ABSTRACT

Matarese, Maureen T. African American Vernacular English in Freshman Composition and the Social Construction of Teacher Response. (Under the direction of Walt Wolfram.)

Dating from the early 1960's, plentiful scholarship has identified, codified, and analyzed features of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) in the written discourse of students at various educational levels (Wolfram, 1969, 1999; Smitherman 1981; Labov 1972, 1998). Although often ideologically neutral, this scholarship has occasionally sparked heated debates, among linguists and pedagogues alike, about the appropriate educational methods for teaching African American students who br   ing into their classrooms varieties of English that are popularly thought to deviate from the norms of academic or "standard" English. Moreover, while a growing body of research exists on teacher response to student writing (Anson, 1988) and more recently to the cultural dimensions of response (Cooper and Odell, 1999; Anson, 1999) and the social construction of error in teacher response (Anson 2001), scholarship on teachers' responses to specific, nonstandard linguistic variables in texts is sparse. This study combines a sociolinguistic analysis of AAVE-speaking students' texts with an examination of the nature and underlying ideological origins of specific teacher comments with respect to those features.

This thesis analyzes teachers' written responses to AAVE features; including consonant cluster reduction, copula absence, possessive marking, and third person singular –s absence in college students' writing. This analysis of teachers' responses to AAVE in writing allows me to make observations about the ways in which teachers

create socially constructed personas for students based on their vernacular dialect features.

The results of this study demonstrate that spoken language strongly influences written, although instances of specific vernacular dialect use are highly localized depending on the student, and the range of dialect use varies from one instance of one feature to multiple instances of multiple features. Although the occurrence of AAVE in these essays is sporadic, the teachers' responses to these features illustrate a potential pattern in teacher response technique. Most often, teachers use imperative statements and strikethroughs to correct language in student rough drafts. An initial analysis of this commenting shows that it may not be helpful to students in revising their essays, as most often, the AAVE feature persists in other papers and final drafts that have been "corrected" by the teacher.

The thesis concludes with a discussion of further programs of research and implications for educational reform, teacher development, and enhancement in the area of writing and language instruction in multicultural and multidialectal settings. Appendix II provides some potential classroom exercises and approaches that are inspired by the research in the body of this thesis.

AFRICAN AMERICAN VERNACULAR ENGLISH IN FRESHMAN COMPOSITION
AND THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF TEACHER RESPONSE

by

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A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
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APPROVED BY:

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Chair of Advisory Committee

DEDICATION

To those with open minds and kind, unassuming hearts.

BIOGRAPHY

Once upon a time, there lived a curly-haired maiden named Maureen Matarese, but everyone called her Mo. Mo lived in a small ivy-covered cottage in upstate New York with her kind mother and father, Patricia and Thomas Fish. She lived in a place where lithe, light-leafing trees played and tossed about with darkling spruces and pines. Lakes were cool and blue-green, sitting placidly at the feet of tree-covered mountains. Glades were filled with yellow flowers and bluebells and morning-thick mist. Such was her pleasant life, that most often you would find her picking vivid wildflowers for her hair or playing in the joyful creek that wound about the bottom of the tallest mountain. Soon her father, the town alchemist, found that work was no longer profitable in New York. Thus, the family moved from New York to Virginia, land of lovers. He took a job in a spite-filled glen in Virginia, where he could mix pharmaceutical products and harvest magical growing beans. When she graduated from her high-lessons, and with the support of her encouraging parents, Mo attended Virginia Tech, which sits in the windy New River Valley. Tech is eternally autumn and cool and vivid blushes of crackling, crunching leaves where women walked with long, unkempt hair, bundled in sweaters next to their beaus. There, she earned degrees in English and Music Performance in flute. During her time at Tech, she encountered many enchanted woodland creatures, one of which was a lovely linguistic socio-sorceress named Clare Dannenberg. Dannenberg taught Mo the ways of the socio-linguist, concentrating on dialect awareness programs and pedagogy. Dannenberg convinced Mo that only a Masters degree would provide her with the magic necessary to bewitch linguists and educators world-wide. Mo consented to apply. During the summer of 2000, Mo married a handsome constructor of computer software and hardware named Philip.

Mo attended graduate school at North Carolina State University. Here she attempted to learn the secrets of linguistics from a wise owl named Walt Wolfram. Wolfram told Mo that in order to graduate she would have to prove herself worthy by completing three difficult tasks. First—she was asked to re-learn Spanish, which proved to be a difficult and time-consuming endeavor, as she knew little of the language prior to graduate school. She had to pour over many books before she considered her skills adequate enough to test. Second—she was asked to compose a masters thesis, and third—she was challenged to defend this thesis against a bombardment of difficult riddles, questions, and conundra. She completed the second task with ease; however, the third task was infinitely more difficult. For like a hailing thunderstorm, the owl, Dave Herman—the sphinx, and Chris Anson—the wizard whirled impossible questions about Mo. Although she was weakened by the intensity of their interrogation, she bravely defended the manuscript from poisoned darts, spells, and other sorts of linguistic and rhetorical trickery. Sending silvery wisps of cognitive fortitude across the room, she answered each question with her newly-gained linguistic and pedagogical magic, defending her thesis from a filthy demise at the bottom of a soda-sticky garbage can. After this success, she rallied with her friends and family, drinking from smoking silver chalices and eating the sweetest and juiciest of woodland fruits.

Next year, she will travel back to New York, but instead of making a home in a small mountainous village, she and her love will move to the city, where she plans to attend Columbia University's Teachers College, earn a Masters in Applied Linguistics, and pursue an EdD. of Applied Linguistics.   The End.

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There are several people who deserve heaps of thanks and gratitude from me. My husband, Philip, obviously deserves my appreciation and gratitude. He has put up with me for two years of graduate school (and more—now that we're moving to New York!!), so he deserves more thanks that I can ever hope to offer. Thank you, thank you! Additionally, the encouragement I received from my parents and parents-in-law cannot go without mention; they were invaluable to my success here.

I would also like to extend gratitude to the many friends who have supported me at NC State. Special thanks go to Matt, who intrigues, inspires, and cognitively exhausts me with his excellent, pedagogical wizardry, and to Ben, who helps me maintain my sanity and has proven to be a dear and honest confidant. I would also like to thank Dave, Jess, and Becca for being my partners in crime and the impetus of my often cackling laughter and extreme silliness. Dave Herman's thoughtful commentary and advice were exceedingly helpful, and I could not have written this thesis without Chris Anson's consistent mentoring and profound appreciation for the subject matter. If it were not for a course that I took with him, I would never have attempted this topic. Finally, without doubt, I must thank Walt—for his invaluable guidance and advice; I have great appreciation and gratitude for your time, energy, and instruction.

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INTRODUCTION

John Rickford (1999) suggests that until 1966 African American speech played little to no role in American sociolinguistics. However, the U.S. Department of Education, began requesting research when government studies showed that African American students as a group scored significantly lower on standardized tests that measure language abilities that did white students (Labov et. al 1968). Linguists addressed these low scores by suggesting that educators consider using students' home dialects as a bridge to understanding Standard English (SE). Thus, dialect readers, school texts, stories, and other materials in students' home dialects were introduced in the mid-1970s in order to facilitate reading acquisition and comprehension of Standard English (SE) (Simpkins, Holt, and Simpkins 1977, Rickford and Rickford 1995). Unfortunately, publishers received so many objections from parents and teachers that the publishers stopped all promotion and development of these tools (Labov 1995). The difficulty in approaching the use of dialects in the reading classroom is further addressed in the Ann Arbor Decision in 1979, a landmark legal case that provided evidence for the legitimacy of AAVE and supported greater understanding of and responsiveness to AAVE in public schooling (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 1998, Rickford 1999).

After dialect readers fell out of fashion, their use was disregarded until resurgence of interest in the topic prompted the Oakland County School Board to recognize AAVE as a legitimate dialect in the mid-1990s. The Board sought to implement a curriculum that would allow teachers to use AAVE to help students learn SE. The debates over the curriculum, popularly known as the Ebonics controversy, are steeped in language biases and a misunderstanding of the strategies designed to help AAVE speakers make a

transition to SE. Therefore, this controversy, similar to past language-related teaching issues, was met by disapproving parents and teachers (Smitherman 1981, Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 1998, Rickford 1999).

Thus, linguists, pedagogues, and composition theorists have pursued the study of AAVE as it influences literacy, reading, and written language in American schools for over twenty years. All these scholars are interested in how theoretical models of linguistics, literacy, and writing apply usefully in the classroom. Most scholars agree that there is a common linguistic competence among vernacular dialect speakers and speakers of SE. Additionally, the competence of vernacular speaking students indicates a rule-governed grammaticality of the dialect that, especially for AAVE speakers, can be used to help these speakers better learn and understand SE. Although this theoretical approach to dialect differences in schooling has been endorsed by many scholars from different disciplines, teachers and parents consistently dismiss it as an unnecessary waste of time.

As issues of language variation and education move in and out of the media's spotlight, other, seemingly unrelated, composition theories are being developed and tested. Student-centered learning (loosely defined as teaching methods that focus more on catering to student learning types) was initiated into school-wide curriculum around the same time as the Ann Arbor Decision. Parallel to the to student-centered learning movement, dialogic pedagogy asks teachers to discourse with a student rather than using more one-sided practices in their comments on papers and in classroom discussion. Both methods allow teachers to give power to the student in essay writing. Nowhere is this return of power more evident than in current teacher response theory. The most recent

theory supports a more dialogic, "facilitative" commentary between teacher and student, which unintentionally attaches a stigma to directive (more imperative-based) commentary and elevates facilitative commentary as the new and pedagogically-sound commenting technique. Many composition theorists suggest that the dichotomy (facilitative and directive commentary) that the theory has propagated is not specific enough, so they developed more refined and various classifications for the particular characteristicsthat define teacher response theory.

Recently, teacher response theory has taken a social constructivist approach (Anson 2001), in which the language that students use forces the teacher, often unconsciously, to create personas for their students that are partly based on the student's language variety and the distance of that variety from SE. Moreover, the teachers' lack of sensitivity to the underlying nature of students' language use and dialects could work against the improvement of their abilities. Advocates of student-centered learning and instruction believe that greater progress can be made through more reflective comments and other forms of dialogic correspondence with students. Therefore, teachers could use reflective commentary, critically examining their commenting techniques and considering the language varieties of their students, in order to more constructively address their students' language abilities.

What perspectives do teacher response theory, and to some extent social constructivist response theory, provide on understanding and addressing student vernacularity in writing courses? This thesis attempts to answer this question by examining student vernacularity in freshman writing programs and teachers' response patterns, as those patterns facilitate or hinder the eradication of error as measured across

successive papers written by the same students enrolled in a college writing course. My analysis reinforces previous studies' convictions about classroom applications, but it also suggests new ones. It appears that the persona that teachers create for their vernacular speakers is not specifically related to the student's vernacular dialect; however, the increased grammar "errors" on these students' papers do not create responses from the teacher that facilitate students' creative thinking or empower them to achieve excellent marks.

Because of the limited number of teachers, this analysis is a quasi-case study and preliminary. My hope is simply that this pilot analysis of teachers' responses to vernacularity will trigger further analysis by linguists and composition theorists alike, while also inspiring teachers to reflectively consider their own responses to vernacular dialects in their own students' writing.

Before discussing the results of the study, I present a short review of literature that highlights the most important and influential studies in sociolinguistics and composition theory. This literature provides the foundation for my own research, illustrating the theories after which I model my own study (e.g. Connors and Lunsford 1993; Straub and Lunsford 1995). These theories must be considered in contextualizing my own conclusions within scholarly research (Anson 2001, Smitherman 1981, Wolfram, Adger, Christian 1999, and Rickford 1999).

After a review of the literature and a presentation of my methodological procedures, I will discuss the data pertaining to vernacularity in students' essays. At this time, the essays with instances of AAVE influence are not paired with an equal number of essays with grammatical "mistakes" that do not include AAVE dialect features;

however, future research, including computational capabilities, will provide statistical

results which will make the differences and similarities between the two sets of essays

easier to assess. I also assess the final drafts in terms of vernacularity, in order to

determine the success of the students' interpretation of comments, drafting, and revising.

SOCIOHISTORICAL BACKGROUND (I)

Linguistics and Vernacularity in the Classroom

Many of the early studies funded by the Office of Education in the late 1960s and 70s attempted to discover the "best" way to address literacy and writing difficulties in the African American community. Since then, many sociolinguists have sought to dispel popular misperceptions concerning the linguistic deficiency of vernacular speaking students (Labov 1972; Wolfram and Whiteman 1971; Farr and Daniels 1986; Labov 1995; Rickford and Rickford 1995; Wolfram, Adger, Christian 1999; Heck 1999; Raskin 1999; Viechnicki 1999; Rickford 1999).

Linguists rallied together to argue that dialectal variation was a matter of difference and not of deficit in the 1960s, and in the late 1970s, legal cases like the Ann Arbor Decision supported the discussion of the legitimacy of vernacular dialect use in the teaching of reading (Smitherman 1981, Rickford and Rickford 1995, Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 1998). The Ann Arbor decision was a landmark legal case in which

> linguistic testimony was critical to the judge's ruling in favor of the African American children who brought suit against the Ann Arbor, Michigan, Board of Education for not taking their dialect into account in reading instruction. (Wolfram 1999: 264)

Wolfram and Schilling-Estes observe that the judge's ruling prompted several dialect awareness programs, workshops, and research in literacy and writing instruction (264).

The awareness of literacy instruction in the 1970s also triggered "dialect readers," the most popular of which were called *Bridge* readers (Simpkins, Holt, and Simpkins 1977). These readers had three varieties of the same section: one written in AAVE, one written in "a transitional variety," and one written in Standard English (Rickford 1999). The readers were designed to help children to become literate without simultaneously

having to learn a new dialect. Rickford and Rickford note that readers were beneficial in addressing difficulties in literacy and language variation in Swedish classrooms. He cites Tore Osterberg's linguistic project (1961) as an example of dialect readers that not only helped Swedish children with literacy, but also aided in their progression toward the standard dialect (quoted by Rickford and Rickford 1995). Several other reader-like texts were introduced into school systems; however, they didn't last long. Labov (1995) notes that "the publishers received enough objections from parents and teachers to the use of AAVE in the classroom that they ceased promoting it, and further development was shelved." Although many studies have pursued the study of dialect use in literacy and writing, educational materials in this vein seemed to have waned after the heat surrounding the Ebonics controversy receded.

