The development of African American Vernacular English in two fiction texts:

a case study

A Bachelor's Thesis

by

Kati Karvonen

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Afroamerikkalainen englanti on Pohjois-Amerikassa ristiriitaisessa asemassa. Kielitieteilijät eivät ole yhteisymmärryksessä kielen syntyperästä ja näin koko kieli ja sen oikeellisuus on kyseenalaistettu Amerikassa. Kielen käyttäjät ovat useimmiten mustia amerikkalaisia, joista useat ovat joutuneet pilkan kohteiksi puhetyylinsä vuoksi. Nykyään monet mustat jopa pitävät kieltään vain slangina tai muuten virheellisenä. Siksi lisää tutkimuksia afroamerikkalaisesta englannista tarvittaisiin. Tässä tutkimuksessa vertailtiin kahta fiktiivistä afroamerikkalaista tekstiä toisiinsa, jotta nähtiin millaisia eroja ja yhtäläisyyksiä kirjailijoiden kielenkäytössä oli. Näistä eroista tehtiin myös johtopäätöksiä kielen kehityksestä.

Tutkimuksessa käytetyt tekstit olivat kappale Zora Neale Hurstonin kirjasta *Their eyes were watching God* sekä osittainen kappale Connie Porterin kirjasta *Imani all mine*. Zora Neale Hurstonin kirja ilmestyi vuonna 1937 ja Connie Portertin vuonna 1999. Lisäksi Hurstonin kirjassa vain dialogi on afroamerikkalaisella englannilla kirjoitettu ja sekin on fonologisesti kirjoitettu. Nämä erot täytyi ottaa huomioon tuloksia arvioitaessa. Teksteistä etsittiin tiettyjä aiemmin määriteltyjä verbaalisia, syntaktisia sekä fonologisia piirteitä. Ominaisuudet eroteltiin taulukoihin ja niiden ilmentymiskerrat kirjattiin ylös.

Tulokset osoittivat, että verbaalisissa ja fonologisissa piirteissä oli eniten eroavaisuuksia. Fonologisissa piirteissä tulokset eivät yllättäneet, koska vain toinen kirjoista oli kirjoitettu fonologisesti. Kuitenkin näiden tulosten perusteella voi päätellä, että syntaktiset piirteet ovat säilyneet muuttumattomina kauemmin kuin verbaaliset ominaisuudet. Kuitenkin laajempi tutkimus olisi tarpeen, jotta tulokset olisivat luotettavampia.

Afroamerikkalainen englanti on tärkeä osa mustien amerikkalaisten kulttuuria. Kieli ei saisi olla rasismin kohde tai häpeän aihe. Afroamerikkalaisen englannin tutkiminen onkin tärkeää, sillä näin siitä saadaan enemmän tietoa ja samalla sen asemaa vahvistetaan. Tämä tutkimus luo hyvän pohjan laajemmalle tutkimukselle afroamerikkalaisen englannin kehityksestä.

Asiasanat: African American (Vernacular) English, language development,

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1. Introduction

One could argue that African American English (AAE) has gained popularity during the 21st century. This is mostly because rap and r'n'b music have become very much in style, especially among younger and white audience. Also, studying African American Vernacular English (AAVE) is important, especially now when the Americans have chosen their first African American president, Barack Obama. It will be interesting to see whether there will be any drastic changes done for the improvement of the African American students during Obama's tenure. The debate about the language status of African American English has gained a lot of scholarly attention. Many studies have been conducted concerning the construction of the language (Baugh, 1983; Cukor-Avila, 2001). However, one is yet to find a study that would compare two pieces of work of African American English together to see what kind of variation exists inside the language.

The topic of this paper is to study the similar and different usages of African American English in two fiction texts. The texts include a partial chapter from *Imani all mine* (1999) by Connie Porter and a chapter from *Their eyes were watching God* (1937) by Zora Neale Hurston. Since the two books have been written more than sixty years apart from each other, to see whether/how the language has developed during that time is interesting. In addition, to study and compare two books written in AAE is important because it acknowledges that the literature exists and places it in a significant role among world literature. Hence, the aim of this study is to find out whether there is diversity inside the African American English language, and where this possible diversity comes from.

