BLACK ENGLISH: DOES IT HINDER LEARNERS?

PRESENTED BY:
SHIRLEY SPRINKLES, Ph.D
“BLACK ENGLISH”
DOES IT HINDER STUDENTS?
BLACK ENGLISH

• WHAT IS IT?

• WHY DO KIDS SPEAK IT?

• DOES IT AFFECT THE “ACHIEVEMENT GAP?” - HOW?

• WHAT CAN SCHOOLS DO?
WHAT IS IT?
A LANGUAGE—WITH MANY NAMES

• BLACK ENGLISH
• BLACK VERNACULAR ENGLISH (BVE)
• AFRICAN AMERICAN ENGLISH (AAE)
• AFRICAN AMERICAN VERNICULAR ENGLISH (AAVE)
• EBONICS
“DIS” AND “DAT”

• DEFINITION:
  – A **DIALECT** (language variety) OF ENGLISH
  • OFTEN SPOKEN BY AFRICAN AMERICANS IN URBAN AND SOUTHERN REGIONS.
  • HAS BEEN DISTINGUISHED BY DIFFERENCES:
    1. DICTION
    2. PRONOUNCIATION
    3. THE USE OF THE CONSUETUDINAL *be*
    4. THE TENDENCY TO DELETE THE –S ENDING OF VERBS
    5. REPLACEMENT OF “th” sounds with “d” or “f” sounds
    6. USE OF THE EMPHATIC *done* TO STRESS COMPLETION OF AN ACT.
AAVE/STANDARD ENGLISH COMPARISONS

AAVE
• Who purse is dis?
• She be here everyday
• She here now
• Where you gon’ be at?
• He hear you
• Nuf’n
• Mouf
• He done did it

STANDARD ENGLISH
• Who’s purse is this?
• She is here everyday
• She is here now
• Where will you be?
• He hears you
• Nothing
• Mouth
• He has already done it
EBONICS IS NOT “SLANG”

• DEFINITION-”slang”:
WORDS, PHRASES, AND USES THAT ARE REGARDED AS VERY INFORMAL AND ARE OFTEN RESTRICTED TO SPECIAL CONTEXTS OR ARE PECULIAR TO A SPECIFIED PROFESSION, CLASS, ETC.
SLANG VS. FORMAL ENGLISH

INFORMAL LANGUAGE (SLANG)

• “WHADDUP, DUDE?”

• “GIMME SOME SKIN!”

• “THAT’S PHAT!”

• “SHOW ME THE BENJAMINS!”

FORMAL LANGUAGE

• “HOW ARE YOU TODAY, SIR?”

• “LET ME SHAKE YOUR HAND!”

• “THAT’S REALLY NICE!”

• “SHOW ME THE MONEY!”
A CONTROVERSIAL TOPIC

• A RANGE OF **ATTITUDES**:
  -- LINGUISTS
  – EDUCATORS
  – PARENTS
  – YOUTH
  – POLITICIANS/ACTIVISTS
PROS AND CONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRO ARGUMENTS</th>
<th>CON ARGUMENTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• CHILDREN’S HOME LANGUAGE IS AN “ASSET” THAT THEY BRING WITH THEM TO SCHOOL</td>
<td>• THE LANGUAGE OF LITERACY IS STANDARD ENGLISH</td>
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<td>• EVERYONE IS ENTITLED TO OWN A NATIVE LANGUAGE</td>
<td>• ALL TEACHERS SHOULD EXCISE, ERADICATE, REPLACE HOME LANGUAGE WITH “GOOD GRAMMAR”</td>
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<tr>
<td>• EDUCATORS SHOULD HONOR AND DRAW ON THE RICH LANGUAGE KNOWLEDGE AF.AM. CHILDREN ALREADY HAVE FROM THEIR CULTURE</td>
<td>• SCHOOLS SHOULD PROVIDE CHILDREN WITH INTERACTIONAL STYLES, SPEECH PATTERNS, ETC., THAT WILL ALLOW THEM TO SUCCEED IN THE LARGER SOCIETY</td>
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BILL COSBY:

• BILL HAS GONE AND DONE IT AGAIN...
• They're standing on the corner and they can't speak English. I can't even talk the way these people talk:
  Why you ain't,
  Where you is,
  What he drive,
  Where he stay,
  Where he work,
  Who you be...
And I blamed the kid until I heard the mother talk.
And then I heard the father talk.
Everybody knows it's important to speak English except these knuckleheads. You can't be a doctor with that kind of crap coming out of your mouth.
In fact you will never get any kind of job making a decent living.
WHY KIDS SPEAK IT

• VARIES BY SOCIAL CLASS
  – LOWER, MIDDLE, UPPER

• VARIES BY CONTEXT
  – WHEN?
  – WHERE?

• VARIES BY DEGREE OF CULTURAL IDENTIFICATION & INFLUENCE
  – AVOIDANCE PATTERNS
  – CONNECTION PATTERNS
WHY DO KIDS SPEAK IT?

A MULTIFACETED ANSWER:

1. BECAUSE IT IS THEIR “MOTHER TONGUE”
2. IT IS A SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL CURRENCY OF “POWER”
3. IT “FITS” WITH OCCASION, PLACE, PEOPLE
4. IT “UNIFIES” AND “FORTIFIES”
5. IT PROVIDES SOCIAL “MOBILITY”
6. IT IS THE LANGUAGE OF MUCH BLACK LITERATURE
7. IT IS CULTURALLY TRANSCENDENT
8. IT IS THE “LOVE” LANGUAGE OF POP MUSIC
9. IT IS “RAP”
10. ETC. .........
HOW DOES BLACK ENGLISH AFFECT THE “ACHIEVEMENT GAP”? 

