

MEASURING ATTITUDINAL CHANGE: A SOCIOLINGUISTIC AND  
PSYCHOLINGUISTIC INVESTIGATION INTO PERCEPTIONS OF AFRICAN  
AMERICAN ENGLISH AND ACADEMIC ENGLISH

By

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To Jeremy, with love, and to all of my students in Louisiana who sparked my interest in affecting education through linguistics

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAVE	African American Vernacular English: What I am referring to as African American English
BEV	Black English Vernacular
IAT	Implicit Association Test
L1	First language acquired
L2	Second language acquired
SE	Standard English: What I am referring to as Academic English

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Chair: Diana Boxer  
Cochair: H. Wind Cowles  
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This experiment measured teachers' attitudes towards African American English and Academic English. Participants were graduate students of Education at a college in New York City. They completed a paper-and-pencil questionnaire that assessed their explicit attitudes towards the two varieties, as well as a Psycholinguistic Experiment that was designed to capture their implicit attitudes. They completed these measures at the beginning of the semester and again at the end. In between the Pre- and Post-Tests they participated in six lessons that gave an overview of the syntax, phonology, and social issues surrounding African American English. After the six lessons the participants completed the same attitudinal measures as before, and the change in attitudes was measured. Participants' attitudes changed significantly from originally thinking that African American English was a slang, lazy manner of speaking, to believing that it is a rule-governed variety that has social value. The Psycholinguistic Experiment was designed within the matched-guise methodology, such that participants heard four speech samples ostensibly from four different speakers, yet there were in fact only two speakers who each gave two separate samples. One speaker was an

African American woman and the other was a White woman. Each speaker told a story in African American English and another story in Academic English, for a total of four different stories. Participants heard one story and then completed an adjective discrimination task in which they assigned eleven sets of opposing adjectives to the speaker they just heard, using a response box that timed their responses down to the millisecond. They completed this activity for all four speech samples. After the Pre-Psycholinguistic Experiment the participants strongly preferred the speech of the White speaker, regardless of what variety she was using. By the Post-Psycholinguistic Experiment, however, the only significant interaction was that participants strongly preferred the White speaker using African American English over the African American speaker using that same variety. The results are considered positive in keeping with the goals of the experiment, which included increasing the participants' positive attitudes towards African American English.



## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

### **Background: “Ain’t Ain’t a Word”**

This research grew out of several negative phrases I heard teachers saying to students a decade ago while I was teaching in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, with Teach For America. The one that still rings most often in my ears is “ain’t ain’t a word.” In the school I was teaching the majority of the students were African American, and most, if not all, spoke what I now know to be African American English. “Ain’t” was clearly a word since the students and teachers were using it in a conversational context and it had meaning attached to it, and it is also listed in major dictionaries. When I heard teachers saying “ain’t ain’t a word” I often wondered what the students were thinking about this paradoxical use. Their teachers were using it as a word and everyone understood it to be a negation and question marker with a variety of meanings, so how was it not a word? I did not know if the students understood the larger framework within which the teachers were operating, i.e. that mastery and usage of Academic English has academic and social benefits. If the students did not understand their teachers’ reasoning for telling them that “ain’t” is not a word, I assumed that they might take what their teachers were saying as a personal criticism and that it might cause them to be less eager to speak in class.

While I was teaching at this school I knew that the students’ language was quite different from Academic English, yet I did not know that it was a fully-fledged variety with its own set of syntactic and phonological rules that were codified in academic texts. I often heard teachers saying very negative things to the students about how they spoke, and while I understood that the teachers were trying to help the students, I knew

that this could not be the most appropriate or most successful strategy. Language and identity are inextricably linked, and in my opinion, as the teachers degraded the students' speech, they were simultaneously degrading the students themselves. I understood that the teachers knew that the students would be more prepared academically and career-wise if they acquired Academic English, as this is a significant tool towards achieving academic, social, and economic mobility and equity. However, I could not shake the feeling that what they were saying to the students could have very negative repercussions.

At the time I had no idea that years later I would be conducting research that grew from my discomfort with the way the teachers were discussing language with the students. This discomfort put me on the path towards seeking information regarding how the students were speaking as well as appropriate methods to assist them in mastering Academic English. While I still regret not having this information to share with my students and the other teachers then, I feel fortunate to be able to share it with teachers now as I did in this current study.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this research was to ascertain whether my teaching methods, over the course of six lessons, would be effective in changing teachers' (who I will refer to as "participants") attitudes towards African American English. These attitudes were measured not only on a paper-and-pencil questionnaire, but also through a Psycholinguistic Experiment that made it much harder to conceal potentially socially undesirable attitudes.

As will be discussed in Chapter 2, research indicates that most teachers have negative attitudes towards African American English, and that teaching about the

linguistics of African American English ought to improve these attitudes. Additional research shows that if teachers have more positive attitudes towards their students' language varieties, the students perform better academically. I would like to see all of these strands of research connected, which entails teaching teachers about the linguistics of African American English, changing their attitudes towards African American English and thus ultimately their interactions with their students, and then seeing how this teaching has affected the students themselves and their academic progress.

My larger vision is that eventually all teachers will be trained in the linguistics and social issues surrounding African American English, and that this training will improve their students' academic performance as well as open doors for the students later in life. Controlling only African American English and not having the ability to produce Academic English when desired greatly limits social and economic mobility, and I want all students to have access to all reaches of society and not become "stuck" where they are due to their limited linguistic repertoire.

There is currently much discussion in politics and education about the disparities between minority and White students' achievement levels, and much research focuses on why minority students do not perform as well as their White counterparts. I believe, however, that language is an issue that is grossly overlooked, and that closing the achievement gap as well as the opportunity gap is not possible until the variety of language that students are using is taken into account and treated as an element that must be examined in order to help improve their performance. This idea of an "opportunity gap" was coined by da Silva et al. (2007), and they are referring to the idea

that not only is there a gap in terms of academic achievement that can be seen through test scores, but there is also a gap in terms of what opportunities are available to different people, and that these two phenomena are interconnected. They state, “we must recognize that the gaps in educational achievement that we are so fond of discussing are produced by even more unwieldy gaps in opportunity” (p. 1).

Much research investigates social issues that affect student performance, and while I find this research to be extremely valuable and necessary, there is little research that looks directly at how the students’ variety of English affects performance. I think this is a significant hole in the fight to close the achievement gap, and that the solution starts in part with teaching teachers about the systematic, rule-governed nature of African American English, and with providing teachers strategies to help their students learn to code-switch between their home variety and Academic English. It is imperative that students’ intelligence is not judged based on the variety of English they command or how they sound.

This is where the current research fits in. It examined if a six-lesson teaching module that I created could positively affect participants’ attitudes. Ensuring that teachers have positive attitudes towards African American English is, from my perspective, the first step in the process of teaching students how to code-switch. This ought to play a strong role in ultimately leveling the academic playing field.

### **The Study**

This research sought to determine whether teaching participants about the linguistic and social features of African American English would make their attitudes towards the variety more positive. The participants were graduate students of Education at a university in New York City, and most of them were currently teaching.

The research consisted of gathering pre-test data for participants regarding their viewpoints towards African American English and Academic English through sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic measures, then teaching about the linguistics of African American English for six hour-long sessions over a period of about six weeks, and then administering post-tests that were identical to the pre-tests in order to measure any changes in the participants' attitudes over the course of the teaching sessions.

The sociolinguistic elements included a Background Questionnaire that measured participants' knowledge of African American English as a linguistic variety, and it ascertained whether they knew of any methods to assist mono-dialectal speakers of African American English acquire Academic English. Participants also completed a Demographics Questionnaire and an Attitude Questionnaire that sought to determine their attitudes towards African American English as well as its place in education and in society.

The psycholinguistic component was an experiment that measured participants' timed responses to eleven sets of adjectives that they selected after hearing stories told by an African American woman and a White woman. Each of the women narrated one story in African American English and one story in Academic English. Participants heard a story, selected an adjective by pressing the associated button on a response box for each set of adjectives, and then went on to the next story until they had completed the task for all four stories. The adjectives were opposite in nature, such as intelligent/unintelligent, loud/quiet, upper-class/lower-class, etc. There were four different stories with two stories from each speaker in a matrix as follows below in Table 1-1.

Table 1-1. Story, speaker, and variety

Story	Speaker	Variety
One	African American	African American English
Two	African American	Academic English
Three	White	African American English
Four	White	Academic English

This experimental design measured participants' reaction times to the adjectives they selected in reaction to the four different speech samples. There is agreement among researchers that when respondents take a longer time to respond to a cue in this type of experiment it indicates more difficulty in making that decision. Likewise, when participants responded more quickly it indicated that they had less difficulty with making that decision, or in this case, adjective selection. Therefore, this experiment not only captured participants' beliefs in terms of their adjective selection, it also captured how much difficulty or ease they had in making that decision. The sociolinguistic methodology included paper and pencil questionnaires, however participants may shift their responses towards what they believe is more socially acceptable or what the researcher is looking for in their responses when completing a paper and pencil measure. Because of this, the psycholinguistic element of the experiment was designed in order to gather participants' attitudes that would be harder to disguise or that they may not have realized that they have.

Between the pre- and post-testing I taught six lessons about the syntax, phonology, history, and other social issues surrounding African American English. I also taught participants methods for assisting their students who speak African American English or another non-standard variety to acquire Academic English without

demeaning the students' home variety. The content of these lessons is fleshed out in Chapter 3.

### **Miscommunication Due to Differing Codes**

Miscommunication is often a result of speakers who command different linguistic varieties, yet when these varieties are very similar to each other, such as with Academic English and African American English, interlocutors are often unaware that these instances of miscommunication are actually happening. Most Americans are unaware of the existence of African American English and therefore do not consider that there would be language differences which could create confusion or a miscommunication between two native 'English'-speaking Americans. For example, if Person A only speaks English and she is speaking with Person B, who speaks French as an L1 and has limited ability in English, Person A would likely be mentally prepared for potential communication issues. On the other hand, if Person A is part of a conversation with Person C, who is a mono-dialectal African American English-speaker, and Person A is unaware that Academic English and African American English are two distinct varieties, she might not be prepared for communication gaps between Person C and herself because she is unaware that she and Person C are operating within different codes. Because she is unaware of the differing codes, she is unaware that a miscommunication may occur since she assumes that she and Person C are operating within the same linguistic system.

In a similar vein, Shirley Brice Heath (1983, reprinted in 2009) provides an example of a student's use of an African American English feature--remote past BIN-- that led to a miscommunication and misunderstanding between a teacher and student. The teacher is a mono-dialectal speaker of Academic English. Brice Heath recounts:

the class was participating in 'sharing time' on the topic of pets, and the teacher called on Teegie: "What kind of pet do you have?" Teegie answered, "A dog, a big ol' collie dog. He been stay down my grandmamma house." The teacher asked: "Has he run away?" Teegie hesitated and answered, "No, I been had 'im der." Later in the afternoon the teacher indicated to me that she thought from Teegie's answer that he had not understood her follow-up question, and she was not certain what Teegie had meant. I explained that his use of *been* in the first answer indicated that the taking and keeping of his dog at his grandmother's house happened in the distant past, and Teegie reaffirmed that point in his follow-up answer. (p. 277)

This is a clear example of a teacher who was not familiar with the syntactic patterns of African American English and who misunderstood the content of a student's utterance. It is clear that it would be beneficial for teachers to understand the language patterns of their students not only for the sake of comprehension, yet also in terms of enabling their students to acquire code-switching skills. If this teacher had understood Teegie's use of BIN she would have been able to use that moment to show Teegie and the other students the differences and similarities between that construction and the Academic English equivalent.

### **Racial Overtones: I am White**

I have considered and have often been asked about how I think my race--I am White--affects my teaching about African American English and how participants respond to me. This is a question about which I am unsure of my response, and I reflected about race consistently throughout all phases of the research. My perceived negatives of being White in relation to my goals are that participants might assume that because I belong to the dominant culture and I speak the dominant language that I'm trying to "fix" the "bad" way that African American English-speaking students speak. Also, I wonder if participants and people in general will listen long enough to find out that I am very aware of the myriad social and racial undertones underlying the issues of



language and how language, identity, and power are intertwined. Language (and especially African American English) is a sensitive topic, and I never know if when beginning a conversation a listener is going to assume that I am working within a racist framework once they realize that I am talking about the intersections of race and language.

My perceived positives of being White are that I am not trying to promote a language variety that I speak natively. I think that this might lend some credibility to the notion that what I am teaching is valid and that I am not trying to promote the use of a non-standard variety that I speak natively. I believe that teachers should be aware that African American English is a rule-governed, logic-based variety, but when I am presenting these beliefs the color of my skin does not suggest that I am attempting to promote African American English because it is my personal linguistic variety.

### **Overview of Chapters**

Following this introduction is Chapter 2, where I provide an overview of the literature that underpins this study. Research is culled from several domains including sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, education, and social psychology. Because this research intertwines several different domains, I attempted to present relevant research from all fields in a manner that informs the reader of the major tenets within each field that support the current research.

Chapter 2 reviews the methodology I used for the sociolinguistic aspects of the research. Following that is Chapter 4, which details the results from those measures. Chapter 5 lays out the methodology for the Psycholinguistic Experiment, and Chapter 6 then presents the results from that experiment. I conclude with Chapter 7 in which I tie

together the sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic results as well as provide implications for this study as well as for research that could be born from this study in the future.

## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Racial Achievement Levels**

African American students have consistently fared worse academically than their White or Academic English-speaking counterparts (Wolfram, 1970; Craig et al., 2004; Lee, 2002; Taylor, 1991; Singleton & Linton 2006; Ladson-Billings 2000, among numerous others), and children who primarily or only speak African American English are far behind White students in reading and most other areas of academia (Rickford, 2005). Rickford notes that performing poorly in English class generally indicates poor performance in all other subject areas (1999), and he has shown that for every year African American students are in school they progressively perform worse (2005). This decline in academic performance continues, as will be discussed shortly. It is abundantly clear that there is a need for dramatic educational change.

According to the most recent data from the National Center for Education Statistics (2010), there remains a gap between White, African American, and Hispanic Students. The report categorizes students into

three achievement levels: *Basic*, *Proficient*, and *Advanced*. These achievement levels are performance standards showing what students should know and be able to do. *Basic* denotes partial mastery of knowledge and skills that are fundamental for proficient work at a given grade. (*Below Basic*, therefore, denotes less than this level of achievement.) *Proficient* represents solid academic performance. Students reaching this level have demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter. *Advanced* signifies superior performance.

In terms of academic proficiency for eighth-graders in 2011, while 30% of White students were categorized as Proficient, only 10% of Black students and 13% of Hispanic students were Proficient. Additionally, while only 13% of White students were categorized as Below Basic, 35% of Black students and 31% of Hispanic students were

Below Basic. The results for the twelfth-graders are almost identical in terms of those labeled Proficient, yet there are even more Black and Hispanic students who are categorized as Below Basic: 39% of Black students and 35% of Hispanic students, compared to 13% again for White students.

Singleton & Linton (2006) state that in their work, “we have discovered that poor White students, on average, outperform poor Black students, and this pattern persists at the middle and upper income levels as well. Even more alarming are data that indicate poor White students may outperform middle-income Black and Brown students” (p. 4). These authors believe race and racism to be at the heart of the achievement gap, and I am in agreement with them about these major causes for the academic disparities between the races. Certainly language is deeply intertwined with the issues of race and racism, though I believe it plays a stronger role than is currently being discussed. It is because of this belief that in this current study I am investigating attitudes towards different language varieties with the hope that in the future, the results of this study will be able to better inform teacher development and ultimately increase student achievement levels. Teachers’ attitudes are directly correlated with student achievement, and many teachers have negative attitudes towards African American English. It is imperative that we ensure that students are being judged based on their true academic performance and not on the language variety they possess or the way they sound.

### **Teacher Attitudes and Student Achievement**

Teachers’ attitudes are highly correlated with student achievement, and research shows that if a teacher shows disapproval of or lack of appreciation for a student’s language, the student will perform more poorly (Rickford, 2005). It is thus imperative

that we examine teachers' linguistic attitudes and explore ways in which any negative attitudes can be mitigated. Blake & Cutler (2003) show that "teachers' attitudes play a significant role in the experiences of students, and furthermore, predictions of students' scholastic achievement are related to evaluations of their speech" (p. 189). Numerous other studies link student achievement with teacher attitudes (Ladson-Billings, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2000; among others), and many indicate that teachers in general have negative attitudes towards African American students' speech (Ladson-Billings, 2000; Bowie & Bond, 1994; Blake & Cutler, 2003). For example, Fogel & Ehri (2000) note specifically that African American English-speaking students "must contend with negative teacher attitudes toward their dialect" (p. 214).

The motivation behind the current study is to alter teachers' attitudes for the purpose of improving student achievement. Although measuring student achievement is not part of the scope of this study, the guiding purpose is to investigate whether teaching teachers about the rule-governed nature of African American English and the fact that it is a recognized linguistic variety will affect their attitudes, given that the research so clearly shows that student achievement is strongly linked to teachers' attitudes.

### **Teaching Teachers About Language Diversity**

Blake & Culter (2003) insist that teachers be taught about language diversity both for students who speak English as an L2 as well as for speakers of African American English. They state that even in such a diverse setting as New York City, teachers are not linguistically informed. According to them,

it is imperative to have educational laws which, in this case, are targeted at categorically training teachers about language diversity. The individuals creating such training programs should be cognizant of the needs of non-

native English speakers, while also addressing the needs of students who are nonstandard English speakers, this including African American English-speaking students. In diverse metropolitan centers like New York City, one cannot address bilingualism without addressing bidialectalism, and vice versa, and yet this continues to be the case. (pp. 189-190)

Likewise, Baugh (1995) states that “school districts rarely hire linguists, and teacher training programs rarely include linguistics classes...the dearth of linguistic understanding for language minority students among educators can have negative consequences for African American students” (p. 94). Even when linguistic diversity training is provided, Adger (1995, as cited in Wiley & Lukes, 1996) says that it does not meet the demands of its population (p. 528). Baugh (1995) also reports that

some urban educators have remarked that language development is a low academic priority for poor minority students because of the myriad of other social problems they face in daily life. The paradox at hand lies in the fact that a good education is critical to breaking perpetual cycles of poverty, and *linguistic skills are a strong indicator of the likelihood of eventual academic success.* (p. 88, italics mine)

### **Educating Pre-Service Teachers**

Knowing that teachers’ attitudes have such a powerful impact on student achievement, one might expect pre-service teachers to be educated about linguistic diversity. Wynne (2008) gave a survey to pre-service teachers in attempts to assess their opinions about Academic English and African American English. She was genuinely surprised by their negative responses to African American English and general lack of awareness of the social prestige that Academic English holds, and she says that she “wondered why, when language is the major medium of instruction, would we in schools of education give so little time, effort, and attention to teaching our pre-service teachers about the basic assumptions of the realities of language diversity?” (p. 211).

To investigate how pre-service teachers are being educated about linguistic issues, Bowie & Bond (1994) conducted a study with seventy-five pre-service teachers. Their purpose was to assess teacher attitudes towards African American English. Unsurprisingly, their results indicated negative attitudes, and they noted that the most negative responses in relation to African Americans and African American English stemmed from pre-service teachers who reported little to no exposure to African American English. Bowie & Bond used Taylor's 1973 "Language Attitude Scale," which is a paper and pencil measure of explicit attitudes, and I used this same measure in the current study, as will be discussed in Chapter 3. In Bowie and Bond's (1994) findings, participants rated African American English as inferior to Academic English. Specifically, "61% [have] not realized...[that] Black English is a legitimate and rule-governed dialect and does not operate under a faulty grammar system" (p. 115). Notably, only 19% of the pre-service teachers said that they had had in depth discussions regarding African American English. This clearly demonstrates the need to expose pre-service and other teachers to African American English as a systematic variety. Bowie & Bond (1994) specifically state that teacher education students need to be more culturally aware and cognizant of differences, including linguistic differences.

Charity et al. (2004), discussing both teachers and pre-service teachers, assert that "speakers of SE have been rated more favorably with regard to their cognitive abilities and social statuses than have speakers of AAVE or other nonstandard dialects" (p. 1352). Because of this, it is imperative that we teach pre-service and currently-teaching teachers about linguistic diversity and encourage them to see that the variety a

student speaks does not necessarily correspond with how intelligent that student is or how well that student will fare academically.

The research that has been presented thus far indicates that teachers, along with other community members, have negative attitudes towards non-standard varieties, including African American English. Because of these negative attitudes that filter down into student assessments, I believe students must become bi-dialectal and able to switch between codes. Ideally, teachers would be educated in linguistic differences and made aware of differing varieties and rules governing them in order to assist students in becoming bi-dialectal, though in the meantime much of the burden rests on the students themselves.

### **Measuring Attitudes**

Researchers in a variety of fields, including psycholinguistics, psychology, and social psychology, have been interested in peoples' attitudes since at least the early 1900's. Gawronski (2007) declares that research on attitudes is "one of the most important constructs in social psychology" (p. 573). The construct of *attitude* is broken down into either an *implicit* or *explicit* attitude.

#### **Explicit Attitudes**

Explicit attitudes are those that are defined as attitudes for which people have conscious control and are those that people are able to express to an audience. Measures of explicit attitudes include scales such as a multiple-item rating scale, semantic differential, feeling thermometer, likability rating, evaluative rating scale, and the modern racism scale, as identified throughout the literature but summed up in Gawronski & Bodenhausen (2006), as well as the Internal and External Motivation to Respond without Prejudice (Plant & Devine, 1998). While there is debate regarding



how conscious these explicit rating scales are, there is general agreement within the research community that these scales measure attitudes that participants are able to express to others. There are differences in *when* participants will express their attitudes, in that a White participant is more likely to respond in a less biased way when the experimenter is Black than when she is White (Lowery et al., 2001), yet simply the fact that she can control the expression of her attitude indicates that it is explicit.

Explicit attitudes have been assumed to be less truthful or insightful as implicit attitudes, and researchers have suggested that respondents might be “strategic” when expressing their attitudes in order to conform to expected social norms (Plant et al., 2003, p. 187).

### **Implicit Attitudes**

Researchers disagree about the amount of awareness a participant may have regarding their implicit attitudes, yet in general it is assumed that implicit attitudes are those over which the participant does not have conscious control, thus they have been referred to as *unconscious attitudes*. However, Gawronski et al. (2006) state that “the available evidence indicates that self-reported and indirectly assessed attitudes are systematically related....the relative size of the correlations seems to depend on a variety of different variables, such as motivational factors, the degree of deliberation during self-report, conceptual correspondence between measures, and measurement error” (p. 490). Indeed, more recent research has started to take into account different ways in which participants may be primed for certain attitudes.

### **Implicit Association Test**

The Implicit Association Test (IAT) was designed by Greenwald, McGhee, and Schwartz in 1998, and it is referenced in nearly every article that discusses measures of implicit attitudes. The IAT can be used to judge implicit attitudes towards a variety of

groups, such as Black and White, or Korean and Japanese participants, as originally created in Greenwald et al. (1998). They specifically state that the IAT is “potentially useful for diagnosing a wide range of socially significant associative structures” (p. 1464), and that “the implicit association method may reveal attitudes and other automatic associations even for subjects who prefer not to express those attitudes” (p. 1465). For explanatory purposes, I will focus on the measure in terms of Black/White attitudes. The measure works as follows:

There are five trials within the test, and each of the trials associates certain emotions and names with which hand the participant uses to press the key. The first trial is labeled the “initial target-concept discrimination” and participants must differentiate between Black and White American names. In the second trial, called the “associated attribute discrimination” task, the participants must discriminate between Pleasant and Unpleasant words. The third trial, the “Initial combined task,” forces participants to combine their decisions between a Black or White name and a Pleasant or Unpleasant attribute. The fourth trial, the “Reversed target-concept discrimination,” forces participants to change keys, such that Black and White names are on opposite keys from before, and the fifth trial, the “Reversed combined task,” is the opposite of Trial three, where on one key participants associate Black names with Unpleasant attributes or White names with Pleasant attributes.

Response times are scrutinized on the third and fifth trial, and the *IAT effect* “is defined as the difference in mean latency between these two conditions (non-compatible minus compatible)” (p. 1468). The non-compatible trial is Trial Three in which participants are associating Black names with Pleasant attributes, and the

compatible trial is Trial Five in which participants are associating White names with Pleasant attributes.

The results show that participants are able to categorize what they perceive to be compatible associations faster than non-compatible associations. Thus, Trial Five is generally faster than Trial Three, revealing the participants' underlying, implicit attitudes towards the two racial groups, with faster response times when White names are paired with Pleasant adjectives and slower response times when Black names are paired with Pleasant adjectives.

### **Whether to Administer an IAT**

I spent considerable time debating whether it would be appropriate to administer an IAT, and I chose not to because of what it measures and the time it would take to administer it. For this specific research I was interested in attitudes towards language varieties and how these attitudes change over time due to explicit instruction regarding the linguistic features of the variety, along with social and cultural factors. I thus measured not only attitudinal change that resulted solely from linguistic education but from activities in which the participants engaged that were specifically targeted at changing their attitudes towards African American English. The IAT, which measures in general a person's implicit racial attitudes (when used with Black/White names), does not measure language attitudes.

Although the IAT is not used in the present experiment, the results indicating a latency towards Black names and Pleasant words will be drawn upon in the experimental design, namely in the question regarding whether participants will respond more slowly to positive adjectives paired with African American English. As will be described in Chapter 5, pressing the buttons slower during the Psycholinguistic

Experiment indicates more conflict for agreement with the participants' selections. Additionally, in this study a comparison between the implicit measure and explicit measure will be made to investigate whether participants respond in more socially desirable ways on an explicit measure.

### **Motivational and Attitudinal Change**

Motivational and attitudinal change have been explored in a variety of ways. Plant & Devine (1998) investigate the differences between internal and external attitudinal motivation, and say, "We conceive of internal motivation to respond without prejudice as resulting from internalized and personally important non-prejudiced standards. In contrast, external motivation to respond without prejudice is conceived of as resulting from social pressure to comply with non-prejudiced norms" (p. 812). Through several self-report measures they classify participants as either high or low in both external and internal motivation to respond without prejudice and consider how people who are motivated by different factors respond to different situations.

It might seem intuitive, when attempting to alter a participant's attitude, to directly address this attitude. However, some of the literature regarding expressed attitudes indicates that when people are directly confronted with their attitudes they may go against what they perceive to be what society expects of them and actually further endorse a socially unfavorable attitude (Plant & Devine, 1998). They also note that "a very real concern is that people who are primarily externally motivated may grow to resent the infringement on their freedom and feel increased frustration and reactance, which may ultimately fuel their prejudices," this referring to research by Brehm (1966). Because of this, I did not address the participants' attitudes directly. Instead, I presented information showing what "many people" and "many teachers" believe about

students' language usage, yet I did not press participants to discuss their personal attitudes, especially during the first few lessons.

Plant & Devine (2001) also discuss Reactance Theory and suggest that “to the degree that people view pro-Black pressure as a constraint on their freedom of response and anticipate that noncompliance will result in punishment as well as future restrictions on behavioral freedom, they are particularly likely to respond with reactance to such pressure” (p. 487). This reactance and backlash is one reason why in the teaching lessons I did not directly confront race. I did not believe that there was enough time to address it in a way that was meaningful and not simply ‘touching on the issue,’ and I did not want participants to react negatively to the information that would be presented in the future lessons.

In conjunction, Monteith et al. (1998) produce findings indicating that if participants are given “replacement thoughts” that counter the stereotype that a person holds, “stereotypes may be inhibited without a concomitant increase in the accessibility of stereotypic material” (p. 71). They go on to assert that the findings were tenable with responses timed to the millisecond, indicating that the responses are not under conscious control. For example, Blair et al. (2001) find that participants were less likely to judge a woman with stereotypical traits when primed by a counter-stereotypical image, and Gawronski et al. (2008) show that “thinking about stereotyped groups or individuals in counter-stereotypical terms (e.g., “old people are good drivers”) is more effective in reducing unwanted stereotyping than attempts to negate an existing stereotype (e.g., “it is not true that old people are bad drivers”) (p. 376). These findings were incorporated into the current experimental design. For example, while I did tell

participants that “African American English is not a lazy, slang form of Academic English,” I much more often said, “African American English is a rule-governed variety that is just as grammatical as Academic English, simply with different grammatical and sound-system rules.”

### **Matched Guise**

The matched guise methodology is a measure that was created within the discipline of social psychology and is used within the realm of sociolinguistics and psychology, though not generally used within the discipline of psycholinguistics. As this current research is combining sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic methodology, data will be examined that was created in part through this methodology.

It is difficult to determine whether the matched guise technique should be categorized as an explicit or implicit attitudinal measure. In a matched-guise experiment one speaker is recorded speaking in two different registers or languages. For example, in the seminal work by Lambert (1967), Canadian participants listened to a speech sample supposedly from a French-Canadian and another from an English-Canadian. Participants rated the English-Canadian speaker more favorably, indicating preference for this manner of speaking, and according to Lambert, this group of people. In reality, the participants only heard one speaker who used a French-Canadian guise in one speech sample and an English-Canadian guise in the other. Participants thus made linguistic judgments and displayed their attitudes towards the different language varieties, and by extension the social groups, based on the speaker’s linguistic identity. Lambert (1967) states that, “the matched-guise technique appears to reveal judges’ more private reactions to the contrasting group than direct attitude questionnaires do” (p. 94). Researchers to this day use this technique, as it is believed to tap into

participants' more unconscious attitudes, or at least those that a participant might not as voluntarily produce upon questioning.

I used the matched-guise technique with the four speech samples that participants heard in attempts of uncovering their linguistic and racial attitudes that they might not express on a paper-and-pencil measure or on a response where they might not want to display unfavorable social attitudes. Researchers do not seem to be questioning whether a matched-guise experiment on its own should be considered to gather implicit or explicit attitudes. Rather, they conceive of it as a tool to gather attitudes towards groups of people or dialects (Lambert, 1967; Purnell, Idsardi, & Baugh, 1999; Casesnoves Ferrer & Sankoff, 2004) as opposed to the actual speaker they have just heard (Lai, 2007), or to “avoid any voice-specific effects that would have clouded the relationship between phonetic variable and social information” (MacFarlane & Stuart-Smith, 2012, p. 769). The matched-guise methodology is still widely in use and I believe that it, coupled with the IAT-type response data, serves as a solid methodology with which to gather data for the current research.

In the current experiment I used the matched-guise technique in conjunction with an adaptation of the logic of the IAT, in that I recorded participants' reaction times to different types of speech and assessed their attitudes based on how long it took them to press the buttons for each particular trial. I therefore believe that I was accessing participants' implicit and explicit attitudes in the Psycholinguistic Experiment, aside from the explicit paper and pencil measures that are discussed in relation to the sociolinguistic element of the experiment. Their explicit attitudes were those that they displayed on the paper and pencil measures as well as the particular adjective that they

selected, and their implicit attitudes are revealed in the speed at which they made their adjective selections.

More recent research clearly indicates that explicit attitude questionnaires are mediated by external factors (Shelton et al., 2005; Lowery et al., 2001; Phelps et al., 2000; among numerous others), and though using a matched-guise technique might not be as effective at capturing implicit racial attitudes as an IAT, it would access more unconscious attitudes than a measure that asks participants to describe or rate a speaker while knowing more about the social and linguistic background of that speaker. Although an IAT is not appropriate for the current research, the matched-guise technique is, and the method by which I recruited speakers and collected the speech samples will be detailed in Chapter 5. The matched-guise in the current experiment involves two speakers, each of whom speaks both Academic English and African American English. Following is a more in-depth exploration of what Academic English and African American English are considered to be for this purpose.

### **Academic English**

What I am referring to as “Academic English” is what many refer to as “Standard English.” I specifically chose to use the term “Academic” because when people think of the term “standard” they often think of the opposite as “sub-standard,” and I did not want to convey the idea that African American English is in any way “sub-standard.” Although in linguistics we think of varieties that are not a “standard” as “non-standard,” this is not a term or concept with which the general public is familiar, and since in my research I interacted with participants who were not familiar with this terminology, I chose to use the term Academic English, which does not have an unsavory opposite.



Of note, however, is that while the term Academic English has the term “academic” in it, I am not referring only to the most formal of language that is often used in academia. I am instead referring to what many think of as Standard, or perhaps “Educated English.” It is the English of power in this country, and the English that mastery of would benefit students in terms of career choice and social and economic mobility.

## **African American English**

### **Problematizing the Nomenclature**

The term for the non-standard variety that I am referring to as African American English does not have a perfect label. I will be using the term African American English and I will discuss my reasons for this choice, however it is important to note that there are many reasons why this term is not ideal.

Over the decades there have been many terms for this language variety, including Negro English, Black English, Black Vernacular English, African American Vernacular English, Ebonics, and what is currently in use most often--African American English. An important reason for the term being not ideal is that all African Americans do not speak African American English, and one does not need to be African American in order to speak it. Children grow up speaking the language variety that is around them, so in the United States a Dominican child who lives around a group of people who speak African American English, regardless of what race she is, will naturally speak that variety.