Since linguists and scholars have been unable to come to an agreement whether African American English is a language or a dialect (Bailey, 2001) in this paper African American English is referred to as language, for clarity's sake. Also, the abbreviations AAE and AAVE are used. Also, because *Their eyes were watching God* has certain Southern English features the terms Southern White Vernacular English (SWVE) and White Vernacular English (WVE) are used to some extent.

The paper starts by exploring the history of African American English to a certain degree. The grammatical features to be analysed are defined and the controversial status of the

language is studied in more depth. Then a place among previous studies is given and a research question is outlined. The next chapter explains the data and the methods of analysing it. Then the results of the analysis are shown, and last, a discussion over the findings is included.

2. A short description of African American Vernacular English

African American English (AAE), African American Vernacular English (AAVE), Ebonics (literally Black sounds) etc. has many names. Simply put it is the language spoken by most African Americans in the United States. (Peterson, 2006; Baugh, 2000)

This chapter will, firstly, look at the definition problems of African American English by first exploring some of the origin theories and then by focusing on the relationship between African American English and Southern White Vernacular English. Secondly, some of the most central grammatical features of the language are studied. Thirdly, the topic of controversy in relation to African American English is explored to certain extent. And lastly, a closer look at the previous studies is taken and a research question is outlined.

2.1 History of African American English

The history of African American English is a complex matter. This is mainly because scholars of African American English and linguists have been unable to come to a consensus on the complicated history of AAE (Bailey, 2001). Mainly, the question of whether AAE is a language of its own or a variety of English has caused disagreement in the scholarly world (Peterson, 2006).

This section will shortly try to characterize the differences of opinions by exploring some origin theories of AAVE. Then the relationship of African American English and Southern White Vernacular English is examined more closely.

2.1.1 Origin theories

There are three main suggestions for the origin of African American Vernacular English (Peterson, 2006). Firstly, some suggest that AAVE descends from West African and Niger-Congo languages because there are some grammatical features within these languages that AAVE also has that do not exist in any other English variety (Bailey, 2001). According to Bailey (2001) this is the "Ebonics" view, which also suggests that AAVE is a separate language.

Secondly, some feel that AAVE is a form of Creole that has been decreolized (ibid). Bailey (2001) continues explaining such view as the "Creolist" position, which incorporates the idea that there are significant differences between African American English and White Vernacular Englishes (WVE) but that AAVE is becoming more like WVE.

Lastly, some think that AAVE is a variety of English that black slaves learned from their white English owners. This is the "Anglicist" view where AAVE is seen as being identical to WVE of similar social class in the same locale. (ibid)

Bailey (2001), also, finds two other views: the deficit and divergence views. In the deficit thinking AAE is different from WVE because it is linguistically deficient. However, this view has been disregarded, since, nowadays linguists agree that AAVE is anything but deficient with a clear set of rules (ibid; Baugh, 2000). The divergence view, on the other hand, advocates the idea that knowing the origin of AAVE is not as important as the fact that AAVE is becoming more unlike White Vernaculars (Bailey, 2001). This can be seen in the forming of new speech communities especially in the urban areas (ibid). The divergence view has gained popularity since the late 20th century (ibid).

There are several views over the correct naming, as well (Baugh, 2000). Some feel that Ebonics is a term that refers to all "Black languages" that descend from African languages, such as Jamaican English and other Caribbean Englishes and African American English to name but a few. Others refer only to African American English as Ebonics. (ibid) Therefore, the term Ebonics is not used in this paper, but rather the terms that encompass 'English' are used for the sake of clarity.

2.1.2 Connection to Southern White Vernacular English

The reason why linguists have been unable to clearly specify the origin of the language is because not enough adequate data exists of black speech from the years of slavery (Bailey, 2001). However, scholars have been able to collect enough information to know that AAE has a strong connection to the Southern White Vernacular English (SWVE) (Bailey, 2001; Cukor-Avila, 2001). This section investigates the relationship between AAVE and SWVE.