However, recently linguists such as Angela Rickford (1996) have been reexamining dialect readers and the problems associated with language attitudes of both teacher and student. An analysis of teacher and student attitudes toward AAVE use in the classroom suggests that most students and teachers disapprove of the use of dialects in the classroom. In a 1995 preliminary study, John Rickford examines African American students' competence using dialect readers, which reports positive statistics for using dialect readers. The article concludes with several suggestions for implementing new reader-like tools, perhaps even updated readers, although they note that dialect readers are only one choice among *many* possible choices for appropriately addressing literacy and vernacular dialect speaking students. Labov (1995) also supports the use of dialect readers, similarly stating that "the need for a cross cultural, cross-linguistic program like *Bridge* is even clearer....[and] the need to develop language arts in the integrated

classroom is even more evident" (18). Furthermore, he states that reading failure can only be reversed if the proper curricula are integrated into and supported by the community (18).

Parents' and teachers' misinformed understanding of the integration of such curricula was the foundation for the Ebonics controversy. Wolfram and Schilling-Estes (1998) suggest that "curricula similar to dialect readers were initiated by the Oakland Unified School District Board of Education when they passed a resolution affirming the legitimacy of AAVE as a language system and supported its use as a bridge to learn Standard English" (169). The Linguistic Society of America, known for its diversity of opinion, voted unanimously in favor of acknowledging the legitimacy of AAVE and supporting its use as a bridge to SE. However, in 1995, almost twenty years after Ann Arbor and dialect readers, when Oakland attempted to validate the use of vernacular dialects in the teaching of reading and writing, they failed. Due to misinformed media coverage and, therefore, countless misinformed parents, the term "Ebonics" suddenly meant that instructors were teaching their students "improper English." The rumors spread, and, although the AAVE resolution stood, the lack of support from parents and both African American and Anglo American teachers and scholars alike forced the implementation of dialect-related programs out of school systems.

Although much literacy and writing scholarship has persisted in the discipline of linguistics, linguists have not been the only scholars to labor for these ends. Academics in education and composition theory have used linguistic research to support their methods for addressing language in reading and writing classrooms. In recent years, the education and composition disciplines have produced numerous articles and books on

this topic that usually contemplate two questions: do vernacular dialects of English belong in the classroom, and, if so, how do teachers address the use of dialects?

Within the disciplines of linguistics, education, and composition, many theorists have attempted to explain how to address vernacular dialects in the classroom. Theories that address language variation in the classroom lie on a continuum: pluralism on one extreme and eradicationism on the other. Other theories that involve nonstandard dialects in the classroom like "code-switching" would fit somewhere between the two extremes, and "skills" and "process" theory help define the many possibilities that linguistics and composition theorists alike present in approaching dialects in the classroom (Howard 1996).

Eradicationism, as defined in Rebecca Moore Howard's article *The Great Wall of African American Vernacular English is the American College Classroom*, asks the students to completely forsake their nonstandard dialect for the "superior" Standard English norms (Howard 1996). This term suggests that eradicationists see Standard English as superior, and the definition of SE as "superior" seems to ground that theory in what many call the "deficit" perspective, which caused controversy in the 60s and still instigates argument today in discussions of the Ebonics controversy.

However, there are other positions for the eradication of nonstandard dialects that stem from more thoughtful pedagogical concerns. These concerns are articulated by Lisa Delpit, who is well known for her belief in language as a representation of power. Delpit opposes "process methods" of approaching vernacular dialects in the classroom, which are most often employed by sociolinguists who desire to empower students with knowledge of their own dialect's importance and grammatical integrity (1988). She

believes that vernacular dialects are generally not socially acceptable, and any language-

related empowerment that the students receive only obscures the fact that *real* power lies

in the ability to use and understand the Standard English prestige norms. Instead of a

"process" approach, she advocates a "skills" approach, which asks students to learn and

use the prestige speech that assures the speaker of the most power (i.e., SE) (293).

In her essay *The Silenced Dialogue: Power and Pedagogy in Educating Other*

People's Children (1988), she outlines five aspects of power that are often overlooked in

classroom situations:

1. Issues of Power are enacted in classrooms.
2. There are codes of rules for participating in power; that is, there is a "culture of power."
3. The rules of the culture of power are a reflection of the rules of the culture of those who have power.
4. If you are not already a participant in the culture of power, being told explicitly the rules of that culture makes acquiring power easier.
5. Those with power are frequently the least aware of—or least willing to acknowledge –its existence. Those with less power are often most aware of its existence. (283-4)

These aspects of power outline a method for eradicating nonstandard dialects, a method

which is not only eradicationist but also Marxist in its theoretical foundations. Her desire

for everyone to acquire the language of power in order to have equal status in society can

certainly be understood in light of such theories. In addition, these rules define a

complicated power-based pedagogy also has ties to critical race theory (Prendergast

1998).

Critical race theory is defined as a "movement of legal scholarship which

investigates how racial (and other) inequities are sustained through legal discourses"

(Prendergast 1998: 37). However, this theory, as it applies to composition theory, usually

examines "issues of audience, genre, voice, and canonization," which usually tend to reveal the largest discrepancy between the culture of power and AAVE speakers (37). This theory directly applies to Delpit's work in her critical examination of the "culture of power." For example, she explains that many teachers complain because their AAVE-speaking students obviously do not get the kind of attention at home as do their Anglo American, more standard-speaking cohorts. She refutes this complaint by arguing that Anglo American cultural norms are instituted in the home at all times. By contrast, African American students have a different culture at home that generally does not share the same norms as a "culture of power" household (283). African Americans come into elementary school at a disadvantage because Anglo American students have been socialized into the power structure earlier than their African American cohorts. Thus, African American children might only start getting that type of socialization once they get to school.

These issues of critical race theory are realized in more bidialectal and pluralistic theories as well. However, critical race theorists might argue that bidialectalism and pluralism both use critical race theory to empower students of race, as they both encourage the acceptance and acknowledgement of vernacular dialects, but in empowering students of other races, one over-compensates for the white culture of power. Instead, teachers should, as Prendergast suggests, investigate whiteness in the classroom, demonstrating where power is in white American culture and showing students how to use it. Thus, critical race theory can be used to support either Delpitian skills methods or sociolinguistic, generally liberal process methods.

Delpit concludes her article by applauding teachers who embrace both the "skills" and the "process" methods. She celebrates teachers who understand "the need to help students to establish their own voices [as well as] coach those voices to produce notes that will be heard clearly in the larger society" (296). Like many critical race theorists, her study "confronts, investigates, and plays with issues of audience, genre, voice, and canonization in short, with issues of discourse and rhetoric" (Prendergast 1998: 37). Nevertheless, Delpit's theory appears to be eradicationist in nature; however, her theory does not fit so easily into that category. She empowers students to be proud of their heritage, but she also encourages students to understand that "real power" lies in their ability to use the socially acceptable, Standard English norms, leaving their nonstandard dialects behind (274).

Delpit's skills theory may seem closer to eradicationism than any other thoughtful theory in the literature. Keith Gilyard, although not an eradicationist himself, (1996) indicates that eradicationists attempt to eradicate AAVE because it "represents deficient speech and interferes with the acquisition of Standard English" (70). Delpit does not see AAVE as deficient speech; however, she does feel the need to inform students about the "culture of power" and what this culture requires, linguistically. She does believe that students should use the dialect of the "culture of power" in order to progress in our society, although she certainly doesn't see AAVE as deficient. Furthermore, it is important to note that many teachers and parents are strict eradicationists who neither appreciate the dialect nor acknowledge its usefulness.

Most other literature concerning vernacular dialects in the classroom supports bidialectalism, or "code-switching"; however, that literature pedagogically varies as well.

Rebecca Moore Howard discusses some of these differences in *The Great Wall of African American Vernacular English in the American College Classroom* (1996). She briefly notes the three major methods for addressing vernacular English in the classroom: eradicationism, pluralism, and code-switching. Eradication and pluralism are the two extreme points on the continuum, with eradicationism defined as a complete abandonment of the vernacular dialect and pluralism characterized as a recognition of the grammatical integrity and equality of vernacular forms, with a focus on an informed choice by the student as to which code she/he would like to use (Howard 1996, Gilyard 1996). Code-switching, aside from being the choice that most composition theorists and linguists endorse, teaches students about the grammatical, rule-governed nature of dialects, but it also makes the distinction that the "standard" is the form that will give the students the most power and prestige (in most situations) (Howard 1996, Gilyard 1996). Therefore, the standard should be used in academic settings and the "mother tongue" dialect at home.

Howard (1996) focuses on code-switching and why it should *not* be mandated by composition teachers. She moves "beyond the usual perimeter of the debate to contest the absence of a pluralistic counterpart—a curriculum that teachers the positive values of African American Vernacular English" (278). She stresses the importance of conceptualizing African American culture as part of the American culture as a whole, and, although she feels that she has no right to discuss the topic, she desires to

> Remove the veil that so blinds a society to itself, that so limits the ways in which we describe ourselves, that allows us to engage in the willful ignorance that makes us believe that teacher-directed *code-switching* can be part of a "liberatory" pedagogy.   (279)

Howard's goal is something beyond pluralism. Instead of desiring a focus on African American culture and linguistic features, she requests a full multi-cultural experience for students, which obviously involves dialects. However, she offers no strategies for accomplishing such a goal. Instead, she simply mentions that "something" should be done (278).

Terry Dean, who has devised several methods for addressing dialect use in composition, is closer to code-switching and the middle of the continuum (1989). Unlike Howard (1996), Dean does not expand upon the specific theories to which she subscribes, but implicitly she places herself between a pluralist and a code-switcher. She advocates both cultural and language-centered topics that focus on diversity in the classroom. She outlines possible strategies for including dialect study in the classroom such as: peer-response groups, class newsletters, bringing campus events to the classroom, and anecdotes. Each of these methods takes some of the pressure off of the teacher (23-37).

Other strategies and suggestions for addressing language varieties are offered by Marcia Farr and Harvey Daniels (1986), although they are more a product of code-switching theory than pluralistic language theory. These suggestions are based on fifteen crucial elements that they associate with writing instruction. They emphasize the rethinking of some aspects of writing instruction that many scholars take as established assumptions including: (1) teachers' attitudes (as they influence classroom environment), (2) in-class writing and reading practice, (3) writing for real audiences, (4) exposure to models of both teacher and student writing, (5) breaking down writing into phases such as brainstorming, drafting, and revision, (6) collaborative efforts and one-on-one work, (7) instruction of strategies and techniques, (8) reduced amounts of "formal" grammatical

instruction, and (9) focusing on the importance of first establishing content and focus in un-polished drafts before evaluation of word-level difficulties (45-6). These kinds of strategies produce various useable classroom applications such as the use of portfolios, current teacher drafts, and dialog journals. I will discuss these issues in more detail in the conclusion of my thesis.

Walt Wolfram, Carolyn Temple Adger, and Donna Christian (1999) discuss code-switching strategies for addressing vernacular dialect usage in reading and writing courses. They specifically address language in writing courses when they suggest that "differences in spoken dialects manifest themselves in [all] writing" (131). To some extent, students will write how they speak, but the degree to which students use vernacular dialects in their writing is variable.

Wolfram et al. argue that many vernacular speaking students attempt to avoid certain vernacular features because they realize that those variables are highly stigmatized. They note that spoken language influence may be found in many areas of writing such as: in the "organization or progression of an argument or narrative," "in the mechanical aspects of writing," and/or in the grammar. Influences from a student's cultural background may have dramatic effects in the methods a student uses to achieve textual cohesion.

Spelling mistakes are one of the many aspects of writing that Wolfram et al. address. Spelling is often reflective of the pronunciation patterns of the speaker. For example, if a speaker pronounces *pen* and *pin* the same, then he/she might spell them the same as well. Similarly, if a student uses consonant cluster reduction (CCR) (e.g. *wes end* for *west end.*) in his/her speech, then it is entirely possible that the feature will

translate into written language (Wolfram et al. 1999). They suggest that these difficulties can be "overcome if a teacher is well aware of the pronunciation features of the dialects spoken by the students so that the sound differences can be taken into proper account in teaching spelling" (136).

Unlike Dean (1989), Wolfram et al. include both theory and strategy. They support many strategies for addressing dialect-related issues in writing. They encourage the use of peer groups and other group-centered activities; however, they also include strategies like dialogue journals, in which the teacher responds to the student's ideas without attaching a grade to any "final product." The teacher can make comments in relation to the topics the student addresses, but he/she also introduces new topics, asks questions, and answers student questions. Although there is no overt "correction" of writing technique, the teacher's writing may serve as a model for the student. In addition to these dialogue journals, Wolfram et al. also mention portfolios, which allow students to account for and critically reflect/access their own writing. This also often gives the students the opportunity to present a series of achievements that they feel best represents their writing during the course. Wolfram et al. conclude their discussion of strategies by discussing the postponing of editing, which has been further explained by Peter Elbow (1999).

As with some of the previously discussed scholars, Elbow's view on vernacular dialects in the classroom certainly falls into the "code-switching" category on the continuum. He illustrates some serious dilemmas in deciding how to address vernacular dialects in composition. He desires both to empower the students by not forcing them to conform to the standard and to help them to write "academically appropriate" essays.

These two views are, for all intents and purposes, mutually exclusive; therefore, he eliminates the first and endorses code-switching throughout the rest of the essay, discussing several strategies that a teacher can use with this pedagogy. One classroom strategy he suggests is the "postponing of editing," which requires students to use their "informal," vernacular dialects in the first two stages of drafting. Instead of concentrating on language in the early stages of drafting, the students fix organization, examples, concepts, and support. Only in the final draft do students receive the chance to change their language from "informal" to "formal," academic discourse. This provides the students with an appreciation for their vernacular dialect without diverting their attention to full empowerment and usage. This method allows the students to see the appropriate places for formal, academic discourse. This method is also employed and endorsed by those who specialize in teacher response theory. In appendix II of this thesis, I propose a variation on Elbow's exercise as a useful classroom activity for teaching students to code-switch and illustrating the importance and validity of language variation.