I never use the term Ebonics because it is not technically the correct term for the variety of English spoken by African Americans in the United States as it refers to languages in the African Diaspora, which includes Caribbean languages as well. I also

avoid using that terminology because, as will be discussed, it came into popular terminology in the United States during the Oakland Controversy in 1996. When people hear it they immediately have a negative impression towards the variety due to a misunderstanding of the program the Oakland school board was attempting to implement in the school system, and I do not want to activate this negativity in their minds. I also do not use the term African American Vernacular English (AAVE) because I do not like the idea of it being relegated to a vernacular. It is used as a vernacular for many speakers, yet for many it is their sole language of use.

I have considered calling it a variety that does not include the term African American since there are many speakers in New York who speak it who are not African American, however I think there is value in sourcing the variety to whom it originates from in the name. Because millions of African Americans speak African American English, and because the largest majority of people who speak it are indeed African American, I believe it takes something away from the speakers to take their heritage out of the name. In my opinion there is no perfect name for the variety. I have chosen to use the term African American English since this is the terminology used most often and currently in the literature, and I believe it to be the most accurate. I have no doubt, however, than within the next decade there will likely be a new term in use.

### **African American English as a Rule-Governed Variety**

African American English is regarded by linguists as a rule-governed, systematized variety (Wolfram, 1970; Green, 2002; Green, 2007; Rickford 1999, among many others). According to Green (2002), “in viewing African American English as a systematic variety of English, we are less likely to have negative attitudes toward it and its speakers” (p. 687). While gathering evidence that African American English is

indeed a rule-governed, systematized variety, linguists have also attempted to refute popular belief that African American English is a lazy, illogical form of Academic English. African American English is just as logical as any other variety, simply in different ways with different rules.

An anecdote provided by Fasold (1999, p. 3) highlights the perception that many people have about African American English:

“Question: Isn’t Ebonic just bad English?”

Linguist’s Answer: Certainly Ebonic is bad English, in the same sense that French is bad English. English is bad Ebonic, too.”

## **Syntax**

Green (2007) gives an extremely comprehensive account of the grammatical system of African American English, and in this discussion I will only highlight some of the features of the variety that I discussed with the participants during the six lessons.

### **Aspectual *Be* and Auxiliary *Be***

African American English differentiates between Aspectual *Be* and Auxiliary *Be*. The distinction between these two forms of *be* marks a significant difference between African American English and Academic English. For non-African American English-speaking people, this difference is one that is often pointed out as illogical, and during Lesson Two, this was the first distinction that I presented to the participants about how African American English grammar differs from Academic English grammar. Mono-dialectal speakers of Academic English, who are unacquainted with African American English, can be overheard remarking that speakers of African American English “can’t conjugate the verb *to be*.”

Aspectual *be* indicates an habitual action or occurrence. The following are some example of Aspectual *Be* with the corresponding Academic English gloss underneath:

(a) Dee be running.

Dee is usually/often running.

(b) Dee is running.

Dee is running.

(c) Dee  $\emptyset$  running.

Dee is running.

### **BIN (been)**

The use of the stressed BIN is also frequently heard among African American English speakers, and its equivalent in Academic English means “for a long time.” An example from Green (2007) is, “Alexis BIN eating,” which means ‘Alexis has been eating for a long time.’ This nuanced meaning is often lost on mono-dialectal Academic English speakers, who often assume that the speaker has simply omitted the form “has,” as in “Alexis has been eating,” which overlooks the “for a long time” meaning that is a crucial element in the sentence.

### **Double/multiple negation**

Although multiple negation is quite stigmatized in African American English, English has historically used double negation as seen in some of Shakespeare’s work, and many Romance languages use it to this date, such as in the following<sup>1</sup>:

In French we see:

(d) Je ne sais pas.

---

<sup>1</sup> These examples are my own.

I (neg) know (neg)

'I do not know.'

Or, even more marked in English, yet the standard in French:

(e) Je ne sais rien.

I (neg) know nothing.

'I do not know anything.'

In African American English we see negation such as (Green 2007):

(f) I don't never have no problems.

'I don't ever have any problems.'

### Existential It

African American English uses "it" in a way that Academic English does not. It is used to indicate that something exists, and it usually occurs in place of *there* or *there is*.<sup>2</sup>

(g) Sometimes *it* didn't have no chalk, no books, no teacher.

'Sometimes there wasn't any chalk, any books or any teacher.'

### Question formation

African American English differs in several ways in question formation, especially in the lack of auxiliary inversion.

(h) I wanted to know could they do it for me?

'I wanted to know if they could do it for me.'

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<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, speakers from the New York area who only control AE can be heard using this form of "it," such as "It's a lot of traffic on the LIE [Long Island Expressway]." I have only heard this from Jewish speakers, so this usage of "it" may be an artifact from Yiddish, yet simply because I have only heard it from Jewish speakers does not necessarily mean that only they use this variant.

## Phonology

Phonological patterns differ between Academic English and African American English, and while both are rule-governed, the rules for each are somewhat different. In African American English, “it is often the case that the final clusters *st*, *sk*, *sp*, *pt*, *kt* (often spelled *ct*, *nd*, and *ld*) are reduced to a single consonant,” (2002, p. 679) as shown below:

African American English pronunciations are on the top, with Academic English written forms underneath.

- (i) lis  
‘list’
- (j) des  
‘desk’
- (k) was  
‘wasp’
- (l) accep  
‘accept’
- (m) contac  
‘contact’
- (n) spen  
‘spend’
- (o) buil  
‘build’

(Green, 2002, p. 679)

Devoicing the consonant cluster is not a random, haphazard occurrence. It is rule-governed, and can be described by a voicing generalization, which Green formulates as follows: “Omit the final consonant of a cluster formed by two consonants with the same voicing value” (2002, p. 680). Many mono-dialectal speakers of Academic English, and also even African American English speakers believe that when

sounds are omitted it is simply because the speaker dropped a sound, and they are unaware that this deletion is only in certain phonological environments. That they do not know the deletion rule factors into their assessment that African American English is a lazy way of speaking with 'sounds dropped here and there.'

Consonants and consonant clusters are phonologically produced in different ways within African American English and Academic English, depending on the position of the consonants within the word. We examined this during Lesson Three: Phonology, in relation to Lisa Delpit's (1995) text that portrays a teacher correcting a student for dialectal rather than reading mistakes. For example, in a word-initial environment in Academic English, voiced *th* produces the sound /ð/ in Academic English, whereas /d/ may occur in African American English, producing the words *dese* and *dat* in African American English. In a word-internal environment the same voiced *th* /ð/ may occur as voiced /v/ in African American English, producing *brova* in African American English. Also, the voiceless *th* /θ/ that occurs word-internally in Academic English can be produced as /f/ in the same environment in African American English, producing the word *birfday*. (Green, 2002). These differences are very salient to Academic English speakers, yet because they do not know that there are specific phonological patterns, they are apt to ascribe negative characteristics to speakers who make these phonological substitutions. It is imperative that teachers know about these differences so that they are able to differentiate between a reading and comprehension mistake, and a dialectal, linguistic difference.

While the complexity of this system is greater than the analysis just presented, the above examples are given to substantiate that African American English speakers

are following specific syntactic and phonological rules, and not haphazardly omitting sounds. Green notes that “to many mainstream English speakers, these phonological patterns in African American English do not sound like patterns at all, and such pronunciations have been characterized as ignorant and uneducated speech...these generalizations play crucial roles in developing strategies in helping speakers see the differences between the African American English and mainstream English pronunciations” (Green 2002, p. 681).

### **Education Language Laws**

Although there are laws that are intended to serve linguistic minority students, most schools do not have policies that adequately serve the needs of African American English-speaking students. There are policies that protect language minority students and direct schools to create programs that take their language needs into account, as decreed in *Lau v. Nicholson* in 1974, however minority students are still very underserved linguistically.

#### **Ann Arbor**

Because parents were concerned that their children were not being adequately served in their public schools and were graduating without the necessary academic skills, in 1979 the parents of eleven (although Newell & Chambers, 1982 account for fifteen) African American children won a lawsuit against the school district of Ann Arbor. Judge Joiner decreed that it was not deficits in the African American English-speaking students that were causing low academic performance, but rather the fact that the teachers were not taking African American English into account when teaching the students, thus contributing to the students’ academic failure. The judge determined that



“when teachers fail to take into account the home language...some children will turn off and not learn” (as cited in Ball & Lardner, 1997).

As Labov (1982) summarizes, Joiner “believed that the language barrier that did exist was in the form of unconscious negative attitudes formed by teachers towards children who spoke Black English, and the reactions of children to those attitudes” (p. 193). The teachers in the district were required to attend a twenty-hour training session that taught about “the characteristics and history of Black English, methods for identifying speakers of the dialect, ways of distinguishing mistakes in reading from differences in pronunciation, and strategies for helping children switch from Black English to standard English,” (pp. 193-194). Nonetheless, Labov believes that “operations on attitudes alone will not be enough to make a substantial difference to the reading of black children” and that further curricular additions must be implemented (p. 194). This current research project included both work on attitudinal change as well as giving participants specific strategies to use with their students to help enable students to master Academic English and learn to code-switch when appropriate. This research therefore furthers work that has been previously executed, and attempts to fill in a gap noted by Labov that was unaddressed in previous attempts to help close this linguistic achievement gap.

Smitherman (1983) notes that there was a negative reaction within the African American community to Judge Joiner’s ruling on the Ann Arbor Case. Many reports, including the Conference Report from the proceedings of The National Institute of Education (NIE), indicate that the public perception surrounding the Ann Arbor decision was that teachers were either going to teach African American children how to speak

African American English, or that they were going to use African American English as the sole language of instruction for the students (Newell & Chambers, 1982, although the conference took place in 1980). This is the same reaction many Americans had when the 1996 Oakland Controversy erupted, as will be discussed.

Even though African American children have been shown to have unique language needs, “current regulations exclude most African American English speakers from funding for language minority students because English is their native language” (Baugh, 1995, p. 91). This renders a situation in which there is documentation and there are court rulings asserting that African American English speakers have unique linguistic needs, yet funding is absent to aid in their language acquisition and overall academic achievement.

### **The Oakland Controversy**

In 1996 the media in the United States erupted with misinformation about a language program that the Oakland, California school district proposed. The media believed that the teachers in Oakland, California were going to start teaching their students, who were primarily African American, how to speak African American English, or “Ebonics,” as it was being called, or that they would even give instruction *in* African American English.

In actuality, the Oakland School Board was aware that their African American students were speaking a variety other than Academic English and they wanted to boost the students’ academic success by addressing their language needs. The Board was going to educate the teachers about African American English and give them strategies to use with their students to help them acquire Academic English since the Board saw that the African American students were performing more poorly than their

White counterparts. This would be done mainly through the use of Contrastive Analysis, a method in which differences between the varieties are explicitly pointed out and discussed. Linguists wrote to the major newspapers to explain what was actually being proposed, but as John Rickford (1999, pp. 270-271) candidly notes, many were not published:

In the case at hand, the mainstream view was that Ebonics itself was street slang, and that Oakland teachers were going to teach in it, or allow students to talk or write in it instead of in English. It was in response to this misrepresentation of Ebonics and the Oakland resolutions that editorials, Op-Ed pieces (texts submitted to newspaper by the public), letters to the editor, cartoons, and agitated calls to radio talk shows were directed, and attempts to get alternative viewpoints aired were often very difficult, especially in the most prestigious media.

For instance, although the New York Times published several editorials and Op-Ed pieces critical either of Ebonics or the Oakland resolutions, linguists' attempts to get them to present a different viewpoint were all unsuccessful. I know of at least four Op-Ed submissions which they summarily rejected (by Salikoko Mufwene, by Geoffrey Pullum, by Gene Searchinger, and myself), and there were undoubtedly others. Similarly, other linguists (like Geneva Smitherman) had experiences similar to mine, in which leading television stations would do one and two hour interviews with them on the Ebonics issue, but never use any of it in their broadcasts.

Although many people do not specifically remember the Oakland Controversy today, many people in the country became familiar with the term "Ebonics," as this is what the media said would be taught in the schools. When I describe to people who have not been exposed to the idea of African American English what the research is about, including the participants in this study, I am often asked if I am referring to "Ebonics." Regardless of whether people specifically remember the controversy and what the media was saying, they did become familiar with the term and the idea that there is a different way of speaking that is utilized by many African Americans. They

are, however, very rarely also informed that this variety is rule-governed and not a lazy, slang manner of speaking.

### **Strategies for Aiding in the Acquisition of Academic English**

One might think that because African American children are exposed to Academic English throughout the school day for numerous years that they would naturally acquire Academic English, however as Wolfram (1970) points out, children gravitate towards the speech of their peers and not towards the speech of the schools (p. 14), and in order to acquire Academic English students must notice the differences between it and the variety they speak. They must also be willing to acquire this variety, and this idea of volition will be discussed shortly.

Baugh (1995) asserts that the linguistic situation in Hawaii, where Hawaiian Creole English is the L1 for many students, is the most similar case in the United States for comparison to African American English. Many of these students enter the educational system speaking Hawaiian Creole English, in the same manner as many African American students enter the educational system only speaking African American English. For both groups there is the challenge of ensuring that the students acquire literacy and code-switching skills in order to master Academic English and have access to all social amenities brought on by speaking what is generally the most valued code in our society.

We see a somewhat similar situation with the usage of Standard French, Non-standard French, and English in the schools and classrooms in the Franco-Ontarian classrooms in Canada. The linguistic situation in Ontario is a very complex one and I will not delve into the details here, but an overall issue is that students enter the educational

system with varying degrees of French fluency, including non-standard French fluency, and it affects the students' academic achievement. See Heller & Barker (1988),

to the extent that students have limited access to a variety of social contexts where the use of French is conventional, they cannot master the varieties of French necessary for them to be able to function as francophones. To the extent that the variety of French used at school differs from that used at home, they have difficulty performing well in classroom contexts. *This difficulty is accentuated for many, if not most, of these students who speak nonstandard French...* (pp. 23-24, italics mine)

The difficulty that the non-standard French-speaking children experience can be compared to the difficulty of African American English-speaking students in the United States. They speak a variety of the standard, yet it is not quite the standard, and because of their lack of command of the Standard variety they perform more poorly.

The situation with African American English is somewhat different from that of other countries and other non-standard varieties, though, as determining which variety to speak is very culturally laden, and many students do not ever acquire the standard, or Academic English, in the United States. In contrast to other language situations in which language and culture are intertwined and students enter the educational system not knowing the standard variety, in the case of African American English many students exit the system without ever having acquired it. Currently in the United States the language of power is Academic English. Although all students may not consciously be aware of the power differences, many are likely aware that the way they speak is different from Academic English, and they may associate their variety with their family and their friends. While in order to acquire Academic English students must be aware of the differences between it and their variety, as will be discussed with Schmidt's "Noticing Hypothesis," the situation is more complex than simply noticing the differences

for the African American-speaking students. Many students believe that acquiring the school variety, or Academic English, means that they are “selling out” or “acting White.”

### **Negotiating Language and Identity**

In an ethnographic study Fordham (1999) conducted with students at a high school she referred to as “Capitol High,” one African American student despairingly described the way in which her mother spoke on the phone. The student said about her mother:

She just talks like that on the telephone, I'll put it like that. When she talks, she puts on airs, you know, sounds White, so you can't tell whether she's White or Black. But when she's around the house, she talks, you know regular; but when she's out around other people, any where out besides the house, she talks in a proper manner...When my mother [speaks in the standard English dialect] it appears that she's trying to be someone she's not. (p. 284, brackets in the original)

This account clearly identifies that the student expected her mother to sound ‘like herself,’ which we understand to be as an African American English speaker. The mother seems to be aware of the social ramifications of ‘sounding Black,’ and is able to code-switch between African American English and Academic English when she was not speaking to other members of her family.

Ogbu (1999) also cites a student's awareness of different speech forms in relation to a social situation. The student says,

I use proper English when I'm around you know in a public place and around a lot of White people...I use proper....But when I'm around my friends, and I'm around my neighborhood, ain't nobody gonna be watchin' me but them, but...I like to talk the way, you know, it's about time people talk the way we talk. My own mother, she was talkin' real crazy slang stuff...And she answers the phone in a little high-pitched voice...and her voice is like very deep...she changes her voice everywhere she's talking...

The interviewer then says, “depends on who she's talking to?” and the student responds “yeah” (p. 165).

We see here that both the student and the mother are aware of the social implications of using one variety over the other. If either of them were to use Academic English in an environment in which African American English were expected they would sound out of place and potentially be rebuked by the interlocutors. On the other hand, if they were to use African American English in a situation in which Academic English were expected, we can imagine that there would be consequences for that as well.

### **Acting White**

Many African American students are aware of a concept referred to as “acting white.” The student Fordham described understood her mother’s use of Academic English as “acting white,” and many African American students grapple with fitting in with their peers and community while also using and mastering Academic English, a variety some see as necessary for social mobility. Fordham (1999) surveyed students and found that “79.2% of the ninth graders identified speaking the standard English dialect as an “acting White behavior” (p. 279). As previously mentioned, the African American community is aware that there are certain situations in which Academic English is expected, however to use Academic English in a situation that calls for African American English, such as when speaking with other African Americans in a more casual setting, can be interpreted as “acting White” (Fordham, 1999).

In discussing the notion of “acting white,” Fordham & Ogbu (1986) assert that conforming to school norms is equated with “acting White.” They assert that academic achievement is thus “a subtractive process” (p. 182) in that students who do not want to appear as “acting White” must rebuke the school requirements to avoid being seen as such. With nearly every marker indicating that African American students are faring worse academically than their White counterparts across major subjects (Green,2002;

Becker & Luthar, 2002), it is disheartening that many African American students are not acquiring the language of power for fear of retaliation by racial co-members.

### **Noticing Hypothesis**

Schmidt (1990) has posited a “noticing hypothesis” that suggests that a linguistic form must be noticed in order for the learner to ‘notice’ its existence. This relates to teaching mono-dialectal African American speaking students Academic English because they have likely been exposed to Academic English throughout their school years. Most teachers control Academic English, and even if students were *not* consistently exposed to Academic English from their teachers, they have taken English grammar classes since primary school. I have found that when I describe to laypeople that many students have heard Academic English for years in school yet they have not acquired it, I am often told that the students are lazy because they have not acquired it, and/or that they have had grammar classes since they started first grade and that it is the students’ fault for not acquiring it. I was even told by one person that the students are not intelligent enough to acquire it because they would have already acquired it if they were capable of doing so.

However, because it is likely that no teachers specifically pointed out the differences between the students’ variety and Academic English, the students never ‘noticed’ the differences. They were therefore unaware of the systematic ways in which the varieties differed, thus adding to the reasons why they never fluently acquired Academic English. Although students must at some level notice the differences between the varieties in order to master each one, in the case of African American English in the United States there is a strong cultural factor at play which keeps many students from acquiring Academic English, and that is that they want to belong to a peer



group that values speaking African American English and specifically rebukes the use of Academic English.

Some prominent African Americans, such as Lisa Delpit, who has written much about the difficulties of acquiring Academic English and gaining entry into what she terms the “culture of power,” have said that if only they would have been explicitly taught the differences between the varieties, they would have been able to be successful academically and socially much faster and on a much easier path.

### **Explicitly Teaching Differences**

Delpit (1995) promotes the idea that teachers explicitly teach differences between the linguistic varieties and asserts that if one is to belong to the “culture of power,” one must know the rules of the group in power, and that explicit teaching makes access to this power easier. Says Delpit (1995), “the codes or rules I’m speaking of relate to linguistic forms, communicative strategies, and presentation of self; that is, ways of talking, ways of writing, ways of dressing, and ways of interacting” (p. 25).

Fogel & Ehri (2000) and Delpit (1995) posit that without explicit instruction as to how to identify the similarities and differences between African American English and Academic English, students will have a hard time differentiating between the two systems. Green (2002) also suggests that teachers make clear the differences between African American English and Academic English in order to assist students in recognizing the differences.

Fogel & Ehri (2000) conducted an experiment in which students were put into one of three categories: those who received no explicit instruction regarding Academic English but who were exposed to it through a story, those who received explicit instruction, and those who received both explicit instruction and were also able to

practice using the two varieties. Results show that students with no explicit instruction and those with explicit instruction but no practice fared similarly on post-test measures, while students who were both exposed and practiced performed significantly better than the other two groups. In light of these results, the lessons I taught the participants included specific ideas for teachers to use with their students to ensure that the students became aware of the differences between the varieties and that they were able to identify when they were using which variety.

Fogel & Ehri (2000) suggest that teachers “[identify] the nonstandard forms exhibited by the students, writing several sentences containing varied examples of the nonstandard forms, explaining the SE [Academic English] rules and having students practice transforming the nonstandard sentences into SE [Academic English] while providing corrective feedback, and then having the students practice using the forms in their free writing accompanied by corrective feedback” (p. 231).

In discussing the acquisition of an L2, Siegel (1999) notes that, “noticing and comparing are unlikely to occur naturally for learners when many aspects of the L1 and L2 are similar, as in situations involving a stigmatized variety and the standard” (p. 717). Although Academic English and African American English are different varieties, they share numerous similarities, especially considering that they are both forms of English. Because there are so many similarities, and because African American English is stigmatized and Academic English is not, there are a variety of hurdles over which mono-dialectal speakers of African American English must jump in order to successfully acquire Academic English. In terms of Schmidt’s (1990) “noticing hypothesis,” speakers

must notice the differences between these two related language varieties if they are to successfully acquire the other.

### **Contrastive Analysis**

There have been a variety of ways of instructing African American English speakers in the rules of Academic English, with Contrastive Analysis (such as described in detail in Rickford, 2005) at the forefront as one of the most respected and successful methods. Contrastive analysis is the process in which differences between varieties are explicitly identified and students are taught to see the similarities and differences between them. In this approach, teachers talk about linguistic differences with their students and help them to understand and pinpoint the differences between the varieties in order to master the equivalent Academic English forms. When students become meta-cognitively aware of linguistic differences they are on a faster path towards becoming bi-dialectal.

An example of a contrastive analysis activity would be for a teacher to give the example *John BIN hungry* and elicit from them that John has been hungry for a long time. This can be done with any grammatical category that differs between African American English and Academic English. An important point that Green (2002) makes is that one does not have to be a fluent speaker of African American English in order to recognize that it is a fully formed system, and that simply recognizing elements of African American English in students' speech and writing will empower teachers to more constructively assist their students. Teachers, thus, can learn about African American English as a system without the need to become "fluent" in the variety. Other methods could include using a "translation" bulletin board, a Jeopardy-style game, creating a

formal writing or speaking event, talking about register and domain and how our language shifts depending on our audience, and journaling.

Pointing out similarities and differences between any forms of speech will bring to focus the idea that there are many ways of expressing the same idea, and that African American English and Academic English both have valid and expressive means. Smitherman (1971) also notes that teachers' need not be native speakers of African American English in order to assist students. She uses African American English throughout her article, and in discussing the need for teachers to recognize and accept African American English says, " I'm with that group who bees advocating the education of reading teachers in Black speech—just being able to dig it, not necessarily use it" (p. 115). Smitherman's point is that it is not necessary for a teacher to speak African American English fluently in order to be able to assist students who speak it as an L1 to acquire Academic English. Likewise, in the current research I am not suggesting to the participants that they become fluent or bi-dialectal in African American English if they do not already speak it. Instead, I am suggesting that they become familiar with its syntactic and phonological structure, as well as issues surrounding the use of a non-standard variety, and use this knowledge to enable their students to acquire Academic English in a meaningful way.

Several studies have shown success using the contrastive analysis approach, including the Dekalb Bidialectal Communication Program used in Georgia, which showed improvements in verbal scores among African American English speaking students (Harris-Wright, 1999, as cited in Siegel 1999), as well as the Academic English Mastery Program in the Los Angeles Unified School District. The 1998-1999 Academic

English Mastery Program's [AEMP] Evaluation Report, conducted on the Los Angeles Unified School District, shows that for African American English speaking students, "there was a statistically significant and educationally meaningful difference between experimental and control groups at the end of the program as measured by the Language Assessment Writing Test. AEMP program participants outperformed those who did not participate in the program" (Maddahian & Sandamela, 2000 p. 3). This program shows that targeted instruction for speakers of dialects other than Academic English can be successful.

My personal pilot data that I gathered in a high school in the Harlem section of New York City showed a decrease in the usage of African American English features and an increase in the usage of Academic English forms in writing samples from the ninth grade students after I gave professional development sessions to the ninth grade English teachers. After the professional development sessions, in which I taught the teachers about the rule-governed nature of African American English, focusing specifically on syntax and phonology as well as discussing cultural and social issues surrounding the acquisition of Academic English, the students' writing scores increased 5.25%, which the administration credited to my work with the teachers. The teachers took the information I taught them and incorporated it into their teaching practice with their students.

Another way of teaching students methods of acquiring Academic English was explored by Pandy (2000). Pandy used what she called the "contrastive awareness approach" in which she taught Academic English as an L2 to African American English speaking students. Her study produced positive results in the sense that students

improved their Academic English skills, however there is not a tremendous amount of social support in the literature for treating Academic English speakers as non-native English speakers (Baugh, 1995). Remembering the social backlash in Oakland when teachers were going to incorporate African American English into the classroom yet not teach it to the students, we must be very careful to consider social implications regarding how the practice is described and how programs are labeled.

### **Valuing African American English**

It is important for teachers to value the students' home language and understand that it is a valid and community-accepted way of speaking. If teachers are uneducated about African American English, or if they are unwilling to accept it as a variety, there will be little progress (Harper et al., 1998). There are many ways of showing that one values a variety, and Ladson-Billings (2000) agrees that what she terms "cultural competency" can be fostered by teachers validating the language students' bring with them to school (p. 210).

Finding strategies to encourage reading comprehension is a skill with which many English and other content area teachers grapple. Bell & Clark (1998) show that providing African-American children with story images depicting African-American, as opposed to White children, improved recall of events when the characters were African American, and they interpret these findings by suggesting that "African American children process information more efficiently when it incorporates their socio-cultural experiences" (p. 470).

Teachers can also openly talk about different varieties other than African American English and Academic English to show that there are many ways of speaking, such as the Southern Variety, different New York boroughs varieties, Appalachian

variety, Chicano variety, etc. While it would help if a teacher is somewhat knowledgeable about different varieties, if their personal variety is different than the students' they could use that as a model, and if it is not, they can very easily search for an online video of someone speaking in a different variety and play this for their class and discuss the differences.

Shirley Brice Heath's (1983, reprinted in 2009) seminal work delved into the different linguistic practices and ideologies in language communities and how the cultural values and language practices that children in two different communities were exposed to readied (or in this case did not ready) them for school and academic success. Brice Heath worked alongside students, teachers, parents, and community members and found that the differing cultural and linguistic practices in the communities greatly affected the students' performance in school and their readiness for the tasks that would be expected of them in school. The two towns she worked with were called "Trackton" and "Roadville," and while the students from Roadville were in some ways more linguistically prepared for the types of questions that would be asked of them and the types of activities in which they would participate in during class activities, both sets of students were not habituated to responding to teachers in the ways that the teachers expected, and this was due to the students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Students from Trackton were not exposed to the types of questions that teachers would ask them in school and they were unaccustomed to the time limits and scheduling of activities that teachers placed on them. They produced stories and narratives that did not conform to the strict patterns that the teachers expected, and because of this it was easy for teachers to believe that the students were not as smart.

One teacher's notes about her African American students indicated, "I would almost think some of them have a hearing problem; it is as though they don't hear me ask a question. I get blank stares to my question. Yet when I am making statements or telling stories which interest them, they always seem to hear me" (p. 269). This teacher's statements reflect the fact that students from Trackton are not accustomed to being asked the types of questions that teachers ask of them, and because of this, it is easy for teachers to think that they might have a hearing problem or are otherwise academically deficient.

Students from both communities were also unaccustomed to the types of indirect requests that teachers employed with students in attempts to elicit a certain behavior. Says Brice Heath (1983, reprinted in 2009), "both Roadville and Trackton children had difficulty interpreting these indirect requests for adherence to an unstated set of rules" (p. 280). When the norms and expectations between groups of people, in this case students and teachers, are different from each other, it is easy to ascribe negative traits or values to the other group. Linguistic research shows that negative traits are often ascribed to speakers of African American English, and the current study investigates how these negative attitudes might be mitigated, which could ultimately lead to more understanding on the parts of teachers and more of a willingness to take the students' norms of speaking and interaction into account. It is important for teachers to note that differences do not necessarily equal deficiencies.

### **Literacy and African American English**

Across the board, Second-Language Acquisition studies show that when students are taught to read in their L1, regardless of which language is used in their classrooms, they acquire literacy skills more readily than when they are taught in their



L2 first (e.g. Stewart, 1969; Goodman, 1969; Wolfram et al., 1998). Siegel (1999) reviews several experiments, such as Ravel & Thomas (1985), Bull (1990), Osterberg (1961), and Siegel (1992, 1997), among others, that indicate that using the L1 aides acquisition of literacy skills as well as other content area skills.

### **Dialect Readers**

Simpkins & Simpkins (1981, as cited in Rickford & Rickford, 1995) show that for African American English-speaking students, learning to read in African American English before Academic English accelerated acquisition, and this program using dialect readers became quite controversial. Dialect readers were first introduced in the 1960's in attempt to aid African American English-speaking students bridge the gap between African American English and Academic English. African American students' reading scores were lagging far behind their White counterparts and linguists were looking for ways to increase literacy skills (Rickford & Rickford, 1995). Simpkins et al. (1977, as cited in Rickford & Rickford, 1995) created the Bridge reading series, which consisted of three stages. First, children would read stories written exclusively in African American English, next they would read a series written partly in African American English and partly in Academic English, and then they would 'bridge' into the series that was completely in Academic English. Rickford & Rickford (1995) cite Simpkins & Simpkins (1981) who discuss the 417 students who took part in the Bridge series and say that

for grades 7-12, the average gain in grade equivalent scores for the group using *Bridge* was 6.2 months for four months of instruction compared to only an average of 1.6 months of instruction for students in their regular scheduled classroom reading activities. The group using *Bridge* exceeded the normative level (four months gain for four months of instruction), many of them for the first time in their academic careers. (p. 238, as cited in Rickford & Rickford, 1995, p. 113, italics in original)

The program was clearly successful, yet there was such a strong negative reaction from parents and teachers that the program was quickly disbanded. The positive outcome of literacy in conjunction with a program that supports code-switching is immediately evident. However, we see again the impressive impact a community can have regarding an educational program. The Bridge series takes the concept of teaching students in their L1 and then transitioning into their L2, a practice often used with speakers of other languages. However, African American English is so stigmatized, and there is such fear in the African American community that African American English-speaking students will be denied access to Academic English<sup>3</sup>, that a program that had been shown to effectively enable students to acquire literacy skills at a faster rate and simultaneously code-switch between the two was disbanded; the publishers quickly ceased publication of the readers. Rickford & Rickford (1995) argue that even though the Bridge series met with serious community objections when first introduced, it is still a viable method of enhancing literacy skills, but that it needs to be implemented with support from the communities.

### **Dialect Differences Versus Reading Comprehension Errors**

Goodman (1969) outlined several ways in which African American English-speaking children can be helped to acquire literacy in Academic English, and suggests that the most viable method is that children are taught to read based on the skills and language that they already possess, and that “no attempt to change the child’s language must be permitted to enter into this process or interfere with it” (p. 27).

Likewise, Piestrup (1973) conducted a large investigation of six different teaching styles

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<sup>3</sup> Additionally, the media was inaccurately reporting the purpose and methodology of the program, which led to the widespread misunderstanding.

with African American English-speaking students, and found that the teachers who used the students' home language and those who did not correct students' speech towards Academic English had students who were the most successful in terms of reading achievement. The common thread here, and one which will be explored further along in the discussion, is that students are more successful when teachers are separating the teaching of reading skills with the teaching of phonological differences between the different linguistic varieties.

Wolfram (1970) asserts that if children can read sentences that are in Academic English in their own variety (African American English), they have successfully read the sentence. He also says that "if a lower-class black child reads a standard sentence such as *Jane goes to Mary's house* as *Jane go to Mary house* he is considered to have read it properly, since third person singular –s and possessive –s suffixial absence are part of the lower-class black child's vernacular" (p. 16). According to Wolfram, any teacher who understands the syntax and phonology of African American English is in the position to accept reading rendered in African American English as a legitimate understanding of the text (p. 31).

Goodman's (1969) previously discussed stance that teachers take students' L1 into account when teaching reading skills also reflects elements that Labov strongly insists upon, including that teachers not confuse dialect differences with reading mistakes, and that teachers only correct mistakes when not teaching reading comprehension (Labov, 1995). As is explored in Lesson Two: Phonology of the current research, Delpit (1995) makes a clear case that the practice of teachers focusing on dialect differences as opposed to reading comprehension errors "blocks reading

development” (p. 59). Correcting students’ speech at any given moment or too frequently often causes students to refrain from speaking when they are corrected in such a manner (Gopaul-McNicol et al., 1998), and Harper et al. (1998) expressly state that if teachers do not take African American English into account when dealing with African American English-speaking students, they will not be successful with their students.