African American English is spoken mostly by black Americans. After all AAVE is the descended language of the slaves (Baugh, 2000). Most of the slaves were brought to the Southern areas of United States, due to the fact that most of the plantations were located there and the slaves were brought to work in them (Bailey, 2001). The slaves were in close contact with the language spoken by their white owners. Even though law prohibited the slaves from proper language learning by forbidding whites from teaching English to them (Baugh, 2000), some things must have been learned for the two groups to be able to communicate with each other.

Cukor-Avila (2001) and Bailey (2001) both find similar features appearing in AAVE and SWVE throughout their history. Also, both researchers (ibid) agree that the two languages took different paths during their evolution making them more distinct from one another. Cukor-Avila (2001) studies the grammatical features of both languages before and after the Second World War. She (ibid) discovers that after the Second World War AAVE and SWVE speakers, respectively, shared fewer grammatical features with each other. Bailey (2001), on the other hand, studies phonological features and discovers that after the Civil War the phonological similarities between AAVE and SWVE started to decrease. Moreover, his (Bailey, 2001: 84) study shows that: "Those contexts [the sociohistorical contexts within which AAVE and SWVE emerged] suggest a shared history, but they also suggest independent development and unique origins."

2.2 Some grammatical features of AAE

In this chapter some of the most basic contemporary grammatical features of African American English are demonstrated. There are ten features of verbal markers and eight markers of syntactic and morphosyntactic properties. Also, two phonological markers are

demonstrated. It is important to keep in mind that the characteristic presented here are only a fracture of the language. Still, because they represent the most obvious traits of the language they are the most sensible choices to present in this study.

2.2.1 Verbal markers of AAE

There are several verbal markers in African American English. However, for the purposes of this study only ten of them were chosen. The chosen elements include indicators of present, past and future tenses, as well as, some unique markers of AAVE.

Present tense

In the present tense the verb is not marked, thus, the same form serves for all persons and number. Also, there is the absence of third person –s.

 (1) She *do*. He *run* to the store. (In Standard English 'She does. He runs to the store.')

There is an absence of copula in the present tense, as well.

 (2) She walking too fast. ('She is walking too fast.')

Also, when a condition is permanent the copula is omitted.

 (3) She my mother. ('She is my mother.')

However, the copula is not deleted in the past tense or in the 1.person.

 (4) He *was* jumping. *I'm* happy.

Past tense

To indicate recent past African American English uses done + verb form.

 (5) That's the second time he *done told* me that. ('That's the second time he has told me that.')

Remote past is indicated with BEEN, which equals has been in Standard English. However, sometimes it can be written BIN, which emphasizes the action.

 (6) My friend *been* ill. ('My friend has been ill.')

 (7) I *BIN knew* that. ('I have known that for a long time.')

Future BE, BE+will

'Will' is written as 'a', but uttered as 'uh'.

 (8) *I'm a buy* me a car ('I will buy a car')

Using BE as 'will be' is used in Standard English.

 (9) Just let me wait for my mama. You know she *be getting* home soon. ('she will be getting home soon.')

Habitual BE

In habitual BE the use of BE expresses a condition or event that occurs frequently.

> (10) I be tired. ('I'm always tired')

However, if the condition is not recurring or repeated, then there is no BE and no copula:

> (11) She tired. (She is tired right now.) The coffee cold. (The coffee is cold now.)

Preverbal marker STEADY

Steady is used to express an activity that is carried out in an intense or consistent manner.

> (12) They *steady* talking. (They continue to talk.) Satan *steady* bothering you. (Satan is constantly
> bothering you.)

(Peterson, 2006)

2.2.2 Syntactic and morphosyntactic markers of AAE

There are only eight syntactic and morphosyntactic markers of AAE described here. These include negation, genitive and dative markers, as well as, markers from questions and relative clauses.

Negation

In AAE multiple negators can be used in a single sentence.

> (13) Ain't nothing you can't do. ('There isn't anything that you can't do.')