• TEACHERS DON’T UNDERSTAND AAVE
• BLACK STUDENTS ADOPT AVOIDANCE BEHAVIORS TO PROTECT THEMSELVES FROM HUMILIATION
• TALKING “WHITE” CAN CAUSE UNDESIRABLE SOCIAL OSTRACIZATION AMONG BLACKS
• OVER-REPRESENTATION OF “SPEECH” REFERRED BLACK STUDENTS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION
• COMMUNICATION BARRIERS ARE ERECTED BETWEEN KEY STAKEHOLDERS
• POLICIES, PRACTICES, ASSESSMENT SYSTEMS, AND INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACHES DO NOT ACCOMMODATE THIS LANGUAGE DIFFERENCE
ESSENTIALS TO AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS LEARNING

GUIDING FUNCTIONS:
– SELF EFFICACY
– SELF-REGULATED LEARNING
– INCREMENTAL BELIEFS ABOUT INTELLIGENCE OR ABILITY
– POSITIVE TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP QUALITY
– COLLABORATIVE LEARNING
– INFORMATION –PROCESSING ELEMENTS
  • COGNITIVE ELABORATION
  • AUTOMATICITY
  • SCHEMA-BASED TEACHING AND LEARNING

SOURCE: CREATING THE OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN: MOVING FROM RESEARCH TO PRACTICE TO CLOSE THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP
AUTHOR: A. Wade Boykin
WHAT WILL WORK TO CLOSE THE GAP?

1. BLACK STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN INSTRUCTION
2. POSITIVE TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS
3. RELEVANT, MEANINGFUL, NON-RACIST CURRICULUM
4. AN ASSET-FOCUSED INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACH
   --CONCENTRATE ON DIVERSE CULTURAL, SOCIAL, EXPERIENTIAL AND INTELLECTUAL CAPITAL BLACK STUDENTS BRING TO THE CLASSROOM.
5. INCORPORATION OF CULTURALLY SENSITIVE POLICIES AND PRACTICES AT ALL LEVELS THAT ALLOW ASSETS TO FLOURISH

SOURCE: CREATING THE OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN: MOVING FROM RESEARCH TO PRACTICE TO CLOSE THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

AUTHOR: A. Wade Boykin
Mother to Son

Well, son, I’ll tell you:
Life for me ain’t been no crystal stair.
It’s had tacks in it,
And splinters,
And boards torn up,
And places with no carpet on the floor—
Bare.
But all the time
I’se been a-climbin’ on,
And reachin’ landin’s,
And turnin’ corners,
And sometimes goin’ in the dark
Where there ain’t been no light.
So, boy, don’t you turn back.
Don’t you set down on the steps
‘Cause you finds it’s kinder hard.
Don’t you fall now—
For I’se still goin’ honey,
I’se still climbin’,
And life for me ain’t been no crystal stair.*

*From The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes by Langston Hughes, copyright ©1964 by The Estate of Langston Hughes. Used by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, a division of Random House, Inc.
A “Must Read!” Book

STAR TEACHERS
The Ideology and Best Practice of Effective Teacher of Diverse Children and Youth in Poverty

Author: Dr. Martin Haberman

http://www.habermanfoundation.org/StarTeacherPreScreener.aspx
STRATEGIES TO BRIDGE THE LANGUAGE “DIVIDE”

• TEACH “CROSS-CODING” IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS TO ALLOW BLACK STUDENTS DIGNITY WHILE TRANSITIONING TO STANDARD ENGLISH

• READ CULTURALLY RELEVANT STORIES AND LITERATURE COMPOSED OF BLACK DIALECTS

• INCORPORATE STUDENTS’ ASSETS OF LANGUAGE, EXPERIENCE, CULTURE, AND PRIOR KNOWLEDGE INTO LESSONS-- ACROSS CURRICULAR GENRES
CURRENT “SOP”

CORRECTIONIST APPROACH:
VIEWS LANGUAGE AS:

– PROPER VS. IMPROPER

– GOOD VS. BAD

– CORRECT VS. INCORRECT

• SOURCE: Wheeler and Swords, Codeswitching, NCTE, 2006
TRY THIS:

CODE-SWITCHING/CONTRASTIVIST APPROACH

VIEWS LANGUAGE AS:

— APPROPRIATE VS. INAPPROPRIATE

— EFFECTIVE VS. INEFFECTIVE IN A SETTING (APPROPRIATE TO THE TIME, PLACE, AUDIENCE, AND COMMUNICATIVE PURPOSE)

— RANGES FROM FORMAL TO INFORMAL

— STUDENT MAY “CODE-SWITCH)” TO FIT THE SETTING

— TEACHERS HELP STUDENTS “TRANSLATE, CHANGE, CODE-SWITCH” FROM ONE VARIETY TO ANOTHER

SOURCE: Wheeler and Swords, Codeswitching, NCTE, 2006
IT’S THE LAW

Case:
Martin Luther King Junior Elementary School
Children v. Ann Arbor School District Board (1979)

Ruling: (in favor of plaintiffs)

Affirmed the obligation of school districts to educate black children: “No child should be deprived of equal educational opportunity because of the failure of an educational agency to take appropriate action to overcome linguistic barriers”

• Judge stated that the barrier lay not in the child’s language per se, but instead in the teachers’ negative attitudes toward the childrens’ language.
Figure 5-1 Empowerment of Minority Students: A Framework for Intervention

Author: James (Jim) Cummins (1989)
California Association for Bilingual Education
In the last two pages of your AIE Quick Reference booklet, write...

**HOW...**

will this session help you further
YOUR school improvement?

AIE Conference 2014