do, extensión o generalización, entre otros. Finalmente, el último capítulo de esta parte recoge las variedades de la lengua inglesa actual, como el inglés británico y otras variedades insulares, o el inglés americano y sus variedades.

A modo de conclusión del volumen se presenta un capítulo que versa sobre la importancia de los córpora en el estudio de la lingüística histórica, debido a la carencia de hablantes nativos de una lengua histórica. Este capítulo ofrece una descripción de los córpora disponibles del inglés medieval y moderno, señalando además las limitaciones de los mismos.

En definitiva, *Lingüística histórica inglesa* constituye una obra de consulta imprescindible en el estudio de la evolución de la lengua inglesa, y viene a paliar la escasez de trabajos escritos en nuestra lengua en este ámbito de estudio.

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AFRICAN AMERICAN VERNACULAR ENGLISH

John R. Rickford

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(por Ana M.ª Hornero Corisco. Universidad de Zaragoza)

Until William Labov's 1966 survey on the English of lower- and working-class African Americans in Harlem, the speech of African Americans had played little role in the development of American sociolinguistics. His can be therefore regarded as the pioneer research of AAVE (African American Vernacular English) linguistic studies. It has been claimed that 80% of African Americans speak AAVE (Dillard 1972: 229), what may account for the fact that AAVE has "more than five times as many publications devoted to it than any other group (including other ethnic and regional groups)" (Wolfram *et al.* 1998:169).

John Rickford, Professor of Linguistics and African and Afro-American studies at Stanford University, has been engaged in the study of AAVE's features and use, its evolution and educational implications for more than 30 years. A leading expert and prolific writer on AAVE studies, he presents here a collection of sixteen essays which was conceived when a new awareness of the degree of misinformation and ignorance concerning this linguistic variety was a achieved as a result of the Oakland Ebonics Controversy in December, 1996. The book is structured in three main parts: Part I (Chapters 1 to 6) focuses on the features and use of AAVE; Part II (chapters 7 to 12) on its evolution and Part III (chapters 13 to 16) deals with the educational implications, that is, the attitudes generally held towards AAVE and the ways in which the AAVE-speaking community can bea helped.

Chapter 1, "Phonological and Grammatical Features of African American Vernacular English" opens with some recommendations on previous work

published on AAVE, representative of most of the research on phonology and grammar produced over the past three decades. The AAVE features described are always brought into contrast with Standard English forms and respond to requests from the media for lists of this kind. The reader, however, must be conscious of the fact that nobody uses all the features described: a degree of variability must be allowed for, according to gender, age and social class, living environment and style.

Chapter 2, "Carrying the New Wave into Syntax: The Case of Black English BÍN" (a work on stressed *been*) is Rickford's first important contribution to the study of AAVE, where he draws attention to some of the innovations achieved in the methodology of sociolinguistic interviews (including a warning about some of the weaknesses of the intuitive data) and applies it to a syntactic case: BÍN in Black English. He considers three central aspects about BÍN on which there has been disagreement in the former published research: 1) The significance of stress; 2) its meaning and use; 3) the productivity-co-occurrence relations. His primary intention is to estimate how significant stress is to the remote function with which that form has been associated. Rickford goes on to illustrate the similarities and differences between BÍN as used with non-statives on the one hand and with statives and progressives on the other. The difference, not to be found so far in previous research (the majority of the examples provided by previous researchers appear with non-stative verbs), proves to be fruitful enough, showing to us the more comprehensive nature of BÍN.The data sources also suggest that black and white speakers are clearly divided in their use and interpretation of the form BÍN. The participant-observation data reveal a higher productivity of BÍN than had been estimated so far.

Chapter 3, "Preterite Had + Verb *-ed* in the Narratives of African American Preadolescents", a paper presented in 1989 and written in co-operation with C. Théberge-Rafal, focuses on the use of preverbal *had* to mark the preterite rather than the pluperfect, a feature that had not been considered so far as characteristic of AAVE.

After establishing comparisons with the usage of Afro-American adolescents and adults in East Palo Alto (California) the researchers reach the conclusion that the use of preterite *had* in that area is restricted to preadolescents. Another difference found between both groups —and therefore considered an age-graded phenomenon— is the fact that preadolescents do not use present perfect *have*, while older speakers do, its use increasing together with the speaker's age. The findings agree with the conclusions derived in Labov *et al.* (1968) on the use of auxiliary *have* and *had* among African American preadolescents and adolescents in East Harlem, New York. All the data derived from both studies lead the authors of this essay to conclude that preterite *had* may represent change in

progress in AAVE in general terms —allowing for the need for further additional data from both communities to confirm this hypothesis. Alternative studies report the use of preterite *had* even by Puerto Rican youth in contact with African Americans, so the possibility that the feature may have spread to other ethnic communities is open.