There is, also, the use of *ain't* in AAE to negate a sentence with copula deletion or to negate a sentence in the past tense.

> (14) They ain't going to the show. I ain't know the girl. ('They aren't going to the show. I didn't know the
> girl.')

Questions

Questions can be formed without using auxiliaries at the beginning of sentences.

> (15) You know his name? ('Do you know his name?')

However, DO can be used in a sentence initial position but then it denotes habitual action.

> (16) Do it be dark? ('Is it usually dark?')

Relative clauses

Relative clauses are not obligatory to introduce with a relative pronoun such as 'that' or 'who' like in Standard English.

> (17) We got one girl be here every night. ('There is one girl who is here every night.')

Genitive marking

There is no possessive –'s marker used in AAE.

(18) That's my mama house. ('That is my mother's house.')

Dative pronoun hisself

The masculine third person's dative pronoun in African American English is '*hisself*'' rather than 'himself' as in Standard English.

(Peterson, 2006)

2.2.3 Phonological markers of AAE

Phonological markers are a crucial feature of African American English. Exploring some of them in this study is important because the dialogue of one of the texts has been written according to the speech style of 1930. Here only two features are characterized, because the analysis is done to texts. These features were chosen because they are accessible to find in a written form.

Unstressed syllable deletion

An unstressed syllable is deleted from initial and middle syllables.

(19) about → 'bout; government → gov'ment.

Initial [th] change

Especially with voiced fricatives the initial [th] becomes [d]

(20) those → [douz]; these → [diz]

(Peterson, 2006)

2.3 The controversy of AAE

African Americans have encountered plenty of discrimination in the United States (Peterson, 2006). Blacks were not seen as being part of the society or worthy of acceptance even after slavery was banned. Slaves and their rich cultures were discriminated against and racism is still alive today. (ibid) Language is a crucial part of a culture. If a person's culture is not tolerated naturally their language encounters hatred, as well. African American English has been the object of scorn so much so that numerous black students consider AAE as bad English (Mufwene, 2001).

There are a couple of reasons why AAVE out of all the other English varieties has the most controversial status. Firstly, there is the fact that African American English descends directly from slaves. Whereas immigrants moved into the country willingly and were allowed to study the new language, slaves were forcefully brought and then denied access to language learning (Baugh, 2000). In fact, according to Baugh (2000), whites were told by law not to teach English to slaves. Hence, a new way of communication must have developed between slaves and whites. Yet, that language has been considered inferior and wrong by whites for several decades now (Baugh, 2000). Secondly, the dilemma of language status creates confusion among the American population (Baugh, 2000). Since scholars have yet to come up with a solution to what AAVE exactly is and where it originated (Bailey, 2001) people are free to discriminate and ignore the language and the people who speak it.

However, after 1997 disregarding AAVE became a bit more difficult (Baugh, 2000). In 1997 the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) made a resolution that acknowledged that most African American students did not speak Standard American English as a native language, which had continuously lead to poorer academic achievements when compared with white students (ibid). The resolution, also, noted that African American English was not "wrong" or "broken English" but rather a systematic, rule-governed language, and that the school district was going to acknowledge that and take it in to account while teaching African American students (ibid). Basically, what the resolution did was that it made everyone in America aware of African American English and the problems with teaching English to African American children. According to Baugh (2000) the resolution provoked a heated discussion in the States and many scholars and linguists were heard by the government while they were deciding which label to put on AAE: language or dialect.

Many scholars felt that the OUSD (Oakland Unified School District) had only made the resolution because they wanted more funds from the government (Baugh, 2000). Since, in the United States a school district is obliged to have funding for students, who are non-native English speakers (ibid), the critique against the resolution and the OUSD was somewhat justified. Nevertheless, the OUSD was not trying to establish African American English as a different language to get the funding, but rather the resolution was made to stimulate a national discussion about the situation of African American students (ibid).

