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Dialect Density and Discourse Maturity of African American Elementary Students

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DIALECT DENSITY AND DISCOURSE MATURITY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN ELEMENTARY STUDENTS

by

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This was a report of an investigation of the effects of dialectal features in African American students' narratives on discourse ratings by trained judges. The question addressed in this research was whether dialectal features influence judges who are evaluating discourse. Graduate students in speech-language pathology (n = 18) learning to analyze discourse samples served as the judges. Two versions of narratives (n = 27) written by third- and fourth-grade African American students (the original version and the edited version) were used to determine if narratives that contain dialectal features would be rated lower. The judges were trained in narrative discourse analysis. For the experimental study, two discourse level rating systems were used: a story grammar scoring system and rubrics from the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP). Results of this study found no significant difference in story grammar and MEAP scores between stories that contained dialect features and stories that did not contain dialect features. Results suggest that when judges are trained to specifically look at discourse ability, they are able to do so without being swayed by dialect.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This is a report of an investigation of the effects of dialectal features in African American students' narratives on discourse ratings by trained judges. Past research has reported that students' oral language forms influence their written language and that students who speak varieties of English other than Standard American English are likely to incorporate nonstandard dialectal features in their writing (Cronnell, 1984; Weaver, 1974; Smitherman, 2000; Smitherman & Wright, 1984; Whiteman, 1981; Scott & Rogers, 1996). Although there are indications in the literature that dialectal features in written compositions may negatively influence teachers' judgments of written language quality (Smitherman, 1984; Seligman, Tucker & Lambert, 1973), more information is needed about potential effects of dialectal features on judgments of discourse maturity by other specialists.

Dialect Differences and Academic Performance

Researchers have long hypothesized that the use of nonstandard dialects may have negative influences on the academic achievement of African American students and the manner in which their academic efforts are perceived. This influence historically has been referred to as "interference," implying that the use of dialect

interferes with students' ability to read and write in a manner that is most ideal in American classrooms. Wolfram, Adger, and Christian (1999) argued that dialect differences between students and the school might affect the quality of education in at least two ways. First, dialect differences might interfere with the acquisition of concepts and academic skills such as reading and/or writing that are based on language systems that differ slightly from the students' home dialect. Second, the social consequences that are often associated with being a member of a dialectal group might affect the quality of education. This latter influence is typically subtle, but it may be just as damaging as the first. The attitude and beliefs of teachers, academic specialists, mainstream students, and even those internalized by dialect-speaking students may have a significant effect on academic interactions and student achievement.

The Influence of Dialect in Students' Writing

African American English features have been found in the written language of African American students across many grade levels (Smitherman, 2000; Smitherman & Wright, 1984; Weaver, 1974; Whiteman, 1981). These writing samples often are judged by educators and language specialists within educational assessments as indicators of academic and intellectual ability. Written language samples are becoming increasingly common on high stakes tests such as state-wide educational tests. The Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) is one example of a

state-wide educational assessment that incorporates a written language sample. Written statements are also frequently included in admission requirements for institutions of higher learning. In other words, children are faced with judgments by educators throughout their school careers (Schneider & Winship, 2002).

Statement of the Problem

The question addressed in this research was whether dialectal features influence judges who are evaluating the discourse. Smitherman and Wright (1984) found that even when evaluators were instructed not to focus on grammar, mechanics, spelling and usage (all of which can be affected by dialect), judges rated narratives that contained dialect features lower than narratives that did not contain such features. This can be problematic for many students (including African American students) when features of their spoken dialect appear in their writing. That is, if educators and other related professionals are negatively biased against grammatical differences from SAE, students who incorporate dialect features in their writing may be penalized in ways that go beyond efforts to "correct" their grammar.

Although past studies have found that teachers might be negatively biased towards dialectal features in writing, the literature lacks studies that examine how other professionals, such as speech-language pathologists, judge discourse abilities in dialect-influenced writing samples. This is particularly important as speech-language

pathologists seek to provide services within curricular contexts and use narratives extensively as components of language assessments (Nelson, 1998).

In describing roles for speech-language pathologists related to literacy development, the American Speech-Language and Hearing Association (ASHA, 2001) has noted ways that speech-language pathologists can collaborate with general educators and other academic professionals to provide and develop literacy enrichment programs for regular education students as well as for students with language-disorders. ASHA (2001) also has recommended that universities and other agencies provide pre-services and in-service training and learning opportunities to speech-language pathologists and speech-language pathologists in-training. Therefore, it is likely that speech-language pathologists will increasingly be called upon to evaluate students' written language and to take part in literacy instruction. This led to the decision in this investigation to examine whether the presence of dialectal features in students' written narratives would influence judges who are language specialists in-training, as they assign discourse maturity ratings.

Standard American English Defined

For the purpose of this investigation, Standard American English (SAE) will be used to refer to the language of academic institutions. SAE is called "standard" because it is socially valued over other dialects, and it is the dialect of power,

commerce, and formal communication; not because it is superior in its grammar or phonology (Whiteman, 1981).

African American English Defined

In this research, the term African American English (AAE), which has also been called Black English, Black English Vernacular, African American Vernacular English, and Ebonics, will be used to refer to the variety or dialect of English spoken by many African American children, in particular, those coming from lower economic backgrounds. It is important to note, however, that not all African Americans in the United States are AAE speakers, nor are African Americans the only persons to speak AAE (Washington, 1996; Nelson, 1998).

The term "dialect" refers to one variety of a language. It implies neither superiority nor inferiority to other varieties of English. A dialect is simply different from other varieties in elements of its phonology, grammar, and vocabulary (Wolfram & Whiteman, 1971). Linguists have long established that "everybody who speaks a language speaks a dialect of it" and further, "it is impossible to speak a language without speaking a dialect of the language" (Wolfram & Schilling-Estes, 1998, p. 7).

AAE is systematic and rule-governed, like any other linguistic system. It consists of a logical grammar, which has many of the same phonological, morphological, semantic and pragmatic features as SAE. In fact, the number of features that AAE and SAE share is far greater than the number they do not share

(Whiteman, 1981). Although AAE may be stigmatized and de-valued compared with other varieties used by mainstream American culture, it is a legitimate linguistic system of communication (van Keulen, Weddington & DeBose, 1997). Furthermore, to refer to AAE as *slang, flawed, lazy*, *ungrammatical,* or *broken English* is both incorrect and demeaning (Green, 2003, Lamoine, 2001).

Purpose and Design of Study

The purpose of this study was to assess how dialect-influenced writing samples of African American children would be rated compared to writing samples that do not contain dialect features. Graduate students in speech-language pathology learning to analyze discourse samples served as the judges. Two versions of narratives written by third- and fourth-grade African American students (the original version and the edited version) were used to determine if narratives that contain dialectal features would be rated lower. The discourse level rating system used by the student judges was an adaptation of Stein and Glenn's (1979) story grammar rating system. Holistic qualitative rating system rubrics from Michigan's MEAP test were used as a second dependent measure in this study.

Hypothesis

It was hypothesized that there would be a difference in story scores assigned to narratives that contained dialect features compared with narratives that did not contain dialect features. Specifically, it was hypothesized that judges would rate narratives that included more dialect features lower. The investigation was designed to answer the following research questions:

1. What morphosyntactic and stylistic AAE features do third- and fourth-graders in African American communities employ in their written narratives?
2. Are narratives that contain dialect features rated lower than altered versions of the same narratives that have been edited so as not to contain dialect features?
3. Is there a relationship between the density of dialectal features and students' discourse abilities as measured by story grammar scores and other holistic qualitative ratings and the related question, how much does dialect density account for story grammar and MEAP ratings?

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This review of the literature considers publications on the role of written language in education and evidence of AAE in the speech, language, reading and writing performances of African American children. It also addresses the heterogeneity of AAE speakers, outlines the features of AAE, and discusses how the appearance of dialectal features is influenced by various factors. Attention also is given to teachers' attitudes and evaluation of oral language and written language of African American children.

Prevalence of AAE Among African American Children

Since the 1960's, linguists, language specialists and educators have focused on dialect differences and their impact on communication and academic achievement. Lamoine (2001) reported that from 75 to 80 percent of African American children who arrive in America's urban kindergartens and first grade classes are fluent speakers of AAE. Washington and Craig (1994, 1998, 2001) reported that most African American children speak AAE to some extent, and use AAE as their primary mode of communication. In contrast, the language of instruction in America's schools is conducted almost exclusively in SAE. This difference in mode of

communication places many students immediately at-risk upon enrollment in formal education (Craig, 1996; Taylor & Payne, 1983). According to Craig (1996), students who are AAE speakers are considerably disadvantaged when their communication skills differ extensively from those used in most academic institutions.

Two Perspectives of AAE: Deficit versus Difference

The origin and historical development of AAE has been viewed from two perspectives: the deficit perspective and the difference perspective. The deficit perspective, which dates back to the mid 1900's, asserts that the language of Africans who were enslaved was "substandard or inferior speech resulting from mental feebleness, inherent anatomical deviations, and, in general, the product of defiant language learners" (Lamoine, 2001, p172). According to this perspective, descendants of slaves did not have enough brain mass to learn a new language. Further, it was asserted that the physiological features such as broad noses, thick tongues and oversized lips impeded the abilities' of Africans to articulate the phonemes of the English language (Lamoine, 2001). Educators and others who continue to buy into this perspective (although rarely stated in such blatant terms in this era of political correctness) still view AAE as evidence of lower cognitive functioning (Lamoine, 2001).

On the contrary, the difference perspective, which was put forth in the late 1960's and early 1970's by sociolinguistics in response to the deficit perspective,

affirms that rather than being deficient, AAE is simply different from SAE (Lamoine, 2001). The current research operates under the difference perspective. The researcher holds the belief that AAE is not disordered or pathological. It is rather simply different, and its difference is not deficient.

Heterogeneity Among AAE Speakers

Before outlining the features of AAE, it is important to mention that African Americans are heterogeneous in their language use. Like all other languages or language varieties, occasions for use of AAE are influenced by many factors, such as socioeconomic status, age, geographical location, and gender (Battle, 1996). The following sections outline the features that are common in AAE, discuss the heterogeneity of individuals who speak African American English, and describe how AAE use is influenced by many factors.

AAE Morphosyntactic Features

Many of the most commonly recognized features of AAE are from the syntactic component of the language, which governs how words are combined to form sentences. In some cases, "words that are similar or identical to SAE (e.g., *is*, *are*) are used to combine with other words in ways that are different" (Green, 2003, p. 34).

According to Smitherman (1997), the greatest differences between AAE and SAE are on the level of grammatical structure. Primary examples are described in this section.

A common grammatical feature of spoken AAE is *zero copula.* Zero copula refers to sentence patterns with no form of the verb *to be* (Smitherman, 1977). The inclusion of the copula "is" is mandatory is SAE, but it is context dependent in AAE (Battle, 1996). According to Smitherman, AAE speakers omit *be* when referring to events that are fixed in time. Smitherman further reported that the zero copula feature could occur in a variety of positions: before nouns (e.g., *He a hippie now*); before adjectives (e.g., *He too tall for me*); before adverbs (e.g., *They shoes right there*); and before prepositional phrases (e.g., *My momma in the hospital*). The zero *be* feature also can occur in auxiliary constructions (e.g., *They talking about school now*). Linguist Lisa Green (2003) reported that, in addition to the zero form, auxiliaries can also appear in a contracted (e.g. *I'm driving to Amherst)* or reduced form (e.g. *You should'a made your mind up before I called you*). The latter form corresponds to Standard Edited English *have*, and similar phonological reductions that are made in other forms of colloquial spoken English.

Smitherman (1977) reported that the most distinctive features in the structure of AAE are patterns using unique meanings of *be.* Aspectual *be*, for example, indicates habituality or a repeated or recurring event (Smitherman 1977, Green 2003). With this construction, the adverb *usually* or *always* is present when the meaning of these sentences is glossed into SAE. Because this feature denotes meaning, the aspectual marker *be* must occur in sentences in which such aspectual interpretation is

intended (Green, 2003). Smitherman (1977) gave the following example: A speaker who produces the sentence, *He be tired* is indicating that he (the person being referenced) is always tired. Conversely, the sentence, *He tired,* indicates that although he is not usually tried, he is tired today. Green wrote that while the auxiliary and copula forms of *be* do not have to occur obligatorily, the aspectual marker of *be* cannot be left out of sentences. Omission of this marker may result in "ambiguous interpretations" (p. 47). Green (2003) also reported that in contrast to auxiliary and copula forms of *be*, aspectual *be* always occurs in its uninflected form, so it will never be produced as *is, am* or *are*. The above discussion of auxiliary/copula and aspectual *be* illustrates the rule-governed, systematic nature of AAE and further illustrates that its speakers follow certain rules in combining words to form sentences.

Variation in Morphosyntactic Features

Washington and Craig (1994) examined the dialectal forms produced during discourse by 45 poor, urban 4- to 5.5-year-old African American preschoolers. Their study showed that African American students produced up to 16 different morphosyntactic types of AAE. They found that the level of AAE varied widely across subjects, however, and that the *zero copula/auxiliary* and *subject-verb agreement* were the two most frequently used AAE features. The researchers also found that there was a wide variation in the frequency of AAE morphosyntactical feature used in spontaneous free-play language samples (0-39 percent). Similarly,

there was variation in the number of different types of features used by low income African American children (Washington & Craig, 1994).

Washington and Craig (1998) added evidence that socioeconomic status and gender are two important influences of AAE morphosyntactical feature use by African American children in a later study. In this study, language samples were elicited during free-play and picture description. The language of children from low-income homes reflected significantly more dialect use than that of children from middle-income homes. Also, the language of boys in the study reflected significantly greater dialect use than that of the girls in the study.

Isaacs (1996) examined the production of nonstandard dialect features across grade levels, race, and gender. His study conducted this with 114 third-, fifth-, and seventh-grade African American and Caucasian students in central North Carolina. Thirty-five percent of the participants were male and sixty-five percent were female. Isaacs used a sentence production task to elicit the production of five common features that are known to differ between nonstandard dialect and SAE. His results showed that participants in the third grade used significantly more nonstandard dialect than did participants in the other two grades. He found that the nonstandard dialect feature that demonstrated the most persistence across grade levels was the multiple negation feature. The results also showed that African American subjects in the third grade were more likely to produce the zero possession feature than were the Caucasian subjects. Similarly, the African American 3rd graders were more likely to produce the "zero copula" feature than their Caucasian cohort.

Newkirk, Stockman, Guillory and Siebert (2001) found that regional location was an important influence of AAE morphosyntactical feature use. They compared the density of AAE features found in the language samples of two regional groups of children: a Northern region (Lansing, Michigan) and a Southern region (Baton Rouge, Louisiana). The results showed that although the two groups did not differ in the type of features used, the Southern group used significantly more AAE features than the Northern group. Among the two cohorts, zero copula and nonstandard subject verb agreement were the two most frequently observed features.

Craig, Thompson, Washington & Potter (2003) also examined morphosyntactic features of African American elementary students. During oral reading, the following morphosyntactic features were the most widely dispersed across the sample of students: zero past tense (produced by 17 percent of the participants), zero article (produced by 15 percent of the participants), and incorrect indefinite article (produced by 10 percent of the participants).

Phonological Features

The phonological system of AAE employs the same number of phonemes as SAE, ranging from 45 to 48. However, these sounds exist in a few different patterns of distribution (Smitherman, 1977). Characterizing the varied phonological features of children who speak AAE has also been a focus of past and current research. Smitherman (1977) found the following pronunciations to be common among African

American speakers: initial voiced /th/ = /d/ (e.g., *them = dem);* final unvoiced /th/ = /f/ (e.g., *south = souf);* deletion of middle and final /r/ (e.g., *more = mow);* deletion of middle and final /l/ (e.g., *help = hep);* deletion of most final consonants (e.g., *test = tes);* addition of pluralized /es/ to forms ending in such double consonants add (e.g., *test = tesses);* vowel plus /ng/ in *thing, ring, sing* rendered as /ang/ (e.g., *thing = thang);* contraction of *going to* rendered as *gon* (e.g., *He was gon tell his momma goodbye);* primary stress on first syllable and front shifting (e.g., *police = PO-lice).*

Stockman (1996a) summarized what is known regarding the phonology of African American children. She noted that differences between AAE and SAE can be observed in one or more word positions for every major phoneme. Medial and final position consonant differences are more prominent than initial ones. For example, the voiceless interdental fricative /th/ may occur in the initial position, but it is often manifested as /f/ in the medial and final positions as in *baeftub* for *bathtub* or *baef* for *bath.* According to Stockman, AAE sound changes most often involve phoneme substitutions (such as the above example) and weakening due to segment omission or devoicing. Although final consonants are deleted most often, Stockman reports that sounds in all positions are susceptible to be deleted in an unstressed syllable.

In terms of consonant clusters, SAE and AAE have the same consonant cluster in the initial word position with a few exceptions, namely, */thr/, /shr/* and */str/.* The */thr/* cluster may be reduced to a single phoneme */t/.* The second and third clusters involve substitutions that either create non-English consonant clusters */shr/* → */sr/* or replace an existing cluster */str/* → */skr/* (as in *street* → *skreet*). Stockman also

reported that African American children may use alternative ways to mark lexical contrasts when a final consonant is deleted (e.g., the preceding vowel may be nasalized or lengthened more than usual). Speakers of AAE also commonly delete inflectional endings for tense *(-ed)*, quantity *(-s),* and case (possessive *–s* and third person singular *–s)* (Stockman, 1996a).

Variation in Phonological Features

Just as the morphosyntactic patterns of AAE have been found to be rule-governed and logical, so also are the phonological features. It is important for professionals working with AAE speakers to recognize that AAE features do not occur haphazardly. Battle (1996) reported that the phonological features of AAE are dependent on the linguistic context. For example, AAE speakers are more likely to omit a final nasal or final stop than a final fricative (Battle, 1996). Alveolars and labials also are more likely to be omitted than stops. She further reported that final consonants preceeding another consonant are more likely to be omitted than consonants preceeding a vowel (Battle, 1996).