SOCIOHISTORICAL BACKGROUND (II)

Teacher Response Theory

Teacher response theory examines various aspects of responding, which range from considerations of how teacher response manifests the knowledge, learning, and writing views of the teacher (Anson 2001) to complex taxonomies that categorize the character and intent of different teacher comments (Straub 1996). A question that has often driven work in this field is: What is thoughtful commentary? Nancy Sommers addresses this question in her essay *Responding to Student Writing* (1982). This article, noted by several scholars as being one of the most thoughtful in its field (Straub 1996), attacks traditional commentary by noting that more often than not comments "take a student away from her own focus," lack text-specific comments, and are "comment-heavy" on final drafts for no apparent reason (Sommers 1982). Her study focuses on the faults of teacher. Meanwhile, C. H. Knoblauch and Lil Brannon argue to better teaching by suggesting that the key to response lies in the "attitudes, postures, and motives that teachers communicate both through and apart from their reactions to particular texts" (Knoblauch and Brannon 1981:288). The teacher must respond thoughtfully and in a facilitative manner, but he/she must also reinforce written comments with class goals, explanations of responses, and the attitude he/she takes toward teaching and students (289).

The various discussions have set in motion a series of analyses that attempt to discover how teachers respond to writing and how that affects students' writing. In an early study, Elaine O. Lees (1979) suggests that "divid[ing] the activity of commenting into seven modes—*correcting, emoting, describing, suggesting, questioning, reminding,*

and *assigning...*" in order to examine what kind of comments an instructor uses and on whom the burden is placed in each of the comments. She notes, without any description of procedures, statistics, or methodology, that

> *correcting, emoting, and describing...*put the burden of work on the teacher; the next three—*suggesting, questioning, and reminding* shift some of that burden to the student. The last mode—*assigning...*provides a way to discover how much of that burden that student has taken. (266)

The study indicates that the situation as teachers of writing is paradoxical in that the teachers comment on students' writing as if they have already created the authorial persona that it apparently takes an entire class (or more) to achieve (267). Although Lees does not offer any concrete strategies for approaching the paradox, she determine new and more specific categories, and this work has been noted by many scholars as one of the earliest attempts to break away from the directive/facilitative dichotomy (Straub and Lunsford 1995).

For example, Searle and Dillon (1980) also design a taxonomy for categorizing teacher response as a means for more critically examining how teachers respond to students' writing. Their criteria involve elements of form (what form the response is in) and type, and the types have several subcategories. In terms of form, they examine response as either *content* or *form*. The type of response ranges from *evaluation* and *assessment*, which involve no subcategories, to *instructional*, with the subcategories: *didactic/correction, encouragement, comment on attitude,* to *audience*, including subcategories: *clarification, elaboration, reaction, and taking action*, to *"moving outside the writing,"* which includes the subcategories *extension* and *addition.* Each permutation has an example of teacher comments to demonstrate the type of response the title addresses. The results of the study demonstrate a clear trend toward teacher commenting:

the teachers in this study discussed form more than twice as often as they marked content issues, and *evaluation* and *instruction* were the most frequently used types of comments, with *assessment* placing third. Searle and Dillon suggest that teachers *correct* mechanics most often because grammar and sentence structure "are more apparent and correspond to some well-established standard" (239).

Until the early 1990s, most of the analyses of teacher response were based on limited samples, with a small number of teachers' responses being analyzed and a small body of essays used for extraction. In one of the first comprehensive studies of teacher response patterns, Connors and Lunsford (1993) collected 21,000 essays on which teachers had responded for a "national study of patterns of formal error" (449). They examined a total of 3,000 essays, looking specifically for "global comments," which they define as "general evaluative comments found at the end or the beginning of papers" (451). The teachers are asked to ignore any comments that deal with grammar, mechanics, and style; however, if the teacher approached the grammar issue from a particular rhetorical context, then it would be included in the study. Connors and Lunsford offer a series of percentages for the various types of commentary they categorized. The results of the study note a high frequency of positive comments that end negatively (453-5).

In addition to measuring the frequency of such rhetorical situations, Connors and Lunsford (1993) also measure the relative length of global comments. They suggest that most lengthy comments focus on logic-related and rhetorical situations in the writing. The content of these sections regularly centers on overall effectiveness that is achieved though a well-developed thesis, supporting criteria, evidence, and organization (456).

These results cause the authors to reflect on the effectiveness of teacher commentary, and they ask teachers to reflect and critique their own "topics of commentary" (463). In considering similar trends in our own comments, we might begin to understand how our students follow them.

Another article with valuable criteria for analyzing teacher response is Richard Straub and Ronald F. Lunsford's *Twelve Readers Reading: Responding to College Student Writing* (1995), which examines teachers' written responses by exploring the comments of twelve "well-known, well-informed teachers and scholars…mainly for the perspective their work would provide." The authors believe that much can be learned from seasoned teachers who respond in various, appropriate ways. Thus, the methodology that Connors and A. Lunsford employ is more objective, whereas Straub and R. Lunsford (1995) investigate more closely the response patterns of expert teachers and the underlying instructional sources of those patterns. In this way, teachers who desire to develop response techniques of their own may have appropriate and exemplary models (1).

Straub and Lunsford's (1995) descriptive analysis takes an eager teacher through the text, showing him/her how to organize categories, how to analyze a teacher's comments, and how to interpret the results of such comments on the student. For example, they use a different scheme in measuring responses when compared to past theorists. Like Connors and Lunsford (1993), Straub and Lunsford address some aspects of global commentary. The following table, which describes the foci and modes of response, is from the authors' statement of methodology.

FOCUS	MODE
Ideas	Corrections
Development	Evaluations
Evaluation	Qualified Negative Global
Structure	
	Imperatives
	Advice
	Praise
Local Structure	Indirect Requests
Wording	Problem-Posing Questions
Correctness	Heuristic Questions
Extra-Textual	Reflective Questions

Figure 1: Taxonomy for Assessing Teacher Comments (Straub and Lunsford: 1995: 159)

Each category is fully illustrated with examples, which provide models for teachers who desire to model their commenting styles after those in the book to relate and compare their own comments with specific examples from the different categories. In addition, they have a series of teacher roles that can be associated with the various modes. In this way, they explain exactly how teachers can interpret these comments.

A year later Straub (1996) wrote another response-related article. This article (1996) is a reflection on the earlier work of Sommers (1982) and Knoblauch and Brannon (1981) concerning facilitative commentary. This article not only focuses on the need for "facilitative" comments but the *amount of control* a teacher exerts over a student when using certain types of comments. Straub unravels the relatively vague concept of "facilitative commentary" by indicating that one can further specify this commenting by describing the "*focuses* and *modes* of these comments," in which the *focus* is described as

areas of writing on which the comments concentrate (233). He suggests that interrogative comments tend to allow writers more creativity in re-working their text; such comments typically ask non-controlling, thought-provoking questions. Often, Straub finds that these questions are followed by statements that use mitigating language such as "I **think** you have overlooked a couple of important points, however" (240). He also notes several other examples of facilitative writing in Peter Elbow's comment style. Elbow's comments consist mostly of what Straub describes as "a kind of summary transcript of [his] reading of the writing as an everyday reader, one who is reading for the meaning and interest it holds for him" (243). This mode is least controlling because it does not cover the essay with editing marks or "corrections." In addition, the comments include mitigated language that tones down the critical and evaluative aspect of the responses, making them more suggestive and less commanding (244).

Thus far, teacher response theory has been asking the question "How do teachers respond to student writing, and is this "way" the best method for teaching our students to write?" Theorists have approached the question from a quantitative perspective and from a general process theory background; however, not many theorists have addressed these questions from a social constructivist perspective. Knowledge, reality, facts, texts, etc. are all socially constructed by "communities of like-minded peers" (Bruffee 1986). Bruffee (1986) suggests that these methods can apply to the teaching of writing and English by first noting the problems with cognitive theory, stating that

> For language, literature, and composition teachers especially, the cognitive understanding of knowledge has always been of limited value because it places language on the margin of knowledge as a mere medium or conduit—a set of 'skills' by which 'ideas' are 'communicated' or 'transmitted' from one individual mind to another. (778)

He then illustrates the positive aspects of social constructivist approaches by further

suggesting that the

> social constructionist alternative identifies knowledge and language and regards
> them as inseparable. Placing language at the center of our understanding of
> knowledge and of the authority of knowledge, it thereby places reading and
> writing unequivocally where…it belongs, at the center of the liberal arts
> curriculum and the whole education process. (Bruffee 1986: 778)

These quotations show the influences that social constructivist theory can have on the

writing classroom in general in terms of how we teach language. This theory can also be

used to analyze teacher comments. If teachers can respond to texts as if these texts

represent the culture that the students are part of and as if their comments suggest

something about the culture that *they* operate within, then one might begin to understand

the paradox of imposing one's own cultural assumptions and ideologies on students who

may have other assumptions and ideologies. Conversely, Kennedy (1998) notes that

social constructivism tends not to have direct classroom application possibilities nor to

satisfy student-centered pedagogy; however, this thesis attempts to prove otherwise.

Chris Anson (2001) addresses social constructivist concerns in composition when

he discusses the "social construction of error." Anson challenges more traditional

response theory and examines (1) how teachers respond to error in student writing, (2)

how teachers create a student persona based on his/her writing, and (3) how the

"relationship between the changing status of socially constructed norms of language use"

and response to error affect teacher response (Anson 2001: 7). His article "Response and

the social construction of error" addresses these relationships and questions by first

reviewing the literature and then tackling classroom and practical application-based

concerns. Anson suggests that "lexical differences and style registers" can be factors that

beg teachers to create a persona for a student that is not representative of his/her work. For example, a more lexically complex and stylistically elevated piece of writing may cause a teacher to overlook important syntactic, organizational, and focus-related issues. By contrast, a piece of writing that is not as elevated in word choice and style may portray the student as a poor writer, with no consideration for the actual content of the essay. Classroom applications in this article are grounded in Anson's reflections on how teachers must examine their own teaching and responding styles.

From the existing literature on dialects and education we can assume with a strong degree of support that the spoken language of students influence their writing. Less thoroughly explored, however, is a corollary hypothesis about the ways in which those spoken language influences will affect the attitudes and commenting types of teachers on drafts, although we can speculate that negative attitudes and commenting will adversely affect student writing.

Although composition and rhetoric theorists such as Anson have analyzed the social construction of error in terms of a teacher's recognition of his/her instantiation of a student's cultural persona, his analysis does not examine teachers' comments on written vernacular dialects. This thesis explores how these essays' comments affect the drafts of AAVE-speaking students, students whose language and knowledge are socially constructed. Are teachers making effective comments for such instances of dialect? Do most teachers even realize that some of the "errors" they find are products of the students' culture and background?

METHODOLOGY

Barbara Johnstone suggests that although the majority of sociolinguistic research is based on spoken language, "people's writing can also show how their language and their social world shape each other" (Johnstone 2000:121). Certainly, written language can tell scholars much about the author's ideology. In a teacher's case, this concept works as much for her interpreting the student's culture as it does for the student inferring cultural and social associations of the teacher through his/her comments. This analysis examines both the written representations of linguistic variation in student language as well as the cultural assumptions of the teacher that are imposed by the teacher on the student. In order to study the variation of the student and the assumptions of the teachers, I collected a body of graded papers that include vernacular dialect features as well as an equal number of essays that do not.

The corpus for this analysis consists of 400 essays collected from three instructors in their English 111, 110, and Upward Bound courses. There are three sections of English 110, which is NC State's college writing preparatory class; there are two sections of English 111, which is a regularly scheduled college writing course; and one Upward Bound class. Upward bound is an optional, college preparatory writing course that primes students for college writing. The Upward Bound class was the first to collaborate with me in this research. This class meets the summer before college classes begin in the fall to prepare students for college writing, among other courses. All sections of English require five essays per course, and each final draft included a series of marked (some

graded—others not graded—which can certainly have an affect on the product) rough drafts and brainstorming exercises.

Although this is a convenient sample, statistically, the English 110 and Upward Bound course have a much higher percentage of African American students. In the case of these studies, 97% of students in the 110 courses and one Upward Bound course identified themselves as African American. Because this study focuses on AAVE dialect features, it is important to choose a sample that will provide the opportunity to analyze their essays.

PROCEDURE

As this study examines both the language of the student and the responding language of the teacher, I had to frame the study in a certain way, so as to obtain valid results. Originally, I was not examining the teachers' comments. For this reason, I gave each student a copy of my Proposal Summary, a copy of the Biography Statements, and a copy of the Student Consent form (see Appendix I). I asked the students to read the Proposal Summary along with me, and I offered to answer any questions that they had. Then, I asked the teacher to assign a random number to each student. This number would be placed on all essays and on the Biography Statements, which is a series of questions about reading, past English courses, and language attitudes used for statistical purposes. I collected the signed consent forms of the students and placed them in a separate folder so the participants names were kept anonymous; numbers from essays and biography forms cannot be connected with any student's name.

Other than the day that I discussed my project with the class, I had had no interaction with the writers at all. The instructors copied the essays and gave them to me with the students' names marked out and the randomly assigned number written on the top page. Originally, I did not ask that the essays be commented upon when they were copied; however, when I began to notice certain patterns in some commenting styles, I decided that I would ask that all copies have responses from the instructors. Because I am extracting commenting language from the teacher, I asked the instructors to sign a consent form as well (See Appendix II). These are kept with the student consent forms. Notably, I did not indicate to the teachers that I would be looking specifically at their comments because I wanted a natural sample of comments that reflect what they genuinely wrote—without any prompting about dialect differences and how they respond to such differences.

STUDENT SAMPLE

Out of four hundred participants, sixty-five were African American, and of those sixty-five African Americans, there are only fifteen essays that appear to demonstrate spoken language influence in the form of AAVE. All sixty-five participants are eighteen or nineteen years of age. The fifteen African American participants indicated that they were from middle-income homes. They are interested in sports—specifically, basketball. Seven out of fifteen students took honors courses, and four out of fifteen students noted that classes such as Creative Writing, Debate, and Public Speaking were offered at their school, although only two out of those four took any of those courses. Only two students noted that they took advanced placement English courses for college credit.