2.4 A place among previous studies and the research question

Many studies have been carried out concerning the construction of African American English language (Baugh, 1983; Bailey, 2001; Cukor-Avila, 2001). Most if not all of these studies concentrate on defining AAE and its place in the English language. Though, there are studies concerning the development of the language, they all are more interested in deciding the origin of the language (Baugh, 1983; Bailey, 2001; Cukor-Avila, 2001) and defining it for the sake of better education for African American students (Baugh, 1983/2000/2005). One is yet to find a study that would compare two pieces of work done in African American English.

Hence, to study whether the language is unified or if it has diversity in it, is very appealing. Since the two books I have chosen to study have been written more than sixty years apart from each other (*Their eyes were watching God* in 1937 and *Imani all mine* in 1999), to see how the language has developed during that time is interesting. In addition, to study and compare two books written in AAVE is important because it acknowledges that the literature exists and places it in a significant role among world literature. Hence, the research question for this study is:

> What kind of similarities and differences do the two authors have in their
> African American English language usage according to the two texts?

Also, the topic of why these similarities and differences have occurred is examined to some extent. For example, the time periods that the books were written is taken into consideration when examining the findings.

Some hypotheses arise from these quandaries. To start with, the phonological features are expected to show only in *Their eyes were watching God* because in this book the dialogue is written in a phonological way. Also, one imagines that the rest of the examined markers appear more in *Imani all mine* because it is a more recent book written completely in AAE and the markers described are from contemporary AAE.

3. Describing the data and methods

The data used in this research paper is two fiction texts. Both texts are from two different novels written by African American women and both are written in African American English, at least to some extent. The texts are a chapter and a partial chapter from the two books respectively. The analysis includes the grammatical features described in Chapter 2.2.

The first text is from a book *Their eyes were watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston. This book was written in 1937 and only the dialogue is written in African American English. The chapter used in this research paper is chapter 11. It was chosen because of the similar theme to the text chosen from *Imani all mine*. The theme in the chapters is love and relationships. The heroines of the books are interested in a man, respectively, and in the chosen chapters they are properly talking to and talking about the man for the first time. In addition, since only the dialogue is written in AAVE only those parts were chosen to use in the analysis.

The second text is from a book *Imani all mine* by Connie Porter. This was written in 1999 and it is completely in African American English. From this book a partial chapter was chosen because this particular part was to some extent thematically equivalent to the chapter from *Their eyes were watching God*. The section used is chapter 2, pages 29-33.

The analysis is qualitative. The analysis was done by reading through the texts carefully several times and underlying the examined grammatical features. Next the findings were divided into their groups already made in Chapter 2.2 (2.2.1 – 2.2.3): verbal, syntactic and phonological groups. Then these groups were divided into their subcategories as was done earlier in Chapter 2.2. After that the different grammatical markers were counted and a table was made for each of the markers. Hence, the comparison is easier and more understandable. This way the similarities and differences are more visible.

4. Results of the analysis

This chapter describes the findings of the analysis according to the division made in Chapter 2.2. Hence, the verbal markers are portrayed first, then the syntactic and morphosyntactic markers and last the phonological markers. A table for each of these categories is shown to clarify the findings.

4.1 Verbal markers

Table 1. Verbal markers

Verbal markers	Imani all mine	Their eyes were watching God
Present tense:		
verb not marked	37	3
Ø 3rd person -s	23	1
Ø copula	28	0
permanent Ø copula	0	0
Past tense:		
recent past done+verb	2	6
remote past Been	0	1
Future tense:		
a	0	0
be	1	0
Habitual Be	16	0
Steady	1	0

The results from the verbal marker analysis are as follows. In the present tense section the division between 'verb not marked' and 'zero 3rd person's –s' was not always clear and at times the results overlap, but mostly the preferred category was 'verb not marked'. There were 37 instances in *Imani all mine* where the 'verb was not marked' and only 3 in *Their eyes were watching God*. 23 times there was 'zero 3rd person's –s' found in *Imani all mine* when there was only 1 instance of that in *Their eyes were watching God*. 'Zero copula' was shown 28 times in *Imani all mine* and none in *Their eyes were watching God*. Using 'zero copula in describing permanent conditions' was not found from either of the texts.