### **The Necessity of Acquiring Academic English**

Many researchers believe that it is important for African American English-speaking children to acquire Academic English. Charity et al. (2004) found that children who were more familiar with Academic English scored higher on reading assessments, which lends support to the method of familiarizing African American English speaking students with Academic English. They suggest a concept they refer to as *dialect awareness*, and say

familiarity with SE [Academic English] may reflect a form of metalinguistic insight that facilitates reading acquisition more generally. That is, given equal exposure to SE [Academic English] and equivalent oral language proficiency, some children may be more attuned to linguistic variation in their environments, whereas others are less inclined to notice or appreciate that different ways of speaking are used in some contexts and not in others and by some speakers but not others. (p. 1353)

They then hypothesize that children who are more meta-linguistically aware might learn to read more easily because they are more aware of language and its different manifestations (p. 1353). Terry (2006) shows through an experiment that “the majority of African American children in the study did appear to have more difficulty spelling dialect-sensitive (e.g. inflections) as compared to dialect-neutral (e.g. consonant and vowel patterns) orthographic patterns than their peers, and their errors were consistent with linguistic mismatches between spoken African American English and standard

written forms” (p. 923). Terry (2006) links this with Charity et al. (2004)’s idea of dialect awareness and says that her results are in line with this analysis.

According to Au (1980), “if minority children are not given the opportunity to become proficient in responding in mainstream contexts, they may be permanently handicapped educationally, socially, and economically” (p. 93). Research has shown that African American children, as opposed to White children, may tend to tell stories in a more loosely organized way known as topic-associating as opposed to a very topic-centered manner expected by teachers and more aligned with stories told by White children (Michaels, 1981), however Hyon & Sulzby (1994) have shown that while this is true, African American students also tell more topic-centered stories under different circumstances. When teachers are expecting a certain type of story they may react unfavorably to stories that do not follow this specific pattern (Michaels, 1981, Brice Heath 2009). We must therefore ensure that children who do not speak Academic English as an L1 be taught about what is expected of them in an Academic English environment.

The ultimate goal is for students to become bi-dialectal and able to code-switch between African American English and Academic English. The purpose is additive, not subtractive; it is not to remove African American English from their repertoire, yet to assist them in mastering Academic English for academic purposes, career success, and social and economic mobility. Any program should be centered around valuing the variety of speech that students bring to school while also ensuring that they gain the variety that our society currently values most, Academic English, and entry into the “culture of power.”

## **The Need for This Study**

This study is necessitated by many interconnected pieces of research. It is unique in that it combines sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic methodologies, as there is sociolinguistic research documenting the need and strategies for bridging the language gap with students, yet no research investigating the measurement of teachers' attitudes towards different language varieties in a psycholinguistic manner. This study attacks the question of assessing teachers' attitudes from several perspectives: one implicit measure and several explicit measures, and synthesizes the findings across subfields. While studies that investigate teachers' and pre-service teachers' explicit attitudes have been discussed, none of these measure implicit attitudes. It is important to understand these implicit attitudes since the research shows that teachers' attitudes directly affect student achievement. We may not understand the larger picture if we do not have a true sense of the prevailing ideologies if participants do not identify their true, deepest-seated beliefs on a paper-and-pencil questionnaire or survey.

Baugh (1995) acknowledges that some educators have attempted to aid African American English-speaking students in the mastery of Academic English, "but they have done so based on policies that are uninformed by relevant linguistic research, thereby restricting the likelihood of Black academic success" (p. 93). This underscores the need for the current work. According to Wolfram (1970), "when teachers 'correct' children for dialect interference in reading as well as the authentic types of errors that occur in learning to read, the teaching of standard English is usually done in a haphazard and unsystematic way" (p. 12). It is therefore important that teachers are given skills and strategies to use with students that will eliminate the "haphazard and unsystematic"

manner in which teachers are correcting, and this current study provides teachers with such strategies.

Wolfram (1970) asserts that in order for a teacher to successfully aid a student in the acquisition of reading the teacher must know the rules of African American English and that otherwise they will not know if a child is reading in a different manner from the text due to differences in African American English or actual reading miscues (p. 18). It is unsurprising, then, that Hollie (2001) notes that in the Linguistic Affirmation Program (LAP) in Los Angeles, the element of the program with which the teachers most struggled was with knowing the phonological elements that differ between African American English and Academic English and applying this knowledge to assist learners during phonics instruction (p. 58). In this current research the lessons address the syntactic and phonological patterns of African American English, thus equipping the participants to better understand their students and to be able to identify differences between the varieties in a systematic way, both for themselves and for their students.

Wolfram (1998) says that language professionals with an authentic understanding of the nature of language diversity have a responsibility and a challenge to educate other professionals, practitioners, and the general public about these [linguistic] issues if we wish to avoid repeated controversies like the one that surfaced in Oakland” (p. 118). Herein lies motivation for the current research.

Labov (1982) proposes several “Principles of Commitment,” one of which is the “principle of error correction.” He defines this as, “a scientist who becomes aware of a widespread idea or social practice with important consequences that is invalidated by his own data is obligated to bring this error to the attention of the widest possible

audience” (p. 172). His discussion is embedded within an analysis of the Ann Arbor Case, and this principle can be directly applied to the current research. Previous research indicates that teachers tend to have negative attitudes towards African American English, believing that it is a faulty way to speak. Furthermore, the research shows that explicitly teaching students the differences between African American English and Academic English improves academic performance. It stands to reason, then, that adhering to the Principle of Error Correction would involve educating teachers, as I did in the current research. Rickford (1997) discusses how there is vast knowledge about African American English within the linguistic community, however this information is not disseminated to the general public and communities with which linguists work. This current project aims to do just that: disseminate information to the educators who work with minority students.

Bowie & Bond (1994) state that “the available research suggests that traditional teacher education has not made a significant impact on improving teacher attitudes toward culturally diverse students” (p. 116), and Ladson-Billings (2000) explicitly says that “teacher preparation is culpable in the failure of teachers to teach African American students effectively” (p. 208). Smitherman (1972), too, suggests that pre-service teachers be taught about African American English. It makes sense, then, for a linguist to enter into the equation and instruct teachers about African American English. In particular, one reason to focus attention specifically on African American English is that of all non-standard varieties spoken in the U.S, African American English has the highest numbers of speakers (Wiley & Lukes, 1996, p. 525).



Although one might believe that by the time African American students enter universities all of their linguistic needs have been met, this is not the case. Taylor (1991) says that African American English “frequently interferes in oral and written presentations” in the university classroom (p. 10). Another implication for the promotion of awareness of African American English among educators is that many African American students are sent to speech-pathologists because of language differences, when in fact it is the differences that are apparent and not a specific disorder (Cole & Taylor, 1990). Smitherman (1998) describes entering the university system and failing a speech test, as she had not become bi-dialectal by that point in time. She, along with other African American English speakers, was sent to a speech pathologist who was unable to diagnose any of the students with a disorder, rendering her unable to assist the students. Ultimately, the speech pathologist taught the students to how to pronounce, in a mid-Western accent, all of the words on the speech test. All of the students then passed (p. 139).

Delpit (2008) notes that “perhaps we have in our country’s development reached a stage in which some of the American populace is willing to see beyond skin color to access intellectual competence, but there are as yet few pockets which can ‘listen beyond’ language form” (p. 38). This concept is addressed in the current study by accessing participants’ implicit attitudes in the psycholinguistic element of the experiment in which the matched-guise methodology is used.

The research presented thus far indicates the urgent need for student achievement to be raised, as well as for teachers to be informed of differing linguistic varieties and how language affects students and academic success. Over the years

there have been attempts, often mandated by law, to assist African American English-speaking students acquire Academic English, yet the majority have not been successful or led to long-term change. The goal of this study is not to measure student growth, but rather to measure teacher's attitudinal growth. Because we know that teachers' negative attitudes adversely affect student achievement, and because we know that when teachers have more positive attitudes to their students' language varieties the students perform better academically, I wanted to test whether teaching teachers lessons in a particular manner would improve their attitudes. If these lessons are successful, we can then hope that that would lead to improved student performance, thus positively affecting the achievement gap and leading to more academic, social, and economic benefits for the students as they continue their education. Although no student data was collected for this study, the scope of the lessons taught to participants did include carefully crafted activities for the participants to engage in with their students in order to improve student performance.

I view students' language, and often lack of access to Academic English, as a key component to raising achievement and opportunity, and an area that has been greatly overlooked when asking questions about how to improve student achievement in minority or under-performing groups. Although this research did not involve students directly, previous research indicates how important teacher attitudes are in relation to student achievement, and I therefore wanted to investigate whether my methods of teaching would positively affect teacher attitudes, with the trickle down result being that students' academic achievement would benefit from the teachers' expanded linguistic knowledge. As will be described in the following chapters, the methods of teaching did

produce significant results, with participants' attitudes improving towards the idea and usage of African American English, and participants anecdotally stated that they were able to apply principals they learned during the sessions with their students to further enhance their students' academic success.

## CHAPTER 3 SOCIOLINGUISTIC METHODOLOGY

### **Selecting the Participant Population**

The ultimate goal of this research was to ascertain whether teachers' attitudes could be changed following a series of lessons that I created, thus I wanted to find a group of teachers with whom I could work on a regular basis. I decided that graduate students of education would be an ideal population because they would either already be in the classroom or entering it soon, and I thought that the information I would present would be quite valuable for them and their students. I have worked in public schools and know how difficult it can be to gain access to teachers, as well as how often schedules change, and I therefore thought that a graduate classroom would be more feasible than attempting to work with a group teachers through an individual school.

### **Securing a Research Site**

Securing a research site was uncomplicated. I contacted one college and one university in New York City regarding the potential partnership and the first chairperson to reply had the most desirable situation. The university is located in Harlem and the participants were all graduate students of Education in the English department.

The chairperson and I met and talked about the project and what would be possible. He and I shared similar teaching backgrounds, both of us having previously taught with Teach For America, and he was immediately receptive to discussing my ideas and desires for the experiment. I described what I envisioned for the research and he was very willing for me to work with his department. We discussed a variety of possible scenarios for executing the project and he suggested that I contact three professors who were teaching a Graduate Seminar course entitled "Issues," which

focused on the issues of literacy, bilingualism, and special education. He thought that my research would fit well with the literacy and bilingual elements of the course, and he welcomed my proposed topics and methods of data collection and evaluation.

I contacted the three professors and spoke with each of them. Two of the professors taught graduate sections and one of the professors taught an undergraduate section. All three professors were women, and the two professors who taught the graduate sections were African-American (one described herself as African-Heritage), and the professor who taught the undergraduate section was White. The two graduate professors very enthusiastically agreed for me to collaborate with them and to use class time to carry out all aspects of the experiment, while the undergraduate professor said that she could not give up any class time for the project. The experiment was thus run with the two graduate professors, one of whom had one section of participants and the other of whom had two.

### **Class Schedules and Data Collection**

I will refer to the two professors as “Professor A” and “Professor B.” Professor A had two sections of students and Professor B had one section, and I met with each section once per week in the evenings. Classes were scheduled to be two and a half hours long, although from time to time they lasted only two hours. On the days that I taught I was given about an hour, although because the classes consisted heavily of student presentations that sometimes exceeded their allotted time, there were a few days when I was given less than an hour. In total, I spent three days running the Pre-Psycholinguistic Experiment (which will be described in Chapter 5), six days (thus six hours) teaching a total of six lessons, and three days running the Post-Psycholinguistic Experiment.

### **The Professors' Experience with African American English**

Both professors were bi-dialectal in African American English and Academic English. They described growing up speaking African American English but becoming adept at code-switching into Academic English for academic and social purposes. They were both aware of the fact that African American English differs in significant ways from Academic English. However, at the start of the semester, and therefore at the beginning of the experiment, they were unaware of the systematic rules governing it. They both had native-speaker knowledge and intuition about African American English, which proved to be helpful in some instances where participants were challenging the validity and grammar of African American English. The professors, using their clout as both professor and native-speaker, were able to underscore that what I was teaching was correct and legitimate.

Both professors made it very clear to their students that they valued and believed in the research that I was presenting. They did this through giving clear expectations that the participants pay attention to my lessons and participate actively, and they verbally underscored the points that I made, saying how they were true and that they either experienced certain situations themselves or saw them play out in a classroom setting. I believe that the willingness of both professors to have me in their classroom, and that they indicated to the participants how glad they were to have me there, helped pave the way towards the participants engaging with the lessons I taught.

### **Participants**

The participants were all graduate students in the English department. The majority currently taught in public schools, with a few teaching at charter schools, and

some were not yet teaching but intended to teach in the near future. Table 3-1 below presents the characteristics of the participants, and a description will follow.

Table 3-1. Participants' demographic information

	African American	Asian	Hispanic	Mixed	White	Totals
Race	9 (20%)	3 (7%)	3 (7%)	4 (9%)	25 (57%)	51
Female	6 (24%)	3 (12%)	1 (4%)	3 (12%)	12 (48%)	25
Male	3 (16%)	0 (0%)	2 (11%)	1 (5%)	13 (68%)	19
Age 20-29	8 (30%)	2 (7%)	1 (4%)	3 (11%)	13 (48%)	27
Age 30-39	0 (0%)	1 (13%)	2 (25%)	1 (13%)	4 (50%)	8
Age 40-49	1 (25%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (75%)	4
Age 50-59	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (100%)	4
From New York	8 (31%)	2 (8%)	2 (8%)	2 (8%)	12 (46%)	26
Not from New York	1 (6%)	1 (6%)	1 (6%)	2 (11%)	13 (72%)	18
Currently teaching	4 (16%)	2 (8%)	1 (4%)	2 (8%)	16 (64%)	25
Not currently teaching	1 (14%)	1 (14%)	2 (29%)	1 (14%)	2 (29%)	7
Years teaching: low	5 (22%)	2 (9%)	0 (0%)	2 (9%)	14 (61%)	23
Years teaching: medium	Unknown	Unknown	1	Unknown	Unknown	--
Years teaching: high	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	2	Unknown	--

The participants who were currently teaching had student populations that were mainly Hispanic or a Hispanic/African-American mixture. Participants ranged in age from 22-57, many ethnicities were represented, and the majority of the participants were of Caucasian, African-American, Mixed, Hispanic, or of Asian descent. The other categories included only one participant per category, and in light of not identifying those two participants, they were not included in this table.

Not all of the potential participants<sup>4</sup> from the three sections participated. There were seven in total who chose not to participate, and while I did not invade their privacy and decision by asking why, it seemed that they were wary of the subject matter and the formality of an experiment. There were a few participants who participated in either the Pre-Assessment or the Post-Assessment but not both.

### **Researcher Introduction**

On the first day of class of the semester the professors asked me to introduce myself. I briefly described my academic background and that I would be working with them on language issues within education. I did not use the terms Academic English or African American English since I would shortly be administering the Pre-Assessment Questionnaire and the Psycholinguistic Experiment within the next few weeks, and I did not want to influence the results in any way. I described that I was working with the classes in conjunction with my dissertation and that I was giving them the opportunity to participate in an experiment that sought to explore the relationships between language and education. Participants were told that if they consented to the experiment that they

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<sup>4</sup> Participant numbers do not add up consistently due to some participants filling out the demographics questionnaire and some not, as well as some participating in either the pre or post experiment/surveys but not the other. Additionally, there were some participants who did not fit into any of the categories in the table, and I did not include them in the table as indentifying their race/nationality would potentially identify them personally. Percentages do not all equal 100 due to rounding.



would hear four short stories and select adjectives that best represented the speakers, and that after that I would ask for basic demographic information. It was not until the first class session that I described that my research was focused specifically on Academic and African American English. Participants were told that they were not required to participate in the experiment by answering the Pre-and Post-Attitude Questionnaire, Demographics Questionnaire, or Psycholinguistic Experiment, however the professors explained that the lessons I taught would be part of the class material and that all class members were responsible for the information I presented and the related class discussions.

Several of the class members had questions that were generally related to the invasiveness of the Psycholinguistic Experiment and whether their data was personally identifiable. I explained in more detail what the participants would do during the Psycholinguistic Experiment, namely to sit in front of a computer wearing headphones with their hands placed on a plastic response box and press buttons on the box in response to adjectives they saw on the screen. One participant asked whether I would be able to give her her personal results after the experiment, and I responded that while theoretically it was technically possible to compare participants I would be looking at the data in the aggregate and that I would not be able to give participants individual feedback, and I would not identify them in any way when describing the data. I emphasized that the data and feedback would be anonymous and that their names and identifying information would not be made available to anyone beside myself, and that I needed to have it only in order to be able to pull their personal data out of the experiment if they changed their minds at any point. I explained that they would shortly

be receiving an identification number used solely for the experiment, and that they would never write their name on any assessment.

### **Assignment of Identification “ART” Numbers**

Once all of the questions were answered I distributed IRB forms and instructed class members who would like to participate to read them, ask any questions, sign two copies, and return one to me. After collecting the IRB forms I assigned participants their identification numbers. I did not want to use the term “identification number” because I did not want the participants to think that I had access to or was using their university identification number, so instead I referred to their personal identification number as their ART number. I created the acronym ART out of the phrase “attitude reaction time,” and only two participants later asked what ART stood for. I said that it represented the idea of “the art of language.” They both asked me this when we were alone in the experimentation room, so the entire class did not hear these conversations.

I considered whether the participants would keep their personal ART numbers or trade with a classmate before the Post-Experiment if for any reason they disagreed with the material I was teaching, if they were disgruntled for any reason, or if they just wanted to play a prank on me or the experiment. The potential problem was avoided because by the end of the semester I knew the participants’ names, and when they presented their ART number in the experimentation room I unobtrusively checked their number against the form that contained both the ART numbers and the participants’ names. No participants had switched numbers. Three participants had misplaced the form with their ART number that they were given at the beginning of the semester, however they believed they knew their number. Because I had previously recorded

their ART number with their name I was able to easily locate their number and verify that they remembered correctly.

### **Pre-Assessment**

Before any content discussion started, participants took a Pre-Assessment that gauged their prior knowledge of African American English. A copy of this assessment is located in Appendix A, and the results of the assessment are described in detail in Chapter 4. Participants spent about ten minutes completing the Assessment.

The Pre-Assessment questionnaire was administered during Lesson One, after assigning the ART numbers. In order to avoid biasing participants' responses to the questionnaire with respect to their prior knowledge of African American English and the idea of non-standard varieties, the topic of the questionnaire was described as "a way to measure prior knowledge of the topics we would be discussing in class." The description was intentionally vague, and no participants asked for clarification before beginning the assessment or while completing it. Participants wrote their ART numbers at the top of the page where indicated.

The assessment questions were designed to ascertain whether the participants were aware of African American English as a system, whether they were familiar with news coverage of the Oakland Controversy in 1996, whether they knew of syntactic differences between African American English and Academic English, and whether they knew of any strategies to help students code-switch between African American English and Academic English.

The assessment contained the following questions:

1. What comes to mind when you hear the term "African American English" or "Ebonics?"

- 2A. Are you familiar with the Oakland, California School Board Controversy of 1996?
- 2B. If so, please describe what you remember.
- 3A. What does the following mean in African American English? John be running.
- 3B. What does the following mean in African American English? Alexis been done ate.
- 4. Do you know of any ways to help children who speak African American English master Academic (Standard) English? If so, please describe.
- 5. Is Academic English better than African American English? Please describe.

An identical Post-Assessment was given during the final class session, save for an additional question asking if the participants had implemented any of the suggested linguistic activities in their classrooms, which was phrased as follows:

- 6. Have you implemented any of the suggested linguistic activities? If so, which ones, how, and what were the results?

A copy of the Post-Assessment is located in Appendix F, and a discussion of the results is located in Chapter 4.

### **Demographics Questionnaire**

The Demographics Questionnaire was administered directly after the Pre-Psycholinguistic Assessment (which will be described in Chapter 5), and a copy is located in Appendix B. It asked for the participants' gender, age, where they were from, race and race of parents, household income growing up, L1 and potential L2s, as well as several questions about the teaching status of the participants and their students. There was also a large blank space left open for participants to describe any particular language issues that they had noticed with their students or any language circumstances on which they would like to comment.

## Attitude Questionnaire

The participants also completed a paper-and-pencil Attitude Questionnaire directly after completing the Pre-Psycholinguistic Experiment, and again at the end of the semester after completing the Post-Psycholinguistic Experiment. After they stepped out of the experimentation room they sat privately, filled out the questionnaire, and put it into a manila envelope along with all of the other participants' questionnaires. This design was created with the intent of giving the participants a sense of anonymity aside from their identification number. The Attitude Questionnaire was taken directly from Taylor (1973), though modified for the vocabulary of race. Any mentions of "Black" or "Negro" were substituted with "African American." Of the twenty-five questions, twelve were phrased "positively" and thirteen were phrased "negatively." "Positive" questions framed African American English in a "positive light" and "negative" questions framed African American English in a "negative light." Participants responded to questions on a five-point likert scale. The full questionnaire is in Appendix C, and a discussion of how the questionnaire was coded and measured is discussed in Chapter 4.

The Attitude Questionnaire was given because I wanted to have not only the psycholinguistic results, but also more standard paper-and-pencil results. This particular questionnaire was selected for its content relevance, as well as because even though it is dated in its language, it is still seen as the standard for the type of information it gathers. Not only does it phrase approximately half of the questions positively and approximately half of them negatively, it also gives participants a scale on which to base their judgments. In the Psycholinguistic Experiment the participants are forced to make a binary decision, which I correctly anticipated would disturb some participants, and with this questionnaire they are able to express more refined

judgments and attitudes due to the likert scale. While some participants in their exit surveys complained about the forced binary judgments they made with the Psycholinguistic Experiment, there were not any complaints about the likert scale of the Attitude Questionnaire.

### **Sociolinguistic Lessons**

The scope and sequence of the lessons was systematically and carefully planned. Again, there were six teaching days and each lesson lasted for approximately one hour. There was therefore a total of six hours of instruction and thus approximately six weeks (there were some breaks during the semester) between when the Pre- and Post-Experiments were run. Note that I only had contact with the participants and not with the participants' students or the participants' students' class work or any type of written work samples. It is against New York state law for a non-teacher to have access to students' personal information, such as their names, thus I never examined student work myself, and I had no contact with the participants' students<sup>5</sup>.

Not having contact with the participants' students was part of the design of the experiment. While the goal of the lessons was to inform participants about the legitimacy of African American English, the ways in which it affects their students and how their attitudes towards it affects their students' academic and future success, measuring the participants' students' growth was not within the scope of the experiment. The effects of the participants' application of the knowledge they gained throughout the six sessions would hopefully increase their students' communicative competence and linguistic repertoire, yet this angle was not directly measured in any way, other than self-

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<sup>5</sup> Participants did bring samples of student work during Lesson Five, however I did not see the work or see any student names.

report by the participants. They did indeed report that their students became more aware of different styles of speaking and that they became more able to detect whether they had used an element of African American English or Academic English, but again, this was not measured in a systematic way. The specific goal of this research was to see whether teaching participants about African American English as a variety would affect their attitudes towards it.

### **Lesson and Experimentation Schedule**

I delivered six lessons to the participants, however I interacted with them more often than this because of the psycholinguistic testing. Below is a list of the weeks, including the weeks that I conducted the psycholinguistic testing.

- Week One: Introduction, ART Numbers, Pre-Assessment, Background Questionnaire
- Weeks Two, Three, Four: Psycholinguistic Experiment, Demographics Questionnaire, End of Survey Response, Attitude Questionnaire
- Week Five: Lesson One: Introduction to African American English
- Week Six: Lesson Two: Syntax
- Week Seven: Lesson Three: Syntax and Phonology
- Week Eight: Lesson Four: Phonology
- Week Nine: Lesson Five: Application of Strategies Learned
- Week Ten: Lesson Six: Review of lessons, Post-Assessment Questionnaire
- Weeks Eleven, Twelve, Thirteen: Psycholinguistic Experiment, End of Survey Response, Attitude Questionnaire

### **Lesson One**

I have found from previous experience that many people initially react negatively to the idea that African American English is a rule-governed linguistic system and not a

lazy, ungrammatical way of speaking. People are often somewhat slow to accept that what I am talking about or teaching is factual. Lesson One was therefore presented as exposure to African American English for participants and to underscore that the material presented is academically sound and that the subsequent presentations would be based on facts. I heavily emphasized that everything I was presenting was based on well-founded research and that it was not my personal opinion that I was espousing.

While my normal teaching style incorporates a lot of audience participation and discussion, I very specifically avoided asking the participants for their opinions about African American English or Academic English during Lesson One. I did this because I believed that they likely did not have enough factual information to make an educated statement about the varieties. I did not want a negative tone to enter into the discussion if participants were aware of “Ebonics” but within a negative framework, and I did not want any participants to make a statement that they would later regret once they had more information, which might lead them to feel embarrassed and less likely to participate in the future.

As previously described, I first gave the Pre-Assessment and Background Questionnaire before teaching any content. Using a Power Point presentation I created and a general lecturing format, I gave a brief history of African American English, discussed the achievement gap between African American and White students based on statistics and well-documented research, talked about how many students are graduating (or not graduating) without control of Academic English, and I spoke about the intersections between teachers’ attitudes and student achievement. Specifically, I discussed research indicating that negative attitudes towards non-standard language



varieties adversely affects student achievement, as well as research that shows that teachers generally have a negative attitude towards non-standard varieties, as was discussed in Chapter 2. In the Power Point I used direct quotes and well as summaries of research and I included numerous citations to support my assertion that the information I was presenting was well-grounded and accepted within the academic community. I concluded and tied-in the work I would be doing with the participants by discussing that if teachers' attitudes are altered then student achievement scores should increase.

An area I touched on briefly, and that I would have liked to explore in more depth had there been more time, is why Academic English became the norm in the United States. Referencing Bonfiglio (2002), I discussed the reasons why what is now considered the standard actually became the standard, and how this is related to the migration out of the cities caused by xenophobia during the times of great immigration into the United States.

During this first lesson, in order to get participants thinking and talking about language use, I asked them to consider the different ways in which they personally use language. We spoke about the differences in how they speak amongst their colleagues, friends, family, bosses, etc, and I pointed out that the way I was speaking with them was much different than how I speak "in real life." I modeled for them how I sound when I am speaking with my friends, which is much faster and uses more casual vocabulary, and we discussed how that differed markedly from how I had been speaking to them in our more formal interactions. I also modeled an exaggerated rural southern accent and asked them to compare what they thought of my intelligence based on how I was

speaking up to that point versus if I had been speaking in the rural southern variety the entire time. The majority of the participants agreed that I seemed more professional and smarter when speaking in my regular manner.

I then asked participants to pair-up and discuss what instantaneous judgments they make about people based on their use of language, and also how this intersects with racial or intelligence judgments. My goal was for participants to see that we automatically judge people based on how they sound and the language they use, and that these judgments are not necessarily reflective of how smart the person is and of who they are. I wanted them to see that their students may speak a non-standard variety, but that this does not mean that they are not just as intelligent as a student who commands Academic English.

As an example for the participants, I said that they probably would not hear someone say “African Americans are stupid,” but it would not be unheard of to hear a statement such as “African Americans don’t know how to conjugate the verb ‘to be.’” This example was to highlight the reality that I have found that people often show their sentiments towards and about race through talking about *language* instead of race itself. They tend to comment on a person’s use of language only if that person is not White, such as African American, and the commentary will without a doubt be negative. Even a statement such as “He’s so articulate,” which I grew up hearing in the South as what was supposed to be a compliment about educated African Americans, is a very racialized statement. It implies that everyone else of that race is not “articulate,” and by “articulate,” the speaker generally means, “he speaks Academic English,” with the implication that the other members of the race do not and are not educated. Likewise,

Fishman (1977) remarks about works dealing with language and racism: “it becomes clear that the language link to racism is an invidious as racism per se” (p. 444).

Language and identity are inextricably linked, and language and racism are equally entwined. It is nearly impossible, if not completely impossible, to discuss language in a deep and meaningful way without also touching on the topic of race.

We also spoke about the fact that language is continually in flux, yet that only certain changes and additions are marked as negative. The example I gave is that the noun *invitation* has colloquially been shortened to *invite*, and while some people find this shortening annoying or offensive, it is my impression that they represent a smaller minority to those who dislike the shortening of the noun *conversation*, or perhaps the verb *converse*, to the verb *conversate*, which is often heard in the African American community. I personally have heard White speakers state that they “do not like the shortening of *invitation* to *invite*” (as in: Did you get the invite to the party next Saturday?), yet when I have heard White speakers comment on the usage of *conversate* (as in: Last night we were conversatin’...), there is always an overtone of the speaker ‘not knowing English’ or ‘not knowing correct grammar.’ Linguistically these are both changes to the English language, however one is laden with assumptions about the intelligence of the speaker and with racial overtones (*conversate*), whereas the other is not (*invite*).

## **Lesson Two**

I have found over the years that when someone is unaware that African American English is a rule-governed system, giving them solid syntactic examples is the quickest, most effective way to convince them that African American English is indeed rule-governed, and it commences the process of generating trust and a willingness to

believe among participants. It opens their eyes to the possibility that what they have always heard and thought was a lazy, uneducated way of speaking might be part of a larger system of which they were previously unaware.

Lesson Two therefore focused on syntax. I placed a heavy emphasis on the rule-governed syntactic nature of African American English and gave many examples that illustrated that African American English is indeed governed by grammatical patterns. Easy examples, such as aspectual 'be,' are clear, easy to understand, and provide a profound example that generally promotes others to question their assumptions, yet it is not too jarring for there to be much resistance. Once interlocutors understand this concept they are more open to hearing other ways in which African American English differs from Academic English. During this lesson I gave participants a handout that listed examples that were presented in order for them to have a guide to follow along during the discussion, as well as to give them explicit examples to use when listening to students and when examining their work for elements of African American English.

Grammatical features that we examined included auxiliary inversion, habitual be, remote past BIN, existential it, multiple negation, and several others. After presenting numerous syntactic examples of how African American English and Academic English differ, I played audio clips of actual people in a natural environment using examples that were similar to the ones we had just discussed and seen on the Power Point. I then opened the floor up for class discussion. We explored participants' current and previously held thoughts, and how, if at all, this had changed their thinking. We also

discussed how they could envision themselves applying this information with their students.

Participants then engaged in an activity that required them to “translate” sentences from African American English into Academic English, and vice versa. They were encouraged to use the handout from the beginning of class to help them, and they were allowed to work in pairs or small groups. This activity was difficult for them, and I think it underscored that there truly are major differences between the two varieties. Several participants commented that since this was difficult for them it must be difficult for their students to translate from African American English to Academic English for school purposes. I agreed, and I think that their having made this connection reinforced the idea that they as teachers needed to pay close attention to their students’ speech as well as make a concerted effort to address language differences in order to ensure that their students acquire Academic English.

At the end of the lesson I asked all of the participants to listen throughout the coming week for examples of African American English that they would have not otherwise noticed, and I opened up the next lesson by talking about what they heard and what it made them think about.

### **Lesson Three**

Lesson Three focused on phonology because this is another area that can easily be shown to be very rule-governed and it gives participants the chance to find rules governing the sound system. It is generally fun, engaging, and underscores the point that African American English is not simply “lazy English.”

During this lesson I generally referred to phonology as “sound patterns.” I did use the term phonology and I defined it for them to give credence to the fact that this is

academic work and again that it is not “made up,” however I chose to use the more vernacular phrasing “sound patterns” so that they were not having to remember the definition of a new word when what I wanted them to focus on was the content of what we were discussing.

During this lesson I placed a heavy emphasis on the rule-governed phonological nature of African American English and I provided examples showing phonological rules and their applications to words and categories of words. For example, I showed them the following list of words (from Green, 2002) and challenged them to see a pattern within them:

- List
- Accept
- Wasp
- Build
- Contact
- Desk
- Spend

Nobody in any of the class sections saw the pattern, so I gave them pieces of information bit by bit. I started by pointing out that each word ended in two consonants. I then taught them about voiced versus voiceless sounds, and guided them to see that each of these words ends in two consonants with the same voicing value. Finally, I explained that when a word ends in a consonant cluster with the same voicing value, the last sound can be dropped.

This example worked very well, and I believe that it was in part because the rule is so specific and there are several parameters which must be true, namely that there must be two final consonants and that the voicing must be the same in order for the final sound to be devoiced. The complexity of the rule gives the participants the ability to see

that African American English is truly rule-governed, as they had a difficult time seeing the rule on their own. That they were unable to figure out the rule on their own likely also helped them see that it is possible that even though they thought they understood everything that their students were saying, there were potentially nuances that they had been missing. For participants who already commanded African American English, they intuitively knew that the final sounds of these words could be devoiced, yet they did not know the formal rule. Learning that there was a formal rule governing when sounds can be devoiced lent weight to the notion that the way they speak is not simply haphazard and lazy, but that it is guided by rules and that it is a legitimate linguistic variety. As I did with the syntax examples, I also played sound clips of naturally occurring speech in which speakers dropped sounds as per the phonological rules we had discussed, plus some other examples that followed different rules that we had not reviewed.

