talk...Somehow the second-dialect student has to be kept secure in his own identity and self-esteem while learning to talk like everybody else (Allen in Abrahams and Troike 324).

Learning new techniques to bolster student-confidence will enable teachers to develop better working relationships with their students. Although an authoritative stance is sometimes called for in the classroom, it is not a good general policy, or even a
good emergency measure policy in all cases. Considering that what teachers must ask their BEV-speaking students to do is replace one very strongly ingrained behavior with another, it is not unfair to ask teachers to learn to teach in a more nurturing manner.

Beyond better informed teachers, more motivated students, and a more positive, supportive classroom atmosphere, one other change could help student-users of BEV to learn Standard English more quickly and easily—new lesson plans designed specifically for teaching users of Black English to use Standard English.

New Ideas on Lessons Plans For Users of Black English

"It is still our custom unhesitatingly and unthinkingly to demand that the clocks of language all be set to Central Standard Time" (Joos in Abrahams and Troike 145).

In beginning to design better lessons for users of BEV it is essential to know where the students fall in their 'linguistic competence' in order to avoid adding to the difficulty of the assignment. Previously, the assumption was that if a student used forms such as "He don't," "We done ate," or "She come home at five," that student does not know the Standard forms "he doesn't" or "We have eaten" (Troike 305). The trouble is that they
often do know these forms, but they translate them into their own form in writing or verbalizing the thought. "A considerable amount of recent work has shown convincingly that students from the first grade on (and often earlier) have a well-developed receptive knowledge of dialects other than the one which they normally speak" (TROIKE 306) TROIKE goes on to say later that students decode sentences to find their meaning then re-encode that meaning into their own dialect to express them. In effect they are translating from one dialect into another, which indicates that they understand the Standard form (306).

Once teachers are sure that students know the forms of Standard English, but don't use them habitually, she/he can design lessons which provide practice in using Standard forms in their speech, reading and writing without the students being aware that they are using them. One such lesson involves asking students either to say aloud or write down the answers to questions like "What does the mailman do? What does the doctor do? What does the minister do? This lesson forces them to use the third person -s suffix. Previously, teachers used verbal and written drills to teach the use of Standard forms; however, linguists have pointed out that although drilling students may force them to use Standard English forms
automatically if they are repeated often enough, these drills are boring and unrealistic applications of the language.

Oral reading instead of drills is often useful in teaching students to recognize the system of homonymy which exists between Standard and Black English, and the sound and rhythm of Standard English. Labov lists the following as guidelines for teachers to follow in directing the oral reading of users of BEV:

1. In the analysis and correction of oral reading, teachers must begin to make the basic distinction between differences in pronunciation and mistakes in reading. Information on the dialect patterns of Negro children should be helpful toward this end.

2. In the early stages of teaching reading and spelling, it may be necessary to spend much more time on the grammatical function of certain inflections, which may have no function in the dialect of some of the children. In the same way, it may be necessary to treat the final elements of certain clusters with the special attention given to silent letters such as b in lamb.

3. A certain amount of attention given to perception training in the first few years of school may be extremely helpful in teaching children to hear and make Standard English distinctions (in Abrahams and Troike 289).

Oral reading in Standard English is especially effective with students who already know how to read. Students who do not know how to read have been approached in a different way. Some experts believe
that in learning to read, dialect users often experience "structural interference" between the grammatical patterns of non-standard and Standard English. Structural interference occurs because the grammar of the language the student speaks and the written language are different, which prevents the student from understanding meaning. William Stewart comments on structural interference as follows:

...the grammatical differences between Negro dialects and Standard English are probably extensive enough to cause reading-comprehension problems...One simple way to avoid placing a double learning load on the lower-class Negro child who is learning to read would be to start with sentence patterns which are familiar to him--ones from his own dialect--and move to unfamiliar ones from Standard English once he has mastered the necessary word-reading skills. In that way, reading ability could actually become an aid to the learning of Standard English (in Abrahams and Troike 269-270).

Many other experts agree with Stewart that one way to help users of non-standard to learn Standard is to start with the basics in their own dialect. It is especially helpful for students learning to read to see their language in print before making the transition to the alien dialect. Dillard is one of those who believes that using a non-standard form to teach basic reading skills is a good idea. He says that, "Young speakers of Negro Non-Standard have a great handicap in acquiring
those more basic skills because of the very great difference between the syntactic structure of their own language and that of the printed texts which the school calls upon them to read" (280-281). He continues with the following example:

I watched a teacher of an allegedly retarded group of reading students deal with a boy who looked at printed

his brother

and responded with

he buvva.