(21) …and after a while *it seem* like she just *give up* and *fall asleep*. IAM p.31

(22) If *it blow up* Ah'll still be on land. TEWWG p.81

(23) *He a* natural born lover. IAM p.33

In the past tense describing recent past with 'done + verb' there were 2 instances in *Imani all mine* and 6 in *Their eyes were watching God*. To describe remote past events by using 'Been' there were none found in *Imani all mine* and only one found in *Their eyes were watching God*.

(24) Look lak we *done run* our conversation from grass roots to pine trees. TEWWG p.85

(25) Ah *been* had dis same hair next tuh mah face… TEWWG p.83

There were no instances found from both of the texts of the utilisation of 'a' to indicate the future. Also, only once was 'Be' found in *Imani all mine* to express the future tense and none in *Their eyes were watching God*.

(26) …if I get a bus right around then, *I be home* by six-thirty. IAM p.31

Uses of 'habitual be' were found 16 in *Imani all mine* and one instance of 'steady'. Neither of these markers were found in *Their eyes were watching God*.

(27) I *don't be scared* of him. IAM p.33

(28) …he was *steady* kissing me. IAM p.33

As was predicted most of the verbal markers were scarce in *Their eyes were watching God* though some surprises were found, as well. Hence, the usage of verbal markers by the two authors was different in most of the cases. Only the usage of 'done+ verb' to indicate recent past was somewhat similar.

4.2 Syntactic and morphosyntactic markers

Table 2. Syntactic and morphosyntactic markers

Syntactic & morphosyntactic markers	Imani all mine	Their eyes were watching God
Multiple negation	12	17
ain't in copula deletion	11	5
ain't in past tense	3	6
Questions:		
Habitual Do	0	0
Ø auxiliaries	1	1
Ø relative pronouns in relative clauses	2	0
Genetive: Ø-'s	6	0
Dative Hisself	2	2

From the syntactic and morphosyntactic analysis the results are the following. Instances of 'multiple negation' were found 12 in *Imani all mine* and 17 in *Their eyes were watching God*. Uses of 'ain't in copula deletion' were 11 in *Imani all mine* and 5 in *Their eyes were watching God*. There were 3 instances of 'ain't in the past tense' in *Imani all mine* and 6 in *Their eyes were watching God*. Naturally some of the uses with 'ain't' overlapped with the uses of 'multiple negation'.

(29) …oh Tea Cake, *don't* make *no* false pretense wid me! TEWWG p.87

(30) There *ain't no* way she going to escape Miss Lovey lap… IAM p.31

(31) Ah *ain't got* no business bein' mad at nothin' you do and say. TEWWG p.84

Using 'habitual Do' at the initial position of questions was not found in either of the texts. But 'having no auxiliaries' at the initial position of questions was found once in both of the texts.

(32) Your mama expect you home right now? IAM p.31

Twice was a 'relative clause introduced without a relative pronoun' and 6 times there were 'no genitive –'s' in *Imani all mine*. Neither of these features were found in *Their eyes were watching God*. Twice was the masculine dative pronoun 'hisself' found in both of the texts.

(33) I got to thinking this the same way Miss Odetta come home. IAM p.32

(34) Reuben work in his *daddy store* after school…IAM p.30

(35) …he always keep *hisself* in changin' clothes. TEWWG p.83

Surprisingly many syntactic and morphosyntactic features were found in *Their eyes were watching God*. On the other hand, quite few were found in *Imani all mine*. Still, the usage of the syntactic and morphosyntactic markers was more similar than was the case with verbal markers. The results differed noticeably only in the usage of relative pronouns and in the usage of 'genitive –'s'.

4.3 Phonological markers

Table 3. Phonological markers

Phonological markers	Imani all mine	Their eyes were watching God
Unstressed syllable deletion	0	36
initial [th] change	0	78

With the phonological markers, as was expected, neither of the features were found in *Imani all mine*. However, 36 instances of 'unstressed initial or middle syllable deletions' and 78 instances of 'initial [th] changes to [d]' were found in *Their eyes were watching God*.