Chapter 4, "Theoretical and Methodological Issues in the Analysis of Copula Variation in AAVE", in Trudgill's words "the most substantial contribution to current knowledge of the AAVE copula and auxiliary", is the work of five authors. It is generally admitted that copula absence sets AAVE apart from all other American dialects —especially with regard to *is* absence, which affects up to an 80% in some areas (like New York, Palo Alto, Mississippi). The authors show how the choice of different methods for computing contraction or deletion of *is* and *are* will undoubtedly affect the results. Then they proceed to their own tabulations of contraction of *is* and *are*, the results showing a strong resemblance to those of other studies, reinforcing thereby the idea of the uniformity of AAVE in the USA. The age-grading factor also plays an important role in copula deletion.

Chapter 5, "Ethnicity as a Sociolinguisitic Boundary", deals with the language of one black and one white speaker of similar socioeconomic background who had spent all their lives in the same community, one of the Sea Islands off the coast of South Carolina. Given that both had above-average frequency of contact with members of the other ethnic group, their speech would be expected to show the effects of mutual linguistic influence. The results of the analysis show similarities in the realization of phonological features, but differences in morphosyntax (formation of the plural, passive constructions and the mark of possessives).

Further data for black-white speech differences are given from earlier surveys which point to the relevance of diachronic provenance. We also find interesting reports on parallel Labovian works in the North. A collection of studies indicate that major black-white differences persist even when socioeconomic status, education and geography are well-controlled, the inherited linguistic tradition proving inadequate to explain the persistence of those differences. What seems beyond doubt is the fact that nonstandard phonological features spread more easily across ethnic lines than nonstandard grammatical features. Contact is shown as the most important factor for explaining inter-ethnic differences or convergence. Furthermore, the "ethological or emotional" barrier will be fundamental in determining linguistic convergence: the adoption of the other group's linguistic norms may be viewed negatively as crossing-over and generate hostility.

Chapter 6, "Addressee- and Topic-Influenced Style Shift: A Quantitative Sociolinguistc Study", written in collaboration with Faye McNair-Knox, reflects the results of a study of addressee- and topic-influenced style shift in language

drawing data from their study of sociolinguistic variation in East Palo Alto (California). The authors' starting point is that style is too central to the methodological and theoretical concerns of quantitative sociolinguistic variation to be neglected, as has been the case with a great number of earlier investigations. Earlier literature on AAVE is either ambiguous or negative in the consideration that several variables, like invariant *be*, zero copula, third singular present *-s*, plural *-s* and possessive -s may be sensitive to style-shifting. Labov *et al.* (1968) and Fasold (1972), some of the earliest empirical sociolinguistic studies of stylistic variation to use addressee as the primary variable, were followed in the late 1970s by a good number of other studies. But in the authors' view, Bell's (1984) is one of the most interesting works in the study of style-shifting and was the basis upon which this empirical study built. Some of Bell's hypotheses about addressee design, as well as the idea of the primacy of addressee over topic shift are confirmed by the data of this survey, where differences are established between the interviewee's vernacular usage in four interviews, carried out between 1986 — when the informant was 13— and 1991.

One of the outstanding conclusions is that invariant *be* use has increased considerably since the 1960s, evidence of a trend that reaches its peak in the authors' data. The interviewee's stylistic variation is also due to her accomodation to the different addressees whom she faces in each interview, although it is difficult to determine how much to attribute to race and how much to familiarity with the interviewer. The authors agree with Bell that nonpersonal factors such as topic and setting of the interview have some influence, too, in the choice of style.

Chapter 7, "*Cut-Eye* and *Suck-Teeth*: African Words and Gestures in New World Guise", written together with Angela E. Rickford, opens the second section of the book, which deals with Evolution. It reports on the results of an investigation of originally African gestures like *cut-eye* and *suck-teeth*, and the words used to describe them. There are to be found in three areas: the Caribbean, the United Sates and Africa. The *cut-eye* is a visual gesture that communicates hostility, a negative sanction against somebody who has misbehaved, and appears mostly in fierce arguments between women. According to this survey, white Americans are absolutely ignorant of *cut-eye* as a cultural form of behaviour. *Suck-teeth*, the gesture of drawing air through the teeth and into the mouth to produce a loud sucking sound is, in turn, an expression of anger, impatience or annoyance and is considered ill-mannered.

Chapter 8, "Social Contact and Linguistic Diffusion: Hiberno English and New World Black English", is a contribution on the possible diffusion of *(does) be* as a marker of habitual aspect, from Irish English to New World Black English, including the West Atlantic English-based creoles and American Vernacular Black English. The author studies the successive migratory movements from Ireland to

the Caribbean and North America as well as the conditions under which Irish and African populations might have come into contact in the New World, and the likelihood of diffusion between them. The author observes striking similarities between the southern North American Colonies and the Caribbean: "both in Barbados and South Carolina, Blacks constituted over 60% of the total population within 50 years of initial settlement by the British. In New York, they were only 16% of the population as late as the 1750s, 100 years after British settlement".