Along the same lines of the *invite/conversate* example in Lesson Two, where I pointed out that all varieties have elements that do not conform to the “correct” usage or pronunciation, I gave an example using *ask/ax* and *orangutan/orangutang*. I asked participants to indicate by raising their hand whether they had ever heard someone pronounce *ask* as *ax*, or if they had heard someone commenting on the fact that many African Americans pronounce *ask* as *ax*. In every class section, all participants raised their hands. I then said that I was going to describe an animal, and that I wanted them to all say the animal that I had described in unison. This was so that everyone would be participating and that nobody would be singled out for their particular pronunciation. I described an *orangutan*, and some participants answered with the correct animal while others guessed other types of similar animals. I listened to their pronunciation, and

many of them said *orangutang* instead of the “correct” *orangutan*. I pointed out that I had heard several of them say *orangutang*, even though the “correct” pronunciation is *orangutan*. Many of the participants were unaware that the word did not in fact end in /g/, which led to my explanation of how language often changes towards easier pronunciations. I described how the pronunciation of *ask* is somewhat difficult, whereas *ax* is a much smoother combination for the mouth to physically make. I then had the participants say each word a few times and feel what their mouths were doing. The same difficulty is true with *orangutan*, where it is easier to copy the first /g/ and pronounce it again at the end of the word instead of a more unnatural /n/. At this point I asked the participants what my point was in creating this example. In each class section someone was able to articulate that the *ask/ax* change is very marked, and linked to race, and that the *orangutan/orangutang* example is the same process--the speaker making the pronunciation easier--yet it is not marked, racially or otherwise. This led to a rich discussion about race and language.

I then presented Lisa Delpit’s (1995) classic example, which is located in Appendix G, in which a teacher is correcting a student’s dialect as opposed to helping him master reading skills. This text highlights in particular the substitution of /v/ for /ð/ in *brother* and the past tense -ed marker that the student was omitting such as in *washed*. The purpose of this was to direct participants’ attention to the differences between reading mistakes and dialect differences, and to be aware of when to correct a student and when to ignore dialectal differences and focus on reading skills and making meaning of a text. I suggested that when working with a student with the goal of improving reading skills, that the teacher not correct dialect differences. Instead, dialect



differences should be addressed and talked about openly on an ongoing basis, and corrections should be made in a formal writing assignment (not a journal entry assignment) and during a formal presentation, or whenever the subject of Academic or “formal” language is being discussed. I asserted that if a student is corrected every time she speaks or asks a question she will begin to shut-down and that this would cause much more harm than good. We again engaged in a class discussion exploring previously held thoughts and how, or if, this changed their thinking, and how they could see this information applying to their interaction with their students.

Although during Lesson Two participants were given a handout with syntactic examples, I did not give a handout with phonological examples during Lesson Three, and in retrospect this would probably have been equally useful. If I were to give the lesson again I would provide a handout with the examples that they saw on the Power Point.

#### **Lesson Four**

Lesson Four focused on synthesizing Lessons Two and Three, and then segued into ways in which participants could use this information to inform their teaching. The lesson continued the explanation of syntax and phonology, and introduced the idea of “bridging the gap” with their students academically. We delved into a deeper class discussion centered around how this new linguistic knowledge affects the participants and how they see it affecting their lives and the lives of their students. I gave the participants some examples of how they could bridge the gap between African American English and Academic English with their students, and encouraged them to think of ideas on their own. We discussed ways in which they could show their students that they value the way that they speak, but also show them that acquiring Academic

English is valuable and that it is worthwhile to learn to code-switch between the two varieties.

### **Bulletin board**

I encouraged participants to create a very visible bulletin board for students to reference. The class would create it together, and on one side they would write phrases and sentences in one variety (either African American English or Academic English), and on the other side they would write the equivalent in the other variety. During Lesson Four I modeled how this would be done using the whiteboard, and as a group we identified phrases and sentences that would be good examples. For example, we wrote on the left side, which was African American English, “Demarcus been hungry,” and on the right side, which was Academic English, we wrote, “Demarcus has been hungry for a long time.”

### **Formal speaking event**

I also suggested to participants that they have their students engage in a formal speaking event. The logic behind this assignment is that it is a specific reason to model and practice Academic English, and it is an appropriate situation in which to correct grammar and any other features that are not part of Academic English. Participants got into groups based on subject area, and they created several speaking topics that they could conceive of using with their students. The plan that I suggested would be for their students to research a topic or use a topic that was currently being talked about in the classroom, and write a speech. There would then be several revisions of the writing to ensure that it was in Academic English, and then students would have time to practice reading their speech aloud to practice pronunciation features with a partner, who would listen for features of African American English and Academic English.

## **Jeopardy**

I also showed participants how they could play a jeopardy-style translation game with their students. I brought in a demonstration jeopardy board that I had created and modeled how the game would be played. Each card would have a phrase, sentence, phonological pattern, or content-area question written on the back of the “price,” and students would either answer the content question or they would translate the phrase or sentence into the other variety (some would be written in Academic English and some would be in African American English).

## **Methods to correct students’ writing**

During this lesson I asked participants to bring examples of their students’ writing to the next class session. We talked about what types of writing and grammatical errors their students made, and for the first time some of the participants were seeing how some of the errors their students were making stemmed directly from the application of African American English grammatical rules instead of the application of Academic English grammatical rules in their writing.

I suggested that participants focus on one element to correct at once, and not every single flaw that they found. For example, if a student is using habitual be, deleting third-person plural markers, and is not using Academic English’s use of auxiliary inversion, I suggested that the participant chose one area to focus on, and that it be the easiest area. In the hypothetical example I just provided, I would encourage a participant to focus on the third-person plural marker. The teacher would explain the grammatical rule to the student, help the student find a few examples of that in her writing, and then encourage the student to continue editing the paper and find the

remaining instances. This revision process would go on until the paper was completely written in Academic English.

At the end of this lesson I asked participants to pay close attention to their personal attitudes and beliefs surrounding different language varieties. Because most of the participants ride the New York City subway, they are exposed to many different types of speech on a daily basis. I asked them to notice these different ways of speaking and to truly try to figure out what their gut reactions and attitudes were to the speakers. I suggested that if they could become aware of their own thoughts regarding different types of speech, it would be easier to address their feelings towards their students' speech, and that they would then be in a position to better serve their students. At this point I reminded them of the research that shows that if a teacher holds a negative attitude about a student's speech that the students will likely perform more poorly academically.

### **Lesson Five**

Lesson Five encouraged participants to recall and synthesize the information they learned over the previous four sessions, to think critically about their personal attitudes towards African American English and Academic English, and it gave them a hands-on, practical application of the material for both the benefit of their students and to help the participants absorb and retain the information.

I wanted to create a discussion about the participants' current attitudes towards African American English and Academic English and how they had changed, if at all, from the beginning of the semester, but I wanted them to have a while to think deeply about this before we began talking. I thus asked participants to take about ten minutes to write down how they currently felt about different language varieties, how those

opinions had changed since the beginning of the semester, and how they thought this did or did not affect their teaching and their students. After about five minutes a lot of the participants seemed to have finished writing, yet I thought that if I gave them longer they might become a bit more introspective and have more to write. Many of them paused at around the five-minute mark and started looking around the classroom, however the majority went back to writing and when I asked them to stop at the ten-minute mark it was apparent that many of them could have gone on much longer. This produced a very rich discussion, and on the whole the participants said that they realized that they had had very negative attitudes towards African American English (regardless of the participants' race), and that they would like to have more positive attitudes. Several participants also said that they thought their attitudes were changing.

During Lesson Four I asked participants to bring in samples of their students' work, and during Lesson Five they examined this work for elements of African American English. Some participants' students had numerous instances of this while others' had very few to none, however for the most part the participants were able to see that grammatical "errors" that they had previously noticed followed grammatical or phonological patterns that we had discussed during the previous lessons. They then saw that simply telling students that they were using "incorrect grammar" would not be as effective as teaching the students the differences between the varieties and showing them how to code-switch.

To discuss the intersections between race and language a bit further, I asked participants if other teachers in their schools made negative comments about their students' speech. Many of the participants said that they had indeed heard negative

comments, and I then asked what they did about it. This caused a silence in the room, as I expected it would. I asked the participants to get into pairs or small groups and talk about the possibility of saying something to a teacher who is equating negative judgments with a student who is using African American English, and I asked them to think of a few phrases that they could say, if they felt comfortable, to the teacher who was making the negative remarks. After about ten minutes we re-convened as a group, and all of the groups had thought of a couple of phrases that they could say. Many participants said that they did not think they would be comfortable saying anything, however there were a few who said that they could see themselves using some of the strategies either their group or another group had created, and most, if not all, of the participants were writing down the possible phrases that they could use to talk to the other teachers about their demeaning remarks about the students' language.

During the last segment of Lesson Five I divided the participants into small groups, gave them all poster board, markers, tape, and index cards, and they began creating their own Jeopardy game, as previously described, which we played during Lesson Six.

## **Lesson Six**

At the beginning of Lesson Six I gave a brief overview of the main topics we had covered over the past five weeks, and I opened up the floor for discussion about how participants could see this information affecting their teaching practice. Although measuring their students' growth was not part of this experiment, the overarching purpose in this research was to find ways to positively affect student achievement and close the achievement and opportunity gap, and the angle that this experiment took was

to affect student achievement through affecting their teachers'--in this case the participants'--attitudes.

Participants said that they found the lessons to be extremely helpful, and several from each section said that it was the most powerful and useful part of the semester. These sentiments were strongly echoed in the Post-End of Response open-ended questionnaire, which will be discussed in Chapter 6.

We then played the Jeopardy games that the participants created during Lesson Five. There were approximately four or five Jeopardy boards in each class section, and we played two or three, depending on how much time there was. Interestingly, and this is not something that I had anticipated, some of the answers to the questions that the participants created were incorrect. This tended to happen in instances when they wrote a phrase or sentence in African American English and wanted the audience to translate it into Academic English, yet the syntax was not quite right in African American English. I used this opportunity to suggest that they base their questions on actual student work so that they are sure that the language is correct if they are not native speakers of African American English.

During the last fifteen minutes of the class the participants took the Post-Assessment, which will be described in Chapter 4, and I then thanked them for their participation and described the logistics for the Post Psycholinguistic Experiment, which would begin the following week.

## CHAPTER 4 SOCIOLINGUISTIC RESULTS

### Pre and Post-Assessment Questionnaire

As previously discussed in Chapter 3, the Pre-Assessment was administered at the beginning of the first class session after I introduced myself to the class, and in order to avoid biasing participants' responses to the questionnaire the topic was described as "a way to measure prior knowledge of the topics we would discuss in class."

For ease of reference, the questions are below:

1. What comes to mind when you hear the term "African American English" or "Ebonics?"
- 2A. Are you familiar with the Oakland, California School Board Controversy of 1996?
- 2B. If so, please describe what you remember.
- 3A. What does the following mean in African American English? John be running.
- 3B. What does the following mean in African American English? Alexis been done ate.
4. Do you know of any ways to help children who speak African American English master Academic (Standard) English? If so, please describe.
5. Is Academic English better than African American English? Please describe.

In order to measure participants' knowledge and attitudes, I coded responses to questions as "favorable" or "unfavorable," and "accurate" or "inaccurate," depending on the question. Favorable responses aligned with the idea that African American English is a true linguistic system and a valid variety, in accordance with the views held in the academic linguistic community regarding African American English. These responses indicated that the participants did not degrade the variety itself or speakers of the



variety. Responses coded as “unfavorable” were those that were not in agreement with the academic linguistic community’s beliefs, and generally did not indicate belief in or knowledge of African American English as a linguistic system. They often degraded the variety and/or its speakers. Note that it is not necessarily “unfavorable” to not have knowledge about African American English as a linguistic system, however in the interest of having a reasonable number of codes, this was selected as most appropriate. Responses were coded as “accurate” or “inaccurate” if there was a discrete, correct response. These questions were not opinion or belief-based, but rather questions that had a factual basis. The translation questions (Question 3A and 3B), in which participants were asked to translate between African American English and Academic English, were coded as “accurate” or “inaccurate.” This is because it was possible to be wrong about an answer.

Examples of favorable and unfavorable responses are as follows. Question One asked participants to describe what came to mind when they heard the term “African American English” or “Ebonics.”

Favorable responses included:

- “An English dialect spoken by African Americans”
- “Debates over what is now known as ‘Black English’”
- “English which has been influenced by African Americans”
- “Non-standard English”
- “ A different way of speaking English that has a different history associated with it”
- “A dialect introduced by the isolation of African-American slaves and their way of language. The dialect still survives to this day.”

Unfavorable responses included:

- “Slang” (This was the most common response, with 26% of all responses containing it.)
- “Broken English”
- “Haphazard use of plurals, and differing abilities to distinguish between first and third person tenses in many verbs”
- “An attempt to legitimize a ‘dialect’ which doesn’t exist. It is sad.”
- “Profanity”
- “Semi-literate sounding English; lower level of intelligence”
- “Not proper English”
- “Incorrect grammar”

Bias in coding was mitigated by the consideration of whether each response agreed or disagreed with the literature describing African American English as a rule-governed system and a variety that is effective at communicating meaning. The literature disagrees with the notions that African American English is a lazy manner of speaking, indicates lack of or lower intelligence, has a faulty grammar system (it is recognized that the grammar is different than that of Academic English, yet that there is nothing inherently wrong with it), does not follow rules, or that it only serves as a form of slang, among many other indicators. The question of whether the responses portrayed the variety and its speakers in a positive or negative light was considered, and this determined the label of “favorable” or “unfavorable.”

Only 19% of all responses to the questions on the Pre-Assessment were answered favorably/accurately. Professor B’s participants answered 20% favorably/accurately and Professor A’s participants answered 19% favorably/accurately, indicating that across the classes participants had the same exposure, or lack thereof, to the idea of non-standard varieties and African American English itself.

Table 4-1 gives a picture of how favorably or accurately participants responded to each question individually, collapsed across professor.

Table 4-1. Percentages of Pre-Assessment favorable/accurate responses

Question	1	2A	2B	3A	3B	4	5
Response rate	42%	5%	5%	11%	8%	18%	45%

Questions One and Five had the highest number of favorable/accurate responses as compared to the other questions. Question One asked what came to mind when participants heard the term African American English or Ebonics. Certainly this question solicited an opinion since it asked what they specifically thought, but the intent was to ascertain whether they thought of it as a slang, lazy form or speaking, or if they knew that it was a distinct, rule-governed variety. Participants were the least knowledgeable regarding Questions Two-A and Two-B and Three-A and Three-B. In general, participants had not heard about the 1996 Oakland Controversy and were unclear about the meaning of the sentences “John be running,” which they thought meant, “John is running,” and “Alexis been done ate,” for which they did not know the remote past element.

For Question Four, several participants were able to identify useful strategies for helping students who speak African American English acquire Academic English.

Favorable examples included:

- “Bringing differences to their attention.”
- “Code switch—recognize when to use one or the other dialect.”
- “Help them understand and incorporate code switching skills.”

Unfavorable responses for Question Five included:

- “Probably to constantly correct their speech until the Academic English sticks. Have them only speak Academic English in the classroom.”

- “Practice.”
- “By encouraging the children to watch television programs where people use Standard English and asking them to describe what they hear.”
- “I correct my students in class whenever they speak incorrectly.”

Many of the participants responded favorably to Question Five in that they expressed that one variety of English wasn't “better” than another. There is somewhat of a contradiction in the responses, however, when comparing some of the responses to Question Four that are directly followed by Question Five. For example, one participant answered the following to Question Four: “Yes. By only allowing the students to speak Standard English. If they have no choice they will get use to speaking Standard English” (grammar of the writer). This is followed by Question Five, to which the participant responds, “No, it is just that one is preferred over another.” It is noteworthy to see that someone who believes that neither variety is better than another simultaneously believes that we should only allow students to speak Academic English and not allow space for both in the classroom. One of the goals of the lessons was to give participants methods to use with their students in order to help the students acquire code-switching skills, yet this does not include forbidding students to speak African American English.

Participants who were currently teachers answered the Pre-Assessment questions favorably/accurately 20% of the time, while participants who were not yet teachers answered only 11% of the questions favorably/accurately. This difference could be for a variety of reasons. One may be that current teachers have attended more classes from an Education department and were therefore exposed to the material. Another possible reason is that in the design of the assessment, participants

were not asked if they had learned about African American English in any of their previous classes. Further, it is possible that participants who are teachers have been exposed to African American English in the classroom and have learned some of the nuances of the variety from this exposure. This final possibility might be less likely, however, in light of the fact that none of the White teachers knew that “John be running” indicates an habitual occurrence that would best be expressed in Academic English as “John often runs” or “John usually runs.” Additionally, it is well documented that simply by virtue of exposure one does not necessarily acquire a specific variety. Many participants who were teachers were exposed to African American English from their students, yet the participants did not acquire African American English. Likewise, many of the participants’ students were exposed to Academic English from their teacher (the participant), yet they did not fully master Academic English either.

This balance between linguistic exposure, identity, and adoption is exemplified in Labov’s (1972) analysis of “Lames” in Harlem. Lames are individuals who are not part of the core social or linguistic group. Like their peers, they speak African American English (which Labov refers to as “black English vernacular”), however closer analysis reveals that their linguistic patterns differ from those of the “members,” who are highly integrated into the social life and culture of the community. The Lames’ outsider status is revealed in many linguistic environments. According to Labov, “categorical or semicategorical rules of BEV are weakened to variable rules by the Lames; rules that are in strong use in BEV are reduced to a low level by the Lames. Whenever there is a contrast between SE and BEV, the language of the Lames is shifted dramatically towards SE” (p. 271).

There are a variety of reasons why the linguistic repertoire of Lames differs from that of the members. By definition, Lames are more isolated members of the community, and “it is only by virtue of being available and on the street every day that anyone can acquire the deep familiarity with local doings and the sure command of local slang that are needed to participate in vernacular culture. To be lame means to be outside of the central group and its culture” (p. 258). If Lames are not part of the group culture they therefore do not have the opportunity to learn and participate in the vernacular, and likewise, by not knowing the vernacular, they are marked as outsiders and unable to gain entry into the inner circle. The Lames are exposed to African American English since they go to school and live around members who possess the vernacular. They have not fully mastered it, though. They are not exposed to it to the degree that a member is exposed by virtue of the fact that they do not participate in the social activities of the members. They have not adopted the vernacular, but this is not because they are incapable of learning it. They may or may not have reasons for not closely associating with members, whether they are not interested in being friends with the members, or the members are not interested in being friends with them.

Likewise, in terms of linguistic exposure and adoption for the participants and their students, participants have been exposed to African American English from their students, and students have been exposed to Academic English from their teachers (participants). As with the Lames, who are exposed to the vernacular at points throughout their day yet do not fully internalize the variety, the participants and their students are exposed to the other’s variety, yet do not fully master it. This highlights the fact that being exposed to a variety does not entail that the variety will become part of

the speaker's repertoire. In popular culture there is often the sentiment that because students have been exposed to Academic English throughout their schooling, they are personally, and as a racial group, at fault for not acquiring it and producing it when expected. Certainly there are numerous factors affecting whether a student will or will not acquire a school variety, yet according to the participants many of their students have not fully acquired Academic English. Simply assuming that students will naturally acquire it by virtue of attending classes with Academic English-speaking teachers or peers is not acknowledging the full extent of the nuances involved with the intersections between language and identity.

Interestingly, participants who indicated that they only taught Hispanic students answered favorably 23% of the time, yet participants who taught both African American and Hispanic students only answered favorably 14% of the time. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Blake & Cutler (2003) showed that teachers who did not teach African American students were more accepting of the idea of using African American English as a medium of instruction than those teachers who actually taught African American students (Blake & Cutler, 2003). The current data is consistent with their results in that participants in this study also reported more favorable views towards a group that they did not teach.

The majority of the participants' Hispanic students were Dominican, as was made evident through class discussions, and participants reported that the Hispanic and African American students lived in very close quarters to each other. For example, in the high school that is directly across from the research site, which is in an area in which many of the participants taught, 60% of the students were Hispanic and 40%

were African American. After I interacted with students at this school for other purposes, there was impressionistic evidence that both ethnicities were using features of African American English. This does not explain, however, the reason why participants teaching African American students would score less favorably than those only teaching Hispanic students.

In terms of the gender of the participant, the female participants scored five percentage points more favorably/accurately than the male participants, though the reason for this is unknown.

Table 4-2. Favorable/accurate responses by gender of participant

	Female	Male
Pre-Test	21%	16%

Figure 4-1 below shows the participants' responses to all of the questions by the race of the participant. There were so few participants who described themselves as neither African American nor White that they are not included in this figure.

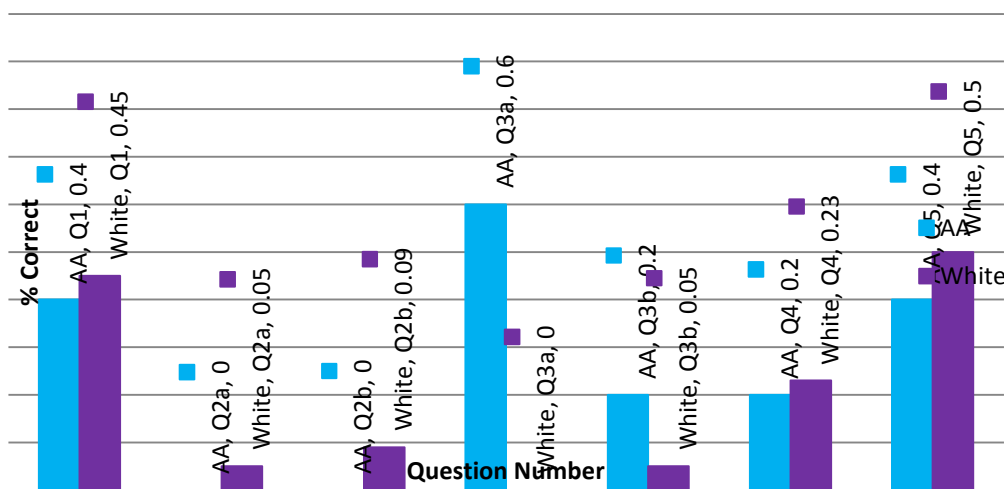


Figure 4-1. Pre-Assessment favorable/correct responses by race



Perhaps the most striking difference between races in this chart is Question 3a, which asked participants to define the meaning of “John be running.” 60% of the African American participants answered accurately, whereas not one White participant was accurate. Also, 20% of the African American students answered Question 3b accurately, which asked them to define “Alexis been done ate,” whereas 5% of the White participants answered accurately. It is important to note that in order for an answer to count as accurate for Question 3b, participants’ answers were required to include the phrase “a long time ago” or “a while ago.” Many participants answered that “Alexis has finished eating,” yet they did not include “a long time ago” or “a while ago.” The lack of this addition is why many participants’ responses were not counted as accurate, both for the Pre- and Post-Assessment. In retrospect, asking a question that did not require such a specific response, or including more statements to create a larger sample, might have provided a clearer picture of participants’ knowledge. A good number of the participants gave answers that in context might have counted as accurate as they seemed to understand the nuanced meaning, however they were not explicit in their responses and I was very conservative in counting a response as correct. Answers were only counted as accurate if they included all elements of the statement.

### **Post-Assessment Results**

The percentages of favorable answers between the Pre-Assessment and Post-Assessment are statistically significant for every question.

Table 4-3. Total favorable/accurate responses

Condition	Percentage
Pre	19%
Post	70%
Change	51%

Participants across the three classes grew by 51%, thereby dramatically increasing their knowledge about African American English and the existence of non-standard varieties. Both Professor A's and B's participants' favorable/accurate responses increased during the lessons, and they increased by roughly the same amount, with Professor A's participants answering 68% favorably/accurately and Professor B's participants answering 72% favorably/accurately.

Table 4-4. Favorable/accurate responses by professor's class

	A	B
Pre	19%	20%
Post	68%	72%
Change	49%	52%

While the same material was taught in all three classes, there was a different dynamic in all of the classes and the discussions inherently varied. In spite of the differences in discussions that occur naturally when working with separate classes, favorable/accurate responses increased similarly among classes, with both classes gaining at a significant level when the responses were submitted to a paired sample t-test: Professor A  $t(1,20)=2.09$ ,  $p<.0001$ ; Professor B  $t(1,11)=2.20$ ,  $p<.0001$ .

Table 4-5 reports the favorable/accurate responses broken down by question, along with the degree of the change.

Table 4-5. Pre- and Post-Assessment favorable/accurate responses

	Q1	Q2A	Q2B	Q3A	Q3B	Q4	Q5
Pre	42%	5%	5%	11%	8%	18%	45%
Post	95%	60%	50%	75%	28%	90%	90%
Change	53%	55%	45%	64%	20%	72%	45%

Table 4-5 shows that the overall shift in positive responses is reflected to some degree in every question. This observation is supported by statistical analysis: the pre- and post- results for each question were submitted to a paired-sample t-test. For Question One, which asked participants about their opinions towards African American English, 42% answered favorably on the Pre-Assessment, compared to 95% on the Post-Assessment, for a 53% change:  $t(1,31)=2.04$ ,  $p<.0001$ . Question Two-A asked participants if they were familiar with the Oakland Controversy, whereas Question Two-B asked them to describe what they remembered. For the Pre-Assessment, if participants indicated for Question Two-A that knew about the Controversy, then they also answered Question Two-B accurately, and this accounted for 5% of the participants. Interestingly, however, for the Post-Assessment, 60% answered that they were familiar with the Controversy (Question Two-A), yet only 50% of the participants accurately described the Controversy (Question Two-B). Questions Two-A and Two-B indicate that they have achieved a state of awareness about the subject, yet that not all participants accurately remembered the details of the Controversy. The 55% increase in accurate responses for Question Two-A is significant at  $t(1,31)=2.04$ ,  $p<.0001$ , and the percentage change for accurate responses for Question Two-B was 45%, significant at:  $t(1,31)=2.04$ ,  $p<.0001$ .

Questions Three-A and Three-B ascertained how accurately participants could interpret the meaning of two sentences written in African American English. The change in accurate responses for both questions was significant, with a 64% change for Question 3-A:  $t(1,31)=2.04$ ,  $p<.0001$ , and a 20% change for Question 3-B:  $t(1, 31)=2.04$ ,  $p<.04$ .

Question Four asked participants if they knew any methods that would assist students who spoke African American English master Academic English, and favorable responses increased by 72%:  $t(1,31)=2.04$ ,  $p<.0001$ . Question Five asked if Academic English is better than African American English, and there was a 45% favorable growth (meaning that at the Post-Assessment they believed that Academic English was not better than African American English), which is significant at:  $t(1,31)=2.04$ ,  $p<.001$ .

Participants' teaching status also proved noteworthy. Note in Table 4-6 below that the favorable/accurate responses of participants who were currently teaching grew by 29%, whereas the participants who were not yet teaching grew by 60%.

Table 4-6. Favorable/accurate responses by teacher status

	Teacher	Non-Teacher
Pre	20%	11%
Post	49%	71%
Change	29%	60%

Consider the following hypothesis: Many of the current teachers seemed resistant to the idea that their students spoke in a way that they did not understand; they thought that they completely understood their students and that their students were not using syntactic or phonological structures that they did not know. This perception was gained by participants' assertions that they completely understood what their students said.

On the other hand, the non-teachers were not yet in a position to determine whether or not they understood their students, as they had none. Perhaps those participants who had no or little prior experience with students were more willing and able to accept that there is a way of speaking that they did not yet fully understand. For

participants who already had students and truly believed that they could understand them, it might be harder to believe that they did not in fact always understand them and that there were differences to which they were not attuned. Perhaps there was an unwillingness for participants to surrender to the idea of not fully understanding their students and to become completely open to learning about the differences in the language varieties.

### **Favorable/Accurate Answers by Race of Students**

Although the participants who were teachers and who taught only Hispanic students began the semester with more favorable/accurate responses than those who taught both Hispanic and African American students, they grew almost exactly the same amount: 46% for teachers of Hispanic and African American students, and 47% for teachers of Hispanic-only students.

Table 4-7. Favorable/accurate responses by race of students

	Hispanic	Hispanic-AA
Pre	23%	14%
Post	70%	60%
Change	47%	46%

This indicates that for the participants who were teachers, their growth was independent of their students' race. My original hypothesis, before knowing that the African American and Hispanic students used many of the same linguistic features, was that participants who taught African American students might attend more to the presentations because they might see it as more applicable to their personal teaching experience, and therefore grow more. As previously noted, however, in the example of the high school across from the university, Hispanic students were also using features

of African American English. Therefore it might not be surprising if all of the participants saw the information as beneficial and worth retaining.

### Female Versus Male Participants

Female and male participants grew roughly the same amount as each other, with the males growing 8 percentage points more than the females.

Table 4-8. Favorable/accurate responses by gender of participant

	Female	Male
Pre	21%	16%
Post	69%	71%
Change	47%	55%

### Post-Assessment Responses by Race of the Participant

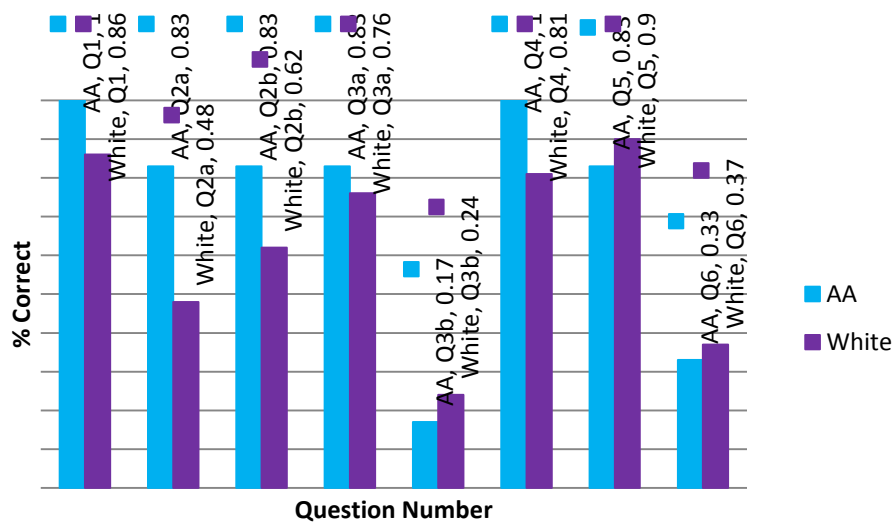


Figure 4-2. Post-Assessment favorable/correct responses by race

The Post-Assessment responses as viewed by race of the participant are not nearly as dramatic in difference as in the Pre-Assessment. Below is the chart by race and by question. There is an additional question (Question Six) which asks participants

if they have implemented any of the suggested activities with their students. Responses were counted as “favorable” or “correct” if the participants indicated that they had indeed implemented an activity or if they had had some class discussions about language use of the type we had during the lessons. Notice that save for Question Three-B, Question Five, and Question Six, the African American participants answered more questions favorably/accurately than the White participants. This is in contrast to the racial divide on the Pre-Assessment, which follows for ease of reference:

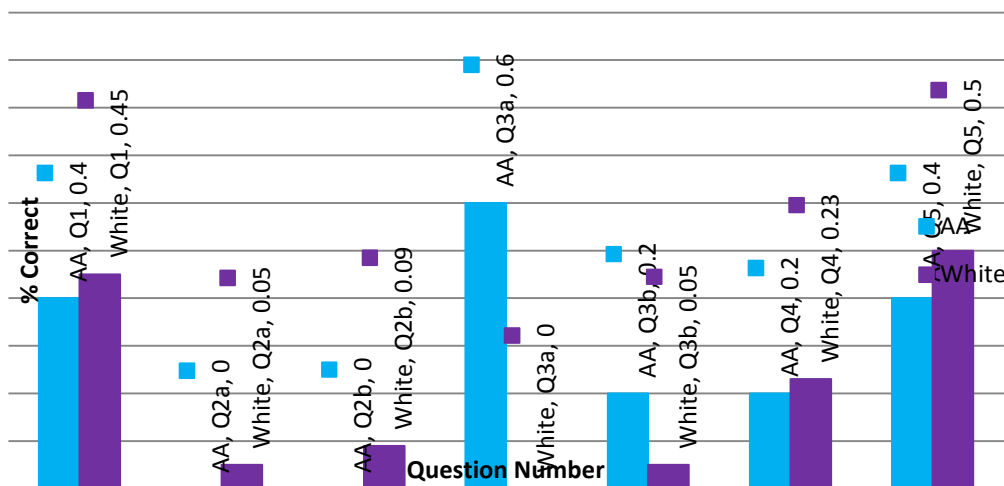


Figure 4-3. Pre-Assessment favorable/correct responses by race

In Figure 4-3, the White participants answered all questions except for Question Three-A and Question Three-B more favorably/accurately than the African American participants. There is therefore a shift that occurred during the teaching sessions. The African American participants started with a lower percentage of favorable/accurate answers yet they ended the course with the majority of the favorable/accurate answers, surpassed by the White participants only on Questions Three-B, Five, and Six.

There could be many reasons for this. One possibility is that they might identify with the information more closely than the White participants because it is about some

of their native language varieties, and might therefore be more engaged with the material. There is a caveat to this proposition, however. While during class discussions many of the White participants held strongly to the notion that they understood everything that their students said and that there were no linguistic nuances of which they were unaware, at the beginning of the semester the African American participants were more likely to assert that they did not use features of African American English and that their students did not either. As the course progressed, however, the African American participants were more and more able to provide personal examples of phrases or sound features that followed the rules described in class and they were able to give native-speaker intuition to questions asked in class. Some African American participants also began to assert that they were bi-dialectal with African American English and Academic English. It is possible that the African American students began the Pre-Assessment with more of a negative attitude towards the idea of African American English, especially considering that many of them mentioned that for most of their lives they had been told (and also believed) that they spoke a “lazy” form of English. Throughout the class sessions they began to become more comfortable with the idea that African American English is indeed rule-governed and that it deserves recognition as a valuable linguistic variety. If this is the case, and it did seem to be based on comments participants made during and after classes, then the African American students may have performed better on the Post-Assessment than the White students because they became more invested in the information and they wanted to learn about their linguistic history and culture. Another possibility could be that the African American participants were more knowledgeable from the start, yet did not



display this knowledge for various reasons. Alternatively, it is possible that the African American participants had more implicit knowledge of the linguistic forms before the teaching sessions began, and the sessions simply enabled them to articulate them more clearly.