Vocabulary

Children who speak AAE acquire words whose form and meaning are similar to children who speak SAE (Stockman, 1999). However, there are many words and

phrases that are particular and unique to African American culture (Smitherman, 1994). Vocabulary is perhaps one of the largest areas of noticeable differences between AAE and SAE, but it is one that may be overlooked as a source of cultural richness and undervalued by educators. Stockman (1999) noted that individuals who speak AAE often utilize different words to mark the same semantic meaning. She also noted words that are shared by AAE and SAE are commonly used to mark different meanings. Because of this semantic incongruency, African American children have been shown to consistently score lower on standardized vocabulary tests than their peers. Different cultural experiences result in variation in the meaning of words or in the way groups of people refer to things. Often, this difference between the vocabulary of SAE and the vocabulary of AAE results in incorrect responses on standardized tests that are due to cultural experiences rather than ability or knowledge.

Kresheck and Nicolosi (1973) investigated the performance of 50 African American and 50 Caucasian children on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT). A statistically different score was found for the two groups, with the African American children's mean score being considerably lower. Examination of the African American children's errors revealed that they lacked familiarity with the decontextualized picture representations. The authors also noted that the African American children, at least in one case, used different words to name a picture. For example, the item that called for the children to identify *caboose* was missed by over half of the African American children (Kresheck & Nicolosi, 1973).

Washington and Craig (1992a) examined test performances of 105 low-income, urban African American preschool and kindergarten boys and girls on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised (PPVT-R). The results of their study revealed that 91 percent of the low-income, urban, African American children tested scored below the mean and more than half (65 percent) scored more than one standard deviation below the mean. When scores were modified to take into account dialect, the scores were higher but the increased scores did not make a clinical difference.

Champion, Hyter, McCabe, and Bland-Stewart (2003) also studied the performances of low-income African American Head Start children on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test III (PPVT-III). Their results showed that the participants scored significant below the mean of the normative sample. Forty-one percent of the participants scored more than one standard deviation below the mean and twenty-two percent scored 1.5 standard deviations below the mean. The researchers conducted an item analysis and found that there were only three items missed by 50 percent or more of the children. Using young adult African Americans in the local community, they confirmed that many items (11 of 75) that were missed by several children in the study had alternate meanings. They proposed that the participants in the study had not acquired the standard meaning for many of the test items and perhaps saw no picture that reflected what they knew the word to mean, which resulted in incorrect responses. The researchers concluded that the Head Start students' performance appeared to be reflective of socioeconomic status and/or ethic patterns of vocabulary usage (Champion, Hyter, McCabe, & Bland-Stewart, 2003).

Newkirk, Stockman, Guillory and Seibert (2003) studied the responses of Northern and Southern African American Head Start students on the Preschool Language Scale-3 (PLS-3). The mean PLS-3 score for African American students from both regions were below the standardization sample group mean. A post hoc item analysis revealed that the African American Head Start students missed many of the test items that were based on vocabulary knowledge.

Teacher/psychologist Hilliard (2002) challenged the use of standardized tests, particularly those used to assess vocabulary, with African American children. He wrote that such tests are ambiguous and that in vocabulary tests, the word "vocabulary" is unqualified. Hilliard posed the following questions regarding standardized tests that assess vocabulary:

> "Is it a Chicago vocabulary, a Bronx vocabulary, a Boston vocabulary, a Tennessee vocabulary? Is there an universal American vocabulary? If not, do we measure a person's vocabulary, or do we simply try to determine if a person has learned a particular vocabulary? Are we measuring vocabulary ability — the ability to learn words? What is the linguistic rationale for expecting all Americans to have identical vocabularies? What are the criteria for item selection for a vocabulary test?" (p. 99)

Such questions challenge the usage and results of standardized vocabulary tests with African American children.

Variation in Vocabulary

Some vocabulary usage is unique to speakers of AAE, but AAE speakers vary in their use of such vocabulary. Green (2003) has found that the unique vocabulary of

AAE can be divided into two broad categories: "words and phrases used by members of all age groups and those more likely to be identified with member of a certain age group" (Green, 2003, p. 13). According to Green, social class is not a key factor in characterizing the items; however, some of the words and phrases used that are associated with AAE vary by regional location.

An example of a varied words use comes from the word *kitchen.* It is used by AAE speakers in the same way as SAE speakers to refer to the room in a house where cooking is done. However, *kitchen* is also used "uniquely by AAE [speakers] to refer to the hair at the nape of the neck" (Green, 2003, p. 20). Green pointed out that AAE speakers have words and phrases for general American English as well as words and phrases for AAE stored in their mental dictionaries. The words stored and the frequency of use varies among speakers and communicative contexts.

According to Smitherman (1994), AAE has a core lexicon of words that are fairly stable and are used and understood across generations. However, Smitherman also noted that due to great diversity in African American culture and changes in time, words have come to have double meanings. This occurs as definitions have shifted according to the situation. Smitherman gave the following example of the phrase *The Man.* According to Smitherman, when it first came into use, *The Man* referred to "the white man". Today, the phrase is intended for any man of distinction of power (p. 3).

When a reader departs from the printed words of the text, he or she are said to have produced a "miscue." A miscue occurs in oral reading when an observed response differs from the expected response (Goodman & Buck, 1997). According to Weaver (1988), the term *miscue* was used by Goodman to convey the notion that every departure from the printed words of the text is not necessarily bad or "something to be considered an error" (p. 3). Just like all students, students who are AAE speakers are reported to depart from the actual words of the text. These departures, or miscues, may occur in the sounds, syntax, and/or vocabulary of the text. Weaver (1988) reported that miscues most commonly involve grammatical endings. The most commonly occurring dialect miscues among students who are speakers of African American English are zero past tense *–ed,* zero plural *–s*, zero third person singular, zero possession, regular present for past tense verbs, *be* form substitution and deletion, and *–ed* overgeneralization (Goodman & Buck, 1997). Goodman pointed out that although these miscues have been found to be common among readers who are speakers of African American English, dialect miscues are not consistent. According to Goodman, a reader who frequently eliminates *–ed* will not do so all of time.

Homophones are another area where dialect miscues may occur. Bidialectal students may have sets of homophones, which are words that sound alike, that differ

from the more traditionally known sets (Goodman, 1969). For example, *door* and *dough*, *so* and *sore,* or *four* and *foe* may be homophonous in AAE.

Weaver (1988) argued that a students' dialect-influenced miscues are not barriers to reading comprehension but rather reflect "an alternative surface structure common in the reader's everyday speech" (p. 132). Weaver further stated that, "having understood the deep structure, the reader simply expresses it in an alternative oral form" (p. 132). In other words, in order to express the written text in an alternative oral form (e.g. AAE), the reader must have understood the written text to some degree.

Craig et al. (2003) reported a study of the phonological features of 64 typically-developing African American elementary students in oral reading samples. Students were instructed to read passages aloud from the Gray Oral Reading Tests, Third Edition (GORT-3). A dialect density measure (DDM; Craig & Washington, 2000) was then calculated for these samples by dividing the number of AAE tokens divided by the total number of words read. This measure was used to quantify the degree of students' dialect usage while reading aloud. Results indicated that 94 percent of the students produced AAE features while reading aloud. A post hoc comparison revealed that the second-graders (the youngest group of student participants) produced significantly more AAE features than third-, fourth-, and fifth-graders. The study found that the following phonological features were the most widely dispersed across the students: monophthongization of diphthongs (57 percent

of participants), substitutions for voiced and voiceless /th/ (45 percent) and consonant cluster reduction (37 percent).

Dialect and Writing

Most of the studies concerning dialect influence have focused on speech; only recently has research focused on writing. Because SAE underlies written English, students who do not speak SAE consistently have been reported to have more trouble writing in SAE than students who are natural speakers of SAE. Studies have reported that AAE features are manifested in some degree, in the writing of AAE-speakers (Cronnell, 1981). Cronnell (1984) examined the influence of AAE on the writing of third grade (n = 99) and sixth grade (n = 68) low-income, inner city African American students. The third grade students were given the task to write a story about a drawing of a monkey and an elephant on roller skates at a starting line. Students in the sixth grade were instructed to write a persuasive letter. Results showed that the largest category of "errors" (defined as deviations from standard formal written English) was related to verb formation and use; in particular, lack of third person *–s* and *–es* in the present tense. Another noted deviation was the lack of *–ed* on past tense verbs and on past participles. The use of verb *be* was also a highly used feature among the African American students. Third graders, in particular, substituted *was* for *were* and *is* for *are*. There were a few instances in both grade levels in which students omitted *is* or *was*. There was only one instance where invariant *be* was used.

Cronnell interpreted this as suggesting that students are aware of highly stigmatized forms, such as invariant *be* and avoid them in writing. Results also indicated that problems with nouns involved the use of suffixes, lack of plural *–s* and possessive *–s*. Hypercorrection, or the addition of an unnecessary *–s* and *–'s* and *an* for *a,* also was observed among both grade levels, although more common among third graders. Cronnell noted that the following syntactic features were observed infrequently: inversion of direct questions, multiple negation, *it's* for *there's* and repeated subject.

Wolfram and Whiteman (1971) studied the role of dialect influence in the writings of 19 tenth-grade African American students. The researchers found that third person singular *–s* absence and absence of the *be* form were frequently occurring features in these compositions. Almost half of the students exhibited at least one instance of these features. Other features that were commonly used were: absence of possessive *–s* and *–s*. Multiple negation and habitual *be* were features that were not used in the compositions. The researchers hypothesized that this could be due to the fact that those two features are so stereotyped and emphasized as unacceptable English by school teachers that students learn by tenth grade to avoid them in writing.

Whiteman (1981) also investigated the influence of dialect in the writing of African American children. She found that there were a limited number of features that occur in the writings of students who speak a nonstandard dialect. These features, however, occur rather frequently. Whiteman found the following features to be characteristic of African American students' writing: verbal *–s* absence, plural *–s* absence, possessive *–s* absence, consonant cluster *–ed* absence, and *is* and *are*

absence. The study found that the frequency of suffix absence increased greatly when the suffix absence was highly frequent in the oral dialect of the writer. Whiteman concluded, nevertheless, that although there was a strong tendency for nonstandard dialect speakers to omit suffixes in their writing, it was not solely due to dialect influence. Another factor that might contribute to suffix omission is that inflectional suffixes are among the less critical and last elements of the language to be learned. Whiteman also noted that experienced writers at times also omit inflectional suffixes, articles, and prepositions when they are writing quickly and under pressure.

Smitherman and Wright (1984) examined the descriptive and expressive narrative essays written by African American 17-year-old students, using samples from the NAEP in 1969 and 1979. Their study asked a specific question regarding the distribution of AAE features for the two groups of essays. Narrative essays were scored using a primary trait score, and descriptive essays were scored using a holistic trait score. T-units and the total number of words were calculated, as well as a composite AAE score. The distribution of AAE features was determined by calculating the ratio of actual to potential occurrences of AAE. Smitherman and Wright (1984) found the following linguistic variables to occur in the NAEP essays: *-ed* morpheme absence, *-s* morpheme absence, zero copula, nonstandard subject/verb agreement in the present tense, subject/verb agreement in the past tense, irregular verbs, multiple negation, *it* expletive, undifferentiated third-person plural pronoun, and pronominal apposition.

Norment (1995) examined organizational structures, cohesive devices and AAE features in African American students' narrative and expository writings. Noment's study utilized 60 writing samples produced by 30 African American students enrolled at a senior college in New York City. The writing samples were analyzed for the occurrence of AAE features described by Smitherman and Wright (1984). The results indicated that African American students used more sentences when writing in the narrative mode then when writing in the expository mode. The students also used more cohesive devices in the narratives than they did in the expository essays. Results also indicated that grammatical variations appear persistently in the low-rated essays. Common variations included the use of uninflected past tense, past tense for perfect tense, present participle for past and present tense, and nonstandard subject/verb agreement.

Williamson and Hardman (1997) also looked at non-standard dialect in children's writing. This study examined a series of writing tasks of 11 and 15-year-old students from four regions of England. Findings showed that there was a wide variation in the patterns of non-standard dialect usage. The authors also noted that dialect in writing occurred less than dialect in speech and that older students used more dialect forms than younger students. They cautioned however, that higher dialect usage may be a function of increased length of text. The results also indicated that girls were more likely to use dialect features than boys; however, the girls in the study produced slightly more words. Additionally, the findings showed that there was more dialect usage in tasks eliciting personal narrative discourse and less dialect

usage in tasks eliciting expository discourse. Regional location was shown not to be an influence on dialect usage.

Fogel and Ehri (2000) looked at the writings of elementary students who speak AAE. Their study focused on examining how to structure instruction for third- and fourth-grade students who tend to use AAE in their writings so that it is effective in increasing the proportion of SAE forms. The researchers compared three instructional approaches for their effectiveness in strengthening AAE-speaking elementary students' competence with written syntactic SAE forms. The three approaches were: (1) exposure to text only; (2) exposure to text plus explicit instruction in strategies depicting the rules of SAE; (3) exposure to text, SAE strategy instruction, and guided practice and feedback in the use of such strategies to transform AAE into SAE. Six syntactic features differing in AAE and SAE were the focus of the intervention: possessive *-s*, past tense *-ed*, third person present-tense singular *-s*, plural *-s*, indefinite article, and subject-verb agreement. Effects of the treatments were assessed by measuring students' ability to translate AAE sentences into SAE sentences and their ability to use SAE forms in free-writing.

Results showed that before treatment, the groups did not differ in their knowledge of targeted SAE forms. After treatment, students whose instructional approach incorporated all three methods were found to have better success translating AAE sentences into SAE syntax. Students who received explicit instructions in syntactic rules but were not provided an opportunity to practice did not perform any better than students who were not given the rules at all and were only exposed to the

text. In terms of posttest free writing, over 80 percent of the students who received the comprehensive treatment involving exposure, strategy instruction, plus guided feedback displayed competence in writing the targeted SAE forms. This compared with 55 percent of the students who received exposure and explicit instruction of SAE and 33 percent of the students who received only exposure to SAE displaying competence. These findings strongly suggest that the combination of exposing students to SAE features in stories, explicit strategy instruction, and guided practice with corrective feedback, constitute the most effective way of teaching elementary students who speak AAE to write in SAE.

Dialect and Spelling

AAE pronunciations are often reflected in spelling. Wolfram and Whiteman (1971) identified two types of consonant cluster reduction that could be possibly be revealed in speech and spelling. The first type of consonant cluster reduction occurs in words that end in final *–t* and *–d* sounds when both members of the cluster do not belong to the same word base. The second type is indicated by the absence of *–ed* where required in SAE. The results of their study showed that, although the first type is consistently reduced in the speech of AAE speakers, it did not occur in the students' writing. On the other hand, the second type of cluster reduction occurred more frequently. The study also showed that spelling errors that could be attributed to dialect differences were relatively infrequent. They concluded that the misspellings

were not generally due to dialect interference, but to the same factors that cause all students to misspell.

Carney (1979) examined whether African American children who speak a nonstandard dialect have difficulty in spelling resulting from the dialect features of their vocabulary. Spelling tests using core spelling words were administered to 66 low-income AAE-speaking children. Results of Carney's study suggested that children who are AAE speakers exhibit spelling difficulties due to certain pronunciation differences in AAE. The features of AAE phonology that caused the most difficulty varied among students at each grade level. Spelling errors at grade one was less severe at subsequent grade levels, but the commonality of certain errors persisted through the third grade. Third grade students exhibited the following spelling errors: (a) plural final consonant clusters */sks/, /sps/, /sts/*, (b) voiced final */th/*, (c) short vowel */i/* before */m/*, (d) past tense morpheme */d/* and */t/*, (e) short vowel */e/* before */m/*. (f) short vowel */i/* before */n/*, (g) voiceless final /th/, (h) *l*-lessness (final position), (i) short vowel */e/* before */n/*, and (j) final consonant reduction. Carney (1979) concluded that older children (in grade three) were beginning to learn how to compensate for the pronunciation difference between SAE and AAE and switch between the two dialects.

Hypercorrect Forms in African American Children's Writing

Hypercorrection is thought to occur because of the sensitivity to, and some confusion about, a particular structure (Christian, 1979). It results from an attempt to produce SAE units with which the speaker is not completely familiar (Wolfram & Whiteman, 1971). Although not desirable, hypercorrections do indicate both knowledge of the greater formality of writing and a desire to acquire a more learned or erudite tone (Smitherman, 1977). Hypercorrect forms often are manifested in spelling. Hypercorrect spellings result from the differences between the pronunciation rules of SAE and AAE (Wolfram & Whiteman, 1971). Wolfram and Whiteman gave the example of *wild* and *while* as in the sentence *He took us over Linda house for a wild.* According to the researchers, even though the phonological rules of AAE allow a speaker to pronounce *wild* as *wil'*, this speaker has probably been repeatedly corrected for this pronunciation leaving him with a vague feeling that it is "incorrect." In this students' desire to get everything correct in the composition, he carefully includes the "correct" *–d* (Wolfram & Whiteman, 1971).

Hypercorrection also can manifest itself with respect to vocabulary. This phenomenon results in malapropisms. It occurs when a writer inappropriately uses words in an attempt to write in an educated style (Wayne, 1970, reported in Wolfram & Whiteman, 1971 and Smitherman, 1977). Wayne gave the following example of malapropism: *Kenneth Clark states how black people with education have the attendance to outdo....* Here, the student in his/her attempt to write professionally or

in an educated style, misuses attendance for *tendency* and thus, fails to effectively communicate his/her idea.