Only four students answered "no" when I asked if teachers even corrected their spoken language. The other eleven students said that teachers did correct their language, in varying degrees. Some students mentioned that teachers corrected their misuse of "tenses" or their use of "ain't." One student mentioned his use of slang saying, "because where I am from a lot of slang words have came up" (27).

THE TEACHERS

Because I wanted to collect essays from the full range of classes at NC State, the teachers were chosen on the basis of the various courses that they teach. They offered to participate in the project, and were exceedingly helpful in working with me on the collection of data. Prior to talking with their class, I met with each of them individually to explain the initial purpose of the project. After each teacher had a copy of the Project Proposal, Biography Summary, and Student Consent forms (see Appendix I), I would request that they examine the sheet to make sure that they were fully comfortable in working on the project. Then, I asked them to sign a form themselves, allowing me to fully discuss their use of comments.

Teacher A (essays 23-99) and Teacher B (essays 100-199) are both white males under the age of thirty, and they taught the Upward Bound and ENG 110 courses, respectively. Teacher C is a white female who taught two sections of ENG 111 for me to use as a control. At this time, I do not provide an analysis of her comments, although I do use these papers to ensure that a particular feature is common to AAVE (i.e. not present in the white student's papers).

EXAMINING AAVE

In order to examine these essays for AAVE features, I wanted to have an understanding as to what "features" constitute "AAVE features." I wanted both to consult a foundation of scholarship on the subject and to make decisions about the most relevant variables based on patterns I found in the writing. Although a review of the literature provided some degree of consensus about approaches to language variation in writing and teacher response, I wanted to analyze the essays by focusing on the differences that I recognized in the essays themselves and not by measuring the papers against a predefined list of AAVE variables; therefore, in this examination, I first read the significant literature on the subject and determined what variables I might encounter. Then, I read all the essays and drafts, highlighting anything that did not seem to fit grammatically. Often I was cued by the teachers' marks on grammatical writing problems. After reading through the essays once, I read them again with the intent of marking the types of problems that I saw. Most of these marks were based upon the scholarship of linguists who had already established a set of credible features for AAVE; however, some of the features I found are not supported as specifically AAVE features but seem to indicate language contact and second language acquisition issues. The total number of features I found were relatively few: consonant cluster reduction (CCR), third plural –s absence and possessive –s, copula absence, and irregular verb agreement. I also found possible patterns in students' uses of prepositions and definite articles, but I will not analyze or hypothesize about these patterns at this time.

Furthermore, the trends that I found that I could not explain in terms of pre-specified variables of AAVE are absence and insertion of articles and irregular

prepositions, although these are largely accounted for by what Farr and Daniels (1986) identify as simply a lack of "rich and continuous reading experience," among other similar classroom method deficiencies. Farr and Daniels further suggest that the writing of vernacular-speaking students may "contain an extra measure of errors in the form of stigmatized features from their oral dialect," although more often the greatest challenge is simply "learning how to make sense on paper." For this reason, I account for both "traditional" or "scholarship-based" features of AAVE and "non-traditional," speculative variables in these essays.

TEACHER RESPONSE

An analysis of teacher response often relies on the dichotomy between directive and facilitative commentary; however, many scholars attempt to further dissect both response methods in order more fully describe the styles and assumptions of teacher comments. Straub and Lunsford (1995), who concentrate on exploring the *focus* of teacher comments and the *mode* in which these comments are written, break down the traditional dichotomy into a series of categories. These categories fall under either f*ocus*, which describes what writing-related elements the teachers' comments focus on, or *mode*, which identifies the type of comments that the teacher uses. *Mode* is not defined by any specific language use or discourse features; however, example types for each and a series of sample papers provide a model for the category of each teacher comment. The table below shows how Straub and Lunsford (1995) examine teacher comments.

FOCUS	MODE
Ideas	Corrections
Development	Evaluations
Evaluation	Qualified Negative Global
Structure	
	Imperatives
	Advice
	Praise
Local Structure	Indirect Requests
Wording	Problem-Posing Questions
Correctness	Heuristic Questions
Extra-Textual	Reflective Questions

Figure 2: Taxonomy for Assessing Teacher Comments (Straub and Lunsford: 1995: 159)

I chose to use this taxonomy for my analysis of teacher comments, for it helps to identify both what student writing issues are addressed by the teacher as well as how the teacher structures his/her comments. Although other scholars have posed categories in the past that appear to address many of the same issues, none of these categories is as specific in identifying different types of teacher comments.

LANGUAGE VARIATION IN FRESHMAN COMPOSITION

Out of several hundred essays, only about fifteen had potential AAVE tokens. Features such as multiple negation, third person singular –*s* absence, copula absence, plural, possessive, and consonant cluster reduction (CCR) are most prevalent. I will briefly discuss the evidence of such features in the sample compositions before providing some conclusions as to why AAVE occurs in college essays and why the frequency of vernacular features is variable.

Out of all the AAVE features that surfaced, one of the most frequent is CCR (Farr 1986, Labov 1995). The reduction or simplification of consonants is discussed in Labov's (1972) seminal article on reading difficulties of African American Vernacular speaking students as being one of the "most complex variables [that appear] in black speech" (Labov 1972: 148). He suggests in his chapter on the reading problems of AAVE speakers that those clusters ending in /t/ and /d/ are often reduced. Most importantly, the students in these essays have the tendency to "reduce clusters of consonants at the ends of words to single consonants" (15). Simplifications of words ending in /-st, -ft, -nd, -ld, -zd, -md/ are common, and words such as *laughed*, which is realized phonetically by a /-ft/ consonant cluster becomes *laugh*. Wolfram and Schilling-Estes (1998) note that clusters are also reduced in standard dialects in preconsonantal environments. Dialects strongly influenced by language contact exhibit extensive prevocalic cluster reduction as well (Wolfram, Childs, and Torbert 2000). Labov (1972) and Wolfram and Fasold (1974) further suggest that CCR can occur when consonants reduce and then take a plural morpheme. In that case, words like *desks* becomes *desses* because the consonant cluster /-sk/ is reduced to /s/ before the plural is attached.

Furthermore, Wolfram et al. (2000) note a series of constraints on the relative incidence of reduction, indicated in previous studies such as Labov et al. (1968), Labov (1972), and Fasold (1972). These constraints include the following phonetic context, preceding phonetic context, stress, morphological marking, and social factors. Social factors indicate that that cluster simplification occurs more often in AAVE than in Anglo varieties, more often in casual style than in formal, and more often in lower social status groups than in higher (Wolfram et al. 2000: 18-19).

In this analysis, CCR is one of the most frequently occurring variables, occurring five times in two essays, out of the fifteen essays of which the writer uses AAVE features. Two factors are significant: (1) the fact that it does occur, and (2) the fact that it does not occur *often*. Some examples from these essays are as follows:

1. Men, I think have because they are becoming more conservative then what they **use** to be.

2. Darling-Hammond would not feel that Affirmative Action is insignificant, but **it design** to protect job opportunities…(essay #68b)

3. Darling-Hammond resourcefully told how the deferral, state, and local governments discriminated against black students, by showing how the **government use** the track system to segregate students within the same schools. (#68b)

4. In 1978, the world **experience** Black Monday. (essay #100)

5. The essay by Wolf, she talks about women looking **pass, fighting** for equal rights and looking for the beauty within themselves. (#100)

The evidence of preconsonantal CCR in African-American essays and not in Anglo-American Essays (although such clusters do reduce in standard dialects) confirms non-standard speaking, minority students' increased disadvantage when producing text. Perhaps AAVE specific, socially stigmatized CCR does not occur due to the stigma

attached to it in the classroom, but clusters that the general public reduces may go unnoticed in nonstandard students' work and appear in these students' essays (Farr and Daniels 1986). The CCR examples from the essays reveal the potential for CCR and the confusion that they must cause for teachers.

Cases of simple reduction of /nd/ (as in *design for designed*) and reduction of /ft/ (such as *laugh* for *laughed*) can make it seem as though the student forgot to maintain his/her discussion in past tense. However, as Labov notes in a current study about AAVE and reading difficulties, the occurrences are plausibly explained by CCR; these are phonological dialect processes common to AAVE that are often misinterpreted as grammatical errors.

The manifestation of AAVE in these college rough drafts is also realized in a variety of verb phrase variations such as copula absence, various irregular verb manifestations, leveling, and third person –*s* absence. Scholarship on these various linguistic variables is extensive and ranges from work in the late 1960s and early 1970s to today. William Labov initiated some of the earliest scholarship on copula deletion. His 1969 article, "Contraction, Deletion, and Inherent Variability of the English Copula," confirms the complexities surrounding copula deletion, and he discusses how these complexities relate to the ever-changing dialects of English (Labov 1972). Green (1998) notes that the absence of copula and the auxiliary for contractible forms of *is* and *are* has received much attention, as it relates to the study of AAVE and its relationship with Anglo American dialects and creoles of Caribbean English (1998: 69, Winford 1998:109, Wolfram and Thomas 2002). In addition, Labov (1995) suggests that "copula and auxiliary verbs of the verb *to be* may be difficult to recognize on the printed page,

because of the high rate of deletion in many contexts" (21). Such data relate specifically

to the instances of copula deletion in this analysis, in which several instances of copula

deletion cloud the meaning of the sentence.

> 1. She has strong points of view when she explaining the different events that happened.... (#33)
>
> 2. But when you go to the store to see how many African Americans working you don't see but a few. (#33)

In these examples from student essays, the auxiliary is deleted. Labov (1995) suggests

that such problems in written language indicate a loss in confidence in the alphabet in

younger children. Such confidence can decline further when teachers mark "errors" that

seem perfectly natural to the student. Although this information refers to younger

children, scholars such as Farr and Daniels (1986) suggest that general research on

literacy, writing instruction, and vernacular dialects are applicable to various age groups

(43). In this case, the auxiliary absence indicates another AAVE feature that can blur the

readability of an essay, especially if a teacher does not understand that it is a feature of

AAVE. Complications arise in the comprehension of the essay that mostly likely result

in lower grades.

Another verb-related AAVE feature that is realized in these texts is third person

singular –s absence. This feature, described by Wolfram and Schilling-Estes (1998) as a

variable of vernacular subject/verb agreement, is noted as most common in AAVE and

more fully described in analyses of its frequency among older and younger African

American speakers (Rickford 1999) and also among New York, Detroit, and Washington,

D.C. speakers (Labov et al. 1968, Wolfram 1969, Fasold 1972).

My data also indicate instances of –s absence in the African American students; no instances of this feature exist in my pool of Anglo speakers (almost 200 essays). Furthermore, the feature is one of the most frequent of any AAVE found in these essays. Five instances in 4 essays show a trend.

1. All three authors had their own way of saying discrimination continue in schools. (#27b)

2. Sommers basically say this is right or wrong. (#100)

3. LeSher feel that if The Women's Sport Foundation does not consider cheerleading a sport then why should every one else. (#103)

4. Cheerleading give many people enjoyment. (103)

5. He crosses the street without really knowing what he is doing and hops on the driver side and drive up to Fountain Lake. (105).

Features such as 1-5 indicate that diagnostic features of AAVE persist in the written language of some African American students' writing. Such features are not present in the essays extracted from Anglo American students, and this trend suggests that along with CCR and copula absence, –s absence in third person singular situations creeps into African American student essays for one reason or another.

Multiple negation also makes its way into these compositions. Multiple negation, more commonly referred to as "double negatives," are also relatively common in these essays. All four types of negation ("marking of the auxiliary verb and the indefinite(s) following the verb," "negative marking of an indefinite before the verb phrase and of the auxiliary verb," "inversion of the negativized auxiliary verb and the pre-verbal indefinite," and "multiple negative marking across different clauses") are available to AAVE speakers, although the fourth is specifically "restricted to Southern and African

American vernacular English varieties" (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 1998: 339;

Rickford 1999). These issues of negation are further explained by Labov (1972), who

discusses the semantic contradiction that negation poses (i.e. the multiple negation used

by African Americans tends to mean the exact opposite of what Anglo Americans would

posit) (131). Furthermore, negation, which is certainly an issue in the AAVE-using

essays, is a potential issue for SE essays because many other dialects share this feature;

however, negation was not visible in the SE essays. The following three sentences are

the only marked instances of double or multiple negation in my sample:

1. I'm not trying to say nothing has improved since the last century because
   things have improved. (#27c)

2. No one that's a minority can say discrimination doesn't exist. (#27c)

3. Something else she is trying to get through is women can not achieve nothing
   else so why try if they have everything. (#33c)

Notably, the first two examples are not vernacular instances of double negatives;

however, as I will later discuss, the teacher notes them as such, which may reinforce

negative stereotypes concerning how the teacher views student vernacularity. I will

address the teachers' comments in a later part of the analysis. At this juncture, it is

noteworthy that these features do occur, and of all the features examined so far, this is the

only set that is diagnostic for more than one American dialect.

Another series of vernacular features that is present in the composition essays are

features having to do with attaching (or not attaching, as the case may be) inflectional-

marking affixes to nouns. The only plural affix that is diagnostic for AAVE varieties is

the "general absence of plural suffix" as in "Lots of boy_go to school" (Wolfram and

Schilling-Estes (1998).

The general absence of plural –*s* is widely used in written compositions by

AAVE-speaking students. The following examples illustrate this usage:

1.   White male are complaining because women and minorities numbers
        are actually decreasing. (#33b)

2.   White male supporters were representing less than 8 percent of all
        household. The honest working man....(#33b)

3.   In each case, it is not hard to see the hold white supremacy had on
        black. However, in each incident blacks stood up for what....(#68b)

4.   Boys are depicted as vital, necessary item to have in lyrics such as: "oh
        baby, the reason I breathe is you." (#309)

The absence of plural –*s* on nouns is also confirmed by Labov (1972), who suggests that

the Thunderbirds, which in his study was the youngest set of speakers who represent "the

groups which respond least to middle-class educational norms," delete plural –*s*

moderately before consonants and only rarely before vowels (Labov 1972: 32). This

claim finds support in my data, as only one of the examples of plural –*s* is deleted before

a vowel. All other cases of –*s* absence are before a consonant. Be that as it may, Labov

suggests that plural –*s* deletes the least out of 3rd singular absence, possessive absence,

and plural absence; however, all of these forms are present at one time or another.

