

# Working with Speakers of African American and other Vernacular Englishes in the Classroom

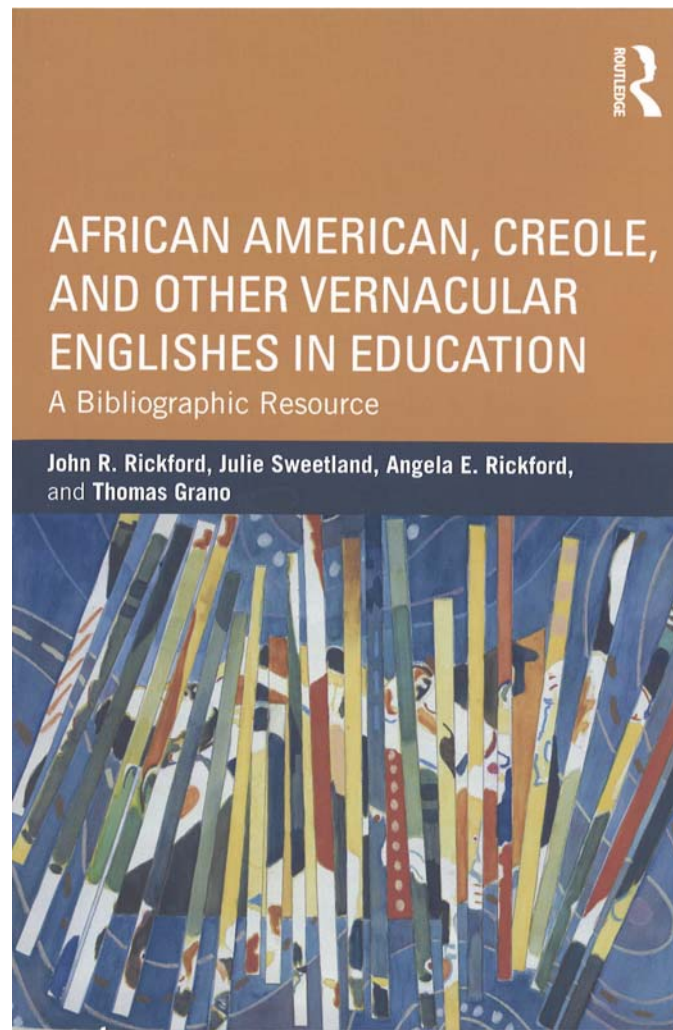
John R. Rickford, Stanford University

*CORE LEADERSHIP SUMMIT, March 5, 2013*

*Hyatt Regency San Francisco Airport, California*

# Outline of today's presentation

- A. About our new bibliography, *African American, Creole, and Other Vernacular Englishes in Education: A Bibliographic Resource* (2013).
- B. Achievement gap in language arts, and four linguistic strategies for narrowing/ending it.
- C. Practical exercises for the classroom, drawing on work of my former PhD student, Julie Sweetland, a former classroom teacher and director at the Center for Inspired Teaching, now Director of Learning at Frameworks Institute.



**Focus:** Rickford, John R., Julie Sweetland, Angela E. Rickford and Thomas Grano. 2013 [Oct. 2012]. *African American, Creole, and Other Vernacular Englishes in Education: A Bibliographic Resource*. NY & London: Routledge, Urbana: NCTE. xx, 306 pgs.

# Rationale for the bibliography

- 50+ years of research at intersection of language and education = a rich but bewildering literature on vernacular language varieties in schools.
- Our bibliography compiles most of the publications from the 1960s to 2012 that deal with this critical topic. Language and topic codings, + annotations, help teachers and researchers comb through this vast literature.
- Covers 1625+ references on education in relation to African American Vernacular English [AAVE], English-based pidgins and creoles, Latina/o English, Native American English, Asian and Asian American English, and other English vernaculars, e.g. Appalachian English in the US and Aboriginal English in Australia.