Hypercorrection tendencies may also influence punctuation. According to Cooper (1977), an example of this is when students who learn that noun possessives are marked with -*'s*, extend the -*'s* to use as a plural marker, as in *The play tell's about complications in love.*

AAE Stylistic Features in Writing

AAE stylistic and rhetoric features also may be found in the writing of African American students (Cronnell, 1981). Style refers to choice, selection and arrangement of features (Cooper, 1977). According to Cooper, hypercorrections (discussed in the preceding section) are more prevalent in the writing of older AAE language users. Other stylistic features that are common are extensive use of imagery in expository and argumentative writing, presentation of a rhythmic pattern in writing, and a tendency toward personal involvement in the content of the writing (Cooper, 1977). According to Cooper, these stylistic features do not interfere with the written message; rather these features enhance the message and should be encouraged. They may, however, be penalized when the context requires formal scholarly or scientific writing.

Smitherman (2000) reported a study in which she explored the African American discourse style of writing in the 1969 and 1979 NAEP essays. These essays

were analyzed to determine the degree to which the African American oral tradition survived in the writing of Black students across a decade of time. The researchers developed a set of criteria for African American discourse in Black student writing which included: (a) rhythmic, dramatic, evocative language, (b) reference to color/race/ethnicity, (c) use of proverbs, aphorisms, Biblical verses, (d) sermonic tone reminiscent of traditional Black Church rhetoric, especially in vocabulary, imagery, metaphor, (e) direct address-conversational tone, (f) cultural references, (g) ethnolinguistic idioms, (h) verbal inventiveness, unique nomenclature, (i) cultural values-community consciousness; and (j) field dependency. The researchers used a holistic score to assign a discourse rating to each narrative using a 4-point Likert scale. In addition, each of the narratives had been assigned a holistic or primary trait score by NAEP raters. The primary trait scores reflected the student's perceived fluency and execution of the writing task. Correlations were run to measure the relationship between discourse scores and primary trait and holistic scores. Discourse scores also were analyzed to examine the relationship between discourse style and AAE syntax. Using the data from the 1984 and 1988 NAEP writing samples, Smitherman (2000) reported that the production of AAE syntax increased as discernible African American discourse style decreased. Smitherman (2000) also found that the "more discernibly African American the discourse, the higher the primary trait and holistic scores; the less discernibly African American the discourse, the lower the primary trait and holistic scores" (pp. 183-184). These findings were contrary to the Smitherman's findings using 1969 and 1979 NAEP data, which found

that AAE syntax correlated significantly and negatively with rater score for both primary and holistic scoring.

Champion (2003) outlined discourse strategies that are particular to the African American oral tradition. These features included *call and response*, and *signifiying*, *playing the dozens*, or *sounding*. Smitherman (1977) defined call and response, relating it to a communication process that is often heard in the traditional Black church. It is a communication exchange that occurs between speaker and audience in which the speaker calls out, either verbally or nonverbally, and the audience responds. *Signifiying* was defined by Smitherman (1977) as "the verbal art of insult in which a speaker humorously puts down, talks about, needles-that is, signifies on-the listener" (p. 118). *Playing the dozens* or *sounding* refers to signifiying with insults aimed at family members (Champion, 2003).

Considering historical socio-linguistic influences, Champion (2003) also outlined stylistic characteristics that are characteristic of West African narratives. These characteristics include:

> repletion [narrative [sic] uses the same key phrase throughout the narrative], parallelism [the use of identical words that are transposed with the same of adjacent statements], piling and association [heaping one detail onto another to build the narrative into a climax], tonality [intonation changes throughout the narrative], ideophone [using sound to convey meaning], digression [a departure from the main theme of the narrative to address or comment to a person or object related to the theme of the narrative], imagery [using similes or metaphors to create images in the mind of the listeners], allusion [an image used to convey meaning when the origin of the image is not verbally apparent]; and

> symbolism [the use of a familiar image to convey lessons to the listener] (p. 26).

Champion asserted that many, if not all, of the previously discussed stylistic features have to some extent been passed down from generation to generation and remain a part of African American culture today.

Dialect and Styles of Discourse

Since the 1980s, researchers have recognized that children's narrative styles differ with different narrative tasks and cultures. AAE narratives have been studied in terms of oral and literate language styles (Hester, 1996). The oral language style has been the style that is most frequently associated with African Americans. The oral language style is expressed in an implicit, highly contextualized manner, rather than the straightforward explicit, and a decontextualized manner that is associated with a literate language style. Hester also noted that in the oral language style, meaning is expressed through slang, idioms, gestures and intonation cues such as changes in voices and pitch. As a highly contextualized style, it requires shared knowledge among the participants. She noted further that this style of discourse shares many features with spoken language, in contrast with written language, across dialect groups.

Hester (1996) reported that African American children are more likely to produce oral narratives that are consistent with the oral language style. These

narratives, also described as "topic associated" typically include "a series of associated segments linked implicitly to a particular topical event or theme" (Champion, 2003, p. 11). Thematic cohesion is attained through prosodic cues rather than through explicit semantic and syntactic forms, such as conjunctions and relative clauses, which are associated with the "topic centered" narratives typical of the literate language style in western cultures. Hester also found that use of direct quotes, emphatic particles (e.g., *always, a lot, just*), pronouns, implicit relations between parts of the narrative, and fewer lexically explicit referential and temporal relationships are characteristic of "topic associated" oral narratives produced by African American students.

Battle (1996) reported that the oral stories of African Americans are typically very expressive and include the use of paralinguistic cues, such as loudness changes, stress, intonation changes, exclamations, and repetitions to enhance the meaning of the story or the role of the characters. In addition, Battle (1996) reported that African American narrators provide prosodic cues in the form of variation in rate, intonation, duration, and pause, and kinesic cues in the form of gestures and movements, to communicate the message.

Although it is important to recognize cultural influences, it is equally important not to let such descriptions lead to stereotypical thinking. Just as African American children are heterogeneous in their language, they are also heterogeneous in their production of narratives (Bliss, Covington, & McCabe, 1999). Although African American students are most associated with using the oral language style, Hester

(1996) cautioned that African American students are not restricted to using only oral style features. Current research studies have found that African American students use both oral and literate language styles (Champion, 2003; Hester, 1996). Gorman, Clark, Fiestas, and Peña (2003) examined the organizational styles of narratives produced by African American working class children. When presented with a wordless picture book, the children in the study (mean age 7;6) were asked to generate a narrative based on the pictures in the book. The researchers found that topic association was not the dominant style of organization used by African American children. The researchers also found that despite normal language use at the word and sentence level, ten narratives could not be classified as topic associative or topic centered (Gorman et al., 2003).

Evaluation of Written Language

What is "good writing?" What is a "good" story? Many opinions exist about what constitutes good writing. McCabe and Peterson (1984) examined the composition of a good story. They conducted a structural analysis of narratives produced by 96 Northern American working class children using Stein and Glenn's (1979) story grammar analysis, Labov's (1972) high-point analysis, and Deese's (1983) dependency analysis. The study compared the structural components of the narratives with the ratings of 28 undergraduate students and 7 faculty members at a university. The raters were asked to rate each narrative on a 6-point scale, where 1 =

a very bad narrative and 6 = a very good narrative. Using the story grammar analysis, the authors found that stories that were rating the highest consisted of problem-solving episodes that included at least a motivating state, an attempt, and a consequence. Using high-point analysis, the authors found that highly-rated stories consisted of a setting that oriented the listener to the events that were to follow, events that led to a building of a high point, a suspension of the high point and a resolution. According to dependency analysis, a "good" story is one that exhibits complex syntactical coherence. McCabe and Peterson reported little agreement between any of the three descriptions and the ratings the adult judges gave. They did however find that stories that were rated high were rated as complex on at least two of the analysis systems, and stories that judges rated low tended to be rated low on all three systems. Finally, stories that were rated highly by the judges demonstrated two of the following three qualities: (1) a complete episode, (2) a build up to a high point, and (3) an ideal hierarchy of events.

The results of the above study suggest that stories that are judged to be "good" stories are syntactically cohesive and are centered around a high point or a problem (Taylor & Matsuda, 1988). The criteria of "good" quality, as suggested by the McCabe and Peterson (1984) study, however, may be problematic when applied to narratives produced by African American children. When narrative cohesion is marked by prosodic cues and intonation changes (Hyter & Westby, 1996) rather than syntactically, and when narratives contain associated segments implicitly linked to a theme (Taylor & Matsuda, 1988), rather than being centered around one distinct

theme, they may be judged of lower quality, when actually they are exhibiting cultural-linguistic differences.

Hendrix (1981) wrote about the political nature of defining good writing and evaluating written language. According to Hendrix, SAE usage is dictated by a minimal definition of good writing. He also listed communicative effectiveness, sensitivity to the audience, and purposeful writing as standards of good writing. In the case of writing assessment and evaluation, Hendrix commented that, "the norms of standard written English are very nearly the norms of white, middle class faculty" (p. 61) who often serve as judges of written language for standardized assessments. Hendrix further stated, "when the content of the essay is part of what is judged, the experience of the writer and reader are at issue" (p. 61). What Hendrix is suggesting (as has been suggested by many others) is that written language, like spoken language, is influenced by culture and experience. When there is a mismatch between the culture or experiences of the writer and the reader, fair assessment may be compromised. As discussed before, in order for narrative assessment to be fair and culturally-sensitive, evaluators must compensate for cultural mismatches by developing an in-depth knowledge of how culture influences written language.

Attitudes and Evaluation of African American Students' Language and Speech

AAE, regardless of its logic and rule-governed nature, is often stigmatized and viewed negatively. Kraemer, Rivers and Ratusnik (2000) investigated the socio-

linguistic perspectives on AAE by creating four versions of a standard passage, "My Grandfather," used by many researchers in communication sciences and disorders. Three of the four versions were modified to reflect AAE linguistic features. Version 1 reflected AAE phonological features, Version 2 reflected AAE morphosyntactical features, Version 3 reflected AAE lexical features, and Version 4 was the original "Grandfather" passage, presented in SAE. The audiotaped versions were played for participants during their communication disorders courses. The participants were asked to listen to each recording and rate the speaker's linguistic skills according to socioperceptive traits, such as ambitious, articulate, competent, educated, financially secure, intelligent, professional, social and successful using a 7-point scale (i.e., a "1" representing the lowest, most negative score and a "7" representing the highest positive value).

Kramer et al. (2000) found that version 2, which reflected African American morphosyntactical features, received the lowest mean score, whereas the original SAE version of the "Grandfather" passage received the highest mean score. The version that reflected the phonological features of AAE was rated as the second "least" favorable. The three traits rated lowest for the AAE phonological version and the AAE morphosyntactical versions were "articulate," "professional," and "financially secure." On the other hand, "literate," "articulate," and "educated" were the socioperceptional traits rated highest for the standard version of the passage. These results indicated that although phonological features and morphosyntactical features of AAE are logical and rule-governed, they are nevertheless stigmatized and not

preferred when compared to SAE. These results also suggest that speakers whose expressive language includes AAE phonological and morphosyntactical patterns, are judged to be poor communicators or as having inadequate linguistic skills compared to SAE speakers.

Seligman, Tucker, and Lambert (1973) examined the effects of speech style, language and other attributes on teachers' attitudes towards pupils. To assess the effect of speech style on teachers' attitudes, eleven female student-teachers were asked to listen to a recording of each student's voice and form a subjective impression of the child. They were then asked to evaluate the child on the following characteristics: pronunciation (*inarticulate, articulate, inaccurate, accurate*), speed of speech (*quick, slow*), intonation (*much, little*), pitch (*high, low*), quality (*smooth, hoarse),* and individual characteristics (*confidence, fluency, class, intellect*). The results of the study revealed that the boys with "good voices" (those voices rated as sounding more intelligent) were always evaluated significantly more favorably than those with "poor voices" (those voices that were rated as sounding less intelligent). They were also judged to be more intelligent, more privileged, better students, more enthusiastic, self-confident, and gentle. Although the subjects in this study were not African American, the results nevertheless illustrate how judgments are often made on speakers based about the *way* they talk or *how* they sound.

Dialect-influenced speech also has been viewed negatively by school teachers (Delpit, 1996; Rosenthal & Jacobson 1968). Correction resulting from a teacher's intolerance of dialectal speech may taint the teacher's overall view of a student,

lowering the teacher's expectations for that student, or compromising open communication between the student and teacher. Evidence of negative teacher judgments also might affect students' attitudes toward their teachers. In one study, Delpit (1996) found that African American students often complained about their teachers interrupting them to make them "talk correct," even when they were conversing with their peers. In a similar situation, Delpit wrote about an interaction between an African American preschooler and his teacher. In this example, the preschool teacher had been drilling her students on responding to the greeting, "Good morning, how are you?" with, "I'm fine, thank you." One morning the teacher stood at the door to greet a four-year-old African American boy. After her greeting, the boy responded by saying, "I be's fine." In this example, the teacher did not overtly correct the student but instead repeated her greeting multiple times in an attempt to elicit her desired response. This confused and angered the student, and he eventually aborted the communication exchange.

Evaluation and Attitudes of African American Students' Written Language

Because the legitimate use of AAE can be confused with symptoms of language disorder, the cultural validity of many language assessment tools has been questioned. Assessment tools must be sensitive enough to differentiate between an African American child who is a dialect speaker and one who is language-disordered. Findings of past research have shown many of the assessment tools that involve the

evaluation of speech and language to be questionable for use with AAE-speaking students (Champion, Hyter, McCabe, & Bland-Stewart, 2003; Cole & Taylor, 1990; Newkirk, Stockman, Guillory & Siebert, 2003; Stewart, 1981; Terrell & Terrell, 1993; Washington & Craig, 1986; Washington and Craig, 1992a).

Formal tests, due to their structure, require all children to use language in rigid and unnatural ways. These tend not to match the cultural experiences of African American children (Stockman, 1996b). On formal tests, the language assessed almost always is SAE. Children who are speakers of AAE are disadvantaged by such measures and often score well below the mean because such tests do not account for cultural dialects. The danger is that these lower test scores may lead to overqualifying African American children for special services as having speech and/or language disorders when instead the tests are detecting differences. Although research has repeatedly shown various tests to be negatively biased against African American children, standardized tests nonetheless are among the most frequently used assessment tools for evaluating young children's language.

Taylor and Payne (1983) reported four common types of bias in speech-language assessments. Situational bias, the first type, occurs when there is a mismatch between the client with respect to the social rules of language interaction. For example, silence after an examiner's elicitation of an answer, may be interpreted as a sign of disorder, when actually it is appropriate in the speaker's familiar cultural milieu. An examiner's misinterpretation, misunderstanding, or rejection of the individual's output in situational mismatches may lead to inaccurate conclusions

regarding the results of speech-language assessment. The second type of test bias, according to Taylor and Payne, is direction or format bias. Children who are familiar with the test format, or whose educational and leisure-time routines are consistent with the testing format are at an advantage, as opposed to children who are not. Additionally, topics that have little or no relationship to everyday lives in a particular culture are biased for members of that culture. Test questions or directions that are lengthy or have content and syntax that are particularly complex also are problematic. The third type of test bias listed by Taylor and Payne is value bias. It occurs when a test taker is required to indicate a preference or to indicate what a person should do in a given situation. Such items are discriminatory because they assess the knowledge or acceptance of a belief or value that may be unfamiliar or different than that of the test taker. In addition, timed tests are culturally unfair to members of cultures that place an emphasis on contemplation. The final type of test bias, as described by Taylor and Payne, is linguistic bias. This occurs when a test fails to take into account first or preferred languages, dialects, and individual differences.

Recently, it has been suggested that writing samples or narratives may be less biased language assessment measures of African American students and other culturally and linguistically diverse students (Gorman, Clark, Fiestas & Peña, 2003). According to Hedberg and Westby (1993), narrating is a language genre that occurs in all cultures, although children's exposure to hearing stories and their opportunity to generate stories, is culture-dependent. Given a student's reasonable exposure to narratives, the use of narratives as a language measure as opposed to standardized

language tests may be more appropriate for African American students. It also could be argued that written narrative language assessment may overcome many of the biases that usually accompany standardized tests, such as the direction bias and test bias that Taylor and Payne described (1983), particularly if the sampling technique is open-ended and students can select their own topics and express their own ideas using their own concepts, terms, and language structures.

The opportunity for linguistic bias to interfere with culturally fair assessment remains a possibility with narrative language assessment. Narratives are influenced by culture, and individual cultural variations may occur. However, like spontaneous conversational language samples, narratives may be less biased than standardized tests because they exemplify habitual speech, and because the speaker chooses the words and how to use them (Stockman, 1996b). On the other hand, clinicians who are unaware of the influences of culture on narratives of students who are from a culture that is different from their own may have difficulty understanding the narratives and may misdiagnose them as impaired (Battle, 1996). Gorman, et al. (2003) pointed out that for narratives to be a non-biased form of assessment, evaluators must have an in-depth knowledge of how culture influences narrative discourse. Differences in evaluation and interpretation of narratives are likely to be influenced by differences in cultural background and experiences of the narrator and the receiver of the narrative (Bliss, Covington, & McCabe, 1999).

When a teacher, educational specialist, or assessment rater reacts negatively to the presence of dialect features in the language, speech, and/or writing of a student, it

can adversely affect the performance of that student. Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968), in their classic study found that teachers' self-fulfilling prophecies are linked to students' performances.

Past research has shown the presence of AAE features to have a negative effect on teacher's evaluations of African American students. Smitherman and Wright (1984) analyzed the essays of African American students from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and found that the use of AAE features predicted lower scores on the NAEP. For this test, the students were instructed to look at a picture of a stork and to write a story about it. The researchers found significant negative correlations between the frequency of AAE and the rater's score; the more AAE features, the lower the score. The authors reported that this significant negative correlation existed even for essays in which the raters were instructed to look specifically at story-telling and coherence. That is, the raters were instructed to use a primary trait scoring schema, which involved rating each paper against a set of criteria (e.g., story telling ability and coherence). This primary trait scoring schema did not evaluate grammar, punctuation, spelling and usage. Instead, it considered how well the writer executed the discourse level features of the narrative genre.

