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E-mail; css@cscanada.org; caooc@hotmail.com

About some Characteristics of Black English

À PROPOS DE CERTAINES CARACTÉRISTIQUES DE L'ANGLAIS DES NOIRS

YIN Ya-juan¹

Abstract: Black English is one of the varieties of so called Standard English spoken by the Black Americans. It has its own characteristics and uniqueness. We study it only because we want to know it better in order to understand and communicate with each other better.

Key words: black English; characteristics; variety; grammar

Résumé: L'anglaise des Noirs est l'une des variétés de ce qu'on appelle l'anglais standard parlé par les Noirs américains. Elle a ses propres caractéristiques et ses particularités. Nous l'étudions dans cet article parce que nous voulons mieux le connaître afin de se comprendre et de se communiquer mieux.

Mots-Clés: l'anglais des noirs; caractéristiques; variété, grammaire

As we all know that each language exists in a number of different varieties, and individuals vary in their language they use according to occasions. Not every individual will necessarily command the same range of varieties as every other person, but throughout the total linguistic community there will be a considerable features. The Black English, especially its spoken form is a special kind of variety.

Linguistics are agreed that no variety of a language is inherently better than any other. They insist that all language and all varieties of particular language are equal in that they quite adequately serve the needs of who use them. So some linguistics who have described the speech by black residents of the northern United States have noticed how uniform that speech is in many aspects. Then, what are the characteristics of black English?

1. SOME CHARACTERISTICS IN PRONUNCIATION

¹ Associate Professor, College of Foreign Languages, Shenyang University, China.
Address: Lianhe Road 54#, Dadong District, Shenyang City, zip code 110041 P.R. of China zip code 110041
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Look at the following talk between two ten year's old boys and an adult.

Tom: hey Ms. Smith, d'ya ovvah watch Kung Fu on TV wif dat dude... wha's his name?

David: he have my name, Tom. Dat's duh dude's name.

Ms Smith: yes I've watched it a few times. It's really an exciting show.

David: did you avvah see how he throw all dose dudes around, an how he use his legs?

Tom: yeah. You know what? He can always fight. He don't fight to be mean dough. He fight to be good, and he'p people. An' he always duh good guy.

David: you know what? He one of does pries' or somefin. Hey Ms. Smith, what is he? I can't remebah what dey call...

On the phonological level, several characteristics of Black English are evident in this conversation.

1st. The use of duh, dat, dose, dey. Tom and David repeatedly use a d sound for the th in standard English at the beginning of the words, such as "the", "that", "those", "there", and "they". And the use of v for th is also heard between vowels of words, such as "ovvah" by Tom.

2nd. The dropping of r after vowels, such as yo (you or you'er) ,sho(sure), for(four), po (pour), mo(more), noth (north)... but at the end of words, where it is especially noticeable in Tom and David's conversation, it is indicated by the spelling ---ah, as in ovvah, remembah

3rd. Black English has certain phonological, and syntactic characteristics. Words like thing and this may be pronounced as ting and dis. bath may sound like baff ; brother like bruvver , nothing like nuffin. Still other examples are bik for big; kit for kid, and cup for cub.

The result of such losses is that there are likely to be quite different homophones in Black English and in standard varieties of the language. Vowels may be nasalized and nasal consonants lost: run and end may just be in the first case an r followed by a nasalized vowel and in the second case a simple nasalized vowel with no pronunciation at all of the final nd. The diphthongs in words like find and found may be both monophongized and nasalized, and the words may lack any pronunciation of the final nd. Consequently, find ,found, even fond may become homophonous, all pronounced with an f and a following nasalized vowel.

Furthermore, in morphology, because final t and d are often pronounced, there may be no overt signaling of past tense, so that I walked sounds just like I walk. There may also be no signaling of the third-person singular in the present tense of the verb, resulting in a form like be go . Tesses as a pronunciation of tests would also indicate that there is no final t at all in the speaker's basic form of the word, which has become for that speaker a word just like dress, with its plural dresses.

2. SOME CHARACTERISTICS IN GRAMMAR

Black English has its own special characteristics not only in pronunciation but also in grammar.

2.1 The omission of the -s ending with the third person singular in verbs. This is not the weakening of consonant cluster, but the omission after vowels. And in the case of words like *have* and *do* that have special forms for the third person singular, Black English does not drop the final -s of the verbs, but it uses the full forms of *have* and *do* . For example: *He don't fight to be mean dough* .

2.2 Black English has special uses of *be*, or lack of *be* (the zero copular), as in a contrast between *He nice* (He is nice right now); and *He be nice*(He is nice sometimes). The negative of these sentences would also be *He ain't nice* and *He don't be nice*, respectively. *you tired*. may be an equivalent of the standard "you're tired." Black English also employs constructions such as *I asked Joe what can he do; Can't nobody do that (as a statement), and It ain't no heaven for you to go to*, in which *it* functions like *there* in Standard English. *Ain't* is used frequently, as is multiple negation, and there are also special auxiliary verb uses of *done* and *been*, as in *He done told me* and *I been watching it*. And *He have my*

name. in the above conversation.

2.3 Black English prefers to the pattern of multiple negation. In standard English we have *any* in both negative and question sentences, but Black English lacks of *any* but *no* is used instead. For example, in standard English we say: *I don't see anything like that anywhere*; but in Black English :*I ain't see nothin' like dat(that) no place*. This example also indicates that Black English often uses double negation.

2.4 The use of *is'* was, and *be* in the form of the first person, the second person and the third person plural. For example :*You know how tough I think I is*; and *now I feels sick every time I be the one to cook*. *You feels sorry for me don't you?*; *We wanna git home fo they ketches us*; *may be she sick.*; *You always say how sickly they is*.

2.5 The use of objective case *us*, *me*, *them* and *him* instead of their subject. Such as “*Us married now, I tell her*; *Me and him out in the field all day*; *us sweat, chopping and plowing* ;*Them the only reason you think of?* ”*She say*.

2.6 Among Black Americans, they also use the word order to express possession. For example: *This John house*; *In there Tom black jacket*; when “word order ” can not be clear enough, the apostrophe possession and possessive pronoun and noun are used, such as, *Dat pen mine*; *I done give the gun to him, it John's*.

2.7 In Black English, indirect question on inverted, in contrast in it in standard English. As in *I asked Marry when did she go* ; *I wnna know did he go somewhere*; *She put the ax down and asked me do I want some lemonade*.

3. THE STUDIES ON BLACK ENGLISH

So from all above we can see that Black English really has its own special characteristics and that is its own “subsystem with the large grammar of English, and subsystem of phonology of English.” But we should be clear that Black English is not a separate system of language . Some researchers point out that black English is derived from pidgin---which vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation are of African language because the speakers were African slaves (Blacks, of cause). And Americanism persists in the English they spoken, some are still apparent in Varieties of Black English, and a few have entered into the mainstream of American English.

Contemporary researchers generally agree that “ both structural and functional patterns of black English have taken their distinct form in the evolution of Black American Culture and social organization in New World settings, both rural and urban. ” Some dialects believe that “the language of Blacks was a direct descendant of the Standard British regional dialects that existed in the colonial era of American History and that their language was largely the result of the influence of contrast with southern white speech. ”

No matter where the Black English is derived from , and how different it is in its pronunciation and grammar, we cannot consider it as a non-standard English, it is a kind of American spoken English , a variety of American English, which we can not ignore .

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