Wolfram's (1969) work on Detroit African American speech confirms the distinction that

although all –*s* absence variations are indicative of AAVE speech (although certainly not

mutually exclusive to AAVE), plural absence has the least significance of the three.

Possessive examples from essays, such as "While the women equal rights movement was

still in progress the middle-income earners were still against working and middle other

things" demonstrate the use of all three variables, most of them with the same set of speakers, which indicate that the written language of students is rooted in their speech (#33b).

There are also several grammatical structures that are not necessarily indicative of direct spoken language such as these examples from #33:

1. A gender feminist is a woman that believes men **does** not have equal rights. (33)

2. But Wolf and Faludi **does** not think there is a conspiracy. (33)

These examples, although not marked as AAVE features, might be the result of hypercorrection. Hypercorrection, common to the spellings of words, is a extreme or over-standard style, in which the student compensates for vernacular features by over-correcting the variable (Wolfram et al. 1999). Here, it is possible that the student is hyper-correcting his use of plural, irregular verbs by assuming that all plural forms use an *s*.

Still other examples of possible hypercorrection are "While the women equal rights movement were still in progress...(#33b);" "All through American history, the majority of the money owned in America were owned by whites (#68b);" "Race crimes such as lynching was not uncommon and the government..,(#68c)" and "the most important of the resources was well-qualified teachers (#68c)." (Labov et al. 1968 and Weldon 1994). A possible explanation for these situation is hypercorrection, in which the student considers any plural, irregular verb to be a verb with an *–s* ending.

ANALYSIS

There are several features that teachers marked as "errors" in these essays. Students 23, 33, and 68 have more vernacular features in their essays, which are indicative of spoken language (in this case AAVE) influence on writing. Labov (1995), in his analysis of the reading failure of African Americans, questions whether structural vernacular differences between it and SE matter in the literacy and writing discipline. He suggests that the features do not interfere with writing and reading; however, the speech of the student does affect the teacher's concept of the student. Anson (2001) also notes that teacher attitudes toward error, in conjunction with the persona that the teacher creates for each student upon reading his/her writing, illustrate a general negativity and ignorance toward vernacular dialects, although he does not mention the effects of students' written vernacular dialect. Labov, however, sees little indication of serious literacy failure associated with dialect in composition, and he instead notes that dialect awareness programs for teachers have resulted in a more accepting attitude from teachers.

Labov's research in conjunction with the relatively small number of vernacular features found in these essays implies that there are not enough AAVE features in these essays to be considered relevant. Farr and Daniels would contest this point by suggesting that significance lies in the fact the small number of AAVE features found prove that spoken language does influence writing, and those who have less experience with SE may incorporate speech features that are not common to SE (Farr and Daniels 1986).

Furthermore, it is possible that teachers who are sociolinguistically well-informed will avoid drawing negative conclusions about a student's writing, but how many

teachers are aware of dialect differences and the specific features involved? If small numbers of AAVE features appear in essays, and the teacher is relatively unprepared for the significance and grammatical variation of the dialect, then negative attitudes in combination with uninformed comments and marks will influence the overall decline in the literacy and writing scores of AAVE speaking students.

TEACHER RESPONSE TO LANGUAGE VARIATION

WHAT WE DO AND WHY STUDENTS DON'T UNDERSTAND IT.

Recently, I had a student question me on a paper grade. I had asked all my students to attach three-four questions on the essay to address their specific questions about the essay and to focus my reading of their essay. Those three questions were answered, but the student was complaining that I had not fixed his grammar. At the top of his essay he had written "DRAFT TWO: CORRECTED BY MRS. MATARESE."

What kind of comments are the easiest for students to understand? What kinds of comments help students the most with their writing? Current scholarship leads us to believe that facilitative comments are far more beneficial to students than directive comments (Sommers 1982). Facilitative comments are comments that challenge students to question their writing; they are usually interrogative and use mitigating language (i.e. I **think** that you **might** want to rethink this concept.). These comments usually question students' concepts and logic more than their mechanics and grammar. Knoblauch and Brannon (1981) suggest that facilitative readers try "to preserve the writer's control of the discourse" and consider the writing at "the level of meaning, line of reasoning, intellectual potentiality" (128). Comments on grammar and mechanics are usually realized by imperative statements that specifically direct a student's decision and are most often called directive comments. Facilitative commenting theory is driven by teachers' acknowledgement of a popular student misconception: "if I fix all of Professor X's comments, then I will receive an A on my essay." The comments that correct or "fix" student writing take innovative and critical thinking opportunities away from the

student. Conversely, facilitative commenting challenges the student to re-work his/her writing instead of relying on solely teacher's comments.

Although current scholarship generally tends to view them as unhelpful to the student, directive comments seem to have their place in teacher commentary. The theory behind these comments involves the acknowledgement of specific grammatical rules and standards that freshman writing program supports. The teacher then models writing for the student by showing them what to do in writing, crossing out the student's writing and covering it with the teacher's own version. A teacher can be a good model for a student, and the corrections that a teacher makes can show the student what is socially acceptable. However, what happens when a teacher marks a "grammatical mistake" that is not considered one by the student? What happens when the teacher misinterprets the language, not realizing that his/her comments make no logical sense to the student. Unfortunately, confusing comments happen often anyway, apart from nonstandard dialect features. Comments such as *awk*, or *expand* can confuse and misdirect the students' revisions.   Furthermore, when nonstandard American dialects further distance the student from SE, the situation becomes more complicated.

Many scholars have addressed these questions, developing different taxonomies for categorizing teachers' responses and examining the occurrence of these responses. Some scholars view commenting as limited to either directive or facilitative, whereas other researchers analyze and dissect the specific components of these comments, finding that the two categories are vague descriptions for various types of commenting. They suggest that response is not a dichotomy (Straub and Lunsford 1995). Lees (1979) proposes a series of categories some of which are *correcting, emoting, describing,*

suggesting, questioning, reminding, and *assigning*. Searle and Dillon (1980) use a similar taxonomy: *evaluation, assessment, instructional responses, audience,* and *moving outside the writing* (##).

These techniques are praised by composition theorists Straub and Lunsford (1995), although they see the number of categories as too simple for analyzing teacher comments. Teachers' comments fit into these larger categories, but a narrower, more precise taxonomy may illustrate, more specifically, how comments are used. Straub and Lunsford (1995) concentrate on exploring both the *focus* of teacher comments and the *mode* in which these comments are written. Under both of these larger labels, several diverse categories for comments exist. *Focus* describes the writing-related elements on which teachers' comments focus. *Mode* identifies the type of comments that the teacher uses. *Mode*, in this study, is not defined by any specific language use or discourse features; however, example types for each and a series of sample papers provide a model for the category that any given teacher comment merits. The table (refer to page 31) below shows the categories that Straub and Lunsford (1995) use in determining how teachers respond in student writing.

Straub and Lunsford define and provide examples for these categories. Beginning with the larger label "Global Focus," "Ideas" are comments that "deal with matters of content at or beyond the level of the sentence: the thoughts, assertions, arguments, lines of thought, and reasoning of the writing" (1995: 160). Examples they provide are "an insightful observation," "Your text is more effective in the winter scene than elsewhere," and "Do a little check on the reasoning behind your statements." The authors define "Development" as the teacher's request for additional support or evidence, "definition,

elaboration, or explanation of the writer's ideas. They do not call for new ideas or assertions so much as they ask for the development of statements that are already present in the text"....with comments such as "What happened? Tell us more," "Evidence? Examples?—Can you provide a definition?," and "What else could you say in favor of your position?" (161). The factor that distinguishes the two is that "development" is more of a specific request, whereas "ideas" comment on information already present. "Global Structure" is the last category that falls under the "Global Focus." These comments are concerned with the "organization of large units of discourse" (162). Comments can discuss the macro-level organization of the essay by addressing a particular paragraph's placement within the essay or by generally noting the overall structure of the essay.

Under "Local" in the "Focus" category, fall "Local Structure," "Wording," and "Corrections." Straub and Lunsford (1995) use the term "Local Structure" to describe comments that deal with sentence structure issues and, issues between sentences, or within a paragraph. The authors' research suggests that these comments focus on the "clarity, directness, coherence, and emphasis of sentences" such as in the examples "I have trouble following this sentence," "try to rework these sentences to avoid the repetition," and "I'd consider cutting the last phrase so you can end on a strong note" (162).

"Wording" focuses specifically on the writer's word choices with shorter comments that deal with "clarity, economy, or appropriateness" (163). Examples of "wording" are comments like "pretentious language," "Right word?," and "What does this refer to?" These comments can also praise word choices that are already present, or

they can request an additional word (e.g. "Which movies?"). "Corrections" deal with

grammar, mechanics, and punctuation, and are most often declarative and imperative

statements, as teachers most often view grammar and mechanics as a set of conventions

that are usually either right or wrong. For this reason, marginal comments are rare, and

the majority of "corrections" are realized as strikethroughs that may or may not include

an imperative re-wording in the margin. Straub and Lunsford provide examples such as

"subject-verb agreement error," "Commas and periods always go inside quotes," "Start a

new title here," and " Good use of a quote" (163).

The final section under "Focus," Extra-textual Comments" are questions that most

often refer to concerns that are outside of the text itself such as assignment type, the

student's voice, audience, choices made by the student, this paper in relation to past

essays, and so on.

When discussing the "Modes" of commentary there are ten sections that the

comments can be: corrections, negative evaluations, qualified negative evaluations,

praise, imperatives, advice, indirect requests, problem-posing questions, heuristic

questions, and reflective statements. "Corrections" in "mode" are characterized by a

change that a teacher makes in the text. "Negative evaluations" are marked by objective

criticism such as "poor sentence structure" or "This paragraph needs detail and clarity"

(167). Similarly, "qualified negative evaluations" are those in which the teacher

criticizes subjectively, most often using "I," "me," or "my." "Praise," is obviously a

positive evaluation that can be either subjective or objective. Becoming sightly less

imposing, "imperatives" request a change in the form of a command such as "Add more

details" or "You must first provide some information about the damage drug use does to

people" (168). Less controlling still, "advice" leaves the final decision-making to the student such as "I suggest you put this material about the gang's name at the start of the essay" or "What about starting with this point?" (169). "Indirect Requests" such as "Can you give an example" are almost always interrogative, and they do not explicitly change the student's text. "Problem-Posing questions" are even less controlling, as they "present critical questions about the writing, especially abut its form" (169). "Heuristic questions" prompt the student to further develop the content. They are open questions that specify no specific change. The final "mode," "reflective statements," is described as a "catch-all for descriptive, interpretive, explanatory, reader-response, and hortatorical statements" (170), all of which impose little control over the student's creative design for the writing. Although they specify that all of these "modes" exert varying amounts of control over the student's writing, the authors qualify this by noting that some quantity of control will always be present, as students will examine their writing differently after seeing any comment.

In addition to categorizing teacher comments, Straub and Lunsford also suggest the "teacher role" that each "mode" of commentary connotes. Integral to this study is the suggestion that as the "modes" become less controlling, the teacher role becomes less of a proofreader or editor and more of a dialogic participant of the writing process.

In my analysis of teacher comments, I use this complex taxonomy, as it addresses both what student writing issues are addressed by the teacher and how the teacher structures his/her comments, as well as the implications of the teacher's role as it is based on the comment mode.

In this section, I analyze the *Mode* of commenting in 13 AAVE rough drafts before examining similar grammatical comments in SE rough drafts. The *Focus* will always be *Local* because the comments analyses center almost completely on word-and sentence-level "problems." Although I wish that I could discuss the widespread use of Global and Extra-Textual comments and Praise, Indirect, Problem-Posing, and Heuristic Questions for my corpus of non-standard speaking essays, these instances occur rarely (if at all). Instead, I can only discuss the overall tendency for teachers to address vernacularity in terms of local commenting, corrections, evaluations, and imperatives.

DATA

Because of the frequency of AAVE features in speakers 27, 33, 68, 100, 103, and 104, I did an analysis of the rough drafts of these students, looking for how teachers comment on these particular features in the drafting stage. All of these papers are written by African American students. The teachers responding to these papers, respond with the full knowledge of their authors' identities and backgrounds. Furthermore, even if a specific error is not specific to AAVE speakers, it's the preponderance of AAVE-related errors that makes teachers see the papers—even unconsciously—through the lens of AAVE.

Student 27 uses many spoken vernacular features in his writing. In his first essay, instances of double negation occur that are completely grammatical, SE uses of negation.

1. I'm not trying to say nothing has improved since the last century because things have improved.
2. No one that's a minority can say discrimination doesn't exist.

Even though these instances of negation are grammatical, teacher A crosses out the first

negative, completely changing the intended meaning of the sentences, and in the second

instance vaguely indicates that the sentence is "double negative."

<div align="center">anything</div>

1. I'm not trying to say ~~nothing~~ has improved since the last century because things
    have improved.

2. No one that's a minority can say
    discrimination doesn't exist.   ⟵   double negative

The first comment is a correction in both mode and focus. Using the strikethrough, the

teacher notes the appropriate usage. Similarly, the second comment, although it could be

construed as a wording problem, also is a correction. Unlike comment one, this comment

does allow the student to determine what a double negative is for his/herself, but it exerts

"correction" amount control over the writing, which, in this case, causes the student to

change the entire meaning of the phrase.

The use of correction here suggests that the teacher is in a proofreader's role,

although it is necessary to note that this professor in other more content-based areas of

the essay uses more interrogative statements. These comments do not explain why the

student's construction is awkward or "wrong." In sentence one, the student suggests that

many things have improved. These kinds of comments could be seen as one mistake

made by the professor; however, the second instance of negation demonstrates the

ignorance of negation on the teacher's behalf, and, more importantly, a specific example

of the socially constructed persona that the teacher has created for this student, although

one cannot be sure unless qualitative analysis interviews are conducted with the teachers

to discuss, specifically, their awareness of language variation. The teacher, in his use of corrections, sets up a series of assumptions based on a student who may use AAVE in a class in which 99% of students identify themselves as African American. Thus, the possibility that he would encounter AAVE in student writing is increased, and marking such speech, which would be necessary, can be uncomfortable for a teacher who does not necessarily know how to approach the language varieties.