Smitherman and Wright (1984) found that many essays that were rated highly actually lacked content, meaning and message, but the number of AAE features was relatively low. Conversely, essays with a high presence of AAE features received lower ratings even if they exhibited higher levels of content, meaning, and message. In other words, students who were able to control their usage of AAE features

typically received higher scores regardless of how well they were able to execute discourse level performance. Conversely, students who demonstrated higher usage of AAE features were penalized more regardless of how well they were able to execute discourse level performance. The results of this study also suggest that even when raters are instructed to look beyond grammar, spelling and usage (which have been shown to be influenced by AAE), the presence of AAE features creates a stumbling block for evaluators.

Seligman, Tucker, and Lambert (1973) also examined the effects of evaluation of written language features on teachers' attitudes towards pupils' abilities. Their study examined the written compositions of 36 third-grade English-speaking Canadian boys. The spelling errors in the compositions were corrected but grammar and punctuation errors were left unchanged. Sixteen female student-teachers read and rated the compositions on ten characteristics (e.g. plot, structure) using 7-point scales. The boys judged to have written a "good" composition also were perceived to be significantly more intelligent, better students, and more enthusiastic than those whose compositions received lower ratings. Even though the subjects in this study were not African American, the results nevertheless illustrated how speakers who are not in control of the morphosyntactic structures of SAE are often judged to be less competent or inferior.

Hendrix (1981) emphasized the unintended consequences of teachers' negative view of AAE-influenced writing:

> Speakers of nonstandard English (blacks and whites) may be on their way to developing quite effective writing abilities, even while some

> of the surface features of their writing (e.g., noun/verb agreement) are persistently incorrect. Until we can be sure that teachers have real insight into language, and into the emotional difficulty of cultural assimilation, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that minority children and working class children have to go an extra mile in mastering writing.

Davidson and Howell (2000) examined the effects of ethnicity and violent content on rubric scores in writing samples. Their study presented teacher judges with four nearly identical writing samples with minor conceptual difference. Two sets of ethnocultural markers were presented in two of the passages and violent content was included in one of the ethnocultural samples. Participants in this study were 144 teachers from Washington state. Ninety-eight percent of the teachers were Caucasian and 82 percent were women. Each participant was given a packet containing one of the four writing samples and a scoring rubric. Results of this study revealed no significant difference in ratings between the ethnically marked and unmarked writing samples. However, nonviolent samples were rated significantly higher than violent samples. The results of this study show that teachers' attitudes regarding the content that students write may influence teachers' ratings of the students.

Past studies have also examined teacher's attitudes toward culturally-influenced narratives of young African American students. Michaels (1981) studied children's orally produced narratives during "sharing time" in an urban first grade classroom. Sharing time was a time during the school day that was designated for

students to come before the class and formally describe an object or provide a narrative account about some important past event. Furthermore, sharing time was an opportunity for students to practice using literate discourse strategies (Michaels, 1981). According to Michaels, the teacher's role during sharing time was crucial in that she facilitated the activity, often interjecting comments and questions that served to structure or scaffold the students' talk. Michaels observed that the discourse of the Caucasian students tended to be topic centered i.e., centered around one topic and tightly organized. In contrast, the African American students, in particular the girls, tended to produce stories that were topic associative. Their stories were characterized by an absence of lexicalized connectives, no explicitly stated theme, and topic shifts signaled by prosodic cues.

Michaels reported that there was differential treatment from the teacher in regards to narrative style. When children produced stories with a topic centered style, the teacher expanded on the child's topic with questions and comments. On the other hand, teacher comments to many of the African American children who were using a topic associative style were observed to be mis-timed, and thematically inappropriate. They often interrupted the child's train of thought. Bliss, Covington & McCabe (1999) attributed this communication breakdown between the teacher and the African American children to different cultural expectations and values with respect to sharing information.

Methods for Characterizing Nonmainstream Dialect Use in Oral Language

Oetting and McDonald (2002) outlined three approaches for characterizing research participants' nonmainstream dialect use in oral samples. The first approach, listener judgment, is used to identify research subjects, to examine adults' perception of race from speech, and to confirm the type of nonmainstream dialect spoken by the participants. The second approach, type-based methods, counts different nonmainstream pattern "types." This method has been used primarily to confirm study participants' dialect variety. Oetting and McDonald (2002) noted that this method provides information about dialect use that is more objective than the listener judgment method. The third approach, token-based methods, involves counting tokens of nonmainstream pattern use. It is designed to provide researchers with info about the rate or density of the speaker's dialect and about the dialect type of the speaker.

Taking the token count approach further, Oetting and McDonald (2002) described three methods of token counting. The first is an utterance-based method. It involves counting the number of utterances that contain one or more nonmainstream patterns and dividing this number by the total number of utterances analyzed for each research subject. The second is a word-based method. It is calculated by counting the number of nonmainstream pattern tokens that a child produces and then dividing this number by the total number of words analyzed. Oetting and McDonald cautioned, however, that this method is vulnerable to sample size differences across subjects

unless number of utterances is tightly controlled. According to the authors, when nonmainstream pattern use is held constant, this method results in rates of dialect use that decrease as utterance length increases. The third method of token counts involves counting individual tokens of patterns (rather than counting utterances with one or more tokens all the same) and dividing the sum of these by the total number of utterances in the sample (rather than the total number of words). According to Oetting and McDonald (2002) this method is most useful for samples that vary in size and/or language ability. It was the method adopted for this study.

Washington and Craig (2000) also proposed a method for characterizing dialect in speakers. Their method, which is similar to the token count approach described by Oetting and McDonald (2002), consists of equating a "dialect density" for each speaker by counting the total tokens of dialect and then dividing this number by the total number of words in the sample. This approach has been used in many studies (Craig, Thompson, Washington, & Potter, 2003; Newkirk, Stockman, Guillory, & Seibert, 2001; Newkirk, Stockman, Guillory & Seibert, 2003; Washington & Craig, 2000). It was not chosen for this study because of the variable sample size.

Discourse Analysis Methods

Stein and Glenn Story Grammar Analysis

The use of narratives to study and assess language use has advantages because narratives are used in both social and educational contexts by people of all cultures (Hester, 1996; Westby, Hedberg & Westby, 1993). Nelson, Bahr and Van Meter (2003) reported a system for analyzing narratives on four levels: discourse level, sentence level, word level, and writing conventions level. They noted that narratives can reveal a significant amount of information about a child's language abilities across levels and that language specialists should try to discern students' individualized patterns of need at each language level.

Narrative language analysis focuses on the discourse level. It has been used for several reasons, such as: (a) determining whether a child has appropriate narrative skills, (b) determining whether or not narrative language delays might be affecting academic practice or social interaction, and (c) developing narrative language and story-telling goals (Hedberg & Westby, 1993). Narratives also can be a rich source of information about a child's use of cohesion, organization, fluency, and about their general language maturity (Bliss, Covington & McCabe, 1999). Additionally, written narratives are now being used to assess students' narrative language and storytelling abilities on district- and state-wide academic assessments, such as the Michigan

Educational Assessment Program (MEAP), and on nation-wide academic assessments, such as the NAEP.

Story grammar analysis is a narrative scoring method that is widely used to analyze the maturity of children's stories. Story grammar analysis looks at the global organization or macrostructure of stories and accounts for including the components of narrative episodes. According to Hedberg and Westby (1993), this type of analysis is most useful for school-age students. Story grammars detail the "natural components of a story, their interrelationships, and their roles in the global story macrostructure" (p. 107). Several story grammar models are detailed in the literature. Most can be traced back to Stein and Glenn's (1979) original description. According to the Stein and Glenn story grammar model, a story consists of a setting and one or more episodes. A well-formed mature episode contains all of the following features: setting, initiating event, reactions and attempts, consequences, reaction or resolution, and an ending.

Story grammar analyses allow examiners to assess a storyteller's knowledge of the components or global structure of a traditional story. Story grammar analysis is most successful when used with stories that are elicited under minimal structure. Using minimal structure ensures that the examiner is assessing what the storyteller truly knows about story components and structure (Hedburg & Westby, 1993). Based on a writing lab approach, Nelson and Van Meter (2002) recommended using open-end sampling techniques rather than story starters as a means to reveal more about students' story-telling abilities than by specifying characters and setting. This may be

especially true for culturally diverse groups of students. The simple open-ended prompt, *Write a real or imaginary story about a problem and about what happens,* has been found to be successful in their work.

Story Grammar Analysis and African American Children

While the literature is replete with studies on the narrative development of Caucasian children using a problem solving story model, there is considerably less research on African American childrens' narratives. Champion, Seymour & Camarata (1995) examined the narrative production of African American children using story grammar analysis. African American children between the ages of 6 and 10 years old served as participants in their study. All of the subjects were from low-income backgrounds. An African American investigator used AAE while eliciting spoken narratives from the children in an informal setting. The examiner used three true stories as prompts to elicit the narratives. The examiner's story was followed by, "Did anything like that ever happen to you or someone that you know?" If the child responded by saying, "yes," the examiner followed up by asking, "What happened?" For the children from whom the story prompts were unsuccessful in eliciting a story, an additional prompt of "Tell me a time when you were _____." Word prompts included: *a hero, a helper, scared, angry, had a hard time, funny, sick.* Each narrative was analyzed using a story grammar approach. Thirty-nine percent of the resulting narratives were coded as complex episodes, thirty-five percent of the narratives were

coded as complete episodes, and thirteen percent were coded as reactive sequences. Twelve percent were coded as some type of interactive episodes. The action sequence pattern was produced by only one subject. Thus, a full seventy-four percent of the participants produced narratives that were either complete or complex episodes. The authors compared their results with those of an earlier study by Peterson and McCabe (1983) study in which fifty-five percent of narratives produced by European North American working class children were coded as complete or complex. The findings of the study by Champion et al. (1995) suggested that African American children between the ages of 6 and 10 are capable of producing complex and complete narratives using the story grammar analysis.

Bidell, Hubbard, and Weaver (1997) examined story structure in African American children by analyzing 15 personal narratives written by African American children who ranged in age from 6 to 12 years. Their results showed that none of the 15 narratives used a Western, linear, "problem solving" story schema that has been associated with Caucasian middle class children. Rather, the African American children in their study used a topic associative or cyclical structure in which the story was developed through "cycles of repetition in which each story component refers back to this theme and amplifies it instead of driving forward to a problem resolution" (p. 4). The researchers also found that the African American children differed in the manner in which they began their stories. Rather than beginning with the traditional setting ("once upon a time; far, far, away"), which is common in Western culture, the African American students in this study began with what the authors called a

"preface," such as ("this is about my teeth") (p. 6). According to the authors, the commonly used "preface" served a different function from that of a setting. Rather than distancing the story from the audience as in "once upon a time; far, far, away," the preface served to connect the story with the audience.

Summary

The literature is filled with research on AAE. Statistics have shown that the majority of students arriving in America's urban schools are fluent AAE speakers. These students often are considered to be immediately at-risk or disadvantaged because of the mismatch between their communication skills and that of the academic institution.

Prior research shows that unique and logical morphosyntactical and phonological patterns are associated with AAE. These patterns are shown to be rule-governed, systematic, and context-dependent. AAE speakers have been shown to be heterogeneous in their language use. Studies have found that young African American students produce different types of AAE features and that there is a wide variation in the use of features. The morphosyntactical and phonological patterns vary by context and are influenced by socioeconomic status, gender, grade level, regional location, and task. Similarly, AAE comprises words and phrases that are particular and unique to African American culture. AAE semantics also has been shown to differ by age and regional location.

AAE has been shown not only to be a feature of spoken language. Studies have indicated that many African American students produce AAE features while reading aloud. Additionally, studies have consistently reported that AAE features are manifested in some degree, in the writing of AAE speakers. These manifestations are found to be evident in syntax as well as spelling. Hypercorrection, which results from an attempt to produce SAE forms with which the speaker is not completely familiar, also have been found in the writing of African American students. Hypercorrect forms have been shown to be evident in syntax, spelling, vocabulary and punctuation. The writings of African American students have also been found to contain different stylistic features, which are thought to be characteristic of African American verbal tradition.

AAE narratives have been studied in terms of oral and literate styles. The oral language style is most frequently associated with African American. Some studies have found that African American children are more likely to produce narratives that are consistent with the oral style or are "topic associated." Other researchers have found that African American students are not restricted to using an oral style and are able to use both oral and literate language styles.

The literature is not clear as to what constitutes good writing. One study found that stories that were rated highly consisted of problem-solving episodes, were focused around a high point, and exhibited syntactic complexity. Other standards for judging writing as "good" include SAE usage, communicative effectiveness, audience sensitivity, and purposeful writing.

Regardless of the evidence of its logical and rule-governed nature, AAE remains stigmatized and viewed from a negative perspective. Studies have consistently shown that spoken language that contains features of AAE, particularly morphosyntactical features, is rated low on several socioperceptive traits. Dialect-influenced speech has been viewed negatively by school teachers. Researchers have found that students with voices that were rated as sounding less intelligent were also perceived to be less privileged, poorer students, less enthusiastic, and less confident.

The cultural validity of many language assessment tools has been questioned. Findings of past research studies have shown that many African American students perform lower than the mean on standardized tests because of the rigid, structured manner of formal tests. The literature reports four common type of bias in speech-language assessments that compromise the validity of speech-language evaluations of African American students. It has been recently suggested that writing samples may be less biased language assessment measures of African American students and may overcome many of the biases that typically accompany standardized tests.

Past research has shown the presence of AAE features in students' written language to have a negative effect on teachers' evaluations. Studies have indicated that writing samples that contain AAE features are rated lower regardless of how well the writer was able to execute the discourse level feature of the narrative genre.

Speech Language Pathology literature reports of three ways of characterizing nonmainstream dialect use in oral language: listener judgments, a type-based method which counts different nonmainstream pattern types, and a token-based method which

involves counting tokens of nonmainstream pattern use. It has been suggested that the third method, which involves counting the individual tokens of pattern and dividing by the total number of utterances in the sample, is the most useful for samples that vary in size.

Story grammar analysis is a narrative scoring method that is widely used to analyze the maturity of students' narratives. Story grammar looks at the organizational structure of narratives and characterizes stories according to the presence or absence of story grammar features. Story grammar is based on a hierarchical network of categories (Stein and Glenn, 1979). Using story grammar analysis, stories can range from the least mature, Isolated Description, to the most mature, Interactive Episode. There have been few studies that have examined the narrative production of African American children using story grammar analysis. One study found that African American children between the ages of 6 and 10 are capable of producing complex and complete narratives using the story grammar analysis. However, another study found that African American students' narrative do not fit nicely into a Western, linear, "problem solving" story schemata.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This study was designed to assess whether stories with dialectal features would be rated lower by graduate students in speech-language pathology than the same stories with dialectal features edited out. A second purpose was to examine the relationship between the density of dialectal features and students' discourse abilities as measured by Story Grammar scores and other holistic qualitative ratings. Additionally, this study was designed to describe the AAE-influenced morphosyntactic and stylistic features employed by the third- and fourth-grade African American students in their writings.

Participants and Narrative Samples

The research study used 27 transcriptions of written narratives produced by third grade (n = 22) and fourth grade (n = 5) African American students. Nine of the students (33 percent) were male and 18 were female (67 percent). The students were participants in the Writing Lab Outreach Project, a joint project between Western Michigan University and Kalamazoo (Michigan) Public Schools. The elementary students whose narratives were used in this project attended one of the several elementary schools that participated in the project. The writing lab approach is one in

which speech-language pathologists, general educators and special educators work collaboratively within classrooms to provide inclusive, curriculum-based, computer supported writing process instruction. While participating in writing lab activities, students engage in various authentic writing projects including producing written narratives (Nelson, Van Meter, Chamberlain, & Bahr, 2001).

Collecting Narrative Samples

The writing samples used for this project were narratives that were gathered as probes for assessing spontaneous written language proficiency at the beginning, middle, and end of a school-year of interventions. The narratives were written by students in their classrooms after being given the following instructions: *Write a story. Your story should tell about a problem and about what happens. Your story can be real or imaginary.* The students were given blank paper for planning and lined paper on which to write their drafts. They were provided ink pens and instructed to cross out errors or changes with one line so that adults reading their stories could see their edits and changes. The students were given an hour to write their stories.

Sample Selection

The database of narratives written by third graders who had participated in the writing lab activities was made available to the primary examiner with permission of

the Western Michigan University Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB). (See Appendix F for HSIRB approval form.) All narratives that were produced by African American students were considered for inclusion. To create as tightly a defined group as possible, narratives that were written by children who were identified as having a suspected learning disability were excluded. The primary examiner read through all of the remaining narratives and selected for inclusion those that were longer than three T-units and had three or more occurrences of one or more AAE features. Narratives that contained few occurrences were selected, as well as those with many occurrences. This was purposely done to ensure a range of AAE use. Initially, only twenty-two narratives were selected from the third grade narrative pool. To increase the number of narratives used in the study, narratives written by fourth grade African American students were also considered. That is, using the same criteria, the researcher selected five narratives that were written by fourth graders.

Procedures for Training Judges

Eighteen people served as judges in this research study. All of the judges were first-year graduate students in speech language pathology at a public university in Michigan. At the time of the data collection, the graduate students were all enrolled in a class, "Normal Language Acquisition and Behavior" in which discourse analysis techniques were a major focus. Eighteen of the graduate students were female and one was male. The graduate students completed their undergraduate

degrees at various schools across the Unites States. The graduate students comprised 11 Caucasians (61.1 percent), four African Americans (22.2 percent), two Asian American (11.1 percent), and one Caribbean American (5.5 percent).