It really seems far-fetched to call this a reading error at all. The boy had done what a reader is supposed to do: he had looked at a group of symbols in one kind of code...and had translated it into his own spoken code. The teacher...chose to regard it as a visual problem: 'Don't you see the final -s?' Of course, a reader isn't expected to 'see' the medial -s- in island! (281).

Reading and writing can be combined in many useful ways to help users of non-standard English to use standard. For students who have mastered the basics of reading, writing instruction is both a logical next step and a good chance for students to express themselves in a new language. Farr and Daniels suggest that,

...some student control of writing activities is also important...For writers of nonmainstream backgrounds, some of the work they produce when given such free choice may derive from the unique linguistic traditions of their group. Allowing such choice is a
positive way of inviting overlap between school activities and home values. Some scholars have argued that bringing these distinctive linguistic traditions into the classroom (e.g., among black Americans, sounding, rapping, playing the dozens) is a vital step not just toward helping students develop as writers but also toward helping them to master the unique rhetorical resources their own cultural traditions offer them (55).

Teachers may initially run into difficulty with their students when they offer free-choice writing assignments. Traditionally, students look to their teachers for direction in all their school work. When being asked to develop their own topics and create a document, many students are apt to be too self-conscious or suspicious of the assignment to complete it. Many users of BEV come from economically depressed home environments where reserve and 'toughness' are respected. Students from this background will have a natural aversion to 'opening up' to the teacher or to classmates in creative writing. Sometimes other types of writing will help to bridge the gap between the suspicious student and his/her teacher.

Farr and Daniels suggest using writing assignments which have a purpose. One of the best types of purposeful writing which will have real value for most students is what is traditionally called Business Writing. Assigning a letter which solves a problem the
teacher provides may be a lead-in to having the students write letters about problems they experience in reality.

To complete this sort of activity well, the class should have a good discussion about current events and social problems before the teacher introduces the assignment. Students need to practice expressing themselves orally in order to help the flow of ideas. From oral work a good way to get the writing started is to teach students how to brainstorm ideas. Encourage students to use either dialect because they can revise their work later. After practicing oral and written brainstorming students should be able to create their own letter topics.

By writing a few practice letters the students might feel more eager to write a letter to the city manager about more playground space or repairs to existing recreation areas, or a letter to a congressman about a political issue they feel strongly about. The value of revision will become apparent to students as they draft their letter. This sort of purposeful writing may help to instill the value of writing and careful composition in the students' minds.

From using Business Writing as a means of teaching revision and relaxing the students, the teacher can move into creative areas. One way to incorporate spoken and written language skills into one activity, is
to use drama. Beginning with simple skits which the teacher can create or find in textbooks, students can learn acting technique as well as practice their English. The teacher should act as the resource person in the group rather than as evaluator of the students' language usage. After having performed a few of the teacher's skits students should be encouraged to create their own either as groups or individually. Using language usefully and meaningfully in this situation will help students to appreciate using Standard English as a tool not just an exercise. Also by working cooperatively, the students will learn to trust each other and the teacher.

Eventually, the teacher should be able to use published plays as the focus of student interest and energy. Choosing the right play is essential in getting started. Initially, plays with events to which students can relate are best. Reading the play aloud or actually acting out scenes will sharpen the students' Standard English skills as well as be a lot of fun.

Closing Comments

This chapter provides a starting point for teachers of composition for users of BEV. Since teaching situations are so different, and the needs of
the students are also different, it is difficult to say what is the best or most correct method for any teacher. The ideals presented in this chapter exist regardless of situation, and the more attainable suggestions will work in most classrooms if the teacher is well-prepared and committed to the students.
CHAPTER V

Conclusion

"All this talk about good words and bad words brings us to a gray but important area called 'usage.' What is good usage? What is good English? What newly minted words is it O.K. to use, and who is to be the judge? Is it O.K. to use 'O.K.'?" (Zinsser 40).

Usage has been defined as 'linguistic etiquette' by Lindemann (107), who says that it refers to socially sanctioned styles of language appropriate to given situations and audiences. Teaching users of BEV to use Standard English in appropriate situations is identical to teaching users of Standard to use formal rather than colloquial language in formal situations. Usage is therefore determined by the speaker's perception of his or her environment, or by his or her purpose in communicating; however, E.B. White once wrote that "English usage is sometimes more than mere taste, judgment, and education--sometimes it's sheer luck, like getting across the street" (151).
Many black writers use Black English Vernacular in their writing. Zora Neale Hurston, Malcolm Little, Alice Walker, Richard Wright, and Tony Cade Bambara have all used their native dialect in passages or entire works to create atmosphere, to add authenticity, and to communicate their ideas as truly as possible. These writers and many others have argued that their dialect is as much a part of their culture as their color, and that they use their native dialect to express traditional values, stories, and rituals. Some scholars have theorized that Alice Walker titled her novel *The Color Purple* because purple is a very significant color to many blacks. The deepest color in purple is black—a fact of some cultural significance to many blacks. It has also been suggested that Walker chose to write her novel in BEV because of the importance of that codell to the cultural meaning of the novel.