A detailed account follows of the type of Irish immigrants that predominated from the 17th to the 19th centuries, establishing clear, and revealing qualitative, linguistic differences between the Ulster Scots and the southern, Catholic Irish. Their contact with Black population varied across time and differed in the areas studied. As a conclusion, the authors state that although northern and southern varieties of Irish English may be at the root of features of New World Black English, other influences (like English dialects, West African or creole substrata) may have been as important, or even more important, than the former. The idea that *be*, frequently regarded as the most distinctive feature of New World Black English, represents decreolization from an earlier creole *does be* turns out to be the most convincing hypothesis. The decreolization proposal assumes that Hiberno English and British dialects served as models for mesolectal creole *does (be)* in the Caribbean and in North America. Moreover, it accounts for the loss of *does* and the emergence of habitual *be* in Vernacular Black English.

Chapter 9, "Copula Variability in Jamaican Creole and AAVE", reanalyses copula variability in Jamaican Creole and AAVE taking as their departure point DeCamp's 1960 texts, showing that the quantitative patterns of copula absence in Jamaican Creole turn out to be being more similar to those in AAVE, giving more weight to the hypothesis that the latter is a decreolized form of an earlier plantation creole which was typologically similar to Jamaican Creole.

Chapter 10, "Prior Creolization of AAVE?" contributes to the debate about the prior creolization in AAVE. Rickford provides 17th and 18th century sociohistorical and textual evidence to assess the likelihood of prior creolization. As sociohistorical evidence, Rickford analyses the proportions of black/white contact in colonial America showing how different it was in the three main regions: the New England, the Middle and the Southern colonies. He states that, as was the case in New England, the likelihood that pidgin or creole speech entered the Middle colonies from the Caribbean is very high. The possiblity of indigenous pidginization seems strongest in the South, especially in Georgia and South Carolina, where the black population constituted over 70% of all the North-American Blacks in the mid-eighteenth century. And finally, Rickford offers the striking evidence that the slaves brought from Caribbean colonies where Creole English was spoken were the essential components of the early black population

in many American colonies and they must have had an important creolizing influence on the colonies to which they came, thus being at the root of the similarities that Caribbean Creole presents with respect to AAVE today.

Chapter 11 deals with the controversy of whether AAVE is now diverging from white vernaculars, a hypothesis introduced in the 1980s by Labov but which is regarded with caution by Rickford. The hypothesis is taken up again in Chapter 12, where Rickord applies it to different age groups of African American speakers.

Chapter 13, "Attitudes towards AAVE, and Classroom Implications and Strategies", opens the final section on Educational Implications. It deals with the (mostly negative) attitudes held by teachers towards students who speak AAVE, sometimes even shared by the students themselves and their parents, a fact that contrasts with their positive attitudes toward Standard English, seen at present as the only way of getting ahead in society. Rickford presents a series of teaching strategies to ensure the students' progress, but an understanding of the expressive and cultural differences between white Americans and African Americans remains, in the author's opinion, essential for efficient teaching.

Chapter 14, "Unequal Partnership: Sociolinguistics and the African American Speech Community", provides an account of the different ways in which the African American speech community has helped in the development of sociolinguistic theory and methodology over the past 30 years. Rickford suggests in turn some areas where services to the community should be strengthened and denounces, among other issues, the scarcity of US-born African faculty members in Departments of Linguistics in the USA, the too often negative representation of the African American speech community in the writing of sociolinguists or ethnographers, the dialect discrimination which is a constant in US courts and even the unfair disadvantages that IQ tests pose for AAVE speakers. Rickford finally supports the practice of "dialect readers" as a preliminary aid in teaching reading to speakers of AAVE.

Chapter 15, "Suite for Ebony and Phonics", opens with definitions of the term "Ebonics" —"one of the most distinctive varieties of American English"— and reflects the general social feeling against it, which is not shared by linguists. The author delimits the group of speakers who use it and explains three major hypotheses for the origin of this variety, showing his inclination toward the creolist view.

Chapter 16, "Using the Vernacular to teach the Standard", further supports innovative methods of taking the vernacular in order to teach reading and writing to African American students more successfully, a task that will no doubt require a change in many teachers' attitudes towards this variety.

In sum, this book proves to be the most comprehensive work written on African American Vernacular English to date, a long-awaited work that reveals the author's mastery of the techniques of variation study, of ethnographic field work, his immersion in the African American community of the USA and his concern for its future education, a concern that ultimately lies at the root of the production of this excellent work. Written in a very accessible style, this volume will be highly enjoyable to historical linguists, dialectologists and sociolinguists alike.

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