### **Effectiveness of Teaching Participants' Code-Switching Strategies to Use with Students**

When discussing the experiment with the professors and what the sessions would contribute to the course at the beginning of the semester, I was very invested in making sure that the participants left with not only a more in-depth understanding about language diversity and how one variety is not inherently better than another, but also that they had specific strategies that they could immediately implement with their students in order to positively affect student achievement. In terms of measuring how well participants would be able to implement the suggested activities (based on the significant growth with Question Four which asks participants to describe ways in which they could assist their students in acquiring Academic English and code-switching techniques), the data shows that this element was indeed successful. Most participants were able to describe in detail at least three activities to engage in with their students. The impact the training sessions had on the participants is clear.

On the Post-Assessment, participants were asked if they had implemented any of the activities explored in class. While only approximately 35% indicated that they had implemented an activity, many said that they planned to, and several said that they had begun examining issues of linguistic diversity with their students. It is understandable that many participants expressed that they had not yet had time to implement the activities since they answered this question only two weeks after having been

introduced to the activities. However, a statement made by John Baugh (1995) is very apropos. He said, "some urban educators have remarked that language development is a low academic priority for poor minority students because of the myriad of other social problems they face in daily life. The paradox at hand lies in the fact that a good education is critical to breaking perpetual cycles of poverty, and linguistic skills are a strong indicator of the likelihood of eventual academic success" (p.88). This highlights the need for linguistic intervention, arguably such as the type presented during the six lessons.

During the last lesson I again emphasized the educational disparity for minority students and the role that the teachers' attitudes towards language plays in this. Nonetheless, teachers indicated that they did not have time to implement the activities. It would be of interest to ascertain how participants might have responded to this question if instead of six sessions there were more, such as twenty, or if the question were asked a month or so later, after the participants had had more time to digest the information and make room for it in their practice.

Below are some examples of participants' responses to Question Six, asking whether they had implemented any of the strategies:

Students had trouble focusing on and pronouncing the word "tact." I agreed with them that it was a strange word. We appreciated its uniqueness but recognized its bizarre form.

Of note is that on her demographics questionnaire this participant indicated that she taught Hispanic students, so it is clear that it is not only participants with African American students who are applying this information, even though during the lessons we were referring to the variety as "African American English." How her students were pronouncing "tact" is unknown, however. As discussed in Lesson Three, African

American English has a final consonant-cluster reduction rule, which “tact” falls into. If they were indeed dropping the final /t/, then this harkens back to the notion that there is no perfect name for “African American English,” because her students were not African American. That the participant explored the issue with her students is positive, as this was a strategy encouraged during the class sessions.

Another participant who also taught Hispanic students said,

I am in the process of creating a bulletin board in my room which addresses the most common uses of African American English in my classroom. In revising their essays this week, my students looked for instances where African American English was used and underlined them. In pairs, students re-wrote these sentences on loose-leaf. During IR [homeroom] on Friday, students will transfer their work onto sentence strips for display on the classroom bulletin board. So far, students seem to enjoy and are retaining the information taught.

Another participant who taught both African American and Hispanic students replied, “I used a match up game for my science class using African American English definitions with our unit vocabulary.”

Responses to Question Five, which asked whether Academic English is better than African American English, on the whole received answers indicating that it was not better. Following are several common responses:

- “No—neither variety better linguistically, but Academic English is generally necessary for students to acquire in order to be successful in school.”
- “No, in terms of linguistic they are equivalent but Academic is the language of power so it benefits students who can master it.”
- “Academic English is not better than African American English, just different.”

Based on the anecdotal evidence above, in combination with the statistically significant increase of favorable responses between the Pre-Assessment given during Lesson One and the Post-Assessment given during Lesson Six, it seems clear that the

purpose of this experiment, which was to positively affect participants' attitudes towards African American English and give them specific strategies to enable their students to acquire Academic English and code-switch, was successful.

### **Attitude Questionnaire**

The participants completed the Attitude Questionnaire directly following the psycholinguistic element of the experiment, both after the Pre- and Post-Psycholinguistic Experiment. I will refer to it as the Pre-Attitude Questionnaire and the Post-Attitude Questionnaire, however it was the exact same questionnaire. Note that the Attitude Questionnaire was simply labeled "Questionnaire," and the participants never saw the word "attitude" attached to it. After they stepped out of the experimentation room they sat privately, filled out the Questionnaire, and put it into a manila envelope along with all of the other participants' questionnaires. This design was created with the intent of giving the participants a sense of anonymity aside from their identification number in that they were not giving me, the researcher, the Questionnaire, but rather putting it in an envelope themselves.

Of course the question of whether participants were responding to the questionnaire in a positive manner in attempts to please me, the researcher, cannot be known. This Hawthorne Effect plagues any experiment in which the participants know the researcher will read their responses, and certainly when the researcher is physically in the room or near the participants. Fortunately, the psycholinguistic element of this experiment, which will be discussed in Chapter 5, included methodology to help avoid or mitigate the Hawthorne Effect. Having the participants complete the Attitude Questionnaire privately and put it in the manila folders was an attempt to help mitigate this possible effect. Ultimately, whether or not participants were affected by their

interactions with me as the researcher, they completed the Pre- and Post-Attitude Questionnaire in the same environment both times, which supports the notion that the results are a valid measurement.

As previously discussed, the Attitude Questionnaire was taken directly from Taylor (1973), though modified for the vocabulary of race. Any mentions of “Black” or “Negro” were substituted with “African American.” Of the twenty-five questions, twelve were phrased “positively” and thirteen were phrased “negatively.” “Positive” questions framed African American English in a “positive light” and “negative” questions framed African American English in a “negative light.” Participants responded to questions on a five-point likert scale. The full questionnaire is in Appendix C.

I coded the responses to the Attitude Questionnaire as follows: Because twelve of the questions were phrased positively and thirteen of the questions were phrased negatively, the responses were coded on a five-point scale of most positive to least positive instead of assigning a score directly to the category of “strongly agree,” “strongly disagree,” etc. The most positive responses were assigned a value of five points, neutral responses were assigned three points, and the least favorable responses were assigned one point. Paired sample t-tests were calculated based on raw numbers for each question, and averages were calculated and submitted to t-tests for comparing groups of responses such as totals by race, gender, professor, etc. Only participants who completed both the Pre-Attitude Questionnaire and the Post-Attitude Questionnaire were included in the results.

Table 4-9 displays the means of the responses to the Attitude Questionnaire, broken down by individual question. Notice that the favorable responses increased for

every question, with the lowest increasing by 4.6% and the highest by 56.6%. The six lessons previously discussed were not created with the specific intent of addressing each of the questions on the Attitude Questionnaire. Certainly many of the concepts on the Questionnaire are in line with material that I felt was important to address in terms of affecting attitudes and introducing participants to strategies to assist their students in acquiring Academic English. At no time, however, were the questions in the Questionnaire systematically incorporated into the creation of the lessons or the guidance of the class discussions.

Table 4-9. Means of Pre- and Post-Attitude Questionnaire responses

	Pre Average	Post Average	Increase	% Increase
Q1	2.98	3.84	0.87	29.10%
Q2	3.2	4.16	0.96	29.90%
Q3	3.18	4.11	0.93	29.40%
Q4	3.47	3.96	0.49	14.10%
Q5	2.2	2.53	0.33	15.20%
Q6	2.89	3.31	0.42	14.60%
Q7	3.33	3.93	0.6	18.00%
Q8	2.62	3.56	0.93	35.60%
Q9	3.58	4	0.42	11.80%
Q10	2.6	3.02	0.42	16.20%
Q11	3.84	4.29	0.44	11.60%
Q12	2.76	3.07	0.31	11.30%
Q13	2.84	3.4	0.56	19.50%
Q14	3.18	3.71	0.53	16.80%
Q15	2.51	3.93	1.42	56.60%
Q16	3.71	4.42	0.71	19.20%
Q17	2.04	2.49	0.44	21.70%
Q18	2.44	2.67	0.22	9.10%
Q19	2.64	3.44	0.8	30.30%
Q20	3.87	4.2	0.33	8.60%
Q21	3.27	3.76	0.49	15.00%
Q22	3.62	4.04	0.42	11.70%
Q23	3.47	4.04	0.58	16.70%
Q24	2.89	3.02	0.13	4.60%
Q25	3.73	4.02	0.29	7.80%

This lack of intentionally-designed overlap, combined with the participants' significant growth, speaks to the overall scope and nature of the participants' positive change since the change was not only in direct relation to the specific points addressed in class.

The Questionnaire uses the terms "African American English" as well as "Nonstandard English." In class discussions, "African American English" was described as a nonstandard form of English. It is unknown whether during the Pre-Attitude Questionnaire participants thought of African American English and Nonstandard English as the same constructs, yet by the Post-Attitude Questionnaire participants had been told that African American English is one specific nonstandard variety.

In his analysis, Taylor (1973) divides the twenty-five questions into four main content categories, which are as follows:

1. The structure and inherent usefulness of nonstandard and Black English dialects
2. Consequences of using and accepting nonstandard and Black English in the educational setting
3. Philosophies concerning the use and acceptance of non-standard and Black English dialects
4. Cognitive and intellectual abilities of speakers of nonstandard and Black English

The results for the current experiment will be addressed within the content categories created by Taylor. Taylor identifies how many questions belong to each category, however he does not itemize which questions belong to which category. His breakdown of the number of questions per category is as follows:

- Content category (1): 8 questions
- Content category (2): 8 questions
- Content category (3): 8 questions
- Content category (4): 1 question

Although Taylor did not itemize which questions belonged to which content category, I did, and based on the numbers it is clear that he and I are not categorizing every question identically since in my analysis the numbers align identically only with Content Category Three. My itemization of content categories is as follows:

- Content category One: 7 questions [Numbers: 2, 5, 9, 12, 14, 15, 23]
- Content category Two: 10 questions [Numbers: 1, 3, 6, 13, 16, 17, 18, 21, 24, 25]
- Content category Three: 8 questions [Numbers: 4, 7, 8, 10, 11, 19, 20, 22]
- Content category Four: 0 questions

### **Content Category 1: The Structure and Inherent Usefulness of Nonstandard and Black English Dialects**

The paired sample t-test comparing whether participants believed that African American English was a misuse of Standard English or not [Q2] indicates that by the Post-Assessment they did not believe that it is a misuse of Standard English, and this result is significant  $t(1,36)=2.03, p<.0001$ . This is a topic that was discussed during every lesson. Participants also did not believe that African American English was an inferior language system [Q9]  $t(1,36)=2.03, p<.04$ , and while this is significant, it is not as highly significant as some other findings. The idea that African American English is not an inferior language system was also discussed during every session, however the results might indicate that they held more strongly to the notion of Academic English being the “correct” or “proper” linguistic system than they did to other beliefs. During the first few sessions I described in detail why I would be using the term “Academic English” instead of “proper” or “correct” English because the semantic load of the terminology is very important. It affects participants’ conceptualization of the linguistic varieties, and it reinforces what they believe to be true about the variety. I told them, however, that it



was their personal choice as to what terminology to use, though I underscored why I would be using the terminology that I had chosen.

When participants asked a question using the terminology “proper English” or “correct English” I always included “Academic English” in my response in hopes of reinforcing the terminology that I believed was most appropriate. At the beginning of the semester during class discussions there were several participants who used the term “proper English” in place of “Academic English,” and while the grand majority began using the term “Academic English” right away there was one participant who continued to use the phrasing “proper English.” It is possible that other participants in this class session were affected by this usage, however this would only affect one third of the participant group.

The data showed a difference in participants’ beliefs between how African American English sounds versus the grammatical system under which African American English operates. Question 5, which asked participants whether they believed that African American English sounded as good as Standard English was *not* significant  $t(1,36)=2.03, p>.05$ , and while Question 12, which asked participants if they believed that African American English sounded sloppy *is* significant  $t(1,36)=2.03, p<.05$ , indicating that they did not believe that it sounded sloppy, the results are less significant than many others. It seems that participants were more willing to change their attitudes towards the idea of African American English as a valid grammatical system as opposed to a system that *sounds* acceptable. Although there was one class session exploring the phonology of African American English, greater emphasis was placed on the rule-governed nature of the system in terms of syntax. This may be why there is a

difference in positive response changes. Alternatively, perhaps participants were more willing to accept syntactic differences instead of phonological differences. There might be a bigger hurdle to overcome in terms of phonology as many participants have heard African American English for years, yet have never (or rarely) been exposed to it in a written medium.

Interestingly, Lisa Delpit, an African American scholar who believes in valuing African American English while still ensuring that students have access to Academic English, does not believe that African American English sounds as good as Academic English. She gives the following anecdote about her Academic English-speaking daughter who had transferred to a charter school with a predominately African American population:

She be all like, ‘What ch’all talkin’ ‘bout?’ like she ain’t had no kinda sense.” When I heard these words spoken by my eleven-year-old-daughter it seemed as though a hundred conflicting scripts raced through my mind at the same time....There was at once a horror at the words emanating from my daughter’s mouth, and a sense of immense shame at feeling that horror. (Delpit, 2008, pp. 33-34)

On one hand Delpit believes that African American English should be valued as a valid linguistic variety, and on the other hand she sees the value in acquiring and using Academic English for social mobility and power purposes. That even she is struck by the sound of African American English from her daughter indicates how insidious the distaste for its “sound” is in American culture.

The final two questions in this content category addressed whether participants believed that African American English is a clear, thoughtful, and expressive language [Q14], and whether nonstandard English is as effective for communication as Standard

English [Q23]. Participants' attitudes became positive at a significant level for each of these questions, respectively: [Q14]  $t(1,36)=2.03, p<.03$ ; [Q23]  $t(1, 35)=2.03, p<.03$ .

### **Content Category 2: Consequences of Using and Accepting Nonstandard and Black English in the Educational Setting**

Participants did not believe that the scholastic level of a school would fall<sup>6</sup> if teachers allowed African American English to be spoken [Q1]  $t(1,36)=2.03, p<.0002$ , and likewise they did not believe that acceptance of nonstandard dialects of English by teachers would lead to a lowering of standards in schools [Q21]  $t(1,35)=2.03, p<.03$ . During the lessons I presented the case that students speak a variety that is different from the academic, school variety. I said that the variety that the students speak is integral to their personal identity of self, and that it should therefore not be taken away or erased. I suggested that participants accept and value the variety that the students' bring to school while simultaneously addressing their need to acquire Academic English as well. School "standards," as such, were not directly addressed during the class discussions, however it is clear from the positive change that participants extrapolated the information to suggest that standards would not be lowered if African American English were accepted.

Over the course of the sessions participants grew to believe that teachers should allow African American students to use African American English in the classroom [Q6]  $t(1,36)=2.03, p<.03$ . This point was discussed in terms of allowing students to express themselves comfortably, and most importantly that participants should not correct students while they are making an academic point, but rather when they are specifically

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<sup>6</sup> The term should have been "fail," however there was a typographical error and the question on the Attitude Questionnaire read "fall."

focusing on language systems or grammatical points. Interestingly, they also believed that speakers of African American English would be more motivated to achieve academically if the use of African American English were encouraged [Q13]  $t(1,36)=2.03, p<.03$ . Class discussions touched upon the idea that achievement would increase if students were made to feel like they, and their language, were accepted socially, however discussions centered around accepting the students' variety but not of explicitly encouraging it.

Participants found that attempts to eliminate African American English from schools would result in a situation that could be psychologically damaging to African American children [Q3]  $t(1,35)=2.03, p<.0004$ . While the phrase "psychologically damaging" was never employed in class, the idea of the interconnectedness of language and identity was a recurring theme. They also believed that when teachers reject the native language of a students, they do him/her great harm [Q16]  $t(1, 36)=2.03, p<.0001$ . This concept was addressed specifically and was integrated frequently into class discussions in terms of harm to academic success. It is directly tied to research as discussed in Chapter 2 indicating that students whose teachers reject the students' L1 perform more poorly, and this point was emphasized throughout the lessons with the intent of shaping participants' attitudes in a way that would positively affect their students' performance.

Question 17 asked participants if they thought a teacher should correct a student's use of nonstandard English. The change was significant, though the direction of growth needs to be clarified. The significant growth indicates that participants grew in terms of originally believing that teachers should correct a student's use of nonstandard

English, and that by the Post-Attitude Questionnaire they believed that teachers should not correct a student's use of nonstandard English.

This question is ambiguous in terms of how and when a teacher should correct. A grounding principal of the study was to impart that teachers should give students access to Academic English but that they should do so in a way that values the variety the students already possess, and that it should be a linguistically additive as opposed to a subtractive process. When scoring this question, my underlying assumption was that correcting was negative because there is a certain type of correction wherein the teacher says something along the lines of "that's not proper English," or "that's bad English," and participants described correcting their students in this manner. It is unknown, however, how participants interpreted this question. During the discussions one recurrent theme was the necessity of highlighting differences between the two varieties and ensuring that students acquired Academic English. To a certain degree this requires correction, yet it is not the type of correction we might envision where a teacher "corrects" a student in a way that devalues the variety the student employed. It is hard to say, then, whether this "positive" growth is either positive or negative, because the type of correction a teacher is said to give is unknown.

By the end of the course participants did not believe that in a predominantly African American school, African American English as well as Standard English should be taught [Q18]  $t(1,36)=2.03, p>.05$ . In order to grow "positively" for this question, participants had to originally believe that teaching African American English was negative, and that by the Post-Assessment teaching African American English was positive. During the class instruction participants were told that the goal was to enable

students to code-switch, but that this was not to be accomplished by teaching *in* African American English or that African American English should be taught as a specific variety. In fact, the point was made that during the 1996 Oakland Controversy it was a misconception that teachers would teach students how to speak African American English, because in reality the students already possessed these linguistic skills. It could be considered “positive,” then, that participants did not take from the sessions the notion that they should be teaching students in African American English, as this is not widely supported in the literature. Additionally, a topic that was not specifically addressed and that the literature would not support was whether one of the goals of the American school system should be the standardization of the English language [Q24], and participants did not grow to believe that this should be the case  $t(1,34)=2.03, p>.05$ .

The final question in this content category asked participants if one successful method for improving the learning capacity of speakers of African American English would be to replace their dialect with Standard English. Participants grew significantly to believe that this would not be a successful method [Q25]  $t(1,34)=2.03, p<.03$ . Discussions revolved around the benefit students would receive if they acquired Academic English, yet this was presented as goal of adding Academic English into their repertoire and not of subtracting their competency with African American English.

### **Content Category 3: Philosophies Concerning the Use and Acceptance of Non-Standard and Black English Dialects**

The questions in Content Category Three are divided evenly into two categories: those that portray African American English in a positive light, and those that portray it in a negative light. Of the positively charged questions, participants responded extremely positively to the question asking if African American English must be

accepted if pride is to develop among African American people [Q8]  $t(1,36)=2.03$ ,  $p<.0001$ . The term “pride” was never used in discussions, yet it seems that the idea of validating a way of speaking that was previously thought of negatively bled into the idea of a sense of pride for the speakers. Participants also believed that widespread acceptance of African American English is imperative [Q19]  $t(1,35)=2.03$ ,  $p<.0003$ , and that Nonstandard English should be accepted socially [Q22]  $t(1,35)=2.03$ ,  $p<.03$ . These points were not made directly, and instead discussions touched on acceptance within the schools. A topic that was never discussed in class was whether African American English is “cool,” yet nonetheless participants grew to believe that it is [Q10]  $t(1,36)=2.03$ ,  $p<.04$ .

Of the negatively charged questions in Content Category Three, Question 7 changed the most significantly, indicating that participants did not believe that African American English should be discouraged  $t(1, 36)=2.03$ ,  $p<.0001$ . It is interesting to compare the responses from Question 6 and Question 7. Question 6 is Content Category Two, and asks participants whether teachers should allow African American students to use African American English in the classroom. Both questions were significant ([Q6]  $t(1,36)=2.03$ ,  $p<.03$ ), but Question 7 changed more than Question 6. For Question 6 participants were asserting that it is acceptable for students to use African American English in the classroom, whereas in Question 7 they were indicating that use of African American English should not be discouraged. It is interesting that the change in Question 7 was more significant, and this could possibly suggest that the participants grew to believe that discouraging the use of African American English in general is not necessary, yet they are not quite as comfortable with the idea of using

African American English in the school classroom. It would be interesting to see if the responses to Question 6 would change after more sessions or after more time spent exploring the issue with their students in the classroom.

Participants disagreed with the statement that “continued usage of a nonstandard dialect of English would accomplish nothing worthwhile for society” [Q4]  $t(1,36)=2.03$ ,  $p<.03$ , and that the sooner we eliminate nonstandard dialects of English, the better [Q20]  $t(1,35)=2.03$ ,  $p<.03$ . Class discussions revolved around the principle of acceptance of African American English as a valid variety and not that of “keeping” or “eliminating” it from usage. Participants internalized the information in a way, though, that sparked the belief that nonstandard varieties should not be eliminated. Finally, participants did not believe at the end of the lessons that African American English should be considered a bad influence on American culture and civilization [Q11]  $t(1,36)=2.03$ ,  $p<.03$ .

### **Growth by professor**

Participants’ responses grew significantly, independently of which professor’s class they attended. Professor A’s participants grew:  $t(1,22)=2.04$ ,  $p<.0001$ , whereas Professor B’s participants grew:  $t(1,13)=2.17$ ,  $p<.03$ , indicating more positive growth for Professor A’s participants. Why Professor A’s participants grew more is unknown, however Professor A did have two class sections so there were more participants in this analysis. However, for the purpose of the study, it is positive that all classes grew at significant levels, indicating that even though material was presented somewhat differently in each class due to the nature of different participants and slightly different discussions, the information I wanted to convey was consistent across class sections.



### **Growth by gender**

Female and male participants grew very similarly, with female participants growing significantly at:  $t(1,20)=2.04$ ,  $p<.0001$  and male participants growing significantly at:  $t(1,15)=2.14$ ,  $p<.0002$ .

### **Growth by race**

While in this analysis there were 21 White participants, there were only 5 African American participants, and the growth for the African American participant pool is not comparable because of the small sample size<sup>7</sup>. Of the 5 participants in the sample, the growth was  $t(1,5)=2.57$ ,  $p<.0002$ . Again, however, this sample size is too small to draw well-grounded conclusions. Growth for the White group, however, is the most significant of all growth reported in this chapter. White participants grew  $t(1,21)=2.08$ ,  $p<.0001$ , where the actual p value is  $4.39E-18$ , or  $p<.00000000000000000439$ . Due to the small sample size of African American participants, an ad hoc comparison was run for the category of “non-White.” This group, composed of participants identifying as “Mixed,” “African American-Hispanic,” and “Hispanic,” resulted in a sample pool of 13, thus enabling the comparison of growth for non-White participants. This group of participants grew significantly at  $t(1,12)=2.18$ ,  $p<.004$ . While this group grew at significant levels, the growth is less dramatic than that of the White participants.

Why the White participants grew more is unknown. One possibility might be that the information was newer to them, thus they had more knowledge to gain. This is not necessarily the case, though, because while many of the African American and non-

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<sup>7</sup> These numbers are smaller than those in Table 3-1 because the paired sample t-tests that were run for the Attitude Questionnaire only included those participants who completed both the Pre- and Post-Attitude Questionnaire.

White participants were speakers of African American English, on the whole they believed that it was an inferior, lazy system, and their negative attitudes could be regarded as equally uninformed as the White participants' attitudes. On the other hand, it might be that since the non-White participants had been told for so many years that the way they spoke was incorrect, lazy, or sloppy, they might need much more time to accept the fact that the academic community regards it as a legitimate, acceptable variety with distinct rules and patterns.

Overall, the Attitude Questionnaire indicates great positive attitudinal change among the participants between the beginning and end of the lessons. I hypothesized that participants would grow positively for most questions, and I was very pleased that favorable responses increased for every single question, with the majority of the questions increasing at a statistically significant rate.

### **End of Experiment and Class Sessions Survey**

After completing the Pre- and Post Psycholinguistic Experiment, participants were given the option of providing feedback on forms entitled "End of Experiment Response," which are located in Appendices D and E. These forms were a way of gathering the participants' opinions about the experiment they had just completed, the Attitude Questionnaire, and/or the class lessons (after the Post-Psycholinguistic Experiment) in an open-ended, free-flowing way. They completed these forms directly following the Psycholinguistic Experiment and put them in a manila envelope just as was described for the Attitude Questionnaire. Once they exited the experimentation room the order of forms was Demographics Questionnaire (only after the Pre-Psycholinguistic Experiment), Attitude Questionnaire, and End of Task Response forms. After the Pre-Psycholinguistic Experiment the final response form was entitled "End of

Task Response,” which asked, “do you have any further comments on the experiment? If so, please describe,” and after the Post-Psycholinguistic Experiment that form was labeled “End of Experiment/Class Sessions Response,” which asked, “do you have any further comments on the Experiment or the Class Sessions? If so, please describe.” Responses from the first session will be referred to as the Pre-Response, and responses to the final session will be referred to as the Post-Response. The comments that specifically addressed the Psycholinguistic Experiment will be addressed following those results in Chapter 6.

I had a variety of hypotheses regarding how participants might initially react to the experiment and class sessions. In my experience with speaking about the topic of African American English with friends, family, and other acquaintances, I have found that people’s initial reactions are often negative or disbelieving. After further explaining the topic and answering questions, however, the conversations tend to become more positive. Nonetheless, there have been situations in which interlocutors have become somewhat angry and hostile about the idea of African American being a veritable linguistic variety, and in these conversations the other person tends to have been an English major in college or someone who considers her/himself an expert at language. Because of these interactions, I was unsure of how participants would react to the experiment, especially considering that many of them were English teachers. I was very aware that the Attitude Questionnaire and Psycholinguistic Experiment might seem racist to participants since they would not know the context of what was to come in the lessons, and that this could affect the beginning of the class sessions if participants

already thought that I was unaware of the interactions between social class, language, and other factors affecting how one perceives another speaker.

### **Pre-Experiment Responses**

The responses to the Pre- and Post-Response varied greatly between each other. One particularly positive response to the Pre Response was as follows:

Makes me think more about language and the presumptions I make based on what I hear. I should assume less, as I am constantly misjudged. Thank you.

On the Pre-Response another participant indicated that she “was confused as to whether African American English was Ebonics or the way African Americans speak,” thus indicating confusion over terminology. Two participants stated that the questionnaire was racist, with one participant asserting that “it was racist, replace “African American Language” with the word “slang” or “incorrect English.” This statement underscores the idea that participants were unfamiliar with African American English as a valid linguistic construct before the class sessions. Of great note, however, is this same participant’s comment on the Post-Response. On the Post-Response this participant wrote, “again, I feel the term “African American English” is racist. Non-standard suits me better.” As I discussed with participants, the term “African American English” is by no means a perfect label, but I chose to use it as it is currently the most popular term in linguistic writing. That the participant changed from believing that the term African American English should be referred to as “slang” or “incorrect English” to preferring “non-standard,” though, indicates a great shift in thinking and a deeper understanding of the construct.

## Post-Experiment Responses

Not all participants responded to the Post Response, but most did, and responses focused mainly on the class sessions and Psycholinguistic Experiment. Participants had overwhelmingly favorable reactions to the lessons. Comments generally indicated that participants found the lessons interesting, informative, and useful. Most of the responses included sentiments such as the following:

- “I learned a great deal and am so grateful to have learned how to bridge African American English and Academic English.”
- “From the class sessions I have learned that African American English is a clear, thoughtful and expressive language.”
- “The class sessions were very useful and informative. I would recommend the class to anyone.”
- “The experiment and class sessions allowed me to be more aware of students speaking African American English. Now I understand what students are trying to say, and how to address them switching to Standard English in a constructive matter.”
- “It is a great experiment, an eye opener for me. The system should give it a trial.”
- “I think this class was beneficial and should be taught as a PD [Professional Development] for all teachers so at least they can teach students about their heritage and where this dialect came from and not to be ashamed of it.”

The following response was written by an African American participant and is a reflection of his experience with the course:

As an African American I felt that this class was a refreshing experience to know that how my peers, family, and I manipulate the English language is well studied and has meaning to it. I believe that classes like these will help many African-Americans to code switch easily and be able to communicate in both varieties. I feel that the experiment was a good way to do some introspection as to how I perceive how speakers of different language and different varieties speak the English language. I hope that this becomes a requirement for inner-city teacher esp. English teachers.

Some comments indicated that they “still” believed that students should learn to speak Academic English, and below is one example of this type of comment. Note, however, that class discussions specifically addressed the need for students to acquire Academic English for academic pursuit and social mobility, and what the participant describes as “still believing” is a concept that was regularly addressed and is in line with the lessons:

I thought the experiment was helpful and I learned a lot about the structure of African American English. I still believe that in an academic setting, the use of “Standard” English needs to be taught and enforced, however this does not mean that African American English is not accepted. To prepare for the future success of our students, we need to give our students the highest academic standard, what educators would expect to see at each step of the education process and that includes “Standard” English.

I examined responses to both the Pre- and Post-Response in several ways to identify any trends by race. For both responses I considered whether African American and non-White participants were more likely to not answer, and only minimal differences were noted. For the Post-Response I was interested in whether more African American and non-White participants responded more positively or negatively to the sessions, and no difference was noted. Finally, the responses were broken down by identifying whether the African American and non-White participants were more likely to insist that Academic English be taught, and this was not the case. Overall it seems that participants’ self-reported experiences did not vary by race in any discernable ways.

### **Sociolinguistic Conclusions**

The data overwhelmingly show that participants’ beliefs changed in significant ways over the course of the six lessons. During the first lesson participants were unfamiliar with African American English as a legitimate linguistic variety and instead thought that it was a slang, lazy way of speaking. On the whole they were unable to

translate between African American English and Academic English, and they were not aware of specific strategies to help mono-dialectal speakers of African American English acquire Academic English. Responses were generally negative to questions measuring how positively participants perceived African American English as a construct, as well as its worth in the educational system and in society as a whole. At the end of the lessons, however, participants' beliefs were much more positive in terms of African American English's worth and usefulness. They stated that the lessons were useful and that they valued the ways in which the lessons had already informed their teaching practice and the ways that their practice would be informed in the future once they implemented the suggested strategies. Several participants suggested that the type of lessons I taught be given to all educators as professional development, and this sentiment was expressed to me as well as the university class professors and the chairperson of the department at the university.

## CHAPTER 5 PSYCHOLINGUISTIC METHODOLOGY

### **Experiment: Reaction-Time Task**

The Psycholinguistic Experiment measured participants' reaction times and provided insight into their implicit processing through their responses towards African American English and Academic English. In this task, participants listened to four stories, two of which were spoken in African American English and two of which were spoken in Academic English. Participants were then presented with a series of opposing adjective pairs and were asked to select the adjective that best described the speaker of the story. The experiment used a matched-guise methodology in which across the four stories there were only two speakers: one African American woman and one White woman. The participants' responses to the adjective task were measured in milliseconds, and longer response times are understood to be an indication that speakers had more difficulty making that adjective selection, while faster response times indicate that participants had an easier time selecting that adjective. Thus, the faster a participant selected an adjective, the easier it was for the participant to commit to her or his choice.

The Psycholinguistic Experiment was designed to measure participants' implicit attitudes towards different speech varieties. I will define the implicit attitudes that I am attempting to elicit in three ways: (1) those that the participants are potentially aware of but might not want to display on a self-report measure, (2) those that they are unaware of but that still exist and might or might not show up on a self-report measure, (3) or those that they may try to control even under the quick decision task they perform but that will surface when I examine reaction times.



## **Hawthorne Effect and Affiliative Social Tuning Hypothesis**

Participants might feel a certain degree of social pressure from the experiment and from having an experimenter near them, and they may therefore have attempted to answer in a more socially acceptable way, as with the Hawthorne Effect or the Affiliative Social Tuning Hypothesis, as will be discussed. Nonetheless, I was expecting their reaction times to be slower in conditions when they would personally be biased. As mentioned previously in Chapter 2, research shows that on explicit measures White participants often respond in more socially acceptable ways when in the presence of a Black experimenter (Lowery et al., 2001), and in situations in which they feel that the person with whom they are interacting holds the same social opinions that they do, they tend to respond more towards the way they think their partner feels (Higgins & Rholes, 1978). I am White, yet how they perceived my social attitudes is unknown. I hypothesized, though, that since we were in a university environment and since I was conducting a study on attitudes, they would have a sense that I was sensitive towards racial attitudes and they may have attempted to alter their responses in favor of what they perceived me to believe. The affiliative social tuning hypothesis, as defined by Sinclair et al. (2005), is “the postulate that individuals will adjust, or ‘tune,’ their beliefs to the ostensible beliefs of another social actor when they desire to get along with this person...” (p. 584). Whether or not the participants were interested in “getting along with me” is not something I knew or explicitly measured in this study, however “getting along” encompasses the idea of trying to please me, and this effect of pleasing the observer is certainly a possibility.