In another draft by student #27, he uses different types of AAVE features such as leveling when he writes "Three authors has an opinion on those issues" (#27). Comparable to the previous essays, the trend is to cross out the student's language and implement his own version onto it:

Writers have
"Three ~~authors has~~ an opinion on those issues" (#27).

Corrections that deal with local wording and grammatical correctness do not continue in the essay drafts by student #33, which are graded by the same professor. In her essay, there are several AAVE features. One example is her use of *does* for *do*: "But Wolf and Faludi does not think there is a conspiracy." There is no comment on this instance. Similarly, she uses multiple negation when she says, "Something else she is trying to get through is women can not achieve nothing else so why try if they have everything." This instance also has no comment on it. CCR in the sentence "Men, I think have because they are becoming more conservative than what they **use** to be" [my emphasis] is another example of a place where the teacher made no comments. This might be a case of a teacher attempting to first focus on the content of the essay before

focusing on grammatical and word level issues. This does not seem to be the case in this essay, as there are few comments on the essay at all.

Student #33 uses multiple negation in her final paper, perhaps indicating that the lack of comments in other drafts has allowed the vernacularity to continue. This paper begins with a discussion of discrimination in which she states, "I can't think of no time I have not been discrimination." The teacher crosses out the student's language and indicates the "correct" version for the student as illustrated in the example to follow.

> cannot any   ed against
> "I ~~can't~~ think of ~~no~~ time I have not been discriminat~~ion~~."

As this is the last essay in the class, it appears that an understanding of multiple negation, which is a trend in this student's writing, is not dealt with effectively by the teacher. The teacher's use of corrections and his focus on grammar and wording does not appear to be effective for this student.

Similarly, student #68 uses vernacular features that are addressed by the teacher in *correcting* and *evaluating* modes. Student #68 occasionally uses present tense as past tense in her irregular verbs, CCR (2 and 4), and adverb reduction (--ly), which are all addressed in the following way:

1. "After 1988 the gap beg~~i~~n to widen." (*a*)

2. "Darling-Hammond resourcefully told how the federal, state, and local governments discriminated against black students, by showing how the government **use** the track*ing* system to segregated students within the same schools." (my emphasis)

3. Due to the fact that many schools are already partial*ly* segregated because of the trend that blacks usually live in urban cities and whites live in suburban ~~cities~~, (*areas*) discrimination ~~of~~ the schools are easily shown..." (*within*)

4. Darling-Hammond would not feel that Affirmative Action is insignificant, but is design~~ed~~ to protect job opportunities...."

Certainly, the trend of *correcting* the grammatical, word-level issues in the paper is a priority. Other comments are imperative such as the "Be Precise" next to the student's phrase "Affirmative Action is insignificant to the Thurstorms" and the imperative "See Page 664" next to a date the student uses. Similarly, the teacher crosses out another AAVE feature when he comments "Race <u>crimes</u> such as lynching ~~was~~ ^were^ not uncommon and the government in power was made it clear that blacks did not deserve a voice in the government." Other imperative and evaluative comments in that essay include "USE ACTIVE VOICE AND ELIMINATE UNNECESSARY WORDS," "NEW PARAGRAPH (BEGIN WITH A TOPIC SENTENCE EXPRESSING THE POINT)," "STRESS OR EMPHASIZE," and various re-wordings of the student's writing.

Essays I collected from Teacher B's class demonstrate similar trends in grading, which include crossing out sections or not mentioning them at all, as in this paragraph from student #100:

! Combine the
2 parg.

What does
looking pass
mean?

"The Beauty
Myth" by Naomi
Wolf

The (essay) by Wolf, ~~she~~ talks about women looking **pass**, fighting for equal rights and looking for the beauty within themselves. She also discussed the political and economic ~~reasons~~ ^influence^ women are having on the society.

In this section of the student's essay, the teacher comments on several aspects of writing; however, each of these addresses local aspects of writing and does not focus on global comments. Corrections concerning how to address the term "essay," word choices, and imperative decisions about how to construct the paragraphs do not detract from the importance of how Teacher B constructs his comment about his student's CCR "looking **pass,**" in which he asks the student to rethink or examine a certain word choice. The teacher relinquishes control of writing and revision to the student, whether he intends to or not, and asks the student to make a decision about his/her language. This is also a wording mode of response; however, it is evident that the interrogative nature of the statement returns more power to the student then would the comment "fix" or "looking pa<u>st</u>."

In another section of the student's essay, Teacher B centers on focus, more specifically global structure, ideas, and development when he suggests "Ok, But focus your response on the author's position (not just your opinion on the issue, which you can in the conclusion)." Imperatives are used, but they are not specific enough imperatives to warrant a directive, or teacher controlling, comment. Teacher B does not address the student's hypercorrection of CCR ("that is their los**t** and someone**'s else** gain" (#100)). The rationale behind such a decision might be that the teacher marked overall content and idea formation instead of minor grammatical issues; minor issues might change with the scope of the piece anyway, so the changing of small details would become obsolete.

This methodological decision of the teacher is speculative; however, it seems that the comments through the rest of the essay, although overwhelmingly imperative

indicates that the teacher's desire to show the student where the content and focus of the essay fall apart.

In essay #103 Teacher B circles and corrects many grammatical mistakes, in addition to commenting on larger wording and sentence level problems. The following paragraph's comments indicate several problems with tense, although some of the nonstandard dialect features in the sample are confused with what appear to be fairly standard problems with tense and subject verb agreement. In the following sample, Teacher B makes judgments about what problems the student has, which focus on tense variation and subject verb agreement.

tense   Good

The other problem Rae Ann (was) having (was) that she (did)
not know how to tell M'Dear that she was bleeding. Rae Ann was
afraid of M'Dear because she had used up a lot of towels and   knows
things as remedies to her problem. Even though Rae Ann was
afraid of telling M'Dear, she had already (knew) that something (was)
going on with Rae Ann, because a lady that lives on their street
told her that she seen Rae Ann leave school early. (#103)
saw

In this example, Teacher B notes several problems with tense. In marking several past tense verbs, the teacher also corrects the *seen* in the phrase *she seen Rae Ann leave school today*. Although the occurrence of subject verb agreement and consistent tense markings are common problems in many students' writings, this teacher makes no distinction between the common grammatical mistakes of students and a nonstandard dialect feature (*seen*). *Seen*, as used in this context, is an irregular verb in which the participle is used for past forms. Instead of paying more attention to this particular feature, the teacher corrects it along with everything else, which similarly suggests this teacher's role as a proofreader.

Student #103 and #104 also use third person *–s* absence in their essays (i.e. "Cheerleading give many people enjoyment."), and each instance of *–s* absence is marked by the teacher with a large circle and an "S."

ANALYSIS: Based on my analysis of how much each student revised his/her paper, and how effective those revisions were.

Overall the teachers' comments have been corrections that focus on wording, local structure, and grammar, in which he crosses out improper verb tenses and uses imperative statements to direct the student's revisions. This method demonstrates directive commenting. Certainly, the teacher can act as a model for students as he/she shows the student the best way to write a phrase. However, this model does not yield the expected results, so the question remains: do corrections and evaluations commenting solve issues of AAVE usage in these essays? Furthermore, although this progress is marked by another question: do the vernacular features identified and commented on in rough drafts persist in the final drafts?

In responding to this, I examine essays for speakers 27, 33, 68, 100, 100, 103, 104. Thus, we come back to the original examples from each student's essays, such as student #27 and his use of multiple negation. Student #27 uses entirely grammatical modes of negation in other examples as "I'm not trying to say nothing has improved" and " No one that's a minority can say discrimination doesn't exist." The professor, in his commenting, alters these sentences. The student in his final draft writes the following sentences in place of the former ones: "I'm not trying to say anything has improved since the last century because things have improved" and "Any minority can say discrimination

doesn't exist." The meaning of the sentences is entirely changed; therefore, the first two sentences of the student's essay are confounded by sentences that are illogical, mal-placed, and potentially misinterpreted as even more "incorrect" than the first. The sentences surrounding those with multiple negation are confused by the lack of cohesion between ideas such as "All the riots, segregation, and discrimination built up to how it is today. Any minority can say discrimination doesn't exist. Basically it comes from the stereotypes that we have for each other" (27) The first sentence is obviously introducing the idea of discrimination, while the last sentence is explaining where discrimination comes from. Both sentences, although not directly stated, in conjunction with the sentences previous to the sample, discuss affirmative action and minority status. For this reason, the sentence "Any minority can say discrimination doesn't exist" makes little sense in context. The teacher has inadvertently turned a grammar problem into a contextual one. Contextual issues, which carry more weight in the grading of an essay than grammar and mechanics, create a situation in which the student's grade will suffer because the context is confused.

In the second essay by student #27, Teacher A crosses out several of the student's words to correct them ("Three ~~authors has~~ Writers have an opinion on those issues" (#27)). The student did correct these words in the final draft, although his cumulative understanding of the use of vernacular dialects instead of SE is complicated by his use of *has* in a sentence of a later paper: "Schools predominately minority has around a very high two though students and up to three thousand students." This sentence has several problems in it, although the student's use of *has* in a *have* environment (in SE) indicates that the

cognitive recognition of the change from AAVE to SE marked on his essay in an early

rough draft may not have occurred.

Student #33, who had relatively few comments on his essay, maintains all

instances of AAVE (including using *does* for *do*, multiple negation, and CCR); thus, the

essay does not draw closer to SE.

In student 33's final essay, she used multiple negation in her rough draft. This

negation was commented on by the teacher, who responded to the student's languages as

follows:

        cannot   any   ed against

     "I ~~can't~~ think of ~~no~~ time I have not been discriminat~~ion~~."

This quote appears to mean that the student has experienced discrimination. This

correction works well with the sentences surrounding it in her final draft, although the

extent to which the student understands this variable of SE is unknown.

   Similar to student 33's essays, student #68 uses several AAVE features that,

although "corrected" or "marked" do not change in the final drafts. Out of the four

following sections from the essay, the student changed only numbers two and three.

1. "After 1988 the gap beg~~in~~ a to widen."

2. "Darling-Hammond resourcefully told how the federal, state, and local
    governments discriminated against black students, by showing how the
    government **use** the track ing system to segregated students within the same
    schools." [emphasis added]

3. Due to the fact that many schools are already partial ly segregated because of the
    trend that blacks usually live in urban cities and whites live in suburban ~~cities~~ areas
    discrimination ~~of~~ within the schools are easily shown..."

4. Darling-Hammond would not feel that Affirmative Action is insignificant, but is design<u>ed</u> to protect job opportunities...."

Adverbial –*ly* deletion is common among many students, no matter what type of dialect they speak, but the fact that numbers one and four persist indicates that vernacular features related to irregular verbs and consonant clusters are not features that can be explained to a student simply by crossing out those features. Instead, more interrogative, indirect, and heuristic comments that question the reasoning behind certain types of language might be more useful if the trend in the final drafts continues.

In Teacher B's students 100, 103, 104, and 105, there is a similar reaction to his comments. In student 100's essays some instances of dialect features are complicated by the student's total avoidance of contexts on which the teacher commented. This occurs most obviously when the teacher commented on the student's use of *pass* in the phrase "she talks about women looking pass, fighting for equal rights...." The student's use of CCR is questioned by the teacher when he asks "What does looking pass mean?" In the final draft, the student completely avoids the idea of women looking past discrimination by saying that "she discussed how women are realizing how unhappy they are with their appearance," which does not seem to match the focus on equal rights and discrimination in the earlier draft.

The comment for *pass* may have caused the student to avoid the usage completely. I remember in my first year of college, I was unsure of the difference between *effect* and *affect*; for this reason, I would avoid using either one at all costs. Perhaps, the comment about the CCR, which the student may recognize as correct, causes a desire to avoid such features.

Conversely, the other instances of vernacular dialect either remain unchanged or do not change (due to the lack of commenting on that feature). This is visible when the student maintains her hypercorrection ("that is their lost and someone's else gain) in the final draft when she states, "that is their lost and someone else's gain." She corrects the possessive marker, but she maintains her use of *lost* for *loss*.

In student essay #103, she is grappling with the use of past tense, in addition to using the participle form for past tense forms (e.g. "because a lady that lives on their street told her that she ~~seen~~ ^{saw} Rae Ann leave school early"). She does not correct this in her essay, although the teacher explicitly crossed out her *seen* and wrote *saw* clearly above it. Seemingly, the correction and evaluation comments are not helping these students to achieve writing that is closer to SE.

In addition, both students 103 and 104 have third person *–s* absence. Each instance is marked with a circle and an "S" by teacher B. The students, like most in this group, maintained their *–s* absence, changing nothing yet receiving a vague comment on it in every draft. It appears that such negligence is the result of a lack of understanding by the student in which he/she does not recognize the reasoning behind the teachers' comments. Perhaps the negligence is not the students'; instead, this inattention places blame on the teacher who is not properly informed about the use of vernacular dialects and who could use class time to address some of the grammatical issues in the essays.

CONCLUSION

Although not the focus, this study has shown that spoken language influence is present in student writing. The presence of AAVE features and the teachers' overall negative treatment of these features demonstrates the need for a re-examination of the types of commenting techniques that teachers use. However, more importantly, teachers need to learn to look for, and expect, dialect differences in the writing of their students, and they need to be able to distinguish between language variation and common grammatical error. Whether teachers are able to makes these distinctions with accuracy or not, they need to be aware that these distinctions exist, and their teaching and commenting styles need to reflect this acknowledgment. Furthermore, the current move toward more dialogic commentary and instruction should aid in how grammatical and language variation-related problems are addressed in the classroom and on student papers.

In order to properly address nonstandard dialects in the classroom, teachers must come to the realization that nonstandard-speaking students are further away from SE than their standard-speaking cohorts because some AAVE speakers code shift into standard forms more easily than others. Vernacularity exists on a continuum, and the more vernacular a student is, the more chance he/she has of using vernacular features in his/her essays. Furthermore, if a teacher finds a vernacular pattern in a student's writing, then the teacher must realize that the occurrence of other features, although more standard, will occur in that student's writing because the journey toward SE is longer for that student.