Some writers who were native Standard English-speakers used dialects like BEV for similar reasons because they too recognized that using a nonstandard dialect such as BEV adds a new dimension to their work. This fact is significant because BEV has been proven to be a useful dialect, thus it is important for teachers to preserve its use as well as teach the use of Standard English. If the prescriptivists' attempt to ban the use of dialects in literature had been more
successful, many works would not exist on public library shelves. Novels like *The Sound and The Fury*, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *Tom Sawyer*, and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* would not be read in schools, and would be omitted from the list of classic American novels.

In teaching users of BEV to write, speak, and read in Standard English, teachers must show respect for the native dialect of their students. Taught well, students should be able to switch back and forth easily between the two dialects, making wise usage choices. One group of teachers dedicated to improving the pedagogy for users of BEV is TESOL, who as a group have acknowledged that "Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages recognizes that the goal of education is to provide the students in accordance with their full potential, with the knowledge necessary to liberate them to make choices within the society in which they choose to live" (in Position Paper 5).

The future of users of BEV and their teachers is much brighter than their past. Much has already been done to improve the success rate of users of Black English. School need not be a painful, humiliating, monotonous, or irksome experience for either students who use BEV or their teachers.

Programs similar to those designed for ESL students are being developed for users of dialects such
as BEV. Some experts feel that textbooks written in Black English which contain graduated additions of Standard English will help students to learn to read more easily and successfully. Although the results are not yet in on the use of these graduated readers, such a program looks promising. Some colleges and universities with high black enrollments have added language arts and literature courses designed specifically for users of Black English. Coursework covers levels of composition, black culture, and black literature. Since programs are being developed to help users of Black English, similar courses should also be developed to improve the ability of teachers of this special group of students.

Colleges and universities which graduate new teachers need to improve their curricula by adding coursework in linguistics, anthropology, and sociology; by employing a stricter system of evaluation for new teachers before they graduate; and by evaluating their teachers after they graduate. State school boards need to develop evaluative instruments to test their experienced teachers, and to create a workshop program for teachers who need coursework in linguistics, anthropology, and sociology. Finally, teachers need to create interesting, useful, purposeful assignments which challenge their students without overwhelming them. As
committed teachers they must be aware of each student's progress and be able to help students who seem to be faltering.

The difficulty users of Black English have in successfully completing school in the United States was recognized early in the 60s. At present, many users of BEV are failing because the school system in this country has not yet fully addressed the problem. Ignorance, prejudice, and fear are the primary reasons for this. Some school systems refuse to believe that their methods or teachers could be ineffective; it is easier to believe that the black children in their schools are learning-disabled or from verbally deprived homes. Radical changes of the country's educational system and policy are too controversial for many administrators to face directly. While much beating around the bush is going on in board rooms, children and their teachers are becoming discouraged, and some of them quit in frustration.

Summary of Contents

The introduction and first chapter included a discussion of the problem administrators and teachers had with users of BEV in classrooms in the sixties, and of the problem which users of BEV had in trying to learn
material covered in schools as a result of their dialect which was a language barrier. Much of the previous research on these problems was discussed, and it was established that more work must be done to solve these problems.

A list of the phonological and grammatical features of BEV which affect their writing appears in chapter two along with appropriate examples.

Current and previous methods of dealing with BEV in the classroom are discussed in chapter three, and their strengths and weaknesses are considered.

Chapter four contains a discussion of ideal goals for the education of users of BEV, and a list of more realistic goals. These goals are applied to classroom activities as examples of some useful and fun ways for users of BEV to learn the usage of SAE.

Limitations of Research

This paper is necessarily without samples of the writing of BEV because none have been made available for study or publication since this work began. Although the paper may suffer from the lack of actual samples, it contains good representations of the writing of users of BEV, and is therefore a significant body of research which offers many avenues for future research.
The work satisfactorily answers the questions which prompted its creation and adds much to the canon of work on the subject. It must be noted here that much of the previous scholarship on the subject was available only in anthologies because the library collections at my disposal had many shortcomings, and had misplaced much of material required to make a complete list of references.

**Future Research**

In 1986 Marcia Farr and Harvey Daniels published a marvelous book with useful suggestions about what to do with nonstandard dialect users in the classroom. *Language Diversity and Writing Instruction* covers both current and past research on the writing of nonstandard dialect users, and then suggests some positive ways to help these students to improve their writing through the use of Standard English. This book should be on the reading list of every new and experienced teacher of English.