Story Analysis Training

The judges were initially trained by the second-year graduate student researcher within one 80-minute class period to analyze the structure and maturity of the children's stories using Stein and Glenn's (1979) story grammar analysis (see Appendix A for training material). Story grammar analysis involves assigning one of the following story grammar levels to a narrative: (1) isolated description, (2) temporal sequence, (3) causal sequence, (4) abbreviated episode, (5) complete episode, (6) complex/multiple episode, or (7) interactive episode. No specific information was presented on cultural variation in narratives during this training. Although the students had been introduced generally to the importance of respecting socio-cultural variation, prior class lectures also had purposefully avoided discussions of culture and dialectal variation in written language. To begin the training session, students were briefly introduced to four ways to analyze stories: on the sentence level, on the word level, on the writing convention levels, and on the discourse level. The remaining 75 minutes of the class period were devoted to discourse analysis.

Specific information was presented on analyzing stories using Stein and Glenn's (1979) story grammar approach. Story grammar elements were presented as

they appear additively at each higher story grammar level. Each explanation of a story grammar level was presented and illustrated with an example story using narratives from Hedberg and Westby (1993) and Nelson, Bahr, and Van Meter (2004). Following presentation of each example story, components that were included or not in each story were discussed. Information was also presented about fluency, cohesion, sense of audience, and narrator voice. Following the presentation of information, the examiner/trainer showed several sample stories to the class using a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation. The students then worked together as a whole class with the examiner to assign a story grammar level.

Following this exercise, students were given a set of stories and asked to work with the person next to them to assign story grammar levels. Students were given approximately 10 minutes to complete this task. When the 10 minutes were up, different groups were called on to talk about their thinking process in assigning a story score. Responses from the small groups were compared to the story levels previously assigned to the stories. If story levels conflicted, the researcher/trainer gave an explanation regarding the reasoning behind the story level assignment. In small groups, the students also rated each sample story on the basis of cohesion, fluency, sense of audience, and narrator voice. Toward the end of the class period, questions were entertained by the researcher/trainer and the two professors who were present.

Reliability Sessions

In an effort to improve reliability, additional training sessions were held following the initial classroom session (October 29, 2003) and before the data collection session (November 5, 2003). Student judges agreed on times that they could meet for at least one reliability session. The first group of judges (n = 6) met on Friday, October 31, 2003 at 8:30 AM. The second group of judges (n = 9) met on the same day at 1:30 PM. Three judges were unable to meet on either of the Friday sessions. These judges met on Monday, November 3, 2003. Each session took approximately one hour or less, depending on the individual judge's level of accuracy as described below. Reliability sessions took place in a quiet room. The judges sat around a four-foot table. The examiner gave brief instructions and responded to any questions or concerns expressed by the judges. Judges were given five narratives and were instructed to independently assign a story grammar rating to each of the five narratives.

Materials for Reliability Sessions

The narratives used in the reliability sessions were produced by elementary students of various ages and races, all of whom were participating in the writing lab activities in their classrooms. The student-produced written narratives were typed into Microsoft Word documents and were assembled into three sets of five stories.

Spelling and punctuation were corrected by the examiner, but no other alterations were made.

Reliability Procedure

In reliability training sessions, judges were initially given one set of five stories. They were instructed to assign a story grammar rating to each story. Judges used a scoring flow chart that was introduced in the class training session for assigning the story grammar levels. In addition, they were allowed to use class notes and other references to complete this task. Upon completing story ratings for the practice stories, accuracy (based on expert ratings of the same stories) was evaluated by the examiner. Identical procedures were used in both training sessions. Judges across the two sessions who achieved 100 percent accuracy on the first trial (n = 3) were considered "reliable" and were permitted to leave. Judges who achieved less than 80 percent (n = 11) were given another set of five stories to rate. Upon completion of the second set, the examiner evaluated accuracy. Judges who achieved 100 percent on the second set (n = 1), and whose average over the two sets was at or above 80 percent, were considered "reliable" and were dismissed from the session. Judges who achieved less than 80 percent accuracy (n = 10) were given a third set of five stories to rate. Upon completing story ratings, accuracy was scored by the examiner. Judges (n = 5) who achieved 80 percent accuracy or above across the three sets of stories (15 stories) were considered "reliable." Judges (n = 10) who were

unable to achieve 80 percent accuracy across the three sets were asked to schedule an additional one-on-one or small-group training with the examiner.

Due to a lower level of reliability than expected for the first two groups, the format of third session was modified slightly. It was designed to provide additional training for the 10 judges who had not achieved criterion, and for the three judges who were not able to attend either Friday session. In the Monday session, a different approach was taken. Judges were instructed to work independently and to use their training materials to assign story grammar ratings to all three sets of five stories. After the judges completed each set, as a group, the "correct" story grammar rating was discussed. At this time, the judges were given an opportunity to ask questions and to receive guided instruction and feedback on their ratings from the examiner. Judges were asked to stay for a minimum of 25 minutes. Individuals were permitted to leave after they had achieved a pattern of correct responses (e.g., 80 percent accuracy). Seventy percent of the students in the Monday session demonstrated an improvement from the reliability attained in the initial reliability session. A concrete reliability score representing the entire group of judges could not be calculated due to modifications to format of reliability sessions.

Procedures for Measuring Dialect

To assist with sentence and word level analysis and coding of dialect density, samples were transcribed using the Systematic Analysis of Language Transcripts

(SALT) program (Miller & Chapman, 2000). Utterances were divided into T-units as defined by independent clauses, including any embedded or subordinated clauses (Hunt, 1965). T-units were used to compute a dialect density measure, which is described next.

Measuring Dialect Density

Dialect density measures represent the "thickness" of dialect present in a communication sample. Dialect density, as originally defined by Washington and Craig (2000) refers to the frequencies (tokens) of AAE divided by the total number of words (tokens) in the sample. Oetting and McDonald (2002), however, recommended using utterances rather than words as the divisor, especially when the total number of words varies widely among the samples, as it did in this study. Therefore, number of T-units replaced number of words in the calculation of dialect density in this investigation.

In coding dialect tokens, several sources (Champion, 2003; Green, 2003; Smitherman, 2000; Wolfram, Adger & Christian, 1999) served as references (see Appendix B). The Systematic Analysis of Language Transcripts software (Miller & Chapman, 2000) was used to count the total number of T-units and the total number of words for each essay. The density of AAE features was computed by using a spreadsheet program to divide the total number of AAE features (tokens) by the total number of T-units produced. The dialect densities reported in this study represent

only morphosyntactic features used by the students. Stylistic features were excluded in the computation because of low percent of agreement among judges, which is described next.

Reliability of AAE Features

Percent of agreement was used to establish interrater reliability for AAE features. The primary researcher analyzed each dialect-version narrative and coded AAE features. Two speech-language pathology professors who have done research on AAE (N. W. Nelson and Y. D. Hyter) also coded 18 percent of the narratives for the purpose of determining a reliability measure. Between the primary researcher and Nelson, percent of agreement for the morphosyntactical features was 95. Between the primary researcher and Hyter, percent of agreement for the morphosyntactical features was 97 percent. Between Nelson and Hyter, percent of agreement for the morphosyntactical features was 98 percent. On the other hand, coding stylistic features yielded percent of agreement values around 31 percent.

Intrajudge reliability was also measured. In this case, the primary researcher analyzed each dialect-version narrative and coded AAE morphosyntactic features on two separate occasions. Percent of agreement was 94.

Procedure for Gathering Experimental Discourse Scores

Preparation of Samples without Dialect Features

To answer the experimental question about whether the same stories would be rated significantly higher if dialectal features were removed, two versions were required. The examiner therefore, prepared two versions of each sample: one version included the students' usage of dialect features and the other version replaced the dialect features with their corresponding SAE revisions (for an example, see Appendix C). Both versions of each writing sample were typed to achieve uniformity in appearance. Spelling errors were corrected in all of the samples, as were punctuation errors. This was intended to encourage the judges to focus on the two variables of interest: 1) discourse maturity, and 2) grammatical variations from SAE.

Random Story and Packet Assignments

Graduate students were blind to the conditions of the study. They were merely told that their task was to evaluate stories written by third- and fourth-grade students. The judges were also told that "the spelling and punctuation of the narratives have been corrected but the words and ideas are those of the children." Each story was assigned a number. Odd numbers were assigned to the edited versions; even numbers

were assigned to the dialect versions. This numbering system was in place for tracking purposes. Graduate students were unaware of the numbering system. The eighteen graduate students were randomly assigned packets in large manila envelopes. Each packet contained nine stories to read and rate. Packets contained randomly assigned edited stories with dialect features removed as well as stories with dialect features present. Packets also included nine scoring sheets that included the story grammar levels and the MEAP scoring rubric. A demographic questionnaire was also included in the packet.

Stories were assigned randomly to packets using the hat-pull methodology. All story numbers (even and odd) were placed on slips of paper 3 times and placed into a container. The slips of paper were mixed up and drawn out one-by-one. As each slip of paper was drawn out, its number was recorded on an Excel spreadsheet next to the number of a judge. For example, the first nine numbers drawn were assigned to Judge #1; the next nine numbers drawn were assigned to Judge #2, and so on. Due to the manner of which stories numbers were assigned, where edited story versions were assigned odd numbers and dialect version were assigned the next even number, it was important that judges not be assigned adjacent odd and even numbered stories. Such assignment might result in the same judge reading and rating both versions of the same story, reveal the full purpose of the study, and confuse the judge. In those cases, the slip was returned to the container, and an alternate was drawn. This system was successful except for one case in which adjacent story numbers were mistakenly assigned to the same envelope, resulting in the same judge rating both the

edited and dialect version of the same narrative. In this case, the judge rated both versions identically and so the scores were still included in the analysis.

Collection of Story Grammar and Holistic Rating

The data collection session was held during a regular scheduled class period (November 5, 2003). Student judges, who were previously trained to use Stein and Glenn's (1979) story grammar to examine the discourse maturity of children's narratives, were instructed to read each individual story in their packet and assign a narrative maturity rating using story grammar levels. Stein and Glenn's story grammar scoring was chosen as the method of analysis for two reasons: First, it is frequently used with school-aged children to evaluate narratives, and second, it is the analysis procedure most consistent with the story probe used to elicit the narratives used in this study.

The following point assignment was used: an Isolated Description received one point, a Temporal Sequence received two points, a Causal Sequence received three points, an Abbreviated Episode received four points, a Complete Episode received five points, a Complex/Multiple Episode received six points; and an Interactive Episode received seven points. In addition to assigning narrative maturity ratings, the judges rated the stories using the 6-point narrative scoring rubric of the Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP). Using this scoring rubric, a score of one was assigned to stories that were rated the lowest while a score of seven

represented the highest score (See Appendix D for complete MEAP scoring rubric). Both versions of each story were rated by three different judges, yielding six ratings for each story.

Judges were given 110 minutes to read and rate the nine stories in their packets, although it took most students between 30 and 40 minutes to complete the task. They were instructed to work independently and were not permitted to consult with classmates, proctoring professors, or the researcher regarding scoring decisions. However, students were permitted to use lecture notes and handouts. Students used scoring sheets (containing the Story Grammar levels and the scoring rubric) that corresponded to a particular writing sample to record their scores. Upon completion of reading and rating the nine stories on both scales, students were instructed to insert the nine stories and the nine scoring sheets back into the large envelope and place it in a pile at the front of the classroom.

After turning in their scores, graduate students were handed a demographic questionnaire that asked their age, the regional location in which they grew up, a description of their undergraduate institution, their ethnic group and their native language (see Appendix E). Upon completion, students returned completed questionnaires to a separate pile on a different table at the front of the table. Stories were read and rated prior to completion of the demographic questionnaire to ensure that students were not biased by the content of the demographic survey when they scored the writing samples. It is also important to note here that information on the demographic questionnaires did not allow students to be matched to story packets.

The research proposal submitted to the HSIRB assured that the judges would remain anonymous so that the judges would not feel misled when they discovered that we were looking for evidence as to whether dialect features might bias judges' discourse ratings. See Appendix F for HSIRB approval.

Procedures for Analyzing Data

Statistical analysis was conducted using the SPSS program to compute descriptive statistics (e.g. mean, standard deviation). Paired T-tests were completed to compare ratings between nondialect and dialect narratives and to examine whether story grammar scores and MEAP ratings were lower for narratives with dialect features present. To analyze whether a relationship existed between dialect density and story ratings, Pearson bivariate correlations were performed on the data. An alpha level of .05 was used for all statistical tests.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This study was designed to examine whether the presence of dialect features in students' written narratives influence judges when assigning discourse maturity ratings, and if so, whether stories with relatively more features would earn relatively lower discourse scores. Additionally, this study was designed to describe the stylistic features employed by the students in their writings. The descriptive data are presented first. Then the results of the study are presented below for the two main research questions: (1) Are narrative that contain dialect features assigned lower story grammar scores and MEAP ratings? (2) Is there a relationship between students' use of dialect and their discourse abilities and the related question, how much does dialect account for story grammar and MEAP ratings?

Descriptive Analysis

Dialect Density

A total of 433 T-units across 27 stories were analyzed and coded for the occurrence of African American morphosyntactical features. Although the original plan was to include stylistic features in the count of dialect tokens for measuring

dialect density, the low reliability (31 percent agreement) on these features led to a decision to base the analysis on morphosyntactical features only. Dialect density (measured as dialect tokens divided by T-units) ranged from 9 to 100 percent across the 27 narratives. Mean dialect density across the 27 narratives was 36 percent. Table 1 details the types and tokens of African American English features used in the narratives. See Appendix G for examples from the students' narratives of each AAE feature.

Table 1. Types of AAE Features and Frequency of Use in Narratives

African American English Feature	Number of Times Used
Multiple Negation	2
Existential It	5
Nonstandard Subject/Verb Agreement	26
Zero Possession	20
Zero Copula	2
Zero Auxiliary	4
Zero Plural	13
Zero Past Tense	45
Nonstandard Indefinite Article	4
Preterite Had	5
-ed Overgeneralization	4
Other	18

Story Scores

The first research question focused on determining if significant differences would be found between ratings for the nondialect narratives and for the dialect narratives. The two dependent variables were story grammar scores and MEAP ratings. Paired T-tests were used to compare mean ratings for the two versions of the same story. Mean story grammar scores and MEAP ratings for nondialect and dialect stories are found in Table 2. See Appendix H for raw scores.

Table 2. Mean Story Grammar and MEAP Scores and Standard Deviations in Both Narrative Versions

	Story Grammar Scores	MEAP Scores
Version	Mean (S.D.)	Mean (S.D.)
Nondialect	3.14 (1.23)	3.33 (.93)
Dialect	3.26 (1.13)	3.11 (.90)

It was originally hypothesized that the mean story grammar scores and the mean MEAP rating for dialect narratives would be lower than the nondialect narratives' scores. The results, however, showed no significant difference. In fact, the mean story grammar score for nondialect narratives (3.14) was slightly lower than the mean for dialect narratives (3.26). As noted, this difference was not statistically significant ($t = -.683$, $df = 26$, $p > .05$). Mean MEAP ratings were also compared for

nondialect narratives (3.33) and dialect narratives (3.11). Although this difference went in the expected direction, it also was not statistically significant ($t = 1.515$, $df = 26$, $p > .05$).

The second research question focused on determining if a relationship existed between students' use of dialect (morphosyntactical) and their discourse abilities as judged by trained speech-language pathology graduate students. A Pearson product moment correlation analysis revealed that a student's thickness of dialect, measured as dialect density, was not significantly correlated with story grammar scores or MEAP ratings. Story grammar mean scores and MEAP mean scores, on the other hand were, correlated highly, as were MEAP mean scores and total number of words (see Table 3).

Table 3. Correlations Among Dialect Density, Story Scores and Number of Words

	DDM	Story Grammar	MEAP	Total Words
DDM		-.005	-.045	-.118
SG	-.005		.671**	.252
MEAP	-.045	.671**		.355*
Total Words	-.118	.252	.355*	

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

The third research question asked whether dialect density might account for any of the variance in story grammar and MEAP scores. A regression analysis was

considered for this purpose but the weak correlations found between dialect density and story grammar scores and MEAP scores made it clear that such a test would yield no additional information.

Reliability

Story Grammar Levels

Each graduate student judged and assigned Story Grammar levels and MEAP ratings to nine narratives. The study was designed in such a way that each version of every narrative was rated by three different judges based on random assignment. During training sessions, some judges never reached 80 percent or higher reliability. For the experimental study, interjudge reliability was determined by the percentage of agreement of story grammar level assignments (and separately for MEAP ratings) across the three judges for the 27 narratives. For any particular narrative, if all judges agreed on the same Story Grammar rating, the agreement was said to be 100 percent. If two of the three judges agreed on the same Story Grammar rating, the agreement was said to be 66.7 percent. If none of the judges agreed on the same Story Grammar rating, the agreement was said to be 0 percent. The percentage of agreement ranged for 0 percent to 100 percent. The mean percentage of agreement for nondialect narratives was 59.3 percent and the mean percentage of agreement for dialect

narratives was 55.6 percent. As shown in Table 4, analysis revealed that it was more common for two judges to agree on a rating than for zero or three judges to agree.

MEAP Ratings

Each graduate student judge also assigned MEAP ratings to each of his or her nine assigned narratives. Although no formal reliability training was conducted using MEAP rubrics prior to the experimental session, the discourse training that was done incorporated several of the qualitative descriptors used in those rubrics (i.e., fluency, cohesion, sense of audience, narrator voice). Interjudge reliability on the MEAP ratings was determined in the same manner as for Story Grammar ratings. The percentage of agreement also ranged for 0 to 100. The mean percentage of agreement for nondialect narratives was 59.3 and the mean percentage of agreement for dialect narratives was 56.8. Analysis also revealed that it was more common for two judges to agree on a rating than for zero or three judges to agree (Table 4).