As will be described, I was in the room while the participants completed both the Pre- and Post-Test portions of the Psycholinguistic Experiment. The participants’

responses were time-locked and the change between the timing of their responses on the Pre- and Post-Test was measured. Since I was in the experimentation room both times, I believe the growth that will be reported in Chapter 6 to be a true measure of the change in their attitudes. Additionally, the participants did not know that their responses were being measured by time as well as by adjective selection, which means that while they could have adjusted their responses in a direction to try to please me in terms of adjective selection, they showed their implicit attitudes through the speed of their responses.

### **Timing Responses**

As discussed in Chapter 2, the timing element of the experiment was based on principles from Gawronski et al. (1998). When faced with a decision, Gawronski et al. (1998) found that easier decisions require less cognitive processing and are mirrored by faster button response times, whereas more difficult decisions that require more processing time are reflected in slower button response times. The current research took advantage of these findings, and participants responded on a response box that timed their responses to the millisecond, which allows insights into which decisions were easier to make and which were more difficult.

### **Method**

#### **Participants**

Forty-nine (twenty-eight female and twenty-one male) participants voluntarily participated in the experiment, including the two professors, whose data were omitted from the results.

## **Design**

The experiment consisted of four stories told by two female speakers and eleven adjective pairs that participants assigned to the speakers of each of the stories. Both speakers were women; one was African American and the other was White. Each of them told two stories: one in African American English and one in Academic English. The four stories were different from each other, and all participants heard all stories. Once the experiment began the participants heard one story and then saw a pair of opposing adjectives on the screen. The participants selected which adjective best described the speaker they just heard, for a total of eleven sets of adjective selections. The participants then heard the following story and assigned the adjectives to that speaker, and so on, for four stories.

## **Materials**

### **Stories**

When designing this experiment my original intent was to use naturally collected speech samples. This proved very difficult, however, as it was not possible to control for as many factors as I deemed necessary. I could not find a public location where naturally occurring speech could be recorded without too much background noise, and speech samples from television, radio, and YouTube that were actually spoken in African American English contained either inappropriate content or were otherwise unusable. I therefore chose to create speech samples for the purpose of the experiment.

I wrote four stories that were then spoken aloud by carefully selected speakers, and the speaker selection process will be discussed momentarily. Two of the stories were in African American English and two were in Academic English, and I solicited

feedback on the stories from native speakers of each variety. Before writing the stories I made a list of the African American English features that I wanted to include, such as final consonant cluster devoicing, lexical features characteristic of African American English, dropping of the third person singular marker, etc. I then wrote two stories in African American English, with each story containing the same number of syntactic, phonological, or lexical features of African American English. In contrast, the Academic English stories had the same number of instances where African American English features could occur but did not. The four stories were within seconds of each other in terms of length, and the sentence structure was similar. Each story indicated at the beginning that the speaker was a student, and the content of the stories was neutral in nature.

The stories were delivered using the matched-guise methodology. In this methodology one speaker speaks in two different ways, or guises, and participants are ostensibly unaware that they have heard two different samples of speech from the same person. This attempts to capture participants' attitudes towards different language varieties that they may otherwise not express to others.

Table 5.1 below indicates the configuration of the four speech samples, or stories. In order to aid the reader in remembering which story was spoken by which speaker and in which variety, I will give abbreviations following the story numbers. "W" stands for "White," "AA" stands for "African American," "AAE" stands for African American English," and "AE" stands for "Academic English." Story One (AA-AAE) was from the African American speaker speaking African American English, Story Two (AA-AE) is from the same African American speaker speaking Academic English, Story

Three (W-AAE) is from the White speaker speaking in African American English, and Story Four (W-AE) is from the same White speaker speaking in Academic English.

Table 5-1. Story, speaker, and variety

Story	Speaker	Variety
One	African American	African American English
Two	African American	Academic English
Three	White	African American English
Four	White	Academic English

Each of the speakers came to my apartment in New York, separately, to record the stories. This location was chosen because it was quiet and there were not external factors creating ambient noise. Before the speakers arrived I instructed them to practice reading the stories aloud so that they would sound as natural as possible while still adhering to the script since it was carefully constructed. The speech samples were recorded using a Roland Edirol R-09 24-bit/48kHz recorder, and the speech files were then downloaded onto a MacBook™ for use in the experiment.

The written stories are below:

#### Story One (AA-AAE)

African American Speaker: African American English

I done seen a celebrity just da other day. On Saturdays I be runnin' around doin' my errands right before I come back home to study. I was in the subway and I seen someone who I thought looked familiar but I couldn't place him. I saw some other people staring hard at him too and finally I realized that son play football. I got home and told my sistah and she was like, "Girl, you BIN seein' celebrities 'round the city. I done tol' you they ain't everywhere—you just think they is. You come in here tellin' me you seen this star and that star and I be thinking you just wanna see a celebrity! You spen all your time lookin' to see who and who is around and you'd be thinkin' hard you finna meet one." I tol' her I BIN seein' 'em and she just jealous she ain't seen 'em too.

#### Story Two (AA-AE)

African American Speaker: Academic English

I really like watching tv but usually I only have time for the news--I have to watch it so I can write up a critical analysis for class. It's funny because I don't usually remember my dreams but the past few nights they've been really vivid. I dreamt that I was a news reporter but that I was also one of the people in the story! I saw a fire across the street and called 911. Everyone was rushin' to get out! When I woke up I told my brother and he was like, "you've wanted to be a reporter for a long time! I've told you you should go to journalism school to see if you really like it. You spend so much time thinking about it but you're not going to know if you don't try!" I told him it's been on my mind for a while and that I'm gonna get a brochure. I'm not procrastinating, I just wanna make sure I have time for it.

### Story Three (W-AAE)

White Speaker: African American English

When I'm not in classes I stay workin' as an assistant for one of my professors. She publishin' an article 'bout history. I be researchin' old documents and den writtin' up summaries for her. Yesterday she ax me do I like this type of research and I say "Yeah! I BIN likin dis—it's a History museum near me that I go to sometimes." Anyway, she real nice to me. My birfday was on Friday and she brought me a card and a book on how the Brooklyn Bridge was built. Now she got me thinkin' 'bout studyin' History since I like workin' fo her so much. I'm finna see can I fit it into my schedule next semester. I ain't a History major but maybe I can have it as a minor. My bruvah study History too and he did like it a lot. That would be real funny if we bof end up studyin' the same thing!

### Story Four (W-AE)

White Speaker: Academic English

My favorite hobby is definitely photography. I took it as an elective a few years ago and I really loved it! I like taking all kinds of pictures but my favorite is going to famous buildings like the Flatiron or the Chrysler building. I often go on weekdays around mid-afternoon when the streets are less crowded. My sister asked me if I could take pictures of her and her family and so one afternoon we went all across the city. When we got there and she saw all my equipment she was like, "Wow! This is only for fun. What do you normally carry around?" I told her I usually lug around as much as I can! I'm gonna see if I can get some of my photos into a local art show since there's a gallery right near me. I'm not a professional yet but it would be really nice if I could get some of my pictures into the show and then maybe start a career.

## Speakers

Speakers were located online using Craigslist. Craigslist is an online forum where people can post items for sale, community events, and services wanted, among many other categories, and both posting and replying to posts is free. One can post an ad for a specific item or service and people viewing the website can respond by sending an email through the website. I posted advertisements for this experiment in the “talent” category with the hopes of finding speakers who were more linguistically aware and who might be more adept at switching between the two varieties when asked. I was looking for an African American woman who could speak both African American English and Academic English, and a White woman who could also speak both varieties.

Two different advertisements were posted: one for an African-American woman between the ages of twenty to thirty who was fluent in both African American English and Academic English, and one for a White woman of the same age group who was also fluent in the two varieties. The advertisement indicated that they would meet with me in person and read two short stories that they had previously rehearsed in order for the stories to sound as natural as possible, and that they would be paid \$50 for their time. Once someone responded to the advertisement I sent an email asking the interested speaker to answer the following questions:

- How old are you?
- What is your highest level of education?
- Where are your parents from?
- Where are you from?
- What was your average family income growing up?

These questions were asked in order to choose an African-American woman and a White woman who were as similar to each other as possible in order to help control

for linguistic and socioeconomic differences. Finding speakers was somewhat difficult. One of the reasons is that I asked the potential speakers to perform a very difficult task. If they responded to the questions I then sent them an email to schedule a time to speak on the phone. On the phone I told them what the experiment was about and what their role would be. When they spoke on the phone they used Academic English so it was apparent that they controlled this variety. I then asked them to perform a very difficult task, which was to speak for a moment, extemporaneously, in African American English. It is not easy to perform this task, especially considering that I only control Academic English and could therefore not hold the other end of the conversation. Nonetheless, I wanted to hear if they understood what African American English was and if they could produce it on command since they would be asked to speak in it for the speech samples. When the African American women attempted to speak in African American English, however, the content was uniformly about drugs and violence. They were not using features of African American English and instead were relying on speaking loudly and on content that they thought would fit the situation. One female speaker was found who was able to speak for about thirty seconds while using features of African American English with neutral content, and she is the African American speaker that I selected. In retrospect I think it would have been just as effective to email the candidates a script already written in African American English and have them read it over the phone for the interview since the actual task was not requiring them to *produce* African American English on their own. My intent, however, was to find a native speaker and not someone who could simply read a script, and ultimately the method I used was successful.



Finding a White speaker proved significantly more difficult than finding an African-American speaker. There were very few responses to the advertisements posted on Craigslist and it seemed that there were not many White women who controlled both varieties. Additionally, Craigslist has a feature whereby anyone on the site can “flag” an advertisement, which means that it gets deleted, and this accounted for the other major difficulty. The advertisements for a White speaker who was fluent in African American English and Academic English were repeatedly flagged, and therefore deleted, on a regular basis. For several days I reposted the advertisement, written in various ways in hopes of avoiding flagging (several times an hour in many cases), trying to get one to stay on the site long enough for someone to respond to it. The fact that the advertisement kept getting deleted will be addressed in Chapter 7. Below is detailed information about each of the speakers I selected and why I believed them to be similar enough to be appropriate for the experiment.

The African-American speaker’s demographic information is as follows:

- Age: 26
- Highest level of education attained: BA in Communication and Art
- Parents’ race: Nigerian
- Where she grew up: Queens
- Average household income growing up: \$100,000+

The White female speaker’s demographic information is as follows:

- Age: 33
- Highest level of education attained: Masters
- Parents’ race: White
- Where she grew up: Brooklyn
- Average household income growing up: \$70,000

Although the two speakers grew up in different areas of New York City, I judged their accents to be very similar. While the African-American speaker’s parents were

from Nigeria, the speaker herself was born and raised in Queens, New York and showed no trace of a foreign accent. I judged these two speakers to be similar enough to use for the experiment because they were both from New York City, they were each able to produce African American English and Academic English, neither of them had especially strong borough accents, they were within a few years of each other in age, and they both came from upper middle to upper class families socioeconomically.

### **Adjectives**

The experiment used an adjective discrimination task to assess implicit attitudes towards African American English and Academic English. Participants responded to eleven sets of adjective pairs that were opposite in nature. The adjectives are listed below in Table 5.2.

Table 5-2. Positive, negative, and neutral adjectives

Positive	Negative	Neutral
Intelligent	Unintelligent	Talkative
Hard-working	Lazy	Not talkative
Rich	Poor	
Upper class	Lower class	
Friendly	Unfriendly	
Uneducated	Educated	
Low achiever	High achiever	
Irresponsible	Responsible	
Loud	Quiet	
Unsuccessful	Successful	

The neutral set of adjectives was Talkative and Not-Talkative, and these were not including in the analyses. They were included in the experiment because I had intended them to be part of the positive/negative set, however after further thought I decided that there was not a clear positive or negative attribute to either of them.

The adjective-pairs were taken from Gawronski et al. (2008) and Rudman et al. (2001), with the exception of Loud/Quiet, Low achiever/High achiever, and Talkative/Not

talkative, which were created expressly for this experiment. The length of most of the pairs intentionally contained approximately the same number of letters as each other, and aside from the neutral pair (talkative/not-talkative) and “hardworking/lazy,” they were both either one or two words.

There were two forms of the adjective lists: one with the positive adjectives on the left side and the negative adjectives on the right side, and one with the positive adjectives on the right side and the negative adjectives on the left side. This was to avoid right-left bias, whereby the participants would select the adjective more quickly when it was presented on the side of their dominant hand. There were therefore eight lists of stories: 1a, 1b, 2a, 2b, 3a, 3b, 4a, and 4b. Participants were randomly assigned the story they heard based on the order in which they came into the experimentation room. The list was ordered 1a, 2a, 3a, 4a, 1b, 2b, 3b, 4b, etc. The first participant heard 1a, the second heard 2a, and so on.

## **Procedure**

### **Logistics**

In order to run the Pre- and Post-Assessments for all of the participants as well as teach six lessons within the semester, it was important that the experiment be run efficiently, with little time wasted between when participants arrived for the test. To facilitate efficient movement between the classroom and the experimentation office, and so that participants would know when it was their turn to leave the classroom without their having to decide who would leave next and disrupt the class, I created a numbering system that I randomly distributed to ten participants at the beginning of each of the testing days. The system consisted of ten small rectangular pieces of red paper with a number ranging between one and ten on one side, and the

experimentation room number on the other side. Each day I would hand out the ten cards and this would indicate the order in which the participants would go to the experimentation room.

All psycholinguistic testing was performed in the same quiet office (which I will refer to as the “experimentation room”), which was down the hall and thus removed from the participants’ classrooms. The room was a professor’s office and it was in a suite with three other offices and a small common space between the offices. In the common space was a bookshelf and enough space for several chairs and a desk. There were never any professors in their offices while the testing took place, which meant that when participants were filling out questionnaires after their testing session they were in a quiet area removed from the hallway and classrooms, and were thus afforded nearly complete privacy.

At the beginning of the testing sessions the participants with numbers one and two left with me to walk to the testing office. The participant with the number one would enter the room first while the participant with the number two would sit in a chair outside the room. Once the first participant was finished with the Pre-Psycholinguistic Experiment she would exit the room and the next participant (participant number two) would enter. Once the first participant exited the office she would sit the chair and fill out the Demographic Questionnaire (only after the Pre-Psycholinguistic Experiment), the Attitude Questionnaire, and optionally the End of Task Response sheet in this order, as I instructed<sup>8</sup>. At the top of each form the participant would write the ART number that he was given on the first day of class. There were three clearly-marked large envelopes

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<sup>8</sup> It is impossible for me to know if the participants actually filled out the paperwork in the order I requested, however I have no reason to believe that they did not.

sitting on the bookshelf in the common area and when the first participant was finished he would put his responses in the appropriate envelope. As previously mentioned, the design of having the participants put their responses in a manila envelope and not giving them directly to me was to help create a sense of anonymity, which I hoped would lead to more honest responses. Also, that the participants completed these questionnaires *after* the Psycholinguistic Experiment was a conscious design. I did not want to prime the participants for language, race, socioeconomic status, or any other factors before they participated in the experiment.

Next, the participant (who was number one) would go back to class and let the participant with the number three know that it was time to go to the experimentation room. By the time this third participant arrived, the second participant was done with the Pre-Test and he would begin filling out the forms while the third participant entered the office. This system worked very smoothly and on average, eight participants were run during each class session. Two participants were taken at the beginning of each class session in order to create a flow such that there was always one participant in the room and one participant filling out the forms outside the office.

### **Apparatus**

The experiment was run using PsyScope X on a MacBook™. A response box that measures button presses with millisecond timing accuracy was on the desk between the participant and the computer. Participants wore headphones that covered the entire ear, and the volume was set at the same level for each of the participants.

### **The Experiment**

Participants sat at a desk in the experimentation room in front of a MacBook™ and a button response box. I orally described what the participant would do during the

experiment, and these instructions were followed by written instructions on the computer along with a practice trial with the response box. They placed the headphones on their ears and put their hands comfortably on the response box. Any remaining questions were clarified, and on occasion a participant would ask a question during the instructional screens. Participants saw several of these instructional screens and were given an example screen during which they made an adjective selection choice by pressing the associated button on the button box. This gave them direct practice as to how to select an adjective and use the button box during a real trial. Once the participant was ready to continue onto the experiment they pressed any button. They then heard a story and at the end of the story the word “Ready?” appeared. Once they were ready they pressed a button and thus began the adjective selection task.

First a fixation cross appeared in the center of the screen to direct their attention away from either side, and immediately after that, two adjectives appeared. One adjective was on the left side of the screen and one was on the right. If they thought the adjective on the left of the screen best described the speaker then they pressed the left-most button on the response box, and if they thought the adjective on the right side of the screen best described the speaker then they pressed the right-most button. After each pair of adjectives disappeared another fixation cross appeared on the screen and immediately thereafter the next set of adjectives appeared. Once the participants selected between the eleven adjective pairs, they heard the second story and proceeded in the same manner until they had completed the task for all four stories. After the last selection task participants saw a screen thanking them for their time and

instructing them to announce that they had completed the task. I was sitting at a desk with my back facing the participant, and I then exited each one out of the program once they were finished.

After the participants completed the experiment they exited the room and filled out the questionnaires that were described in the Logistics section above. The results from these questionnaires were described in Chapter 4, and the results from the experiment just described will now be presented in Chapter 6. I did not ever ask the participants if they were aware that they had only heard two speakers, and this would have been a good question to ask on the Post-End of Survey Response form.

## CHAPTER 6 PSYCHOLINGUISTIC RESULTS

The adjective discrimination task was created to reveal biases that would be revealed by both adjective selection and the speed of response times. Within this discussion of psycholinguistic results, I will refer to the results as either results for the Pre-Test or the Post-Test. For the Pre-Test, overall, I thought that participants would most prefer Story Four (W-AE) and least prefer Story One (AA-AAE). I was not sure whether participants would prefer Story Three (W-AAE) or Story Four (W-AE) more, since this is a question of whether they prefer Academic English from a non-White speaker, or if they prefer African American English from a White speaker, and I was assuming that this would be because they could “hear” that the speaker was White. I was unsure as to whether participants would be able to identify the race of each speaker, though Thomas & Reaser (2004) found that participants are often able to differentiate between African American and White speakers when they hear speech samples from speakers of the two different backgrounds. My underlying assumption was that the participants would prefer “White” speech, so a question was whether a White speaker using African American English would count as “White” speech.

Story One (AA-AAE) was expected to elicit the most negative responses, with the other two stories in the middle. For the Post-Test, I still expected participants to prefer Story Four (W-AE) the most and Story One (AA-AAE) the least, but I hoped that they would dislike Story One (AA-AAE) less than they disliked it during the Pre-Test. I was again unsure as to whether they would prefer Story Two (AA-AE) or Story Three (W-AAE), as it is a question of whether they prefer Academic English from an African American speaker or African American English from a White speaker.



A number of questions guided the analysis of the psycholinguistic results, which are divided into Pre-Test results, Post-Test results, and Demographics results. Brief analysis of the questions guiding the regressions will appear within each section, and a more global analysis of the results tying the Sociolinguistic and Psycholinguistic results together can be found in Chapter 7. Table 6.1 again shows the Story combinations.

Table 6-1. Story, speaker, and variety

Story	Speaker	Variety
One	African American	African American English
Two	African American	Academic English
Three	White	African American English
Four	White	Academic English

### Pre-Test Results

#### Regression 1: Overall Results for the Pre-Test

A multivariate mixed-effects regression was employed in order to find out how much time participants spent making their adjective selection in each of the story conditions and to get a ranking of speed across all four study conditions. The dependent variable was the Pre-Test time (measured in milliseconds) for each story-adjective choice, and the independent variables were story condition, adjective choice, and whether a positive or negative adjective was chosen, which I will refer to as “adjective valence.” Analysis was performed using the LSMEANS t-tests and Tukey-Kramer method for controlling for multiple comparisons.

Table 6-2. Overall Pre-Test speed of results

Story	Milliseconds
One	2110
Two	1980
Three	1878
Four	1732

Table 6-2 above shows the average Pre-Test response time by story in milliseconds, after controlling for the effect of adjective and type of adjective chosen. While we see in the timing of responses that Story One (AA-AAE) was the slowest and in a linear fashion Story Two (AA-AE) is the next slowest, Story Three (W-AAE) is the next to fastest, and Story Four (W-AE) is the fastest, we cannot say that this the exact ranking of the participants' preferences as only three pair-wise comparisons are significant. Although looking only at the response time it may appear that the stories can be ordered, pair-wise comparisons show that only the interactions between Stories Two versus Four ( $t=2.87$ , adjusted  $p=.021$ ), Stories One versus Three ( $t= -2.65$ , adjusted  $p=.040$ ), and Stories One versus Four ( $t= -4.08$ , adjusted  $p=.0003$ ) are significant.

### **Regression 2a: Pre-Test Positive Adjective Chosen**

A similar multivariate mixed-effects regression was run to investigate the relationships between the stories when only the positive adjective was chosen. The dependent variable was the reaction time, and the independent variables were story condition and adjective choice, and the analysis was performed using the LSMEANS t-tests and Tukey-Kramer method for controlling for multiple comparisons. According to the results, we are somewhat able to rank the participants' preferences for story order with results from the regression looking at the Pre-Test positive adjective selection. The average Pre-Test response times for selecting a positive adjective are from slowest to fastest:

Table 6-3. Pre-Test positive adjective chosen

Story	Speaker	Speed	T-statistic	P-value	95% CI
One	AA-AAE	2828	20.55	<.0001	2558, 3097
Two	AA-AE	1974	17.3	<.0001	1751, 2198
Three	W-AAE	1951	16.94	<.0001	1725, 2177
Four	W-AE	1640	15.61	<.0001	1434, 1846

The ranking of these stories is not as clear-cut as it may look, however, since Stories Two (AA-AE) and Three (W-AAE) are not significantly different from each other ( $t=0.21$ , adjusted  $p=1.00$ ). If we were to rank the stories according to preference, the results would be as follows, in order from slowest to fastest:

Table 6-4. Pre-Test story order

Slowest		Fastest
Story One (AA-AAE)	Story Two (AA-AE)	Story Four (W-AE)
	Story Three (W-AAE)	

Looking at pair-wise comparisons of the response times, all pairs are significantly different from each other except for the interaction between Stories Two (AA-AE) and Three (W-AAE).

### Regression 2b: Pre-Test Negative Adjective Chosen

A multivariate mixed-effects model was created to investigate response times when participants selected a negative adjective in the Pre-Test. In the model, response time was the dependent variable, and the independent variables were story condition and adjective choice. The analysis was performed using the LSMEANS t-tests and Tukey-Kramer method for controlling for multiple comparisons.

For participants who chose a negative adjective, the story response times from slowest to fastest are as follows:

Table 6-5. Speed of Pre-Test negative adjective chosen

Story	Speaker	Speed	T-statistic	P-value	95% CI
Four	W-AE	2432	13.66	$p<.0001$	2084, 2781
Two	AA-AE	2374	16.32	$p<.0001$	2089, 2659
Three	W-AAE	2209	14.95	$p<.0001$	1919, 2498
One	AA-AAE	1976	14.96	$p<.0001$	1717, 2235

The slowest responses are for Story Four (W-AE), then Story Two (AA-AE), followed by Story Three (W-AAE), and the fastest response is for Story One (AA-AAE). Pair-wise comparisons show that the interactions between Stories One (AA-AAE) and Two (AA-

AE) are significant ( $t=3.55$ ,  $p=.0023$ ) and between Stories One (AA-AAE) and Four (W-AE) are significant ( $t=2.98$ ,  $p=.016$ ), however the rest are not. To be slow at selecting a negative adjective means that it took the participants more time to decide that a negative adjective best described the speaker they just heard. Likewise, selecting a negative adjective quickly means that the participants had less difficulty with ascribing a negative trait to that speaker.

After examining the results by overall preference and preference based on whether a positive or negative adjective was chosen, several other tests were run to investigate particular interactions that I thought might be of interest.

### **Regression 3: Story Two (AA-AE) Versus Story Four (W-AE)**

A multivariate mixed-effects model was created to answer the question of whether participants were slower to answer more positively for Story Two (AA-AE) than for Story Four (W-AE). Analysis was performed using the LSMEANS t-tests and Tukey-Kramer method for controlling for multiple comparisons. It was run on all story-adjective observations in which participants chose the positive adjective in the Pre-Test. Pre-Test response time for each story was used as the dependent variable and the independent variables were Stories One (AA-AAE), Two (AA-AE), and Three (W-AAE) (with Story Four (W-AE) as the reference category), adjective choice, adjective valence, and three interaction terms (which are products of Stories One (AA-AAE), Two (AA-AE) and Three (W-AAE)), and whether or not a positive adjective was chosen. I was interested in testing the significance of this relationship because both Story Two (AA-AE) and Story Four (W-AE) employ Academic English, however I was interested in whether participants would show a preference for one over the other. This question seeks to

ascertain whether participants are sensitive to an African American versus a White speaker using Academic English.

For Story Two (AA-AE), participants chose a positive adjective (marginally) significantly more slowly than they did after hearing Story Four (W-AE). As compared to hearing Story Four (W-AE), participants responded to Story Two (AA-AE) on average 339 milliseconds slower than they did to hearing Story Four (W-AE) ( $t=1.67$ ,  $p=0.095$ ).

#### **Regression 4a: Stories Three and Four Versus Stories One and Two: Number of Positive Adjectives**

A mixed-effects multivariate regression was run to determine whether Stories Three (W-AAE) or Four (W-AE) were associated with a higher number of positive adjectives chosen than Stories One (AA-AAE) or Two (AA-AE). Analysis was performed using the LSMEANS t-tests and Tukey-Kramer method for controlling for multiple comparisons. Responses to Stories Three (W-AAE) or Four (W-AE) were associated with on average 2.36 (with 95% CI: (1.67, 3.04)) more positive adjectives chosen than responses to Stories One (AA-AAE) or Two (AA-AE) ( $p < 0.0001$ ).

#### **Regression 4b: Stories Three and Four Versus Stories One and Two: Speed of Positive Adjectives**

This multivariate mixed-effects regression examined if the effect of Story (Three (W-AAE) or Four (W-AE) versus One (AA-AAE) or Two (AA-AE)) on Pre-Test response time was modified by whether the adjective was positive or negative. Pre-Test response time was the dependent variable, and the independent variables were Story (Three (W-AAE) or Four (W-AE) versus One (AA-AAE) or Two (AA-AE)), the adjective choice, adjective valence, and an interaction term between adjective valence and story (Three (W-AAE) or Four (W-AE) versus One (AA-AAE) or Two (AA-AE)). Analysis was

performed using the LSMEANS t-tests and Tukey-Kramer method for controlling for multiple comparisons.

There was a non-significant effect of the adjective valence for the Pre-Test response times for Story One (AA-AAE) or Two (AA-AE) ( $t=1.66$ ,  $p=0.096$ ). The effect of Story (Three (W-AAE) or Four (W-AE) versus One (AA-AAE) or Two (AA-AE)) on the Pre-Test varied according to whether the participant chose a positive or negative adjective ( $t= -4.16$ ,  $p<0.0001$ ). Participants responded on average 153 milliseconds slower to Stories Three (W-AAE) or Four (W-AE) (compared to Stories One (AA-AAE) or Two (AA-AE)) when choosing a negative adjective ( $t=1.65$ ,  $p=0.10$ ). On the other hand, participants responded on average 496 milliseconds faster to Stories Three (W-AAE) or Four (W-AE) (compared to Stories One (AA-AAE) or Two (AA-AE)) when choosing a positive adjective ( $t= -5.98$ ,  $p<.0001$ ).

#### **Regression 5: Speed of Response When Choosing a Negative Adjective with All Stories Compared to Story Four (W-AE)**

In this analysis I wanted to know if participants responded faster when choosing a negative adjective after hearing Stories One (AA-AAE), Two (AA-AE), and Three (W-AAE), as compared to having heard Story Four (W-AE). A multivariate mixed-effects model was run, with response time as the depended variable and story condition, adjective valence, and adjective choice as the independent variables. Analysis was performed using the LSMEANS t-tests and Tukey-Kramer method for controlling for multiple comparisons.

Compared to Story Four (W-AE), participants were significantly faster in choosing a negative adjective after hearing Story One (AA-AAE), and they were faster, though not significantly, after hearing Stories Two (AA-AE) and Three (W-AAE), after controlling

for adjective chosen. Compared to having heard Story Four (W-AE), participants who chose a negative adjective responded on average 456 milliseconds faster after hearing Story One (AA-AAE) ( $p=0.0029$ ), 59 milliseconds faster after hearing Story Two (AA-AAE) ( $p=0.72$ ), and 224 milliseconds faster after hearing Story Three (W-AAE) ( $p=0.17$ ).

### **Regression 6: Speed of Choosing a Negative Adjective with All Stories Compared to Story One (AA-AAE)**

In this interaction I wanted to know whether participants responded more slowly when choosing a negative adjective after hearing Stories Two (AA-AE), Three (W-AAE), or Four (W-AE) than they did after hearing Story One (AA-AAE). As in the above interactions, a multivariate mixed-effects model was run to answer this question. Analysis was performed using the LSMEANS t-tests and Tukey-Kramer method for controlling for multiple comparisons.

Participants were significantly slower in choosing a negative adjective after hearing Stories Two (AA-AE), Three (W-AAE), and Four (W-AE), as compared to Story One (AA-AAE), after controlling for adjective chosen. Compared to having heard Story One (AA-AAE), participants who chose a negative adjective responded on average 397 milliseconds slower after hearing Story Two (AA-AE) ( $p=0.0004$ ), 232 milliseconds slower after hearing Story Three (W-AAE) ( $p=0.038$ ), and 456 milliseconds slower after hearing Story Four (W-AE) ( $p=0.0029$ ). Participants thus did respond more slowly when choosing a negative adjective after hearing Stories Two (AA-AE), Three (AA-AE), or Four (W-AE), as compared to Story One (AA-AAE).

### **Overview of Pre-Test Results**

Table 6-6 below shows the number of positive and negative adjectives selected, as well as the response times for the Pre-Test. As discussed above, the significant

interactions for the overall results are Stories Two (AA-AE) versus Four (W-AE), Stories One (AA-AAE) versus Three (W-AAE), and Stories One (AA-AAE) versus Four (W-AE). For the positive adjective selections all interactions are significant except for the interaction between Stories Two (AA-AE) and Three (W-AAE), and for the negative adjective selection the significant interactions are between Stories One (AA-AAE) and Two (AA-AE) and Stories One (AA-AAE) and Four (W-AE) .

Table 6-6. Overview of Pre-Test responses

	Story One (AA-AAE)	Story Two (AA-AE)	Story Three (W-AAE)	Story Four (W- AE)
Positive adjectives				
Number	160	278	279	380
Average time (ms)	2689	1853	1839	1603
Negative adjectives				
Number	80	61	81	41
Average time (ms)	2205	2159	2195	2066

### Post-Test Results

As described in Chapter 5, the Post-Psycholinguistic Experiment was given after the six teaching lessons.

#### Regression 7: Overall Percentages of Positive Results

A multivariate mixed-effects regression model was created in order to determine whether participants chose a positive adjective more often in the Post-Test than they did in the Pre-Test. The results show that they choose a positive adjective in the Post-Test 67.44% of the time as compared to 59.31% of the time in the Pre-Test, and some of the differences are significant, as will be discussed momentarily. Table 6-7 below displays the percentages indicating how often a participant chose a positive adjective for the Pre- and Post-Test.



Additionally, paired t-tests were used to test if the difference between the mean Post-Test number of positive adjectives is significantly different from the mean Pre-Test number of positive adjectives chosen for each story. Four separate t-tests were performed, and they are reported as follows in Table 6-8:

**Table 6-7. Percentage of positive adjective selected for Pre- and Post-Tests**

Story	Pre-Test	Post-Test
One	34%	47%
Two	60%	64%
Three	61%	75%
Four	83%	84%

**Table 6-8. Differences between the mean numbers of positive adjectives**

Story	Speaker	Mean difference	T-statistic	P-value	95% CI
One	AA-AAE	1.04	2.4	0.02	.17, 1.91
Two	AA-AE	0.14	0.28	0.78	-.87, 1.16
Three	W-AAE	1.06	2.06	0.045	.027, 2.10
Four	W-AE	-0.22	0.43	0.67	-1.28, .83

These results indicate that for Stories One (AA-AAE) and Three (W-AAE), the mean number of positive adjectives chosen across all subject-adjective conditions in the Pre-Test was significantly different from the mean number of positive adjectives chosen across all subject-adjective conditions in the Post-Test within each condition.

### **Regression 8: Overall Story-Order Results for the Post-Test**

To answer the more global question of which stories the participants preferred on the Post-Test following the six lessons, a multivariate mixed-effects model was created. In it, the dependent variable was the participants' response times, and the independent variables were the story condition, adjective selected, adjective valence, and Pre-Test response times. Analysis was performed using the LSMEANS t-tests and Tukey-Kramer method for controlling for multiple comparisons.