One area yet to be written about from the standpoint of education is that of the literature of black writers who have used BEV as the code for their work. How does the dialect affect meaning? Is it appropriate for the work? Does using the dialect
automatically exclude some readers? Could the work be as effective if it were written in Standard English? These are just a few questions worth answering on the subject.
NOTES

1 For that reason, black children often failed the tests or did so poorly they were considered learning disabled. The Dove Counterbalance Intelligence Test was developed by Adrian Dove to measure the I.Q. of poor black urban children, and the Black Intelligence Test of Cultural Homogeneity was developed by Professor Williams of Washington University in St. Louis for the same purpose. Standard intelligence tests would have been in direct violation of the King decision's ruling that schools must provide adequate extra instruction for students with language barrier problems. See William Labov, "Objectivity and Commitment in Linguistic Science: The Case of the Black English Trial in Ann Arbor," in Language in Society, 11 (1982), 165-201.


4 From College Composition and Communication, 23 (Oct. 1972), 325.


8 Little had been written about the writing problems of nonstandard users until recently; see Marcia Farr and Harvey Daniels, Language Diversity and Writing Instruction (New York: ERIC, 1986)

9 Briefly, the "flip-flop rule" involves switching the position of the subject and auxiliary in the negatives of users of BEV. For a complete explanation of the "flip-flop rule" see Robbins Burling, English in Black and White (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1973), 64.


11 I use the term "code" here to indicate a form of communication which is still hotly debated by linguists and others. Some say that BEV is a dialect while others say it is a language. I think BEV is as much a language as Standard English, and that calling BEV a dialect only reveals the speaker's misunderstanding of that code of communication.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX

The results of the survey were obtained by questioning fifty members of the faculty, staff and graduate students at the Ohio State University and twenty members of the teaching staff at the Columbus State Community College.

Of the seventy instruments handed out, forty-four were returned anonymously and two were returned with a name indicated.

Of those who answered the survey, three quarters had had black students in their composition classes. It should be noted that the percentage of black students to students of other races at The Ohio State University is significantly lower. At OSU, one out of nine students in composition classes is black. At CSCC, one out of five students in composition classes is black.

Many of those surveyed indicated in response to question #3 that they were not very familiar with the features of Black English, and therefore, had difficulty answering the question. Of those who did respond, one
quarter had noticed features of BEV in their students' speech or writing.

Of those surveyed who answered #4, the following results have been calculated:

a. 26 noticed that their black students deleted the past tense suffix.

b. 25 noticed that their black students deleted the third person singular suffix.

c. 14 noticed that their black students deleted the be-verb.

d. 16 noticed that their black students used multiple negation.

e. 4 noticed that their black students used consonant cluster reduction.

f. 11 noticed that their students over-used the be-verb.

g. 15 noticed that their students used pleonastic pronouns (especially in writing)

h. 17 had noticed remote or emphatic been or done in their speech only.

Of those surveyed only one person answered number five. This person identified herself and mentioned having noticed existential it and th sound deviations.

Of those surveyed, all forty-six indicated that they were not satisfied with their current pedagogy. Many indicated that they had no idea what to do to help their students to write in Standard if they used Black English.

No writing samples were made available for inspection.
Sample copy of the survey handed out on March 4, 1987.

Dear English Department Faculty, Instructors and Graduate Students:

This survey is part of the research I am conducting for my Master's Thesis. The subject of the thesis is the writing of Black composition students. I am interested in creating a method for teaching students who write in Black English Vernacular (BEV) to write in Standard American English. This survey can be filled out quickly and easily. Please help me out by completing this form and returning it to my mailbox by March 20, 1987.

Thank you for your help!

Mary Faure

1) How many students (approximately) have you taught to write?

2) Of that number, how many were black?

3) During the course of your teaching, how many of your Black students wrote or spoke using Black English Vernacular?

4) How many of each of the following features did you observe:
   a. Past tense suffix (ed) deletion.
   b. Third person singular (s) deletion.
   c. Use of "be-verb" deletion.
   d. Multiple negation: "Nobody knows nothing"
   e. Consonant cluster reduction: test-tes
   f. Misuse of "be-verb" in writing or speech.
   g. Possessive (s) deletion: "That is John book."
   h. Pleonastic pronoun: "The man who came in he is my brother."
   i. Remote been: "I been had it three year ago."
      Emphatic been: "I been done seen that movie."

5) Other nonstandard features you've observed in their writing or speech?

6) Do you feel your present pedagogy is effective for teaching BEV speakers to use Standard English?

7) If you have any writing samples of BEV, please include them with this survey.