Table 4. Judgment Agreement for Non-Dialect and Dialect Story Grammar and MEAP Ratings

	Non-Dialect SG	Dialect SG	Non-Dialect MEAP	Dialect MEAP
0/0 Agree	8	6	5	5
2/3 Agree	12	15	18	20
3/3 Agree	7	6	4	2

Summary

To summarize, the results of this study found that African American 3rd and 4th grade students used a variety of morphosyntactical African American English features in their written narratives. Dialect density in the writing of African American students occurred on a continuum ranging from very low usage to very high usage. There were no significant differences between ratings of dialect and nondialect versions of stories, either in story grammar scores or MEAP ratings. Dialect density was not found to be highly correlated with story grammar scores or MEAP scores. Therefore, the results indicated that it did not account for story grammar scores or MEAP scores.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This study examined discourse maturity ratings and MEAP scores assigned by speech-language pathology graduate students to narratives written by African American students that contained dialect features and to matched narratives that did not contain dialect features. Dialect density was calculated for each dialect version of the narrative. Data analyses were completed to determine if narratives with dialect features would be rated lower than narratives without dialect; and to determine if dialect density would correlate with discourse maturity ratings and MEAP scores. The stylistic features employed by the African American students were also described. A discussion of the results follows. Limitations, future research, conclusions, and a summary end the chapter.

Density, Types, and Frequency of AAE Features

Dialect Density

The findings of the current study are consistent with findings of past studies that examined the use of AAE in oral language. The present study found that the

density of AAE feature use varied from appearance in an average of 9 percent to 100 percent of T-units. That is, a 9 percent dialect density score represents a narrative in which very few AAE features were used across T-units produced. A 100 percent dialect density score represents a narrative in which an AAE feature was used at the average of at least one per T-unit. Washington and Craig (1994) reported dialect densities that ranged from 0 to 39 percent during the discourse of African American preschoolers. Newkirk et al. (2001) reported that Northern Head Start students' dialect densities ranged from 8 to 56 percent, and Southern Head Start students' dialect densities ranged from 35 to 76 percent during free-play. Although the experimental design of the present study did not allow examination of contextual factors that can influence dialect density, other studies have found that AAE use is affected by a child's social economic status (Washington & Craig, 1994), gender (Washington & Craig, 1998), regional background (Newkirk, Stockman, Guillory & Siebert, 2003), and context (Washington & Craig, 1998; Hester, 1996).

AAE Morphosyntactic Feature Types

Results of this study indicate that narratives written by African American third and fourth graders exhibit a variety of AAE feature types. Across the 27 narratives, 148 occurrences of AAE features were counted.

The most common AAE feature used was Zero Past Tense. In AAE, the use of the past tense marker *-ed* is not obligatory. Zero Past Tense was also common in

the writing of third-grade students in Cronnell's (1984) study. Cronnell reported that the third graders he studied frequently omitted *–ed* suffix in their writings. That finding was consistent with the findings of this study. Whiteman reported NAEP data that showed past tense *–ed* to be omitted 50.9 percent of the time by African American 9-year-olds. The current study's finding of Zero Past Tense as the most frequently used feature is interesting because numerous studies of African American children's spoken language have found this feature not to be one of the most frequently used (Newkirk, Stockman, Guillory & Siebert, 2003; Washington & Craig, 1994). The difference in findings may be attributed to the fact that written narratives tend to communicate events that have happened in the past.

Spoken AAE employs a number of different aspects of past-tense as well as different ways of marking past events (Green, 2003, p. 93). In AAE, the ways of marking a past activity include: simple past (e.g. *drunk*, meaning "time before the present"), preterite had (e.g. *had drunk*, meaning, "time before the present"), remote past (e.g. *been drunk*, meaning "remote past"), pluperfect (e.g. *had drunk*, meaning "past before the past"), remote past perfect (e.g. *had BIN drunk*, meaning "past before the remote past"), and resultant state (e.g. *done drunk*, meaning "state of having been finished or having ended") (Green, 2003, p. 93).

Of the above list, the one alternative used by the African American children in this study to signify past tense was preterite *had*. In this study, the preterite *had* feature was used five times in three different narratives.

The second most commonly used AAE feature produced by the students in this study was Nonstandard Subject-Verb Agreement. Wolfram, Adger, and Christian (1999) noted that there are at least eight subtypes of Nonstandard Subject-Verb Agreement. However, for the purpose of this study these eight subtypes were collapsed into one. This feature was used 26 times in 56 percent of the narratives. Further analysis revealed "leveling to *was* for past tense forms of *be*" (Wolfram, Adger, & Christian, 1999, p. 214) to be the most common subtype used in the current study. This subtype accounted for 50 percent of the Nonstandard Subject-Verb Agreement occurrences. Examples of that subtype from narratives in this study are: *And I told the scariest stories and they was so scary; And when we got home, we was tired;* and *When I was at my friend's house, we was riding our bikes.* The second most common type was "leveling to *is* for present tense forms of *be*" (Wolfram et al., 1999, p. 214). This feature accounted for 11 percent of the Nonstandard Subject-Verb Agreement occurrences in this study. Examples are: *And we is going to have a lot of fun* and *And who all is the characters are my, my sister, my nephew and D.* The third most common subtype was "*-s* absence on third plural singular forms," which accounted for 7 percent of the feature. An example is: *He live in White Pidgeon.*

Whiteman (1981) reported 1972 NAEP findings of written data from Southern Maryland African Americans. Analysis of those data showed that African Americans omitted third person singular, which is considered in the present study as Nonstandard Subject-Verb Agreement, 50 percent of the time in their writing (Whiteman, 1981). Weaver (1981) also found that omission of the third person singular verb ending,

which is also considered in the present study as Nonstandard Subject-Verb Agreement, occurred 80 percent of the time in her student's writing. Third person singular verb ending omissions were also common in Cronnell's (1984) study, occurring 15 percent of the time in which they were required in written samples by third grade African American students. In a study of children's use of AAE in oral samples, Washington, Craig, & Kushmaul (1998) found that Subject-Verb Agreement and Zero Copula/Auxiliary were the most frequently used AAE types. In the present study of written narratives, Zero Copula/Auxiliary was not as common. There were only two instances of Zero Copula and four instances of Zero Auxiliary, but that may have resulted from the tendency to tell written narratives in the past tense.

The third most commonly used AAE features in the narratives written by the third and fourth graders in this study was Zero Possession. This feature was used 20 times and appeared at least once in over half of the narratives. Zero Possession was less common in the Cronnell (1984) study, in which it was used only 3 percent of the time by third graders. Likewise, Weaver (1981) found that the Zero Possession feature occurred infrequently in her student's paper.

The present study provides no clear explanation as to why certain AAE features, Zero Past Tense in particular, were used more frequently in this study than in others. This finding may have been due to the greater tendency to use past tense in written narratives than in oral conversations, as narratives are more likely to call for past tense than oral samples. Whether or not the omission of past tense markers can be contributed solely to dialect is unknown. Whiteman (1981) reported that suffixes

are omitted in many children's writing partly *because* they are inflectional suffixes. According to Whiteman (1981) when children are learning to write a language, inflectional suffixes are among the last elements to be mastered. Whiteman (1981) further suggested that the omission of inflectional suffixes may be partly attributed to increased anxiety or feelings of hurriedness when writing under pressure. Even experienced, skillful writers may omit suffixes when they are rushed or feeling pressured to finish.

AAE Stylistic Features

Examining and coding the stylistic features employed by the African American students proved to be a difficult and unreliable task. Whereas there were many instances of "colorful" and "lively" language, using the coding system of Smitherman and Wright (1984), there were relatively few occurrences of stylistic features that could *indisputably* be attributed to African American verbal tradition and said to be unique to African American tradition. This finding may be due to the fact that Smitherman's stylistic data were based on the writings of students much older than the students in the current study. Compared to the students used in Smitherman's study, the students in the present study have had considerably less life experience and were less mature in their language use. Perhaps because of this, the younger African American students in this investigation did not produce the more mature stylistic features (i.e., proverbs, Biblical verses, traditional Black church

rhetoric, metaphors, idioms) that Smitherman found. This finding could also be related to the length of writing samples, as many of the students' narratives in this study were possibly shorter than the older students' samples in the Smitherman and Wright study. It would be interesting to see if the stylistic features that are associated with African American verbal tradition would increase with age or life experiences in written narratives, especially in a longitudinal study.

One stylistic feature used by the African American children in this study could be attributed with confidence to African American verbal tradition. These were instances when students used vocabulary unique to AAE in place of expected vocabulary choices. For example, in one student's narrative, the word *pigeon* was used to refer to *females* and the word *scrub* was used to refer to *males.* The words *pigeon* and *scrub* are two words that are used to refer to male and female in a demeaning, derogatory way. They became popular in urban African American culture after two hit rap songs published in 1999. Green (2003) asserted that there are many words in AAE for referring to males and females. In her book, she offered a list of examples. Although *pigeon* and *scrub* were not included on her list (probably due to the book's publication date), these words are consistent with current AAE.

In another narrative, the word *popos* was used by a student to refer to an angry police officer. In her dictionary of AAE words and phrases, Smitherman (1994) defines *popo* simply as *police*. According to Smitherman, other synonymous words for *popo* or *police* are *one time* and *five-O*.

The above examples clearly show the manifestations of AAE semantics in African American students' narratives. As these examples also show, however, words such as *pigeon, scrub,* or *popo* may create some difficulty for readers who are not familiar with words and phrases common in AAE. Whereas it is unreasonable to expect a person to become familiar with every word and phrase associated with AAE, it is not unreasonable to encourage all educators and other professionals to develop an appreciation for the influence that culture has on students' written products. Simply asking students to explain their word choices by expressing interest in them can be enlightening and culture broadening for instructors.

In other narratives in this data set, students made reference to cultural activities that are common among African Americans. Examples are: *We had a fish fry and a family reunion and some of my cousins came* and *And on the way back to the church, she got hit by a car.* Having fish fries, attending family reunions, and attending church are all activities common in African American culture.

Gorman, Clark, Fiestas, and Peña (2003) also examined the creative and stylistic devices used in the narratives of African American children, as well as Latino American and Caucasian children. They coded narratives for organizational style (e.g., topic associating, topic centered, linear, cyclical), dialogue (e.g., direct dialogue, indirect dialogue), character relationships (e.g., nature of the relationship, conduct in relationship, character naming), embellishment (e.g. suspense, fantasy, conflict), and paralinguistic devices (e.g., expressive sounds, exclamatory utterances). Although a formal analysis was not conducted in the current study using such coding criteria, the

African American children in this study did use many of the creative and stylistic devices that were examined by Gorman and associates. As examples, Table 5 presents excerpts from narratives used in the current study that fit closely with the above codes (Table 5).

Table 5. Narrative Excerpts Coded According to Gordan et al. (2003)

Code	Narrative Excerpt
Dialogue	And I said, "Now do you believe me?"
Character Relationships	And my sister name is T.
Embellishment	The crook just stole our secret money.
Paralinguistic Devices	We only found out his name!

Dialect Use and Story Scores

Correlation between AAE Features and Story Scores

Findings of past studies prompted a hypothesis in the present study that narratives that contained AAE features would be rated lower than narratives that did not contain AAE features. For example, Smitherman and Wright (1984) studied the correlation between the combined total of AAE features and found that essays with high frequencies of AAE received low ratings and those with low AAE features received high ratings. Smitherman and Wright noted that even though raters were instructed to evaluate story telling abilities, coherence, and rhetorical effectiveness

rather than grammar, mechanics, spelling, and usage, the data indicated that the use of AAE did predict scores. Contrary to Smitherman and Wright's negative correlation findings, the current study found that there was no correlation between AAE use and story scores ratings assigned by graduate students in speech-language pathology. Narratives that contained AAE features were found to be scored no differently than narratives that did not contain dialect features. Using the MEAP rubric, narratives with dialect features also were scored no differently than those without dialect features. Therefore, the results of this study found that, unlike Smitherman and Wright's study, AAE use had no apparent effect on discourse level ratings.

The results of this study are positive in that they suggest that judges can evaluate dialect-influenced writings without being biased by the presence of morphosyntactic dialect features. As in Smitherman and Wright's (1984) study, judges in the current study were trained to evaluate students' narratives on the discourse level, which involved concentrating on storytelling abilities, the presence of story grammar elements, cohesion, sense of audience, and voice. Judges were not told to focus on grammar, mechanics or usage (which all may be influenced by dialect); nor were they told *not* to focus on these areas. Rather, they were trained extensively *only* in discourse analysis. By the findings of this study, it can be suggested that when judges are trained specifically to look at discourse ability, they are able to do so without being swayed by dialect.

It is also worth noting that judges were not provided with specific information regarding how dialect influences students' writings, and they were not informed that

the deviations from standard formal written English that were present in the narratives could be attributed to dialect. Neither were the judges informed that the narratives were all written by African American students. The above conditions and conclusions are important for two reasons. First, they suggest that judges do not necessarily have to be trained extensively in dialect-sensitivity or regarding the influence of dialect in writing to be unbiased in their judgments. Prior to the experimental study, the judges in this study were not trained on cultural variation in narrative organization nor on dialect morphosyntactic features association with dialect. They had been exposed, however, to discussion of cultural sensitivity on a broader scale.

Second, the findings suggest that when judges are not overtly informed of the writer's cultural background, judges may be more fair in assigning story scores. Weaver (1974) wrote that racial ethnocentrism may complicate evaluation of Black students' writings. According to Weaver (1974) teachers may unconsciously use students' dialect as an excuse for maintaining social and racial prejudices. I am suggesting that when the cultural background or the native tongue of a speaker/writer (especially when it is a more stigmatized one) is not pointed out, it may lead to less-biased evaluations.

A brief discussion about the heterogeneity of judges in the current story is appropriate. The group of judges in this study comprised an ethno-racially diverse group. It included one male and seventeen females. Most remarkable was the diversity of cultural backgrounds (e.g. 11 European Americans, 4 African Americans, 2 Asian Americans, and 1 Caribbean American) and past educational backgrounds.

Three judges described their undergraduate institution as having been a "Historically Black College or University." This diversity of backgrounds and/or experiences may offer an explanation of the "no significant difference" found between the two versions of narratives. Diversity of culture of the judges and in narrative socialization might also be related to the difficulty with reliability training. Scholars have reported differences in narrative socialization for culturally and linguistically diverse groups and have proposed that story telling patterns differ across cultures (Heath, 1982; Heath, 1986; Hedberg & Westby, 1993). These cultural differences not only may affect how culturally and linguistically diverse students *write* stories, it also may affect how a culturally heterogeneous group of judges *rate* stories.

In past studies, judges represented a more homogeneous group. Seligman, Tucker, and Lambert's (1973) study looked at the effects of speech style and written composition on teachers' attitudes towards pupils and found that students who were judged to have poor voices and poor written compositions were perceived to be less intelligent. They also were characterized as worse students and less enthusiastic than students who were rated as having good voices and compositions. The judges in that study were 19 female education students. No information was given about the racial or cultural backgrounds of the group, so it impossible to know whether the group represented a homogenous group of Caucasian judges, but lack of description suggests that may have been the case.

In another study that examined the effects of ethnicity and violent content on rubric scores in writing samples, Davidson and Howell (2000) found statistically

significant differences between ratings of violent and nonviolent samples in favor of the nonviolent content. Judges in this study comprised 98 percent Caucasian women of middle-class socioeconomic status. Davidson and Howell found that the perceived nonviolent minority passages were scored higher than perceived nonviolent majority passages. The authors wrote that, although their study did not find passages written by perceived minorities to be rater lower than passages written by perceived majorities, they were not ready to conclude that violent content written by a perceived minority author had no effect on scoring considerations by a homogenous group of raters.

What I am suggesting for the current investigation is that the heterogeneity that was exhibited in the group of judges might further explain the "no significant difference" findings between the two versions of narratives. By design, the story score assignments could not be tracked to individual judges, so it is difficult to know whether a judge's race or ethnicity influenced the ratings. It is possible, however, that story scores were balanced by the heterogeneity of the group.

Am I suggesting that African American or other culturally diverse judges were solely responsible for balancing story scores by raising them? No I am not. Informal conversations with minority language specialists in-training and past studies (Simmons, 1991) show that African American, or other dialect speakers, are often just as critical or judgmental towards dialect-influence speech and writing as others. I am, however, suggesting that a heterogeneous group of judges may have contributed to the findings of comparable scores for the two versions of narratives perhaps because they

were influenced by a mix of factors in the ways they were socialized or educated that were not identified in this study. This suggests a need for future research to investigate such factors deliberately.

Accounting for Story Scores

It was expected that the presence of AAE would significantly influence story scores. This was found not to be the case, as dialect-influenced stories were not rated differently than stories that did not contain dialect. The good news is that the findings of the current study suggest that when judges (in this case, graduate students in speech-language pathology) are trained to evaluate narratives on the discourse level, AAE use is not likely to exert a significant influence on story score ratings. Rather, the presence of story grammar elements and fluency (as measured by number of words produced) may be better predictors of story scores. These are the discourse level features recommended for capturing evidence of change in the stories written following treatment with the writing lab approach (Nelson, Bahr, & Van Meter, 2004; Nelson, & Van Meter, 2002).

Limitations

There are a few limitations of this study that should be mentioned. One was the low reliability achieved on story grammar scores. Achieving agreement was not

expected to be as difficult as it turned out to be. There was approximately one week between the time that judges were first introduced to story grammar ratings and when they assigned story grammar levels to the narratives. Because of scheduling constraints, data had to be collected on a certain day, although desirable reliability could not be achieved for all judges by that time.

Another limitation to this study was that judges were not tracked to story score assignments. As suggested previously, cultural diversity may, in fact, have contributed to variation in scoring, and perhaps to the difficulty in achieving reliability. It would have been ideal and could have yielded interesting information if judges could have been tracked to story scores, especially in view of the diversity in this particular group of judges. Further analysis could have been done to determine how different subgroups rated the narratives, although the small numbers in each group would have hampered that analysis.

One final word about the stylistic features analysis is warranted here. Perhaps the findings of our study could have revealed more about the stylistic features employed by the third- and fourth-grade African American students, had a different set of stylistic feature codes been used. Specifically, a limitation of this study was that the particular stylistic codes chosen were perhaps too mature for the narratives of focus.