Once teachers understand how nonstandard dialect speakers write, then they can begin working on more facilitative and interrogative comments. They can challenge the student to re-think their word choices by using indirect requests, problem-posing questions, and heuristic questions. Teachers who recognize that their commenting is ineffectual for some students must learn to use the power they have to inform students about dialect differences while giving the student the power to re-work their writing.

CCR, plural –*s* absence, copula deletion, and irregular verb variation occur, although sporadically, in these African American students' essays. CCR occurs in preconsonantal environments, which could indicate a lack of vernacular (prevocalic) CCR. However, the evidence of preconsonantal environment CCR, although common to standard dialects, illustrates how teachers may rid students' speech/papers of prevocalic stigmatized forms (e.g. *las egg* for *last egg*) but not more white-based forms, which may not be as stigmatized by a white teacher. The stigmatized features are not realized in essays, but those that are common to SE occur because these forms are not hard on the teacher's ear and look more like grammatical problems than phonological ones. This demonstrates how students who are further from SE may be at a disadvantage even though they may not necessarily use vernacular dialect features in writing or in speech.

Furthermore, the incidence of plural –*s* absence, copula deletion, and irregular verb variation, which are indicative of vernacular dialects, demonstrate convictions first presented by Farr and Daniels (1986), which indicate that vernacular dialects do appear in essays. However, the occurrence of these vernacular features is concurrent with the realization that most, if not all, students incorporate spoken language into their writing. Students who use vernacular dialects happen to use more of their spoken language

features, which are not often used in SE and are more easily recognized as "errors" by teachers (Farr and Daniels 1986).

In examining teacher response, student errors are often realized as a lack of student writing ability, which results in negative teacher attitudes and commenting types that adversely effect student writing. Commenting is usually correction or evaluation-based and uses imperative statements. The correction is usually a strike-through with the correction written next to the strike-through. Most often, the paper has many other grammatical mistakes in it that are not specific to nonstandard-speaking students, so the teacher marks the dialect feature with the rest of the grammar. Ironically, much of the "grammar marks" actually result from phonological differences in the students' dialect, as in the corrections on CCR. Furthermore, it seems that the teacher, although not particularly helpful in his/her corrections and responses, is not making a distinction between random grammatical problems and dialectal differences; therefore, I cannot at this time make clear judgments about the extent of the social constructed personas that teachers may or may not create for students based on dialect use without further qualitative research about the ways in which teachers construct the personas of student writers based on their dialect use. Grammatical issues in essays do seem to be indicative of an overall disregard for lengthy and dialogic commenting, which can only be further complicated for the student if he/she is a speaker of a nonstandard dialect like AAVE.

How do these types of marks help student writing? It appears that when teachers make "corrections" with a strike-through, the students will either make the change or maintain the vernacular feature. If the student makes the correction in the final draft, usually the same feature persists throughout the series of essays for that semester. If the

student does not make the correction, usually that feature will also be maintained for the remainder of the class. The maintenance of vernacular features throughout the semester indicates that teachers are not addressing this language variety in a way that facilitates code-switching, or any type of linguistic self-awareness. Correction and evaluation are not enhancing the students' understanding of written language. If this commenting style continues, and teachers allow this type of language use to persist in student writing, then we are setting these students up for failure. If the student manages to pass the class, they will face new challenges when writing in the next class. Who will tell them how to adjust to a new dialect?

So far, we have examined some exercises for using dialect in the classroom and for incorporating language variation awareness in the classroom, with varying degrees of overt linguistic variation teaching. Now, we can contemplate how teachers address their own response styles. Is it enough to simply ask teachers to be more interrogative and powerless in their responding techniques, or can we also ask something of the students? Who sees student papers more often?

In my class, the peers in the class see early drafts much more often than I. Perhaps we need to teach the students to be more facilitative. I accomplished this with one of my classes this semester, and the results were quite interesting. I told them that we were doing a "Jeopardy" peer review, that is, all peer comments took the form of a question. I told them that it was my goal to take some of the power away from them and give it back to the actual author of the paper. I also told them about facilitative versus directive commenting, and we talked about what kind they were more comfortable with. They suggested that they were more comfortable using directive comments. For this

reason, we used a transparency of an old essay and practiced making interrogative comments. This was a difficult exercise for them at first; however, after we examined an introduction together, they were confident in their ability to produce similar kind of questions. They switched papers with a person with whom they haven't reviewed with before (as is customary in my class), and began to review.

The students had many questions about how to phrase certain kinds of corrections. "John didn't use the right tense here. What should I ask him?" I soon understood that although we practice critical thinking in class all of the time, asking questions is much more difficult than marking an essay. Asking questions requires critical thinking, whereas marking comments on paper most often simply makes use of the linguistic and writing competence that we have been adding to and shaping since grade school.

It seems that students will need practice in asking critical questions of their peers' papers. Once they develop critical questioning, they might be able to merge these new tools with the tools they've honed for years. This critical questioning carries the student to a distinct and higher level of writing and learning, in parallel with Freire's theory of critical pedagogy. Thus, not only do we have a responsibility to teach cultural and linguistic acceptance our students, we also need to teach them how to "shift" between correction and question, between evaluation and praise, and between directive and facilitative comments. Students need to be able to review and discuss essays on a critical level using interrogatives to empower their peers.

There is really only one way to address this problem. If a teacher decides to address nonstandard dialect features with the student, on a purely individual basis, then

the teacher would have to discuss the matter with the student and follow up this discussion with appropriate, interrogative statements that challenge the student to re-think his/her language choices by critically thinking about audience and style. These comments may be very helpful to the student, but Knoblauch and Brannon (1981) might argue that any comments, whether discussed individually with the student or not, must be reinforced by "attitudes, postures, and motives that teachers communicate both through and apart from their reactions to particular texts" (288). Thus, if teachers must actively support their commenting styles in the classroom, then by the same token they are obligated to discuss language issues with students. When we are faced with language variation in the classroom and are compelled either to incorporate it into our curriculum or "leave language to linguists and let writers do their job," we must rise to the challenge and integrate the acknowledgement and study of language variation into the curriculum.[1]

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[1] Appendix II suggests several methods for integrating issues of language variation into the freshman writing curriculum.

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APPENDIX I: Student Project Packet

Project Summary

My name is Mrs. Maureen T. Matarese, and I am a graduate student in English here at NC State. I am interested in looking at the differences between the types of language students use in rough drafts in contrast to those utilized in final papers. I am also interested in examining the occurrence of informal forms of English in both the drafts and final essays (as well as in the occasional informal writing exercise) in order to analyze language change from draft to draft.

The goal of the project is to provide teachers with a better understanding of the types of language that students use in the different drafting points of their essays. The project's benefits extend to both teachers and students because teachers who better understand students can advise them more effectively.

In order to examine the language in the essays, I would like to make a copy of each essay, free write, and draft, turned in for class. All information collected will be kept completely confidential, and any student has the right to withdraw his/her consent to participate at any time, for any reason. Additionally, it is important to note that my analysis of the language for this project will not have any bearing on your professor's teaching, lectures, assignments, nor on his evaluation of students' work and assignments, including his assignment of students' grades.

Anonymous Biography Form #___ .

1. How old are you?
  - o   17
  - o   18-19
  - o   20-25
  - o   26—

2. What are your parent's ethnicities ? (fill in all that apply)
  - o   White (not Hispanic)
  - o   Hispanic
  - o   African American
  - o   Native American
  - o   East Asian/Pacific Islander
  - o   Indian sub-continent
  - o   African
  - o   Other (please specify) _____

3. What is your ethnic identity? (fill in all that apply)
  - o   White (not Hispanic)
  - o   Hispanic
  - o   African American
  - o   Native American
  - o   East Asian/Pacific Islander
  - o   Indian sub-continent
  - o   African
  - o   Other (please specify) _____

4. What is your estimated annual family income?
  - o $10,000—$25,000
  - o $30,000—$45,000
  - o $50,000—$60,000
  - o $70,000—$90,000
  - o $100,000—$150,000
  - o $160,000—
  - o   Other (please specify)_____

5. What are your hobbies?
  - o   Sports (if so, which ones?_____)
  - o   Play an instrument (if so, which ones?_____)
  - o   Read
  - o   Write
  - o   Play video games
  - o   Community Service

    o Other (please
specify)_____

6. When you read you tend to pick up…
- o Magazines (if so, which ones_____)
- o Comic Books
- o Novels-fiction (if so, which ones_____)
- o Poetry (if so, which ones_____)
- o Non-fiction
- o Newspaper (if so, how often_____)

7. How much time a week do you usually spend reading for pleasure?
- o 1-7
- o 8-14
- o 15-21
- o 22-28
- o 29-35
- o more_____

8. What type of English classes were offered at your High School (fill in all that apply)?
- o College Preparatory
- o Honors
- o AP English (Advanced Placement)
- o High School Required English Courses
- o Creative Writing
- o Public Speaking
- o Debate
- o Other_____

9. What type of English classes did you take in high school?
- o College Preparatory Courses
- o Honors Courses
- o Advanced Placement English (college credit possible)
- o High School Required English Courses
- o Dual Enrollment (college credit –usually through a community college)
- o Creative Writing (how many years?_____)
- o Public Speaking
- o Debate
- o Other_____

10. How did you feel teachers responded to you as an individual?

_____
_____
_____

11. Have teachers ever corrected your spoken language? How so?

_____
_____
_____

Student Consent Form

I have read the information concerning the student conducted by Maureen T. Matarese. I give my permission to Maureen Matarese to copy my compositions, drafts, and writing exercises for the analysis of formal and informal speech. I realize that she will be analyzing informal speech for the benefit of the composition classroom; moreover, these copied student essays will *only* be used for the proposed study. I understand that all information will be kept strictly confidential, and I recognize that my identity will be kept completely anonymous. In addition, I realize that I may withdraw my consent to participate in the research at any time, for any reason.

Access to this information will only be provided for Maureen Matarese's thesis committee, who will assist in some of the analysis. Access for your professor may be provided after the termination of the semester, after all grades have been submitted.

_____   _____

Your signature   Date

APPENDIX I: Teacher Consent Form

Teacher Consent Form

Fellow colleagues,

For my thesis, I am interested in looking at the differences between the types of language students use in rough drafts in contrast to those utilized in final papers. I am also interested in examining the occurrence of informal forms of English in both the drafts and final essays (as well as in the occasional informal writing exercise) in order to analyze language change from draft to draft. Although these occurrences of formal/informal language are very interesting and integral to the study, I am also interested in mentioning the teacher comments and how they affect student papers.

The goal of the project is to provide teachers with a better understanding of the types of language that students use in the different drafting points of their essays, and also to provide a glimpse of the types of commenting that teachers are using on drafts. The project's benefits extend to both teachers and students because teachers who better understand themselves and their students have the ability to teach their students to the best of their ability.

In order to examine the language in the essays, you have been kind enough to make a copy of each essay, free write, and draft, turned in for class. All information collected has been kept completely confidential, and any student has had the right to withdraw his/her consent to participate at any time, for any reason. However, in order to make reference to the comments on the essays, I will need your consent. The information you've provided will be kept completely confidential, as each teachers will ONLY be referred to as "Teacher A, Teacher B, Teacher C, and Teacher D." I can assure you that

no thesis readers, advisors, students, or professors will see the names of any participant, student or teacher.

_____

After reading the above information:

      I give my permission to Maureen Matarese discuss my marginal comments on drafts. I realize that she will be analyzing informal speech and response for the benefit of the composition classroom. I understand that all information will be kept strictly confidential; and I recognize that my identity will be kept completely anonymous. In addition, I realize that I may withdraw my consent to participate in this research at any time, for any reason.

      Access to this information will not be provided to any person for any purpose. The results of the study will draw no connection to any particular student or set of students.

If you agree to the above terms, please sign your name and date below.

_____   _____

Your Signature   Date

      Thank you all so much for the help you've given me so far in this project. I appreciate your time and commitment. If you would like to see the results of the study, I can discuss them with you. Please let me know if there is anything that I can do for you.

-Maureen T. Matarese

maureenmatarese@yahoo.com

APPENDIX II: APPLICABILITY IN THE CLASSROOM

How Teachers can Address Language Variation in the Freshman Composition

Classroom: A Series of Exercises and Lessons.

Before discussing what methods for addressing vernacularity I think work best in

the classroom, I will briefly touch on the literature that spent time proposing classroom

applications. For example, Campbell (1997) builds on ideas first presented by Farr and

Daniels (1986) such as using the "linguistic resources" that students bring when they

enter the classroom (71). A pluralist, Campbell asks students to perhaps compose an

autobiography in their dialect or learn the rhetorical differences between white and black

narratives. He suggests that these kinds of tools would empower students instead of

asking them to "appropriate existing spaces" of the dominant (white) discourse, both

linguistically and rhetorically.

Prendergast (1998) takes the pluralist concept of Campbell's a bit further when

she suggests that not only should we examine minority cultures and dialects like AAVE,

we should also spend time discussing "whiteness." If teachers are to have an accepting

classroom that discusses race and cultural issues, then they must also discuss whiteness as

it persists as a culture. Ladson-Billings and Tate IV (1995) concur with critical race

perspectives when they suggest that current multicultural pedagogy is not working. Its

lack of effectiveness is attributed to "the difficulty...of maintaining the spirit and intent of

justice for the oppressed while simultaneously permitting the hegemonic rule of the

oppressor" (1995: 62). Although the difficulty in attempting to create an American

culture that includes all of the races, creeds, and philosophies seems insurmountable,

Prendergast's concept of teaching whiteness may be a way to teach students how to maintain "the spirit and intent of justice" (62). There is a direct difference between understanding and appreciating other cultures and understanding and appreciating your own culture as it relates to others. Furthermore, Delpit's discussion of the "culture of power" implicitly includes the concept of "whiteness," as the "culture of power" implies a standard culture of whiteness that includes middle to upper class white cultural norms and speech.