The average Post-Test response time by story is as follows in Table 6-9, from slowest to fastest in milliseconds:

Table 6-9. Average Post-Test response times

Story	Speaker	Speed	95% CI
One	AA-AAE	1946	1765, 2128
Two	AA-AE	1918	1741, 2095
Four	W-AE	1799	1618, 1979
Three	W-AAE	1718	1541, 1895

The story order indicates that Story One (AA-AAE) is the slowest, followed by Story Two (AA-AE), followed by Story Four (W-AE), and Story Three (W-AAE) is responded to the fastest. After completing pair-wise comparisons for each of the story interactions to determine significance, only the interaction between Stories One (AA-AAE) and Three (W-AAE) is significant. This means that the only true difference among participants' attitudes towards the speakers after the six lessons is that they strongly prefer the White speaker using African American English over the African American speaker using African American English. Because the rest of the interactions are not significant, the stories cannot be ordered in terms of most to least preferred by the participants.

### **Regression 9a: Post-Test Positive Adjective Chosen**

In this analysis I wanted to understand the relationships between positive adjectives selected and response times. In the multivariate mixed-effects regression, the dependent variable was the Post-Test response time, and the independent variables were the story condition, adjective chosen, and the Pre-Test response times. Analysis was performed using the LSMEANS t-tests and Tukey-Kramer method for controlling for multiple comparisons.

Below are the response times in milliseconds from slowest to fastest for the positive adjectives:

Table 6-10. Post-Test positive adjective response times

Story	Speaker	Speed	95% CI
One	AA-AAE	2369	2147, 2590
Two	AA-AE	1786	1591, 1982
Three	W-AAE	1687	1505, 1868
Four	W-AE	1656	1467, 1845

Here we see the same order of preference as for Regression 8: Overall Story-Order Results for the Post-Test, which is from slowest to fastest Story One (AA-AAE), Story Two (AA-AE), Story Four (W-AE), and Story Three (W-AAE). According to pair-wise comparisons, only the differences in response time between Story One (AA-AAE) and the other three stories are significant; that is, Story One (AA-AAE) versus Story Two (AA-AE) ( $t=5.21$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ), Story One (AA-AAE) versus Story Three (W-AAE) ( $t=6.21$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ), and Story One (AA-AAE) versus Story Four (W-AE) are significant at ( $t=6.61$ ,  $p < .0001$ ).

### **Regression 9b: Post-Test Negative Adjective Chosen**

In this analysis the selection of a negative adjective in the Post-Test was examined. In the multivariate mixed-effects model, the dependent variable was the Post-Test response time and the independent variables were the story condition, adjective chosen, and the Pre-Test response time. Analysis was performed using the LSMEANS t-tests and Tukey-Kramer method for controlling for multiple comparisons.

Pair-wise comparisons show that there are no significant differences between any of the stories for response time, with all p values greater than .57. Although the response time order is presented below, there is no discernable difference between participants' preferences for stories. Stories in order from slowest to fastest, as

indicated in Table 6-11, are Story Four (W-AE), Story Two (AA-AE), Story Three (W-AAE), and Story One (AA-AAE) is the fastest.

Table 6-11. Post-Test negative adjective response times

Story	Speaker	Speed	95% CI
Four	W-AE	2132	1751, 2513
Two	AA-AE	2097	1787, 2406
Three	W-AAE	2038	1727, 2349
One	AA-AAE	1933	1659, 2206

### **Regression 10a: Overall speed of adjectives chosen for Story One**

A mixed-effects multivariate regression model was created to examine whether in the Post-Test the positive responses to Story One were faster than they were in the Pre-Test. Response time was the dependent variable and the independent variables were intervention (Pre-Test or Post-Test) and adjective choice. Analysis was performed using the LSMEANS t-tests and Tukey-Kramer method for controlling for multiple comparisons. The six lessons were not found to significantly affect response times for responses from Story One ( $t = -1.17, p = 0.24$ ). Participants were on average 104.33 milliseconds faster in choosing any adjective in the Post-Test than they were for the Pre-Test.

### **Regression 10b: Story One: Comparison of speed of positive adjectives chosen between Pre- and Post-Test**

A mixed-effects multivariate regression model was created to examine whether in the Post-Test the positive responses to Story One were faster than they were in the Pre-Test. Response time was the dependent variable and the independent variables were intervention (Pre-Test or Post-Test) and adjective choice. Analysis was performed using the LSMEANS t-tests and Tukey-Kramer method for controlling for multiple comparisons. The six lessons were found to significantly affect response times for responses from Story One (AA-AAE) ( $t = -2.69, p = 0.0076$ ). Participants were on

average 517.32 milliseconds faster in choosing a positive adjective in the Post-Test than they were for the Pre-Test.

### **Regression 10c: Story One: Comparison of speed of negative adjectives chosen between Pre- and Post-Test**

A mixed-effects multivariate regression model was created to examine whether in the Post-Test the positive responses to Story One (AA-AAE) were faster than they were in the Pre-Test. Response time was the dependent variable and the independent variables were intervention (Pre-Test or Post-Test) and adjective choice. Analysis was performed using the LSMEANS t-tests and Tukey-Kramer method for controlling for multiple comparisons. The six lessons were not found to significantly affect response times for negative responses from Story One (AA-AAE) ( $t = -0.39$ ,  $p = 0.70$ ). Participants were on average 35.56 milliseconds faster in choosing a negative adjective in the Post-Test than they were in the Pre-Test.

### **Regression 11: Story Two (AA-AE) Versus Story Four (W-AE): Positive Adjective Selection**

This interaction was created to answer the question of whether participants were slower to answer in the positive for Story Two (AA-AE) than for Story Four (W-AE). A multivariate mixed-effects regression was used to address this question, and Post-Test response time for each story was used as the dependent variable, with the independent variables in the regression being Stories One (AA-AAE), Two (AA-AE), and Three (W-AAE), versus Story Four (W-AE), adjective and Pre-Test response time. This regression was run on all Story-adjective observations in which participants chose the positive adjective in the Post-Test.

The results show that there was not a significant interaction between Story Two (AA-AE) and Story Four (W-AE). Participants chose positive adjectives after hearing

Story Two (AA-AE) on average 100 milliseconds slower than after hearing Story Four (W-AE) ( $p = 0.29$ ), so while they were somewhat slower to select positive adjectives after hearing Story Two (AA-AE) versus Story Four (W-AE), this result is not significant and there is therefore no discernable difference between the two.

### **Regression 12a: Stories Three and Four Versus One and Two: Number of Positive Responses**

A mixed-effects multivariate regression model was used to see if Stories Three (W-AAE) or Four (W-AE) were associated with a higher number of positive adjectives chosen in the Post-Test than Stories One (AA-AAE) or Two (AA-AE), controlling for the number of positive adjectives chosen in the Pre-Test condition. Responses to Stories Three (W-AAE) or Four (W-AE) were associated with on average 1.28 (with 95% CI: (0.72, 1.85)) more positive adjectives chosen than responses to Stories One (AA-AAE) or Two (AA-AE) ( $p < 0.0001$ ).

### **Regression 12b: Stories Three (W-AAE) and Four (W-AE) Versus One (AA-AAE) and Two (AA-AE): The Relationship Between Positive and Negative Responses**

In this regression I wanted to know what the relationship was between positive and negative responses for Stories Three (W-AAE) and Four (W-AE) versus Stories One (AA-AAE) and Two (AA-AE). In the regression the Post-Test response times were used as the dependent variable and it was examined whether the effect of story (Three (W-AAE) or Four (W-AE) versus One (AA-AAE) or Two (AA-AE)) on Post-Test response time was modified by whether the adjective was positive or negative. Therefore, the independent variables in the regression were Story (Three (W-AAE) or Four (W-AE) versus One (AA-AAE) or Two (AA-AE)), positive adjective chosen, interaction term created using story and positive adjective chosen, adjective choice, and Pre-Test time.

There was a significant effect of the interaction term on the outcome for the Post-Test response time. The effect of Story (Three (W-AAE) or Four (W-AE) versus One (AA-AAE) or Two (AA-AE)) on the Post-Test varied according to whether the participant chose a positive or negative adjective. Participants responded on average 9 milliseconds slower to Stories Three (W-AAE) or Four (W-AE) (compared to Stories One (AA-AAE) or Two (AA-AE)) when choosing a negative adjective ( $p=0.93$ ), which is non-significant, however participants responded on average 300 milliseconds faster to Stories Three (W-AAE) or Four (W-AE) (compared to Stories One (AA-AAE) or Two (AA-AE)) when choosing a positive adjective ( $p=0.016$ ), which is significant. There was therefore a significant interaction of story condition and adjective valence on the Post-Test response time.

### **Regression 13a: Stories Two (AA-AE), Three (W-AAE), and Four (W-AE) Versus Story One (AA-AAE): Positive Responses**

A multivariate mixed-effects regression was used to address the question of whether participants were slower to answer in the positive for Story One (AA-AAE) than for the other stories. Post-Test response time for each Story was used as the dependent variable and the independent variables in the regression were Stories Two (AA-AE), Three (W-AAE), and Four (W-AE), versus Story One (AA-AAE), adjective chosen, and Pre-Test time for that same adjective-Story condition. Analysis was performed using the LSMEANS t-tests and Tukey-Kramer method for controlling for multiple comparisons. The regression was run on all story-adjective observations in which participants chose the positive adjective.

For Stories Two (AA-AE), Three (W-AAE), and Four (W-AE), participants who chose a positive adjective in the Post-Test conditions responded significantly faster than they did after hearing Story One (AA-AAE). Compared to having heard Story One (AA-AAE), participants responded to Story Two (AA-AE) on average 582.29 milliseconds faster ( $p < 0.0001$ ), 713 milliseconds faster to Story Three (W-AAE) ( $p < 0.0001$ ), and 682 milliseconds faster to Story Four (W-AE) ( $p < 0.0001$ ). Overall, then, we see that participants responded more positively to Stories Two (AA-AE), Three (W-AAE), and Four (W-AE) than to Story One (AA-AAE) for positive responses.

### **Regression 13b: Stories Two (AA-AE), Three (W-AAE), and Four (W-AE) Versus Story One (AA-AAE): Negative Responses**

The preceding results were then re-run and were restricted to participants who chose a negative adjective in the Post-Test instead of a positive adjective, using the same methodology as described above. For Stories Two (AA-AE), Three (W-AAE), and Four (W-AE), participants who chose a negative adjective in the Post-Test responded significantly more slowly than they did after hearing Story One (AA-AAE). Therefore, for all stories, participants were faster to choose a negative adjective after hearing Story One (AA-AAE) than after hearing any other story. Compared to having heard Story One (AA-AAE), participants responded to Story Two (AA-AE) on average 546 milliseconds slower ( $p < 0.0001$ ), 379 milliseconds slower to Story Three (W-AAE) ( $p = 0.0139$ ), and 648 milliseconds slower to Story Four (W-AE) ( $p = 0.0004$ ). Again, participants were most negative towards Story One (AA-AAE).



### **Regression 14a: Stories One (AA-AAE) and Two (AA-AE): Speed of Positive Responses in the Post-Test Versus Pre-Test**

A mixed-effects multivariate regression model was created to examine whether in the Post-Test the positive responses to Stories One (AA-AAE) and Two (AA-AE) were faster than they were in the Pre-Test. Response time was the dependent variable and the independent variables were story condition (One (AA-AAE) or Two (AA-AE)), Pre-Test or Post-Test, and adjective choice. Analysis was performed using the LSMEANS t-tests and Tukey-Kramer method for controlling for multiple comparisons. The six lessons were found to significantly affect response times for responses from Stories One (AA-AAE) and Two (AA-AE) ( $p=0.029$ ). Participants were on average 201 milliseconds faster in choosing a positive adjective in the Post-Test than they were for the Pre-Test. When participants responded positively to Stories One (AA-AAE) and Two (AA-AE), they were faster in the Post-Test.

### **Regression 14b: Stories One (AA-AAE) and Two (AA-AE): Speed of Negative Responses in the Post-Test Versus Pre-Test**

The same mixed-effects multivariate regression model was used as in the previous question that assessed positive responses, yet in this case it was used to investigate negative responses. Response time was the dependent variable and the independent variables were story condition (One (AA-AAE) or Two (AA-AE)), Pre-Test or Post-Test, and adjective choice. As opposed to the previous question in which participants chose a positive adjective faster in the Post-Test than in the Pre-Test for Stories One (AA-AAE) and Two (AA-AE), in this case, in terms of the negative responses, the six lessons were not found to significantly affect response times for responses from Stories One (AA-AAE) and Two (AA-AE) ( $p=0.64$ ). Participants thus did not select negative adjectives faster in the Post-Test.

### **Regression 15a: Stories Three and Four: Speed of positive responses in the Post-Test versus Pre-Test**

A mixed-effects multivariate regression model was created to examine whether in the Post-Test the positive responses to Stories Three (W-AAE) and Four (W-AE) were faster than they were in the Pre-Test. Response time was the dependent variable and the independent variables were story condition (Three (W-AAE) or Four (W-AE)), Pre-Test or Post-Test, and adjective choice. Analysis was performed using the LSMEANS t-tests and Tukey-Kramer method for controlling for multiple comparisons. The six lessons were not found to significantly affect response times for responses from Stories Three (W-AAE) and Four (W-AE) ( $t = -1.52$ ,  $p = 0.13$ ). Participants were on average 91.18 milliseconds faster in choosing a positive adjective in the Post-Test than they were for the Pre-Test.

### **Regression 15b: Stories Three and Four: Speed of negative responses in the Post-Test versus Pre-Test**

A mixed-effects multivariate regression model was created to examine whether in the Post-Test the negative responses to Stories Three (W-AAE) and Four (W-AE) were faster than they were in the Pre-Test. Response time was the dependent variable and the independent variables were story condition (Three (W-AAE) or Four (W-AE)), Pre-Test or Post-Test, and adjective choice. Analysis was performed using the LSMEANS t-tests and Tukey-Kramer method for controlling for multiple comparisons. The six lessons were not found to significantly affect response times for responses from Stories Three (W-AAE) and Four (W-AE) ( $t = 0.59$ ,  $p = 0.56$ ). Participants were on average 74.41 milliseconds slower in choosing a negative adjective in the Post-Test than they were for the Pre-Test.

## Overview of the Post-Test responses

Table 6-12 below shows the number of positive and negative adjectives selected, as well as the response times for the Post-Test.

Table 6-12. Overview of the Post-Test responses

	Story One (AA-AAE)	Story Two (AA-AE)	Story Three (W-AAE)	Story Four (W-AE)
Positive adjectives				
Number	210	285	330	369
Average time (ms)	2218	1663	1587	1609
Negative adjectives				
Number	240	158	110	71
Average time (ms)	1748	2359	2161	2410

As discussed, the only significant interaction in the overall results is between Stories One (AA-AAE) and Three (W-AAE). For the positive adjective selections, only the interactions with Story One (AA-AAE) are significant, thus the interactions between Stories One (AA-AAE) and Two (AA-AE), One (AA-AAE) and Three (W-AAE), and One (AA-AAE) and Four (W-AE) are significant. For the negative adjective selections, there were no significant interactions between any of the stories.

## Percentages of positive and negative adjectives in the Pre- and Post-Test

Table 6-13 provides an overview of the percentages of positive and negative adjectives selected in both the Pre- and Post-Test.

Table 6-13. Percentages of positive and negative adjectives in the Pre- and Post-Test

	Frequency	Percent
Pre-Test		
Positive	1115	59
Negative	765	41
Post-Test		
Positive	1214	67
Negative	586	33

In order to determine if the differences between the Pre- and Post-Test results were significant, McNemar's test was run and the results are reported in Table 6-14.

Table 6-14. Results from McNemar’s test

Chi-square	Degrees of freedom	P value
47.85	1	p<.0001

These results indicate that the percentages of positive results do differ significantly between the Pre- and Post-Test.

### **Discussion**

Overall, participants’ attitudes grew in a positive direction between the Pre- and Post-Testing. In Regression 1, “Overall Results from the Pre-Test,” because the comparisons between Stories One (AA-AAE) and Two (AA-AE) are not significant, we see that participants are not differentiating between the speech of the African American speaker. Also, because Stories Three (W-AAE) and Four (W-AE) are not significant, we see that they are not differentiating between the speech of the White speaker. There is also not a clear difference between Stories Two (AA-AE) and Three (W-AAE), meaning that the participants do not have a marked preference for Academic English from an African American speaker or African American English from a White speaker. They do, however, strongly prefer the Academic English from the White speaker over the Academic English from the African American speaker, the African American English from the White speaker over the African American English from the African American speaker, and finally the Academic English from the White speaker over the African American English from the African American speaker. They thus prefer the White speaker over the African American speaker in every combination in the Pre-Test.

In comparison, in the Post-Test the participants’ attitudes shifted. In Regression 7, “Overall Percentage of Positive Results” in the Post-Test, we see that participants selected positive adjectives more often for every story for the Post-Test as compared to the Pre-Test. For Stories One (AA-AAE) and Three (W-AAE), the mean number of

positive adjectives chosen across all subject-adjective conditions in the Pre-Test was significantly different from the mean number of positive adjectives chosen across all subject-adjective conditions in the Post-Test within each condition. Considering that the participants either are or soon will be teachers, these results are promising in terms of achieving the desired outcome of having teachers respond more positively to students who speak a non-standard variety.

We see in Regression 2a, “Pre-Test positive adjective chosen,” that when selecting a positive adjective, participants did not have a clear preference between an African American speaker using Academic English and a White speaker using African American English, but they did clearly prefer the White speaker using Academic English over the African American speaker using African American English. In comparison to the Post-Test, we learn from Regression 9a, “Post-Test Positive Adjective Chosen,” that after the six lessons, the participants still showed the most conflict in responding positively to Story One (AA-AAE), yet there were no discernable differences between their preferences between the other stories. This is a positive result in terms of the major goal of the experiment, which was for participants’ attitudes to become more positive towards African American English. Although they still disliked the African American English from the African American speaker, they did not strongly dislike the African American English from the White speaker, or the Academic English from the African American speaker.

In Regression 2b, “Pre-Test negative adjective chosen,” participants strongly preferred the Academic English from the African American speaker over the African American English from that same speaker. Also, like in Regression 2a, they strongly

preferred the White speaker using Academic English over the African American speaker using African American English. It is noteworthy that the participants preferred the Academic English over the African American English from the same speaker. This may possibly indicate that they were unaware that they had just heard the same speaker twice, but it clearly indicates that they prefer Academic English over African American English.

In contrast to Regression 2b, in Regression 9b, “Post-Test negative adjective chosen,” there are no significant differences between any of the story comparisons. In Regression 2b, participants strongly preferred the Academic English form the African American speaker over the African American English from the African American Speaker, as well as strongly preferring the White speaker speaking Academic English over the African American speaker speaking in African American English. I consider this lack of significant differences in the Post-Test for negative adjective choices a positive finding. It means that participants did not have such an immediate negative reaction to hearing African American English. A major research question in the current work was whether teaching about the systematized and rule-governed nature of African American English would improve participants’ attitudes towards the variety, and the current results indicate that the lessons may indeed have improved their attitudes.

Looking at Regression 10a, the “Overall speed of adjectives chosen for Story One (AA-AAE),” we see that the lessons did not significantly affect the overall response times for Story One. In 10b, “Story One (AA-AAE): Comparison of speed of positive adjectives chosen between Pre- and Post-Test,” we see that the lessons did indeed significantly affect the response times when investigating the positive adjectives, and

they were faster at choosing a positive adjective after the lessons than they were before the lessons. This is a very positive finding, as it indicates that after learning about the syntax, phonology, and cultural issues surrounding the use of African American English and Academic English, the participants selected positive adjectives significantly more quickly than they did before having this knowledge. Additionally, Regression 10c, “Story One (AA-AAE): Comparison of speed of negative adjectives chosen between Pre-and Post-Test,” shows that the lessons did not significantly affect the participants’ response times to negative adjectives. This also is a positive finding, as it indicates that participants did not become more negative towards African American English as a result of the lessons.

Overall in Regression 3, “Story Two (AA-AE) versus Story Four (W-AE) in the Pre-Test,” the participants preferred the Academic English from the White speaker. The results show that participants did notice a difference between the Academic English of the White speaker and the African American speaker, and they needed more time to ascribe a positive adjective to the speaker after hearing Story One (AA-AAE) than after hearing Story Four (W-AE). In Regression 11, “Story Two (AA-AE) versus Story Four (W-AE): Positive Adjective Selection in the Post-Test,” we see that there was not a significant interaction between Story Two (AA-AE) and Story Four (W-AE). This is a positive result in terms of the research goals, as it means that participants are not distinguishing between the Academic English of the White speaker and that of the African American speaker. This is in comparison to Regression Three of the Pre-Test in which participants *did* distinguish between the Academic English of the African American and the White speakers. A question that I have considered is whether African

Americans will still be judged by the “sound” of their Academic English if they acquire it. According to these results they will not be, as long as they are being judged by someone who is knowledgeable about the linguistic varieties.

These findings could indicate that linguistically educated listeners care less about the race of a speaker and more about the grammar and phonology of the speech itself. In terms of educating all students about the grammar and phonology of Academic English, these results are promising vis `a vis social mobility and social equity for speakers of African American English. Racial disparity and inequity is a very real issue in the United States, especially in the job hiring process, so if an interviewee who speaks African American English as an L1 is able to acquire Academic English, her career and financial prospects may well benefit from the acquisition of the additional, more formal variety. This would be especially true if the listening audience is familiar with the concept of African American English being a rule-governed linguistic variety.

From Regression 14a, “Stories One (AA-AAE) and Two (AA-AE): Speed of positive responses in the Post-Test versus Pre-Test,” when participants responded positively to Stories One (AA-AAE) and Two (AA-AE), they were faster in the Post-Test, indicating that their attitudes changed in the direction of being more positive towards African American English or an African American speaker after participating in the six lessons. Additionally, in 14b, “Stories One (AA-AAE) and Two (AA-AE): Speed of Negative Responses in the Post-Test Versus Pre-Test,” we see that participants did not select negative adjectives faster in the Post-Test, and this is a positive finding in terms of the research goals.



In Regression 4a, “Stories Three (W-AAE) and Four (W-AE) versus Stories One (AA-AAE) and Two (AA-AE): Number of Positive Adjectives,” participants preferred the White speaker over the African American speaker, regardless of what variety the White speaker was using. In Regression 4b, “Stories Three (W-AAE) and Four (W-AE) versus Stories One (AA-AAE) and Two (AA-AE): Speed of Positive Adjectives,” participants responded significantly faster when selecting a positive adjective to Stories Three (W-AAE) and Four (W-AE), indicating that they preferred the White speaker regardless of what variety she was employing.

In Regression 5, “Speed of Response When Choosing a Negative Adjective With All Stories Compared to Story Four (W-AE) in the Pre-Test,” participants overall reacted more negatively to the African American speaker using African American English than to the White speaker using Academic English. Similarly, in Regression 6 “Speed of Choosing a Negative Adjective With all Stories Compared to Story One (AA-AAE) in the Pre-Test,” we see that it was easier for participants to ascribe negative traits to the African American speaker using African American English than to any other story interaction.

Regression 8, “Overall Story-Order Results for the Post-Test,” shows us that the participants strongly preferred the White speaker using African American English over the African American speaker using that same variety. It is interesting that the interaction that the participants most reacted to is the African American English-usage by the White and African American speaker. I would have expected there to be a lingering preference for the White speaker using Academic English over the other three possibilities, but this was not the case. Perhaps this is because so much of the class

time was spent focusing on African American English and not on Academic English. That they preferred the White speaker over the African American speaker may indicate that they can tell the difference between the races even when both are speaking in the same African American English variety. As compared to the Pre-Test, though, the participants did not distinguish strongly between the Academic English from the African American speaker and the Academic English from the White speaker, so this indicates that they heard Academic English simply as that--Academic English--and not "African American Academic English" or "White Academic English."

In Regression 12a, "Stories Three (W-AAE) and Four (W-AE) versus One (AA-AAE) and Two (AA-AE): Number of Positive Responses," we see that Stories Three (W-AAE) and Four (W-AE) are associated with more positive adjectives selected. This might indicate that the participants were able to "hear" that the speaker was White, and they showed a preference for a White speaker even in the case in which she was speaking in African American English. For Regression 12b, "Stories Three (W-AAE) and Four (W-AE) versus One (AA-AAE) and Two (AA-AE): The Relationship Between Positive and Negative Responses," participants again selected positive adjectives faster for Stories Three (W-AAE) and Four (W-AE), and we see that it was easier, even for the African American English story (Story Three (W-AAE)), for participants to ascribe positive characteristics to African American English after attending the six lessons than before attending the lessons.

In Regression 13a, "Stories Two (AA-AE), Three (W-AAE), and Four (W-AE) versus Story One (AA-AAE): Positive Responses in the Post-Test," the results show that for Stories Two (AA-AE), Three (W-AAE), and Four (W-AE), participants who chose

a positive adjective in the Post-Test did so significantly faster than they did after hearing Story One (AA-AAE). This indicates a lingering resistance to accepting the speech of the African American woman speaking African American English. Regression 13b, “Stories Two (AA-AE), Three (W-AAE), and Four (W-AE) versus Story One (AA-AAE): Negative responses in the Post-Test,” shows us that for Stories Two (AA-AE), Three (W-AAE), and Four (W-AE), participants who chose a negative adjective in the Post-Test did so significantly slower than they did when responding to Story One (AA-AAE). We see therefore that overall for these two conditions, participants had the most difficulty ascribing positive traits to the speaker in Story One (AA-AAE).

In Regression 15a, “Stories Three (W-AAE) and Four (W-AE): Speed of positive responses in the Post-Test versus Pre-Test,” we see that the lessons did not significantly affect participants’ positive response times. Likewise, in Regression 15b, “Stories Three (W-AAE) and Four (W-AE); Speed of negative responses in the Post-Test versus Pre-Test,” participants’ response times did not change significantly between the Pre- and Post-Test when selecting a negative adjective.

Additionally, when considering the results from the percentages of positive and negative adjectives selected in the Pre-Test compared to the Post-Test, we see clearly that the participants responses became more positive.

### **Demographics**

Results were also broken down by multiple demographic categories in order to determine whether there were differences within the participant groups before and after the lessons. All results were obtained by running multivariate mixed-effects regression models. Demographic categories investigated were:

- Professor’s Class

- Gender
- Race
- Age
- From: East Coast versus West Coast
- From: New York versus Elsewhere
- Teacher versus Non-Teacher
- Years Teaching
- Race of Students

### **Pre-Test Results**

Multivariate mixed-effects regression models were run on all Pre-Test results for the demographic categories above in order to ascertain whether the participants had approximately the same baseline responses. Aside from whether the participants were a teacher or a non-teacher (which was only marginally significant), all comparisons were non-significant, indicating that there were not differences between the groups. This is an ideal place to begin, as we can assume that any differences after the six lessons are actually changes resulting from having attended the lessons.

The significance levels of the Pre-Test results for the demographic categories were as follows: Professor ( $p=.95$ ), Gender ( $p=.87$ ), Race ( $p=.80$ ), Race of Students (Hispanic-mixed:  $p=.35$ ), Years Teaching ( $p=.57$ ), Teacher versus Non-Teacher (results will be discussed), from New York versus Elsewhere ( $p=.49$ ), East Coast versus West Coast ( $p=.32$ ), and Age Group ( $p=.29$ ). Thus, aside from whether the participants was a teacher or not, all other comparisons were shown to not be different from each other.

### **Post-Test Results**

#### **Professor**

One professor's class was not associated with faster responses when controlling for adjective (positive or negative), Story condition (Two (AA-AAE), Three (W-AAE), or Four (W-AE), with Story One (AA-AAE) as the reference), adjective choice, and Pre-

Test time for that same story and adjective condition. The estimate of the effect of professor B's class (vs. Professor A's class) is -2.22 (standard error=155.55), with a p-value=0.99. The professor's class (A versus B) was also not associated with a greater likelihood of choosing a positive adjective in the Post-Test adjective choice task (odds ratio= 1.23, 95% CI for odds ratio: (0.71, 2.14), p=0.45) when controlling for Pre-Test adjective (positive or negative), story condition, or adjective choice.

### **Gender**

The gender of the participant is not associated with faster responses when controlling for adjective valence, story condition (Two (AA-AAE), Three (W-AAE), or Four (W-AE), with Story One (AA-AAE) as the reference), adjective choice, and Pre-Test time for that same story and adjective condition. The estimate of the effect of being female (vs. male) is -161.98 (standard error=152.22) with the p-value=0.29. Being female was also not associated with a greater likelihood of choosing a positive adjective in the Post-Test adjective choice task (estimated OR= 0.71, 95% CI: (0.43, 1.17), p=0.18) when controlling for Pre-Test adjective valence, story condition, and adjective choice.

### **Race**

The participants' race was not associated with faster responses in the Post-Test when controlling for adjective valence, Story condition (Two (AA-AAE), Three (W-AAE), or Four (W-AE), with Story One (AA-AAE) as the reference), adjective chosen, and Pre-Test time for that same Story and adjective condition. "Race" was run as a categorical variable in the multivariate mixed-effects model and no p values were lower than .40.

### **Age groups**

Age groups were broken down by decade, thus 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, and 50-59. The age group of the participant was not associated with faster responses in the Post-Test when controlling for adjective valence, Story condition (Two (AA-AAE), Three (W-AAE), or Four (W-AE), with Story One (AA-AAE) as the reference), adjective choice, and Pre-Test time for that same story and adjective condition. The estimate of the effect of a one-decade increase in age group is parameter estimate= 1.27, standard error= 7.36,  $p=0.86$ .

### **East Coast versus West Coast**

Whether the participants were from the East Coast or the West Coast was not associated with faster responses when controlling for adjective valence, Story condition (Two (AA-AAE), Three (W-AAE), or Four (W-AE), with Story One (AA-AAE) as the reference), adjective choice, and Pre-Test time for that same Story and adjective condition. The estimate of the effect of East Coast (compared to West Coast/other) is parameter estimate= -57.57, standard error= 194.45,  $p=0.77$ .

### **New York versus elsewhere**

Being born in New York was also not associated with faster responses when controlling for adjective valence, Story condition (Two (AA-AAE), Three (W-AAE), or Four (W-AE), with Story One (AA-AAE) as the reference), adjective choice, and Pre-Test time for that same Story and adjective condition. The estimate of the effect of being born in New York on response times (compared to being born anywhere else) was parameter estimate= 189.11, standard error= 152.48,  $p=0.22$ .

### **Teacher versus non-teacher**

The comparison of Teacher versus Non-Teacher had a marginally significant association with response time in the Post-Test time. Being a teacher is associated with somewhat longer response times when controlling for adjective valence, story condition (Two (AA-AAE), Three (W-AAE), or Four (W-AE), with Story One (AA-AAE) as the reference), adjective choice, and Pre-Test time for that same story and adjective condition. The estimate of effect of being a teacher (compared to non-teacher) is parameter estimate= 411.77, standard error= 212.84,  $p=0.053$ . These results show that participants who were currently teaching had a marginally slower response time.

### **Length of teaching**

There were three categories created for length of teaching: Low, Medium, and High. “Low” consisted of 0-5 years, “Medium” was 6-10 years, and “High” was anything over 10 years. Based on these categories, length of teaching is not statistically significantly associated with response time in the Post-Test time. However, a one-unit increase in category (thus from low to medium, or medium to high) is significantly associated with a decreased likelihood of choosing a positive adjective in the Post-Test when controlling for Pre-Test adjective choice, story condition, and adjective valence:  $OR=0.95$  95% CI: (0.90, 0.99),  $p=0.021$ . This means that participants who have been teaching for longer are more likely to ascribe negative traits to the speakers than are participants who have been teaching for a shorter period of time.

### **Race of students**

Although I originally intended to look at the participants' students' races broken down by several categories, such as African American, Hispanic, and White, there were not enough students to fill these categories. Almost all participants listed having either

Hispanic students or Hispanic plus another race, which was sometimes listed as Hispanic-African American, or Mixed, so the results for the participants' students' races were broken down by "Hispanic versus other" and "Hispanic-Mixed versus other."

The results show that being Hispanic (and not Hispanic plus another race) was not associated with the adjective participants chose when controlling for Pre-Test positive responses or adjective valence, story condition, or adjective choice: OR=0.65 95% CI: (0.29, 1.47),  $p=0.30$ . Having Hispanic students (compared to other races of students in the class) is also not significantly associated with a shorter response time in the Post-Test.

Students who are categorized as Hispanic in any way (which I will call "Hispanic mixed"), whether they are "Hispanic," "Hispanic-African American," or "Hispanic-Asian," are significantly associated with shorter response time in the post-intervention time when compared to the other races of students. Participants with Hispanic-mixed students are associated with shorter response times when controlling for adjective valence, story condition (Two (AA-AAE), Three (W-AAE), or Four (W-AE), with Story One (AA-AAE) as the reference), adjective choice, and Pre-Test time for that same story and adjective condition. The estimate of the effect of Hispanic-mixed (versus "other") is parameter estimate= -910.23, standard error= 283.44,  $p=0.0040$ .

### **Demographics: Pre- and Post-Test Comparisons**

Separate multivariate mixed-effects regression models were employed to address the question of what demographic variables predict the change in attitudes after participating in the six lessons. The difference in response time (in milliseconds) between Pre- and Post-Test response times was calculated on a story-adjective level and used as the dependent variable in all regression models.