Conclusions and Clinical Implications

This project examined whether the presence of dialectal features in students' written narratives would influence judges when assigning discourse maturity ratings. If so, it was hypothesized that stories with relatively more features would earn relatively lower discourse scores. The study was designed to describe features of AAE that appeared in narratives written by Northern urban African American third- and fourth-graders.

The results of this study support the claim that African Americans are heterogeneous in their language use. This study found that African American third- and fourth-grade students use a variety of African American morphosyntactic features in their narratives, but students did not use the features to the same degree. AAE feature usage ranged from appearance in 9 percent to 100 percent of T-units. Results of this study revealed no significant difference in story grammar and MEAP scores between stories that contained dialect features and stories that did not contain dialect features. Additionally, Pearson bivariate product moment correlations revealed that student's dialect densities were not significantly correlated with story grammar scores or MEAP ratings. Story grammar mean scores and MEAP mean scores were, however, correlated highly with each other, as were MEAP mean scores and total number of words.

The review of the literature and results of this study suggest that care should continue to be taken by educators and other academic professionals when evaluating narratives written by African American children. African American children's writing has been shown in the past to be evaluated lower because of the presence of dialect features. Therefore, training of judges should be methodical and carefully planned. If the goal truly is to evaluate students' discourse abilities, training should focus on discourse-level analysis. Although students' morphosyntactic skills are equally important, they ought to be focused on separately from discourse abilities. This study suggests that training judges to evaluate the presence of story grammar elements is an effective way of limiting negative bias toward dialect and enhancing fair assessment.

Results of this study suggest that language specialists in training are able to evaluate African American children's narratives without being influenced by the presence of dialect, although they may not agree closely on story grammar ratings. In spite of low agreement on story grammar ratings among judges, the findings of this study support a conclusion that when judges who are language specialists in-training are trained to focus specifically on discourse ability, they are able to do so without being swayed by dialect.

Future Research

Future research should continue to explore the written narratives of African American students and other culturally and linguistically diverse children. Studies have examined written narratives of Caucasian children (McCabe & Peterson, 1984), children with hearing impairments (Weiss, 1987), students with learning disabilities (Montague, 1988), and children with specific language impairments (Kaderavek & Sulzby, 2000). However, research from the field of speech-language pathology regarding narratives of African American children is still limited. Research on African American children's *written* narratives is further limited. Due to the fact that narrative writing tasks are increasingly being included in state and national education assessments, written narrative language data on African American children is needed. Future research should compare oral and written narratives of the same African American child to determine if oral and written language abilities are comparable. Future research could also look at shifts in use of AAE features over time. It would be interesting to see what happens when students are scaffolded to use SAE, but without being penalized for AAE use, as Nelson, Bahr, and Van Meter (2004) recommend in the writing lab approach.

This study used speech language pathologist graduate students as judges of narrative ability. Its results differed from those of prior stories in which teachers or

other related professionals served as judges (Smitherman & Wright, 1984). It would be interesting to see if this study were replicated using regular educators as judges whether these results would hold. Future research should focus on examining how regular educators or other groups of professionals (e.g., psychologists or special educators) evaluate written narratives of African American children.

Summary

This was a report of an investigation of the effects of dialectal features in African American students' narratives on discourse ratings by trained judges. Past research has reported that students' oral language forms influence their written language and that students who speak varieties of English other than Standard American English are likely to incorporate nonstandard dialectal features in their writing. The literature has indicated that dialectal features in written compositions may negatively influence teachers' judgments of written language quality. Past studies have found that judges rate narratives that contained dialect features lower than narratives that do not contain such features. This can be problematic for many students (including African American students) if educators and other related professionals are negatively biased against grammatical differences from SAE. Whereas studies have shown that teachers might be negatively biased towards dialect features in writing, there is a lack of information concerning potential effects of dialectal features on judgments of discourse maturity by other specialists, including

speech-language pathologists. Speech language pathology literature has suggested that narratives are less-biased assessments of language and for that reason, are being used as components of language assessments. This led to the decision in this investigation to examine whether the presence of dialectal features in students' written narratives would influence judges who are language specialists in-training as they assign discourse maturity ratings.

The question addressed was whether dialectal features influence judges who are evaluating the discourse. Graduate students in speech-language pathology learning to analyze discourse samples served as the judges. Two versions of narratives written by third- and fourth-grade African American students (the original version and the edited version) were used to determine if narratives that contain dialectal features would be rated lower. The discourse level rating system used by the student judges was an adaptation of Stein and Glenn's (1979) story grammar rating system. Holistic qualitative rating system rubrics from Michigan's MEAP test were used as a second dependent measure in this study.

The African American children in this study used a variety of AAE features. Zero Past Tense was the most commonly used feature in the written narratives. Results of this study showed no significant difference in story grammar and MEAP scores between stories that contained dialect features and stories that did not contain dialect features. Additionally, no relationship was shown to exist between dialect density and story grammar and MEAP scores. These findings are encouraging because they suggest that judges can evaluate discourse maturity in dialect-influenced

writings without being biased by the presence of morphosyntactic dialect features. They further suggest that when judges are trained to specifically look at discourse ability, they are able to do so without being swayed by dialect.

Appendix A

Discourse Analysis Training Material

Sub-Components of Assessment at the Discourse Level

Discourse structure and maturity

Discourse structure and maturity refers to the formation or structure of the narrative.

Fluency

Fluency refers to the reader's ability to generate text. Although longer does not necessarily translate into "better," tracking student's productivity of fluency can capture a student's ease of generating text over time.

Cohesion

Cohesion refers to how well the structures of the narrative fit together. Cohesion also considers the writer's use of pronoun references and verb tenses to make connections within the narrative.

Sense of audience and Voice

Sense of audience and voice refers to how well the writer considers his/her audience when writing the story. Asks questions such as: Does the writer assume the audience's level of world knowledge and leave out important details? Does the writer make sensible connections? Was the story clearly communicated? Sense of audience and voice also considers whether aspects of the piece were creative, original, and achieved the intended effect.

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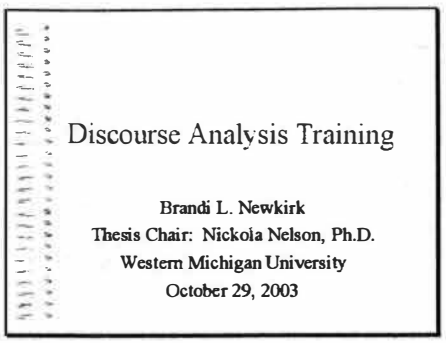
Slide 1



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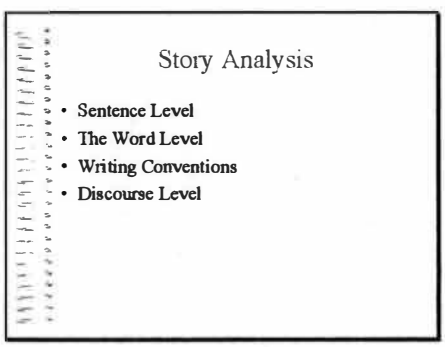

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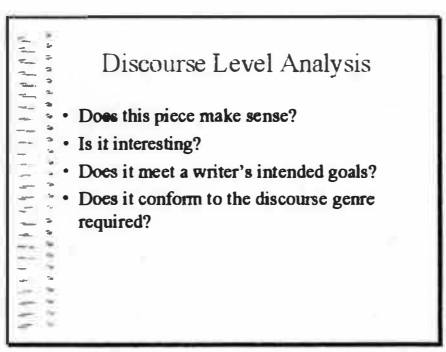

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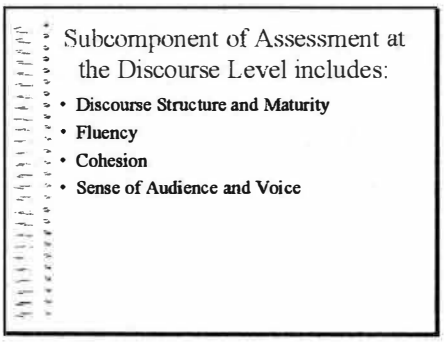

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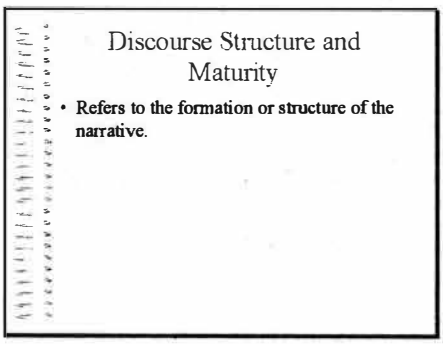

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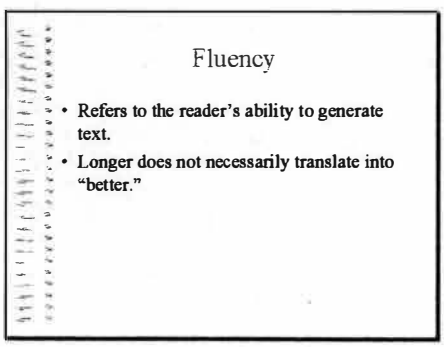

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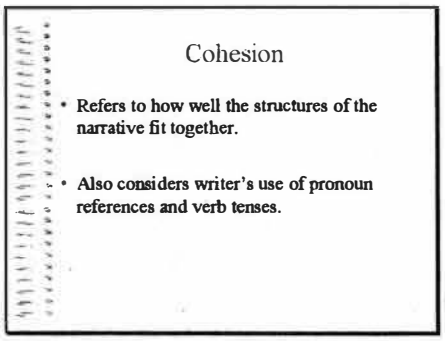

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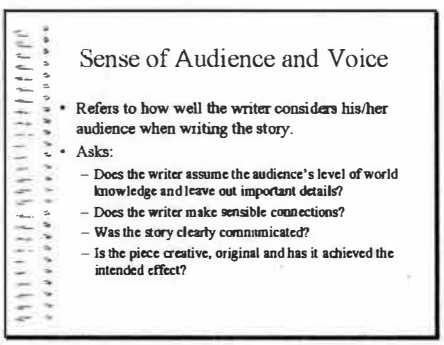

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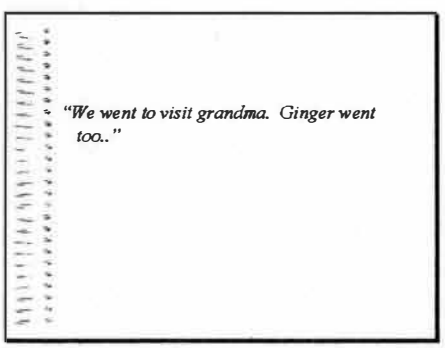

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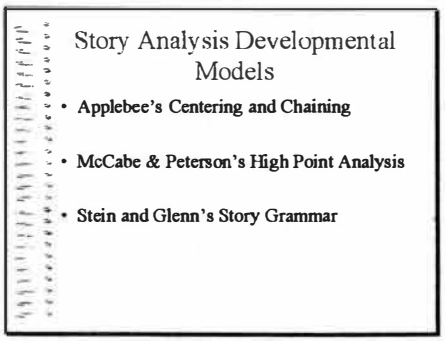

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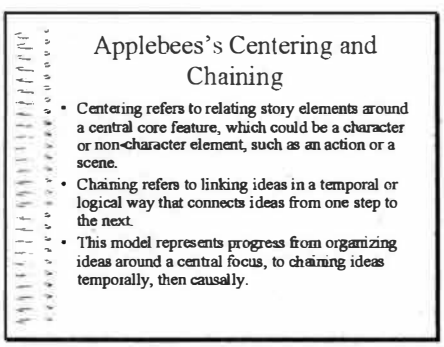

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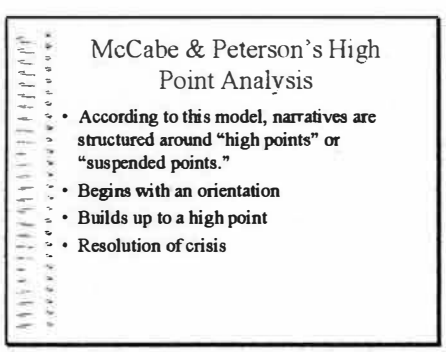

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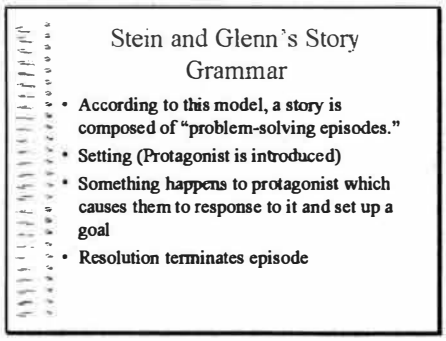

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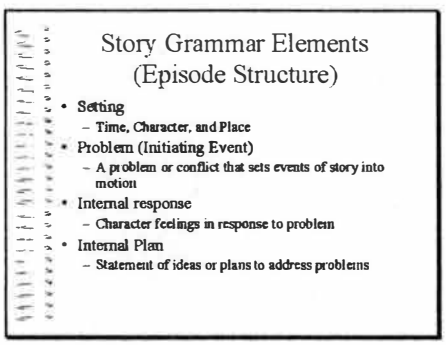

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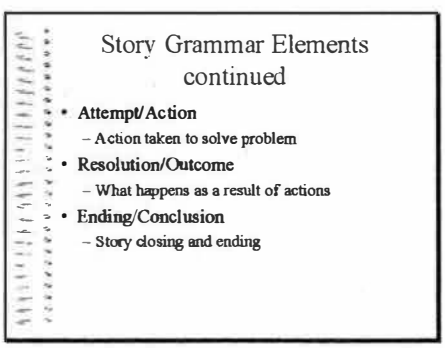

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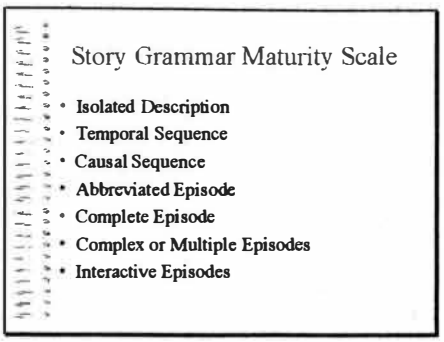

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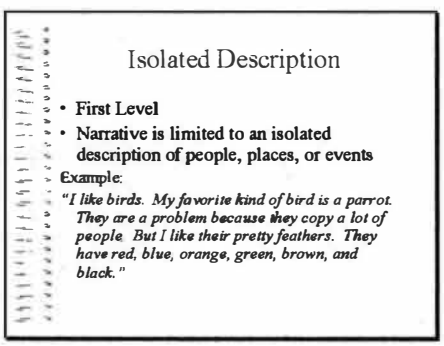

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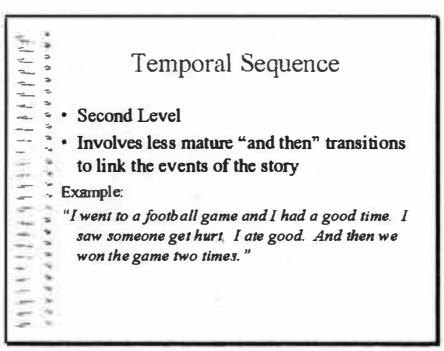

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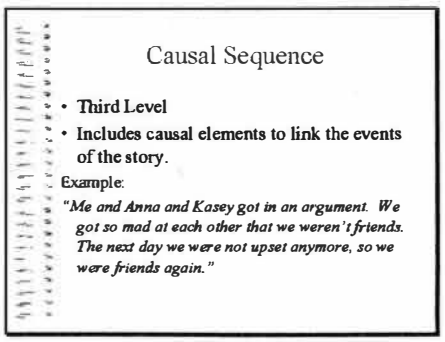

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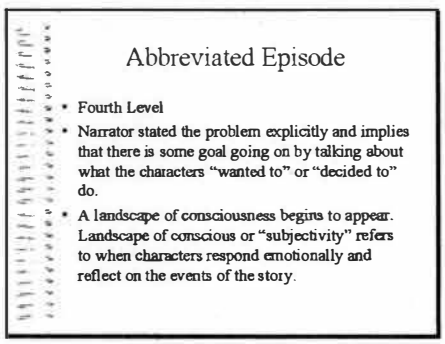

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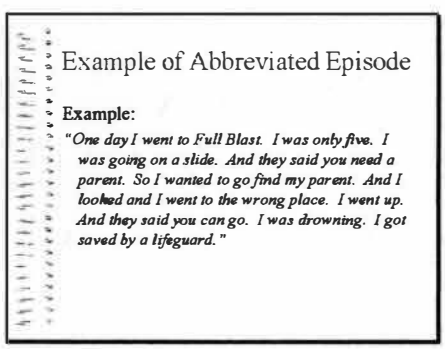

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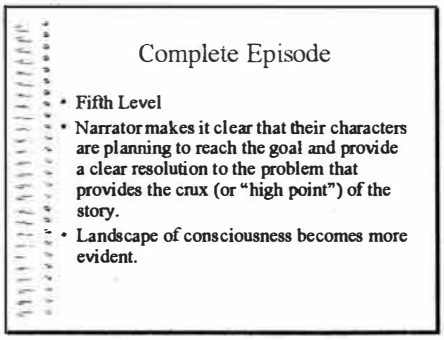

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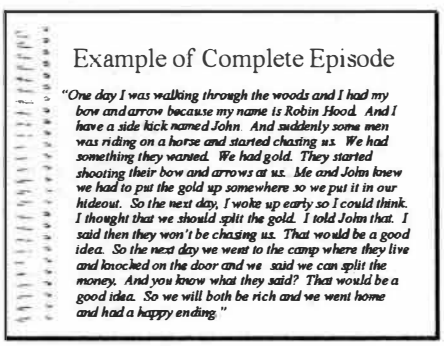