Although there is a standard white culture of power, the social (e.g. ethnic, regional, linguistic) groupings that contrast with this standard culture are what define America. In addition, it is essential to note that the social grouping that defines the standard culture is relatively small in comparison to the rest of the United States. If a composition course is taught in order to develop each American's individual voice, then perhaps it should be focused upon the individual linguistic and sociological groupings that define American culture, which occur within "whiteness" as well as other racially and regionally diverse groups.

Farr and Daniels (1986) and Wolfram, Adger, and Christian (1999) both discuss similar methods for addressing vernacular dialects in the classroom. Exposure to writing models, including your own writing, collaboration with teachers and with peers, and constant practice in reading and writing in class are all possible ways of aiding students' writing. Opportunities to revise previous work, in which grades are not involved, are always useful. Additionally, portfolios, in which the student prepares a collection of the best of his/her work, is also a fruitful way to show the student that one failed attempt at composition does not necessarily affect his or her grade.

In addition, a series of interesting classroom applications come from *Language Variation in North American English: Research and Teaching*, which, among other topics, discusses how language variation can be addressed in the composition classroom. The chapter devoted to this topic explores the applications of five diverse strategies by five different scholars. Karen McFarland Canine (1993) suggests requiring the students to create a "dictionary of slang," which allows her to discuss language variation, regional and social dialects, etymology, speech-act theory, and code-switching. She supplements her students' studies with reading and article that encourage critical thinking. Canine notes that results include the students' understanding of primary and secondary research as well as "critical analysis, research, synthesis (including incorporation of quotations), and writing for a particular purpose and audience" (370).

For Jerrie Scott (1993) another strategy for approaching language issues in the composition classroom involves the collaborative analysis of vernacular forms in student's essays, as scholars recognize the negative results of grammar "drills." Scott suggests that sentences actually produced by the students ensure that "errors are analyzed within the syntactic and semantic environments in which they tend to occur" (338). These examinations may lead to the production of a class-constructed handbook, although he also suggests methods similar to Wolfram et al. (1999) and Farr and Daniels (1986) such as un-graded drafting that allows students to focus on content instead of grammar and mechanics.

Varying far from previous attempts to address language variation, Varn, Dorrill, and Jones (1993) suggest (although they differ very slightly) similar methods for incorporating linguistic, observation-based research into the classroom. Dorrill notes that

many students did ethnographic or observational research such as hand and arm positions in the lunch line and courtships gestures at fraternity parties. Other students did survey research, as in attitudes toward slang. Still others did textual and quantitative studies—the most popular given names at a certain college, surnames in a small-town telephone book, or differences between British and American spelling. Other students conducted dialect interviews and case studies of language development. (361)

Some courses used readings as a vehicle for generating class discussion. Jones suggests that students in her courses recognize how they can manipulate and are manipulated by language. The authors collaboratively opine that freshman require many texts and an endless supply of examples to make the linguistic goals, to which they are unaccustomed, palpable. However, they further suggest that the critical analysis and absence of Manichean thinking, as well as the deeper understanding of knowledge is invaluable to their college learning experiences.

The following pages are a series of exercises I have used, some of which are adapted from the scholarship presented in this thesis.

"Brain Dumping and Copy Editing"

This exercise is included to illustrate a possible variation of Peter Elbow's (1999) drafting exercises.

Abstract: An exercise that helps students forget about "the right language" in order to get their ideas onto paper. They can use all the tools of verbal discourse to accomplish their early drafts.

Method:

1. Persuasive Paper: pick a "controversial" topic that interests you: death penalty, abortion, homelessness-etc. Think about how you might persuade someone to believe in your topic (you would have to refute arguments from the "other side" –not just support your own side.)

2. Dump all of your ideas, facts, stories, etc about this topic onto some paper. Pay no attention to organization or finding "the perfect words." In fact, to make sure that you **don't use the "perfect" words**, use the EXACT words that you would use in describing-verbally-this argument to your tightest friend. Use the dialect, slang, informal nature, and your own narrative structure to put these ideas on paper. This might be hard when you first try it, but give it a try anyway! If it would help, you can talk out loud while you write it.

3. I'll collect the drafts to check that you attempted them, and I'll make some comments to help you along.

4. When you get the "dumps" back, start taking your ideas and putting them into a tighter order/organization. Make sure to add details and examples to support your ideas. Keep using the same individual, informal style.

5. This time, you and your classmates will get into "editing groups" for peer editing. At this time, your peers will help you clarify any organization or detailing issues that they may find.

6. COPY-EDIT! This is the time to take your informal draft and make it formal. This might be really difficult. Maintain the same ideas and examples, but make the language more "standard," more "prescriptive".

7. I'll collect the drafts quickly for an "attempt" grade, and I will put some additional comments on the paper to help guide you.

8. How did your paper change between the first, second, and third drafts? Did it help to **not concentrate** on language initially?

Rationale:

This strategy is most helpful at the beginning of a freshman composition section. This assignment is an attempt to adapt Peter Elbow's idea of including the "mother tongue" in the initial stages of drafting into a writing model that allows complete linguistic freedom, initially. For example, Elbow suggests asking students to begin the process by choosing an idea that he/she cares about, then produce an "exploratory writing or a draft that follows whatever path comes most naturally." He expresses the need to not force students to write in the "mother tongue," but that they may if they would like. I definitely agree with these ideas, but I feel that his exercises could be even a bit more

linguistically all-inclusive than they appear to be. There might be students who, no

matter how much evidence you provide to convince them, will feel that *they* do not speak

a dialect. To these students, I would like to encourage them to simply write how they

speak. Use slang, informal language, your own rhetorical models, **and** different dialects

to begin organizing your thoughts. Do whatever it is you do when you tell a story or

explain yourself. Additionally, it might be interesting to compare the early drafts with

the later; possibly, one could compare the drafts in conjunction with a "personal

narrative-like style" and a "research paper-like style."   You can also discuss what makes

a draft a "draf." Does isolating organization from language help? Moreover, students'

minds are almost bursting with ideas but getting these ideas onto paper is often difficult

because they are concerned about the "appropriate," "formal" nature of their language. I

often encourage students to begin the paper by first "dumping" their ideas onto the paper.

After they "dump," I ask the students to try to put their ideas in some order/organization

(i.e. traditional five paragraph essay format and the like) and perhaps to add more details

and/or examples to back up their ideas. The most important concept to stress in these two

steps is that **language is unimportant**. So often, students get so frustrated when

attempting to find the "right word" for an idea that they spend forty minutes trying to say

it "just right."

Tips and Cautions: There is only one cautionary measure that I would take in assigning

this exercise: Make sure that EVERY student understands that EVERYONE speaks a

dialect. As Elbow notes, no one speaks "the standard" naturally. Everyone uses informal

styles of English, and I would encourage students to use these informal styles in their early drafts.

"Split Peer Grouping"

Abstract: Help the students feel comfortable collaborating, sharing ideas, and editing together with an emphasis on sharing culture knowledge and awareness constructively and appreciatively.

Method: To be assigned at the beginning of the semester

1. Divide the students into groups of four of six.

2. Ask each group to pick a controversial cultural topic that is important to them (suggestions: third-world hunger, third-world debt, war, religious dispute, English as a national language in the US, dialect prejudice, American homeless etc.).

3. Each group must be split in half. Two (or three if a group of six) much argue for one side of the dispute, and the other two will argue for the other side of the controversy.

4. For homework, ask each group to research their topic and point of view. (agree/disagree etc)

5. Ask them to organize their ideas into an outline.

6. Presentations! Each group will present BOTH SIDES to whatever topic they chose.

7. Respond to this exercise in your journal. Did you like it? Did it help you to consider both sides? Did you feel that considering both sides would be helpful in a written essay?

Assessment: This assignment could go on for three class-periods. I do not want the presentations necessarily FORMAL—just informational. Each group will get a check.

Rationale: This peer group strategy is partially inspired by Terry Dean (1989). I would like for this strategy to help students get to know each other, each other's cultures, and each other's belief systems. Peer groups have the opportunity to discuss information that is important to them. I also like the idea of presenting both sides of the debate. I would emphasize in class that this is how papers should be too. When you research a subject you should take both the ideas you agree with and the ones that you do not. This assignment is best at the beginning of the semester because students are just beginning to know each other, and I would like to introduce the idea of "using both sides" early in the semester.

Tips and Cautions: Many students will say that they do not have a "cultural topic that is important to them." Use the suggestions to get their minds rolling, and/or bring in some different newspapers and ask those who are not sure to browse for a topic. Additionally, it is important to institute Elbow's environment rules and to ask students to PLEASE be appreciative and respectful of their classmate's ideas. They may not agree, but aggressive, angry behavior is not respectful to the other students.

Elbow's class environment rules are as follows:

1. You would have to show me that you respect my dialect and accept it as a full, complete, sophisticated language—in no way inferior or defective compared to Standard Written English….
2. You would have to show me that you see me as smart. And not just smart by linguistically sophisticated….even though I am less skilled in SWE than most speakers of prestige English, I possess a linguistic sophistication that most of them lack. I have had lots of practice I hearing and understanding *multiple* dialects. In fact I have probably learned to switch codes quickly and easily. My mainstream classmate speakers are usually less linguistically sophisticated and more blind to some of the social realities of linguistic variation.

3. You would have to make your class a place where I can *use* my mother tongue as much as I want or as little as I want. That is, you have to offer me a real invitation to use my mother dialect, yet you can't come across like bell hooks' teacher and fellow students who told her that her voice was only "true" and "authentic" when she used a Southern black dialect.
4. Ideally you would have to set things up so that *other students* see me and my language as fully sophisticated and rich [although some attitudes cannot be changed by a teacher in a single course]. (1999: 364)

This environment strategy, although idealistic, is not just helpful; it's essential to the success of acceptance of dialects in the composition classroom. The guidelines specified above are not a "sure-fire" method that will result in open-minded students who are receptive to the concept of understanding dialects, but the rules are a move in the right direction. Environment strategies are just as important as the assignments, exercises, and theories. If a teacher constructs an atmosphere of safety and acceptance, then students will be more receptive to opening their minds. This type of environmental theory, which is supported by many composition theorists, is often called the "Safe House" theory. This safe zone takes students away from the "critical zone" in which they might be made fun of or laughed at. This zone is critical in creating the kind of environment where dialects can be discussed and accepted.

Civil Argument and Language Variation

Out of six composition and rhetoric texts, all of which deal with civic argument, only two discuss language and language variation. Elements of Argument: A Text and Reader (Rottenberg 2000) has an entire chapter on "Language and Thought," which addressed the "power of words," slanted language, connotation, concrete and abstract language. I must admit that seeing a text that actually devotes a chapter to the examination of language made me very happy. The author even included an essay (See Appendix III) about AAVE with discussion questions afterward! However, you can imagine my dismay when I noticed that the article focuses on how AAVE does not exist as a dialect of SE. Much like Delpit, this author thinks that cultural awareness is important, but does not extend his desire for cultural awareness to using dialects to help students achieve competence in SE. There is nothing wrong with using this article in the composition classroom; however, it is essential to pair it with an article that discusses the positive aspects of AAVE in the classroom. The other textbook Strategies of Argument (Hirschberg 1996) also has an article about vernacular dialects. This article only argues the other side of the issue: AAVE is legitimate. Although I agree with this view, it is only fair to give students both sides of the argument. Certainly, if we give impressionable students a powerful article about a topic that they may not be familiar with, they may make a decision based on the rhetorical persuasiveness of the article alone. Both sides of the issue need to be presented to them in order to give them the opportunity to decide on their own.

Although some textbooks may address language variation, the majority do not appear to. What can a teacher do if he/she likes the text he/she's using but still wants to incorporate language variation into classroom discussion and/or exercises? It seems to be the worry of many Delpit followers that if a teacher integrates language variation exercises into his/her classroom, then it will be the focal point for all discussion. However, there are actually many places where language variation can fit into the class without being the constant focus of discussion.

One of the easiest ways to incorporate issues of language variation into the classroom is by discussing writing style, as it relates to the writer's audience. Audience has an enormous effect on how students write, and the class exercises that you use when you cover audience can implicitly cover dialect issues. An example of two audience workshops that I do in my class are as follows.

Audience Letters

Abstract: A two-part exercise that helps students become more conscious of the different codes they use in speech.

Method:

1. I usually use these letters in conjunction with one of the paper assignments for the semester, although you can use it in specific conjunction with or apart from paper assignments. Let the students choose a topic that interests them (I have a select list of topics that I do not allow).

2. Using a structure for a formal essay (loosely: Introduction with a thesis, Body paragraphs with examples that support the thesis, and a Conclusion) write two letters. One letter is addressed to your best/closest friend. The second letter is addressed to a member of Congress.

3. For the letter to a friend: make sure that you **don't use the "perfect" words**, use the EXACT words that you would use in describing this argument to your tightest friend. Use the dialect, slang, and informal tone to put these ideas on paper. This might be hard when you first try it, but give it a try anyway! If it would help, you can talk out loud while you write it.

4. For the letter to a Congressman: keep in mind that you will need to be as formal as possible.

5. Your goal for both letters is to tell the audience about a problem and your solution to the problem. (Basically, a proposal argument)

6. I'll collect the drafts to check that you attempted them, and I'll make some comments to help you along.

7. These letters are not graded, but they will be sent to both audiences! In this way, you are doing this activity for a purpose, that is not necessarily graded, that shows that writing has a purpose and that your letters will differ based on the audience.

Rationale:

This strategy is most useful for me during the proposal paper toward the end of the semester. The students choose a current civic argument and get a response from their audience. This response can tell you a lot about how your letter was received and what the audience's response was.

Everyone's an Audience

Abstract: An exercise that asks each student to play the role of a particular type of audience. They all must respond in writing to a certain civic prompt. Then, they share their responses with the class.

Method :

1. First, discuss with the students that this exercise deals with stereotypes and that stereotypes are never completely accurate for everyone who *could* fall under any particular stereotypical category. It is important that they enjoy playing out the stereotypes and not take offense. You need to describe to them that you will be taking this time to both show what kinds of stereotypes are available and why these stereotypes are faulty.

2. Then, assign each student an audience type:

3. Give the student's a current civic argument (in an article). Ask them to respond to the article as they think their role would respond (language-etc).

Rationale: Usually dialect differences as well as stereotypes will result from this exercise. This is a great way to get the class thinking about these topics.