Table 6-15. Pre- and Post-Test comparisons

Participant and student demographics	Parameter estimate (95% CI)	T value	P value
Professor's class	-81.65 (-358.37, 195.06)	-0.58	0.56
Gender= female	-31.82 (-307.25, 243.62)	-0.23	0.82
Race of participant (overall)	F-test=0.32 (7, 1793)		0.95
African American (versus White)	-41.57 (-399.76, 316.62)	-0.23	0.82
Mixed race (versus White)	268.16 (-223.90, 760.21)	1.07	0.29
Hispanic (versus White)	-137.70 (-694.84, 419.45)	-0.48	0.63
Age	-2.04 (-15.18, 11.10)	-0.3	0.76
Where from: east coast versus west coast	201.61 (-140.06, 543.27)	1.16	0.25
Where from: New York versus elsewhere	239.59 (-28.17, 507.34)	1.75	0.079
Teacher versus non-teacher	-89.37 (-477.32, 298.57)	-0.45	0.65
Length of teaching	-25 (-68.97, 19.01)	-1.11	0.27
Students are Hispanic (versus all other students)	123.55 (-300.74, 547.84)	0.57	0.57
Students are Hispanic-mixed	592.69 (-1173.09, -12.29)	2.00	0.045

These models examined the effect of each demographic predictor on change in response time, after holding constant the effects of the other predictors in the model: (1) Story Two (AA-AE) versus Story One (AA-AAE), (2) Story Three (W-AAE) versus Story One (AA-AAE), (3) Story Four (W-AE) versus Story One (AA-AAE), and (4) adjective choice. This regression was run on all story-adjective observations.

As shown in Table 6-15 above, none of the demographic variables were significantly related to the change in response time between the Pre- and Post-Test,

after controlling for story and adjective conditions ( $p > 0.07$ ), except for the participants who had students who were part of the “Hispanic-mixed” grouping. This group was associated on average with a 1200 millisecond change in response time. Additionally, one group had a marginally significant effect on the change in response time, which is that respondents from New York (versus anywhere else) were associated on average with a 239 millisecond change in response time.

### **Demographics Discussion**

For the most part, the demographic characteristics of the participants did not have a significant effect on their responses. In terms of which professor’s class the student was enrolled in, I consider it a positive finding that even though I taught two different professors’ classes, with a total of three sections, even though there were differences in the conversations we had in the three classes, the results still showed no differences between them. Regarding gender, I did not have a clear hypothesis about whether females or males would change more, though I did think it possible that females might grow more positively. In terms of significance, however, males and females performed the same on the Post-Test.

When planning this experiment and even throughout the experiment, I did not have a clear hypothesis about whether White, African American, Hispanic, or Mixed participants would attain more positive attitudes. I had several reasons for thinking that different groups would or would not respond positively to the experience. I thought that it was possible that the White participants would change their attitudes more positively because they did not speak African American English and therefore had not grown up being told or believing that the way they spoke was lazy or sub-standard. Because of this lack of negative buildup over the years, I thought it might be possible that it would

be easier for them to accept the information I was teaching as legitimate, and incorporate the ideals into their thinking.

I also, however, thought that the White participants might not move forward as quickly because they are a majority group whose variety is more highly valued and esteemed, and I thought that it might be easy for them to discount the information and simply choose to not believe it because socially, since they are in the more powerful group, it is not detrimental to them to not believe that African American English is “real.”

Keeping in mind that language and identity are inextricably linked, reasons for thinking that non-White participants might become more positive include that they would learn that tenets that they had believed their entire lives about their language were untrue. I reasoned that they might enjoy and feel empowered by knowing that their variety is not any less valid than Academic English, and therefore they would embrace the information. However, because of the fact that many (if not all) of the African American participants grew up hearing that their language variety was “bad” or “incorrect,” plus they had learned through living in our American society that Academic English is more valued, they might have had more hurdles to jump through than the White participants and therefore their attitudes would change more slowly. This would mean that they, and I grouped the other non-White participants into this category, would show less positive attitudinal change than the White participants. However, because there were no significant differences between races, we see that participants grew together and not as separate groups. This is a positive result in terms of repeating this experiment with various groups of races of participants.

In terms of age, going into the teaching sessions, my hypotheses were that the younger teachers might be more receptive to the lessons than the older teachers because I thought that they might be less set in their ways. Although education classes are not nearly thorough enough on the topics of linguistic varieties or the connections between teachers' attitudes towards students' language varieties, I thought that the younger teachers might be somewhat more exposed to those ideas. Throughout the teaching sessions, however, I did not notice this to be the case simply through conversations I had with the participants. In retrospect, a question that I wish I had asked on the Background Questionnaire was whether they had ever been exposed to this information in previous classes or from any other source.

Considering where participants were from, with the East Coast versus West Coast analysis I thought that it was possible that there would be an effect of the participants listening to speech samples that sounded more 'like them,' but the results showed otherwise. For the New York participants, as with the East Coast versus West Coast comparison, I considered the possibility that because the speakers the participants heard were from New York, there was a possibility that New Yorkers would respond differently than non-New Yorkers simply because they were familiar with the accent. This was not the case. Again, these results are positive in terms of replicating the experiment with participants who are from different regions of the country.

Regarding the Teacher versus Non-Teacher comparison, the increased response time from teachers could be because they have learned through teaching to take time before judging a student, however the exact reason for why they responded somewhat slower is unknown. In terms of length of teaching, the participants who had been

teaching for longer were more likely to ascribe negative traits to the speakers than were participants who had been teaching for a shorter period of time. This could be because more-seasoned teachers have more ingrained thoughts about their students' use of language, or it could be because they have a more in-depth understanding of the importance of acquiring Academic English for academic and future career purposes. We are unable to know the reason for this difference, and certainly there could be a variety of other reasons to explain this difference.

In terms of the race of the students, I was especially interested in whether the race of the participants' students would affect the participants' responses. I hypothesized that participants whose students were African American or any other group that spoke African American English or another non-standard variety might pay closer attention to the lessons and might see the value in learning and applying what I was teaching more than those who taught only students who already commanded Academic English. Whether or not my reasoning is what caused the growth, participants whose students were of Hispanic-mixed attitudes changed in a positive way (and this includes African American students). Participants whose students were only classified as Hispanic did not improve significantly, though they did have shorter response times in the Post-Test, whereas participants whose students were a mix of Hispanic and other races or ethnicities did improve significantly. This difference may be because the participants with Hispanic-only students did not think that their students spoke African American English and they therefore did not pay as much attention or apply the strategies with their students because they did not believe their students to be

using linguistic features of African American English. This could perhaps be in part because of the nomenclature of African American English itself.

### **Psycholinguistic Conclusions**

Overall, participants' attitudes became more positive between the Pre- and Post-Testing measures, and results from the Post-Test show that the participants grew in the direction of being more positive towards African American English. In the Pre-Test, which was run before participants were exposed to the idea of African American English or Academic English in this setting, participants preferred the White speaker over the African American speaker in all combinations. They preferred the Academic English from the White speaker over the Academic English from the African American speaker, the African American English from the White speaker over the African American English from the African American speaker, and the Academic English from the White speaker over the African American English from the African American speaker. In the Post-Test the participants' preferences changed, and the only significant interactions in terms of story order preference were between the White speaker using African American English and the African American speaker using African American English. The participants significantly preferred the White speaker using African American English over the African American speaker using African American English. This means that the participants were less negative towards the African American speaker when she used Academic English, as the participants did not show a preference for the White speaker over the African American speaker when they used Academic English.

In terms of participants' selection of positive adjectives, their preferences changed between the Pre- and Post-Testing. In the Pre-Test they responded slowest to Story One (AA-AAE), there was no significant difference between Stories Two and

Three, and they responded fastest to Story Four (W-AE). By the Post-Test they still responded slowest to Story One (AA-AAE), however there were no significant differences between the speed of their responses to the other stories. This means that by the end of the teaching sessions they still dis-preferred Story One (AA-AAE), yet it was easier for them to make the decision to select a positive adjective for the other stories. It was also easier to select a positive adjective for Story One (AA-AAE) in the Post-Test than in the Pre-Test, and this is a very positive finding.

When selecting negative adjectives, responses varied greatly between the Pre- and Post-Test. For the Pre-Test participants significantly preferred the Academic English from the African American speaker over the African American English from the same speaker, and they also significantly preferred the Academic English from the White speaker over the African American English from the African American speaker. By the Post-Test, however, there were no significant differences in participants' responses, which indicates that they did not have strong negative preferences for any of the speakers.

Looking at the interactions between Stories Two (AA-AE) and Four (W-AE) for the Pre- and Post-Test, we see that participants' significantly preferred the Academic English from the White speaker in the Pre-Test, yet by the post test there was not a significant difference between the two stories. This means that participants did not have a preference for Academic English from either the White or African American speaker by the end of the lessons. In terms of broader implications this is a very positive finding. It indicates that people who have been educated about African American English do not show a strong preference for one race of speaker when Academic English is being

used. Considering that when interviewing for a job an employer is often expecting to hear Academic English, this is positive in that it indicates that if an African American person is able to produce Academic English, there might be less discrimination based on language. It indicates that it is worthwhile for a mono-dialectal speaker to acquire Academic English because people who have been educated about the variety (and certainly these assertions are based on a small sample) do not discriminate based on what race of person is speaking the variety.

For the Pre- and Post-Test, participants continued to respond faster to Stories Three (W-AAE) and Four (W-AE) when selecting a positive adjective. Additionally, for the Post-Test participants continued to dislike Story One (AA-AAE) the most. For positive responses in the Post-Test participants responded significantly faster to Stories Two (AA-AE), Three (W-AAE), and Four (W-AE) than they did to Story One (AA-AAE). Additionally, when participants chose a negative adjective in the Post-Test they responded significantly slower to Stories Two (AA-AE), Three (W-AAE), and Four (W-AE) than they did to Story One (AA-AAE). When participants responded positively to Stories One (AA-AAE) and Two (AA-AE) in the Post-Test, they were significantly faster in doing so than they were in the Pre-Test. In terms of negative adjective selection, response times were not found to be significantly different from the Pre- to the Post-Test.

Regarding demographics, participants started with very few differences between each other, which means that in general, changes that are found in the Post-Test can be ascribed to the lessons they were taught. Comparing the Pre- and Post-Test results there were no significant differences found between the groups aside from a close



inspection of the participants' students, which means that the lessons affected the participants in the same way overall. Participants who taught students who were Hispanic plus another race, such as African American or Asian, did have significantly shorter response times, however this was the only group of participants' students that showed significant results. Before executing this research I thought that participants with African American students would potentially show the most change because they would see the lessons as very relevant for themselves, however there were too few African American students to calculate this comparison by itself. Overall, I consider these findings very positive in terms of the research goals.

## CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

### **Conclusions**

This research proved to be successful from both the Sociolinguistic and Psycholinguistic perspectives. In this concluding chapter I summarize the results that have been presented as well as discuss future implications.

### **Summary of Sociolinguistic Results**

As discussed in Chapter 4, the participants' responses to the Sociolinguistic Pre- and Post-Assessments grew in a positive direction at a statistically significant level for every question. Additionally, participants grew significantly for every question that I would have wanted them to, except for one. The question for which they did not grow significantly was whether they thought that African American English sounds as good as Academic English. That they did not adopt the belief that African American English sounds as good as Academic English could mean that spoken African American English will continue to be judged negatively even by people who have been exposed to the fact that it is a valid linguistic system. During the lessons I never expressed the idea that either of the varieties "sounds" better than another, simply that it was important for the participants to know that African American English is a valid linguistic variety and that their students would benefit if they learned strategies to assist them in code-switching. On the other hand, during the lessons the language was generally presented in writing, and it could be the case that the participants simply needed more auditory exposure to African American English before beginning to think that it sounds as good as Academic English.

The two questions for which they did not grow significantly were whether African American English should be taught in the schools and whether a goal of the American school system should be standardizing the English language, and I would not have wanted the participants to have adopted these beliefs over the period of our class sessions. African American English does not need to be taught in the schools because in many areas students already command it, and the purpose of the lessons was to ultimately enable students to code-switch into Academic English. Additionally, whether schools should standardize English is not a topic we addressed and I did not express any preference about this idea.

Another indicator of positive change is that by the end of the lessons participants were familiar with African American English as a rule-governed system and they were to a much greater degree able to translate phrases written in African American English into Academic English. This indicates that they might be more able to identify examples of African American English in their students' writing and address the linguistic differences between African American English and Academic English in an effective way.

Participants grew positively and significantly irrespective of which professor's class they were in, and all races grew significantly. White participants grew the most, and this is one of the more robust findings of the study, with White participants growing at  $t(1,21)=2.08$ ,  $p=4.39E-18$ , or  $p<.0000000000000000439$  on the Attitude Questionnaire for the measure of overall growth.

In terms of the open-ended Pre- and Post-End of Experiment responses, participants grew from believing that the idea of African American English is simply a form of "slang" or "incorrect English" to understanding that it is a rule-governed system.

On the Post-End of Experiment Response participants indicated that they “learned a great deal,” and several participants stated that they thought that the lessons I taught should be part of mandatory professional development for teachers in New York City. The experiment was a success in their eyes and they appreciated it and felt like they benefited from the lessons, as some examples below indicate.

Participants’ overt attitudes towards me grew in a positive direction as well throughout the duration of the lessons. At the beginning of the semester, especially after completing the Pre-Psycholinguistic Experiment, the participants were somewhat wary of me. I had the impression that they were wondering what my motivation was in discussing the topic, and I thought that some participants wondered if I was racist and trying to disguise my racism through talking about language. The majority of the participants did not believe in the idea of African American English at the beginning of the semester, and for at least the first two class discussions I encountered a good deal of resistance to the idea that it is a rule-governed, patterned variety. Starting around the third session participants seemed to begin to trust me more, and they began agreeing with the idea that they had heard this type of speech from their students and from simply traveling around the city. They were able to provide examples of African American English from conversations they either participated in or overheard, and their attitudes towards me shifted dramatically.

As an example of their distrust for my motivations, on the open-ended response sheet on which they were provided the opportunity to express any thoughts they had about the experiment, some indicated that they were concerned with my motivations

and insight into the larger implications of the experiment. For example, two participants said:

- “The questionnaire seems a bit racist. The visual experiment needs more adjectives to describe the speakers.”
- “Unclear why experiments limits class, education and income. Not sure why a graduate student in NYC would have such limited perspectives on human beings?”

The latter comment was one of the comments that struck me the most, as it made it clear that the participants were unaware of my motives and my knowledge about the nuances and intersections between language and race. By the end of the sessions, this participant indicated on the response form that s/he still believed that the experiment was limited with the binary choices, however s/he did say:

- “Class work was very valuable. Little bit rushed. Would have been nice to spend more time on rules.”

I interpret this as a positive change of attitude, as the participant indicated that the class sessions were useful and that s/he would have enjoyed spending more time on the subject.

By the time they completed the Post-Test End of Experiment Response, almost every participant had something positive to say about the class sessions. Many of the participants declared that they thought that the lessons I delivered should be given to all teachers as required professional development. For example, among others:

- “I think this class was beneficial and should be taught as a PD [Professional Development] for all teachers so at least they can teach students about their heritage and where this dialect came from and not to be ashamed of it.”
- “I found the class sessions to be incredibly useful and was able to use many of the strategies and activities discussed in my own classroom. All educators should be given this information! Thank you!”

- “I found all the sessions fascinating...I learned a lot about African American English and this is something I can take and use in my career. There should be courses in this that are required for teachers to take. Thank you!”
- “The information given throughout the semester was very helpful. A linguistic course of this nature would prove to be beneficial to teachers, and the students they teach.”
- “It is a great experiment, an eye opener for me. The system should give it a trial.”

The above comments, along with my impressionistic feelings about how the participants were responding to me (plus other comments that are too numerous to mention here), indicate that their attitudes towards me became very positive throughout the duration of the lessons.

### **Summary of Psycholinguistic Results**

The purpose of the Psycholinguistic Experiment was to uncover participants’ attitudes that they may not have realized that they had or that that might not want to display for social purposes. There was much significant change between the Pre- and Post-testing, which indicates that the six lessons I taught were successful. Overall, participants were slowest to respond positively and fastest to respond negatively to Story One (AA-AAE) in the Pre-Test. This pattern continued on the Post-Test, however other measures indicating how comfortable participants were with the varieties moved in the direction that I have been calling “positive.”

On the Pre-Test participants preferred the White speaker over the African American speaker for every possible combination, though by the Post-Test the only significant story interaction was that participants significantly preferred the White speaker’s use of African American English over the African American speaker’s use of African American English. I consider the fact that the rest of the interactions are not

significant to be a positive result because it indicates that the participants are not reacting as negatively to hearing an African American speaker or African American English as they did during the Pre-Test. Also on the Pre-Test the participants significantly preferred the White speaker's use of Academic English, however on the Post-Test they did not have a clear preference for the White speaker's use of Academic English or the African American speaker's use of Academic English.

### **Exploring the Sociolinguistic and Psycholinguistic Results Together**

While the Sociolinguistic and Psycholinguistic measures gathered somewhat different data, an underlying theme was whether participants felt positively or negatively towards the idea of African American English and acknowledging it as a valid variety. The results of all the measures together indicate that at the beginning of the semester the participants did not believe that African American English was an actual linguistic variety and they did not like the way it sounded. On the Sociolinguistic measures they stated that it was "slang," "improper," and "lazy," among other labels, and they indicated on almost every measure that it was not as valid as Academic English. Likewise, on the psycholinguistic measure, they showed through the speed of their responses and their adjective selection that they did not believe African American English to sound as pleasing or to be as acceptable of a variety. Nonetheless, after the six lessons, the results from both the sociolinguistic measures and the psycholinguistic measures indicate that the participants did grow to believe that African American English is an actual linguistic variety aside from slang and that it is worth valuing it as a variety. They also grew to believe that the speech samples from the African American speaker did not sound as negative as they did in the Pre-Psycholinguistic measure.

## Implicit Versus Explicit Measures

A question I had was whether participants would respond in more socially desirable ways on the explicit, sociolinguistic measures than they would on the implicit, psycholinguistic measure. Although the two different methodologies of measuring attitudes and opinions were gathering different sets of data, I did not see a marked difference between the two different types of measurement. This may be in part due to the anonymity of the participants, since they were assigned numbers that they wrote on the forms instead of their names. If they had to write their names on the forms they may not have been as candid as they were. Participants were very clear and direct on the pre-sociolinguistic measures indicating that they thought that African American English was an unacceptable way of speaking. While I do not have any way of knowing how they may have socially tuned their responses towards me, it seems to me that they expressed their true feelings in light of the fact that many of these feelings were very negative. For example, one participant said of the Psycholinguistic Experiment:

- “It was racist, replace “African American Language” with the word “slang” or “incorrect English”

Other negative responses about what comes to mind when they hear the term “African American English” or “Ebonics” include:

- “semi-literate sounding English, lower level of intelligence, lack of education”
- “Profanity in my classroom, profanity that I hear shouted in the streets. Mothers yelling at their children on the subway or (more often) bus.”
- “Slang, broken English, non proper English”
- “Simplified dialect of English”



Certainly not all of the responses to the open-ended questions were negative; however, I have highlighted several of the negative ones to demonstrate that I do not believe that the majority of the participants were attempting to please me as a researcher since I find their comments to be very negative and uninformed.

Furthermore, in terms of the implicit measure, participants had more positive responses in terms of number of positive adjectives selected on the Post-Test than on the Pre-Test. This indicates that they were not completely tuning their beliefs towards me when answering the Pre-Test measures. Additionally, because their responses were time-locked, their potential desire to please me with positive selections was mitigated by the time in which it took them to make their decisions.

### **Is New York Ready for African American English?**

As mentioned in Chapter 4, when I was attempting to find a White African American English-speaking woman to record the stories, my advertisements on Craigslist were repeatedly deleted. On the other hand, my advertisements for African American women who could speak African American English were not deleted. There is no way to determine who was flagging my advertisements and causing them to be deleted; however, I assume that the individual or individuals were also seeing my advertisements for an African American woman because they were chronologically next to each other. I can never know why the advertisements kept being flagged, however I believe that it may have to do with our society's discomfort when discussing race, and this was a somewhat unusual racial mix that I was discussing. When I began teaching about African American English in Professor A and B's classroom I was met with a good degree of resistance from the participants. In particular, several openly expressed that they thought that the topic of the sessions was racist. I assume that whoever flagged

my advertisements and caused them to be deleted also assumed that my motivations were negative, although I will never have a way of knowing. Simply the fact that they were deleted, though, indicates the difficulty I encounter when broaching this subject, and it is also potentially a sign of why there are very few individuals or programs that exist to address the linguistic issues that were addressed throughout this research. It is a sensitive topic and one that is met with great resistance.

When addressing the question of whether New York is “ready” for African American English, my response would be that it is ready to address the topic and learn strategies to assist students to become effective code-switchers, yet I do not believe that New Yorkers are ready to “hear” African American English. The sociolinguistic results indicated that while the participants believed that African American English is an effective language for communication and that it is important for it to be accepted as a valid variety, they did not believe at significant levels that African American English sounds as good as Academic English. The participants are thus willing to accept that African American English is a legitimate, rule-governed variety that has a place in society and that it is important to value the students’ home variety, yet they are not willing to say that it sounds as acceptable as Academic English. Certainly there was no context associated with this question on the Attitude Questionnaire, however on the open-ended response sheet that participants were given, several did state that they believed that while valuing African American English was important, Academic English was nonetheless needed for academic and career purposes. During the lessons I emphasized that giving students access to Academic English would help them

academically, economically, and career-wise, and these views were reflected back in the responses. For example:

- “It was a nice, eye-opening experience. I had no idea that African American English was an entirely different language with its own rules. Now that I know, I see it differently. However, I think that African American English speakers should be made aware of and gradually taught to use the Academic English for formal purposes. This is not only because that is what is accepted in the society but also because we need a standard platform to weigh accomplishments and achievements in this never-ending race. I really enjoyed these experiments and class sessions.”
- “I thought the experiment was helpful and I learned a lot about the structure of African American English. I still believe that in an academic setting, the use of “Standard” English needs to be taught and enforced. However this does not mean that African American English is not accepted. To prepare for the future success of our students, we need to give our students the highest academic standard, what educators would expect to see at each step of the education process and that includes “Standard” English.”

### **Linguists’ Roles Within the Community**

Charity (2008), Mallinson & Charity Hudley (2010), and Mallinson et al. (2011) reflect on what linguists’ roles are within the academic and general community. Mallinson & Charity Hudley (2010) believe that “linguists are in a unique position to help scholars and practitioners across disciplines tackle questions about how the social aspects of language behavior intersect and manifest in educational situations” (p. 253). They offer suggested ways for linguists to become a part of the community in which they live in order to share linguistic findings and apply what is known within the field of linguistics to the local education community. Charity’s (2008) aptly titled article, “Linguists as Agents for Social Change,” describes exactly how we can do that: take what we know in academia and use it to benefit society. My current research is in line with what Charity proposes. In this research I educated teachers or soon-to-be teachers about the linguistics of African American English and gave them specific skills

and strategies to use to help their students become adept at code-switching. I have also founded a business, Linguistic Consulting, through which I give professional development sessions to teachers in the New York City area around issues of linguistic diversity. I want to ensure that all students have access to Academic English for academic, social, and economic mobility, and I want all students to be taught by teachers who understand and value linguistic diversity and see the interconnectedness between language and identity.

### **Implications**

Because the experiment was so successful on all fronts, additional research could investigate how the experiment's results filtered down to the students themselves and their academic progress. It would be valuable to know whether the lessons I taught impacted the participants' students in a measurable way. Though that was outside the scope of the current research, my hope was that the participants' students would see academic benefits as well as benefits to their self-esteem in terms of language and identity. My larger hope is that they would also see benefits later in life with easier access to university admission and more success in career interviews. I am currently working with teachers in a public high school and tracking their students' progress so that I can determine how effective the teaching sessions are for the students themselves. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, I collected pilot data in a high school in Harlem, New York, and that data showed excellent results from the lessons I taught those teachers. I am continuing this work and hope to affect much larger numbers of students through exploring language varieties, our ideologies towards these varieties, and ensuring that all students are given access to Academic English.

My hope in a wider scope of implications is that eventually all students will be taught by teachers who have been exposed to the idea that African American English or other non-standard varieties are rule-governed, logical linguistic varieties. In the movement to close the achievement and opportunity gaps I believe that the language students bring to school is a factor that is being somewhat overlooked, and that if we were to systematically educate all teachers about non-standard varieties, students' academic achievement scores would improve. This would be because their teachers' attitudes would become more positive, which has been demonstrated to positively affect achievement, and teachers would also have a repertoire of specific skills and strategies to use to enable their students to code-switch between their home variety and Academic English. Certainly there are many other factors affecting minority students' achievement levels; however, language is one important facet, and I believe that placing more emphasis on this area would greatly benefit students. It is my goal to work with as many teachers as possible and to ultimately affect a large number of students across the country.

Additionally, this work has notable implications in terms of whether it is valuable for mono-dialectal speakers of African American English to acquire Academic English. The results from the experiment indicate that when interacting with people who have been trained in the linguistics of African American English, the acquisition of Academic English is beneficial. Certainly in our society most people have not been trained in the linguistics of African American English, and this research is limited to measuring the attitudes of people who were exposed to the linguistic rules and patterns. Nonetheless, current prevailing ideologies indicate that speaking Academic English is beneficial, and

most professional workplaces require the use of Academic English to a certain degree, or at the minimum during the job-hiring process.

As I reflect on the experiment and all of the information gathered, I think back to the days when I was a teacher and I heard other teachers telling students that “ain’t ain’t a word.” I still wonder how that affected the students and I wish I had had the tools and strategies to teach my students ways to code-switch. Now I do have the strategies, and I have shown that my teaching methods have the power to change participants’ attitudes towards the variety. This research wove several strands of research together, and it is my intent to continue in this line of research and work. Raising the achievement levels of students across the country is an important task, and examining the language that students are using and educating teachers about non-standard varieties is one of the crucial steps on the path towards educational equity in the United States.

APPENDIX A  
PRE-ASSESSMENT

ART \_\_\_\_\_

Pre-Assessment

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Professor: \_\_\_\_\_

Class Meeting Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: Please answer the questions to the best of your ability.

1. What comes to mind when you hear the term “African American English” or “Ebonics?”

2. Are you familiar with the Oakland, California School Board Controversy of 1996?

If so, please describe what you remember.

3. What does the following mean in African American English?

John be running.

Alexis been done ate.

4. Do you know of any ways to help children who speak African American English master Academic (Standard) English? If so, please describe.

5. Is Academic English better than African American English? Please describe.



APPENDIX B  
DEMOGRAPHICS QUESTIONNAIRE

**Demographic Questionnaire**

Do not put your name on this.

**ID Code:** \_\_\_\_\_

Date:

Professor:

The following questions are needed for demographic information only and will not be associated with your name. Please take a moment to answer the following questions.

1. Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Age: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Where are you from? \_\_\_\_\_

If you are from New York City,  
which borough? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Your race/ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Race/ethnicity of your Mother: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Race/ethnicity of your Father: \_\_\_\_\_

7. What was your average household income growing up? \_\_\_\_\_

8. What is your first language—the language you grew up speaking at home?

\_\_\_\_\_

9. What other languages do you speak, if any?

\_\_\_\_\_

10. Are you currently a teacher? \_\_\_\_\_

If so, what race/ethnicity are the majority of your students? \_\_\_\_\_

What language do they primarily speak? \_\_\_\_\_

11. How many years have you been teaching? \_\_\_\_\_

12. What grade level(s) do you teach? \_\_\_\_\_

13. Do you encounter language issues with your students, or any special language circumstances you would like to comment on? Please describe.

Thank you for your responses. Your name will not be associated with them.

APPENDIX C  
ATTITUDE QUESTIONNAIRE

ART: \_\_\_\_\_

**Questionnaire**

Please circle the response that most closely reflects your opinion.

Circle the response **ABOVE** the question. We are interested in your first response—  
please do not deliberate over the questions.

Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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1. The scholastic level of a school will fall if teachers allow African American English to be spoken.

Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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2. African American English is a misuse of Standard English.

Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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3. Attempts to eliminate African American English in school result in a situation that can be psychologically damaging to African American children.

Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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4. Continued usage of a nonstandard dialect of English would accomplish nothing worthwhile for society.

Strongly Agree      Somewhat Agree      Neutral      Somewhat Disagree      Strongly Disagree

5. African American English sounds as good as Standard English.

Strongly Agree      Somewhat Agree      Neutral      Somewhat Disagree      Strongly Disagree

6. Teachers should allow African American students to use African American English in the classroom.

Strongly Agree      Somewhat Agree      Neutral      Somewhat Disagree      Strongly Disagree

7. African American English should be discouraged.

Strongly Agree      Somewhat Agree      Neutral      Somewhat Disagree      Strongly Disagree

8. African American English must be accepted if pride is to develop among African American people.

Strongly Agree      Somewhat Agree      Neutral      Somewhat Disagree      Strongly Disagree

9. African American English is an inferior language system.

Strongly Agree      Somewhat Agree      Neutral      Somewhat Disagree      Strongly Disagree

10. African American English is cool.

Strongly Agree      Somewhat Agree      Neutral      Somewhat Disagree      Strongly Disagree

11. African American English should be considered a bad influence on American culture and civilization.

Strongly Agree      Somewhat Agree      Neutral      Somewhat Disagree      Strongly Disagree

12. African American English sounds sloppy.

Strongly Agree      Somewhat Agree      Neutral      Somewhat Disagree      Strongly Disagree

13. If use of African American English were encouraged, speakers of African American English would be more motivated to achieve academically.

Strongly Agree      Somewhat Agree      Neutral      Somewhat Disagree      Strongly Disagree

14. African American English is a clear, thoughtful, and expressive language.

Strongly Agree      Somewhat Agree      Neutral      Somewhat Disagree      Strongly Disagree

15. African American English has a faulty grammar system.

Strongly Agree      Somewhat Agree      Neutral      Somewhat Disagree      Strongly Disagree

16. When teachers reject the native language of a student, they do him/her great harm.

Strongly Agree      Somewhat Agree      Neutral      Somewhat Disagree      Strongly Disagree

17. A teacher should correct a student's use of Nonstandard English.

Strongly Agree      Somewhat Agree      Neutral      Somewhat Disagree      Strongly Disagree

18. In a predominantly African American school, African American English as well as Standard English should be taught.

Strongly Agree      Somewhat Agree      Neutral      Somewhat Disagree      Strongly Disagree

19. Widespread acceptance of African American English is imperative.

Strongly Agree      Somewhat Agree      Neutral      Somewhat Disagree      Strongly Disagree

20. The sooner we eliminate nonstandard dialects of English, the better.

Strongly Agree      Somewhat Agree      Neutral      Somewhat Disagree      Strongly Disagree

21. Acceptance of nonstandard dialects of English by teachers will lead to a lowering of standards in schools.

Strongly Agree      Somewhat Agree      Neutral      Somewhat Disagree      Strongly Disagree

22. Nonstandard English should be accepted socially.

Strongly Agree      Somewhat Agree      Neutral      Somewhat Disagree      Strongly Disagree

23. Nonstandard English is as effective for communication as is Standard English.

Strongly Agree      Somewhat Agree      Neutral      Somewhat Disagree      Strongly Disagree

24. One of the goals of the American school system should be the standardization of the English language.

Strongly  
Agree

Somewhat  
Agree

Neutral

Somewhat  
Disagree

Strongly  
Disagree

25. One successful method for improving the learning capacity of speakers of African American English would be to replace their dialect with Standard English.



APPENDIX D  
END OF TASK RESPONSE (AFTER PRE-PSYCHOLINGUISTIC EXPERIMENT)

ART: \_\_\_\_\_

End of Task Response

Do you have any further comments on the experiment? If so, please describe.

APPENDIX E  
END OF TASK RESPONSE (AFTER POST-PSYCHOLINGUISTIC EXPERIMENT)

ART:\_\_\_\_\_

End of Experiment/Class Sessions Response

Do you have any further comments on the Experiment or the Class Sessions? If so, please describe.

APPENDIX F  
POST-ASSESSMENT

ART \_\_\_\_\_

Post-Assessment

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Professor: \_\_\_\_\_

Class Meeting Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: Please answer the questions to the best of your ability.

1. What comes to mind when you hear the term “African American English” or “Ebonics?”

2. Are you familiar with the Oakland, California School Board Controversy of 1996?

If so, please describe what you remember.

3. What does the following mean in African American English?

John be running.

Alexis been done ate.

4. Do you know of any ways to help children who speak African American English master Academic (Standard) English? If so, please describe.

5. Is Academic English better than African American English? Please describe.

6. Have you implemented any of the suggested linguistic activities? If so, which ones, how, and what were the results?

APPENDIX G  
DELPIT'S READING EXAMPLE

TEXT: Yesterday I washed my brother's clothes.

STUDENT'S RENDITION: Yesterday I was my bruvver close.

The subsequent exchange between student and teacher sounds something like this:

T: Wait, let's go back. What's that word again? [Points at *washed*.]

S: Wash.

T: No. Look at it again. What letters do you see at the end? You see "e-d." Do you remember what we say when we see those letters on the end of a word?

S: "ed"

T: OK, but in this case we say *washed*. Can you say that?

S: *Washed*.

T: Good. Now read it again.

S: Yesterday I *washed* my bruvver...

T: Wait a minute, what's that word again? [Points to *brother*.]

S: Bruvver.

T: No. Look at these letters in the middle. [Points to *th*.] Remember to read what you see. Do you remember how we say that sound? Put your tongue between your teeth and say /*th*/...

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