(36) Ah don't know *'bout dat*, Tea Cake. TEWWG p.87

All in all, the results were not surprising when considering the verbal and phonological markers. These two categories provided the expected results of differentiation because of the writing style for starters and because of the time difference between the two books. Still, the results for the syntactic and morphosyntactic markers were unexpected for they were mostly alike in the texts.

5. Conclusion

African American English has maintained its controversial status for many years. As noted earlier, scholars have been unable to come up with suitable solutions to the questions for proper education for African Americans and the language status issue. For that reason, more studies about the language are needed.

As mentioned earlier in Chapter 2.1.2, African American English has diverged from Southern White Vernacular English phonologically since the Civil War and grammatically since the Second World War. Therefore, it is not surprising that the two texts differed most in the phonological marker category. However, there is a stylistic aspect here that affects the results, as well. *Their eyes were watching God* has only the dialogue in AAE that is written in a phonological way and this is a stylistic choice made by Hurston (1937). Therefore, the results for the phonological markers were the most divergent, as was expected, but also, they were somewhat futile because *Imani all mine* was not written in a phonological way. Still, including these phonological markers in this study was important because they confirmed that the language used in *Their eyes were watching God* was African American English and not Southern White English.

The two authors appeared to have the most similar usage of the syntactic and morphosyntactic features. The verbal markers differed more. Based on these findings one could assume that the verbal rules in African American English have developed or changed more than the syntactic and morphosyntactic ones. Additionally, writing in AAE has become more accessible. Hurston writes the dialogue as the words are said, whereas, Porter writes the actual words. Hence, African American English has developed clearer grammatical rules that make writing easier.

With the verbal markers the results showed more usages in *Imani all mine* than in *Their eyes were watching God*. There could be several reasons for this. The first one could be the style in which the two books are written. There were several occasions where markers for present tense occurred in *Imani all mine* but hardly any in the future or past tense. The reason for this is most likely the choice made by the author to use present tense in the narration. The same can be assumed for *Their eyes were watching God*. Then again the reasons for the results of

'habitual be' and 'steady' could be that they are more recent features of AAE, or perhaps that they are more peculiar features than the others to a Standard English speaker. Since Hurston's book was partially written in Standard English one can assume that some of the choices made could have been the result of being more comprehensible. The results for the syntactic and morphosyntactic markers, on the other hand, are not affected that much by stylistic choices and can, therefore, occur more frequently.

However, to confirm the results of this research one should study whether or not verbal changes do happen more frequently than syntactic ones. This would give an insight to language development universally. For, the results that this study provides are a good starting point but not thorough enough to give a realistic or possibly even a truthful picture of African American English language development. This is because only two books were used, hence, not a very wholesome picture of the language is acquired here. In addition, only a chapter and a partial chapter were studied, thus leaving both of the books, respectively, wide open for the features to emerge more frequently. Therefore, a further comprehensive study that would include several texts by several different authors from different time periods would be in order to give a more general picture of the issue.

Also, for future studies it would be interesting to analyse *Their eyes were watching God* more thoroughly. This is because the text had some remarkable and unusual features that the source materials could not clarify the reasons for. For example, a reason for spelling 'let's' as 'less' or 'out of' as 'outa' was not found in any of the source material (e.g. Cukor-Avila, 2001; Bailey, 2001). Also, another interesting feature was found from this book. This was a feature that, at least nowadays, is incorrect usage of AAVE but that is sometimes thought of being 'Black English' by whites. This feature was the overuse of '3rd person's –s' in places where it would not normally appear.

> (37) Ah sells…p.87
> (38) You needs tellin'…p.86
> (39) Ah wants…p.87

On the other hand, these "mistakes" can be the mark of language development. That this feature occurs rather frequently in the text must mean that it used to be in common use.

All in all, this study provides an appealing start for a more thorough study. The differences between the verbal and syntactic markers can provide new knowledge of African American

English or possibly even universal understanding of language development. Moreover, studying African American Vernacular English helps others to understand and accept it, thus, diminishing any intolerance against it and the people who speak it.

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