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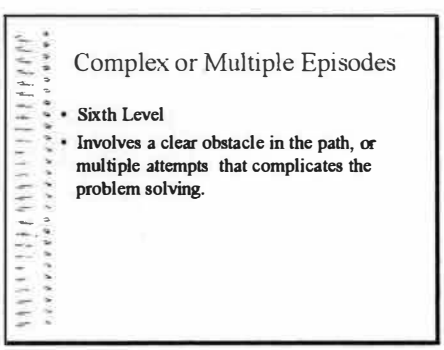

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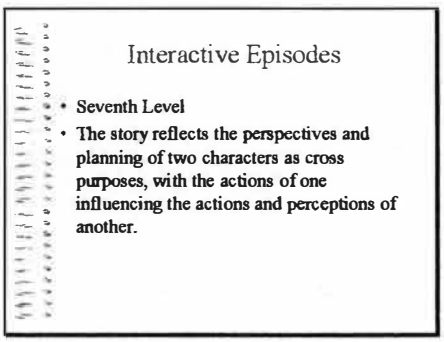

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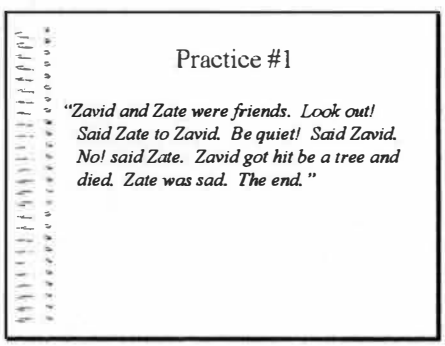

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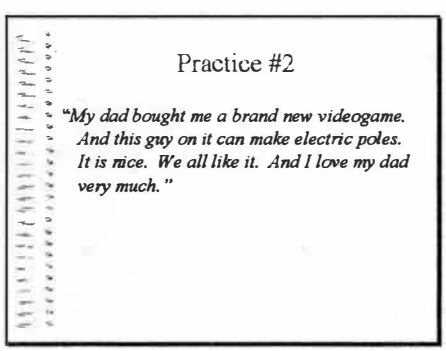

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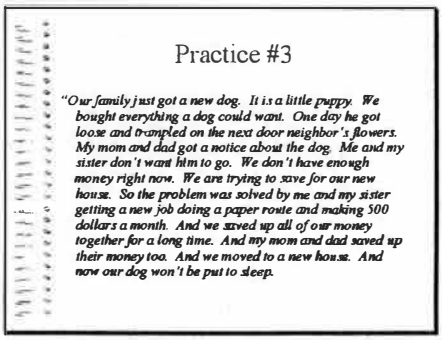

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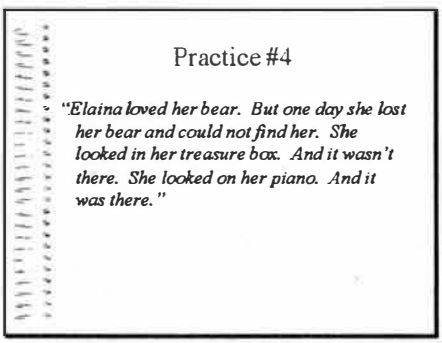

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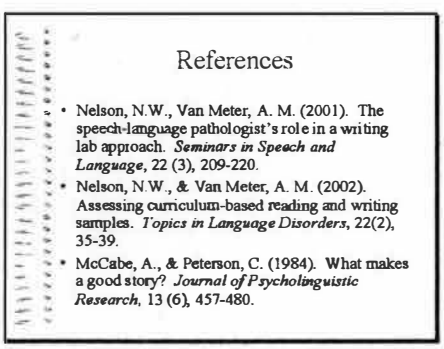

Appendix B

AAE References for Dialect Density Scoring

Selected Features of African American English
L. Green, 2003

Multiple Negation
Multiple negators such as *don't, no* and *nothing* can be used in a single negative sentence. In multiple negation constructions, negation can be marked on auxiliaries (e.g. don't) and indefinite nouns such as anybody (nobody) and anything (nothing).

Bruce don't want no teacher telling him nothing about no books.
Bruce doesn't want any teacher telling him anything about (any) books.

I don't ever have no problems.
I don't ever have any problems.

Existential it
*It (*and *dey)* occurs in constructions *in AAE that are used to indicate* that something exists.

It's some coffee in the kitchen.
There is some coffee in the kitchen.

It be too many cars in the parking lot.
There are usually too many cars in that parking lot.

It was a lot of things going on in this lesson.
There were a lot of things going on in this lesson.

Zero Possession
The morphosyntactic marker genitive -s is not required in possessive or other genitive contexts.

I always get bites cause we be hanging out at my mama house.
I always get bites because we usually hang out at my mama's house.

Sometimes Rolanda bed don't be made up.
Sometimes Rolanda's bed isn't made up.

Preterite (i.e. past tense) had
The preterite had sequence and pluperfect sequence in AAE are superficially identical; they are both formed with had + past tense form.

That's why at W.E., we had discussed a lot.
That's why we discussed a lot [of information] at W.E.

I was playing basketball, and I had went up for a lay up and then I came down and sprung my ankle.
I was playing basketball and I went up for a lay up and then I came down and sprained my ankle.

The general statement about these examples is that the had+ verb (verb-ed) sequence is not used to indicate action that took place in the past before the past; this sequence basically refers to an event in the simple past. This feature often occurs in narrative contexts (i.e., event culminates before now).

Selected African American English Features
Washington and Craig (1994)

Zero Copula or Auxiliary
Is, are model auxiliaries: *will, can,* and *do* are variable included.
Examples: "the bridge out" and "how you do this?"

Subject-Verb Agreement
A subject and verb that differ in either number or person.
Example: "what do this mean"

Zero Past Tense
-ed is not always used to denote regular past constructions, or the present tense is used in place of the irregular past tense.
Example: "and this car crash"

Zero -ing
Present progressive morpheme *-ing* is deleted.
Example: "and the lady is sleep"

Zero to
Infinitive marker *to* is deleted.
Example: "now my turn shoot you"

Zero Plural
Variable inclusion of plural marker *-s*.
Example: 'ghost are boys'

Indifinite article
"*a*" regardless of vowel context.
"Brenda had to play for a hour, didn't he?"

Appositive pronoun
Both a pronoun and a noun reference the same person or object.
"the teacher she's going up here"

African American discourse in black student writing
G. Smitherman, 2000

1. Rhythmic, dramatic, evocative language. *Example*: Darkness is like a cage bird in black around me, shutting me off from the rest of the world.
2. Reference to color-race-ethnicity *that is, when topic does not call for it). *Example*: I don't get in trouble at school or have any problems with people picking on me. I am nice to everyone no mater what color or sex.
3. Use of proverbs, aphorisms, Biblical verses. *Example*: People might shut me off from the world cause of a mistake, crime, or a sin … Judge not others, for you will have you day to be judged.
4. Sermonic tone reminiscent of traditional Black Church rhetoric, especially in vocabulary, imagery, metaphor.

Example: I feel like I'm suffering from being with world. There is no food, water, bed and clothes for me to put on. I'm fightin, scared of what might happened if no one finds me. But I pray and pray until they do find me.

5. Direct address-conversational tone. *Example*: I think you should use the money for the railroad track…it could fall off the tracks and kill someone on the train and that is very dangerous. Please change your mind and pick the railroad tracks for the people's safety, okay.
6. Cultural references. *Example*: How about slipping me some chitterlings in tonight.
7. Ethnolinguistic idioms. *Example*: A fight has broke loose; It will run me crazy.
8. Verbal inventiveness, unique nomenclature. *Example*: [The settlers] were pioneerific.
9. Cultural values-community consciousness. Expressions of concern for development of African Americans; concern for welfare of entire community, not just individuals. *Example*: Young and old, and the homeless among Blacks.
10. Field dependency. Involvement with and immersion in events and situations; personalizing phenomena; lack of distance; lack of distance from topics and subjects.

Cultural vocabulary-influence

Cultural vocabulary-influence represents culture-specific words, idioms, and phrases (Chaplin, 1987, p.26)

Appendix C

Example of Narratives with Dialectal and Without Dialectal Features

Narrative with Dialectal Features:

Once there were me and my brothers and we was up in my mom and dad room. And I told the scariest stories and they was so scary. And when I got done my mom and dad was downstairs and all of a sudden I heard something. And I said, "What was that?" And my brother said, "Quit playing and finish." I said, "That was not me," and we heard it again. And I said, "Now do you believe me?" And he said, "Uhoh." We got the flashlight and we look. And it was not there so we turned the light back off. We heard it again. And our window was open and it was someone. And we hurried down the step and we went to my mom and dad. We call the popos and they came and got him out in a heartbeat.

Edited Version of the Same Narrative:

Once there was my brothers and I and we were up in my mom's and dad's room. And I told the scariest stories and they were so scary. And when I got done my mom and dad were downstairs and all of the sudden I heard something. And I said, "What was that?" And my brother said, "Quit joking and finish." I said, "That was not me," and we heard it again. And I said, "Now do you believe me?" And he said, "Uhoh."

We got the flashlight and we looked. And it was not there so we turned the light back off. We heard it again. And our window was open and it was someone. And we hurried down the steps and we went to my mom and dad. We called the police and they came and got him out in a heartbeat.

Appendix D

MEAP Scoring Rubric

Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) Writing Scoring Rubric

6	The writing is exceptionally engaging, clear, and focused. Ideas and content are thoroughly developed with relevant details and examples where appropriate. The writer's control over organization and the connections between ideas moves the reader smoothly and naturally through the text. The writer shows a mature command of language including precise word choice that results in a compelling piece of writing. Tight control over language use and mastery of writing conventions contribute to the effect of the response.
5	The writing is engaging, clear, and focused. Ideas and content are well developed with relevant details and examples where appropriate. The writer's control over the organization and the connections between ideas effectively moves the reader through the text. The writer shows a command of language including precise word choice. The language is well controlled, and occasional lapses in writing conventions are hardly noticeable.
4	The writing is generally clear and focused. Ideas and content are developed with relevant details and examples where appropriate, although there may be some unevenness. The response is generally coherent, and its organization is functional. The writer's command of language, including word choice, supports meaning. Lapses in writing conventions are not distracting.
3	The writing is somewhat clear and focused. Ideas and content are developed with limited or partially successful use of examples and details. There may be evidence of an organizational structure, but it may be artificial or ineffective. Incomplete mastery over writing conventions and language use may interfere with meaning some of the time. Vocabulary may be basic.
2	The writing is only occasionally clear and focused. Ideas and content are underdeveloped or connected. There may be little evidence or organizational structure. Vocabulary may be limited. Limited control over writing conventions may make the writing difficult to understand.
1	The writing is generally unclear and unfocused. Ideas and content are not developed or connected. There may be no noticeable organizational structure. Lack of control over writing conventions may make the writing difficult to understand.

http://www.meritaward.state.mi.us/mma/meapinfo/writingRubric.pdf

Appendix E

Demographic Form for Judges

Thank you for participating in this research study. Please complete the following form. The information that you provide on this form will be used to help me describe the judges *as a group*.

Thank you. – Brandi L. Newkirk and Dr. Nickola W. Nelson

Demographic Information

Chronological Age: _____
(Please calculate your chronological age using today's date.)

Where did you grow up?

_____ Midwestern U.S.A.
_____ Western U.S.A.
_____ I did not grow up in the U.S.A.
_____ Eastern U.S.A.
_____ Southern U.S.A.

How would you describe your undergraduate institution?

_____ Private
_____ Public
_____ Historical Black College or University

Race/Ethnic Group: (Select the one group with which you most closely identify)

_____ White, Non Hispanic
_____ Black, Non Hispanic
_____ Hispanic
_____ Asian or Pacific Islander
_____ American Indian or Alaskan Native
_____ Other (Please specify)

What is your native language? _____

Appendix F

Approval Form

Date: June 24, 2003

To: Nickola Nelson, Principal Investigator
Adelia Van Meter, Co-Principal Investigator
Brandi Newkirk, Student Investigator for thesis
Pamela Ansell, Student Investigator for thesis

From: Mary Lagerwey, Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number: 03-05-31

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project entitled "Writing Lab Sample Analysis" has been **approved** under the **expedited** category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note that you may **only** conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: June 24, 2004

Appendix G

Examples of AAE Morphosyntactic Features

AAE Morphosyntactic Features	Examples from Students' Stories
Nonstandard S/V Agreement	Then we was trying to open the door. And we is going to have a lot of fun.
Zero Possession	It was my baby cousin birthday. I went to my friend house to play.
Zero Copula	That what the air bag is for. Then her problem when she got up to room 668, the baby was coming out.
Zero Auxiliary	And then we going to the store. And my brothers coming with us too.
Zero Plural	And we hurried down the step. Once upon a time a boy was teasing two girl.
Zero Past Tense	Then my mom believe me. My mom ask me what he was smoking.
Indefinite Article	And I ate half a ice cream. I went to my dad's house for a hour.
Preterite Had	Then the party had came. Mickey had liked Minnie since first grade.
+ ed	She had spented the night. We swimmed under the water.
Multiple Negation	And I am not taking no chances. Do not smoke no more at all.
Existential It	And our window was open and it was somebody. It was three girls.
Other	Then we took our shower for the day can begin.

Appendix H

Raw Data

Case	StoryG1	MEAP1	Judge1	StoryG2	MEAP2	Judge2	StoryG3	MEAP3	Judge3	sgmean1
1	5	3	15	1	2	6	3	2	4	3.00
2	2	1	17	3	4	12	2	4	11	2.33
3	2	4	17	2	3	14	2	4	7	2.00
4	1	2	17	2	3	16	2	3	3	1.67
5	3	3	9	5	4	3	5	5	2	4.33
6	1	1	12	4	3	10	1	2	8	2.00
7	4	5	7	3	3	6	3	3	3	3.33
8	3	3	15	3	2	12	4	2	9	3.33
9	3	4	5	4	5	2	3	4	1	3.33
10	3	3	12	5	3	7	5	3	4	4.33
11	4	4	14	5	5	11	3	4	4	4.00
12	1	2	6	1	2	16	1	2	4	1.00
13	3	2	16	5	3	15	4	3	8	4.00
14	4	3	13	1	2	12	4	3	2	3.00
15	4	4	15	4	4	5	4	3	2	4.00
16	4	4	10	2	4	9	5	4	3	3.67
17	1	3	17	4	4	7	4	4	1	3.00
18	3	4	17	3	3	14	4	3	11	3.33
19	2	2	14	2	4	11	2	3	9	2.00
20	5	4	17	7	6	12	5	5	6	5.67
21	4	2	11	2	2	8	2	3	5	2.67
22	2	5	11	2	4	10	2	4	1	2.00
23	2	3	17	2	5	7	2	2	3	2.00
24	6	5	13	6	5	12	5	4	8	5.67
25	4	5	8	6	5	3	5	5	1	5.00
26	2	3	16	2	3	14	4	4	11	2.67
27	2	2	17	1	1	5	1	2	3	1.33

mmean1	WordsND	TunitsND	StoryG4	MEAP4	Judge4	StoryG5	MEAP5	Judge5
2.33	68		5	4	18	5	5	2
3.00	83		3	3	18	2	2	8
3.67	200		2	2	18	2	4	15
2.67	85		2	3	18	2	2	14
4.00	125		4	2	7	3	3	5
2.00	67		3	1	16	3	3	13
3.67	208		2	3	9	3	4	4
2.33	107		5	3	18	4	3	10
4.33	116		2	3	18	4	4	16
3.00	126		5	3	20	3	3	8
4.33	137		6	5	15	5	4	7
2.00	65		1	2	14	1	3	13
2.67	156		4	3	11	3	2	5
2.67	110		2	1	16	4	2	9
3.67	78		1	4	6	4	3	4
4.00	113		5	3	12	3	4	5
3.67	88		5	4	13	3	3	9
3.33	44		3	2	10	2	3	5
3.00	284		3	3	15	4	4	10
5.00	144		5	5	18	5	3	16
2.33	93		4	2	15	1	2	9
4.33	76		4	4	18	2	3	14
3.33	139		2	4	6	2	3	9
4.67	131		5	4	16	6	4	10
5.00	265		7	6	15	4	5	10
3.33	85		1	2	18	1	3	7
1.67	159		2	1	15	3	2	13

StoryG6	MEAP6	Judge6	mmean2	WordsD	TunitsD	Dtokens	DDM	DDMT
5	5	10	4.67	68	10	3	4.41%	30%
2	3	6	2.67	85	12	8	9.41%	67%
2	3	8	3.00	196	25	5	2.55%	20%
4	3	1	2.67	86	12	3	3.49%	25%
2	3	1	2.67	127	22	2	1.57%	9%
3	2	7	2.00	66	10	2	3.03%	20%
5	3	13	3.33	211	28	7	3.32%	25%
4	3	3	3.00	107	12	8	7.48%	67%
4	2	13	3.00	115	12	5	4.35%	42%
4	4	2	3.33	125	18	2	1.60%	11%
4	3	1	4.00	139	17	6	4.32%	35%
1	2	2	2.33	65	10	7	10.77%	70%
4	2	3	2.33	158	16	8	5.06%	50%
2	2	6	1.67	107	20	6	5.61%	30%
4	3	1	3.33	77	9	4	5.19%	44%
4	3	4	3.33	110	12	4	3.64%	33%
4	4	1	3.67	88	5	5	5.68%	100%
3	3	2	2.67	44	8	2	4.55%	25%
3	4	4	3.67	280	32	15	5.36%	47%
5	3	14	3.67	144	23	11	7.64%	48%
2	1	2	1.67	92	10	2	2.17%	20%
5	5	12	4.00	76	12	2	2.63%	17%
2	4	11	3.67	136	20	8	5.88%	40%
2	4	6	4.00	130	17	4	3.08%	24%
4	5	4	5.33	264	32	6	2.27%	19%
1	3	17	2.67	83	9	2	2.41%	22%
2	2	8	1.67	155	20	9	5.81%	45%

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