# SCOPE

- *Vernacular*: “everyday spoken language(s) as contrasted with a standard or official language” (LePage 1997:6)
- Because these are everyday, non-standard spoken varieties, used by descendants of slaves, ethnic minorities, immigrants & subjugated populations, they usually have low social prestige, and are not used for educative purposes. But the fact that they are ignored or disparaged in education is one reason that schools often fail to help speakers of these varieties reach their full potential.
- Exclusions: Non-English varieties (Fr. Creole, bilingual educ.), work not on education, most dissertations and other unpublished works.

# Contents

- Foreword by Walt Wolfram, William C. Friday  
Distinguished University Professor, NC State U
- Introduction, covering scope and background of  
bibliography, and how to use it, pp. xiii-xx
- Topic Overviews, with introductions and citation  
lists for 22 topics (see below), pp. 1-64
- Bibliography, with 1625+ entries, from 1960s -  
2012, about 1/3rd of them abstracted, pp. 65-304
- About the Authors, pp. 305-306

# A typical entry

- [*Numerical* language variety codes & *alphabetic* topic codes at the end indicate that this entry is relevant to *language variety* 1: African American Vernacular English, and to *topics* I: Ideology, Attitudes and/or Identity, R: Reading, and S: Strategies for Instruction. It also has a 212-word abstract or annotation, not included here.]
- Delpit, Lisa. 2006. What Should Teachers Do? Ebonics and Culturally Responsive Instruction. In *Dialects, Englishes, Creoles, and Education*, ed. by S. Nero, 93-101. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers. **1 I R S** 

# *Numerical* Language variety codes

- Pp. xvi-xvii discusses each language variety, but see “Latest Book” subset of “Writings” on John Rickford’s website for a list of all entries for each variety. URL is on handout:

<http://www.johnrickford.com/Writings/Books/LatestBook/tabid/1340/Default.aspx>

- 1: AAVE: African American Vernacular English, 861 entries
- 2: Anglophone Pidgins and Creoles, 314 entries
- 3: Asian and Asian American English, 70 entries
- 4: Latina/o English, 122 entries
- 5: Native American English/American Indian English, 128 entries
- 6: Other vernacular Englishes (e.g. Appalachian, Aboriginal, Indian), 196 entries

# *Alphabetic Topic codes*

- [Pp. 1-64 provides an introduction to each topic, and a list—in short citation format—of all relevant entries in the bibliography]
- *A: Assessment and Achievement*, 233 entries
- *B: Bidialectalism and/or Contrastive Analysis*, 245 entries
- *C: Culture and Curriculum*, 225 entries
- *D: Disorders of Speech, Language or Communication*, 61 entries
- *E: Edited Volumes, Overviews, Reviews, or Other Bibliographies*, 162 entries
- *F: Features*, 347 entries
- *I: Ideology, Attitudes, and/or Identity*, 501 entries
- *K: Controversies about Vernacular Englishes in Schools*, 100 entries
- *L: Language or Dialect Awareness Approach*, 501 entries
- *M: Materials for Instruction*, 49 entries
- *N: Narrative, Discourse, Speech Events or Style*, 174 entries

# Alphabetic Topic Codes continued

- *O: Oral and Aural Arts: Speaking & Listening*, 87 entries
- *P: Politics & Policy*, 235 entries
- *Q: Language Acquisition*, 96 entries
- *R: Reading*, 218 entries
- *S: Strategies for Instruction*, 296 entries
- *T: Teacher Preparation and Practices*, 235 entries
- *U: Code Choice*, 78 entries
- *V: Vernacular Literacy or Dialect Readers*, 98 entries
- *W: Writing*, 199 entries
- *X: Language Transfer or Interference*, 134 entries
- *Z: Video Resources*, 14 entries

# A Typical Topic Overview

- *Strategies for Instruction (S)*
- What are the implications of language variation for classroom instruction? An early, ubiquitous, and still timely recommendation is for instructors to adopt a descriptive rather than prescriptive approach toward language variation, which entails starting from the premise that all dialects are linguistically equal and thereby rejecting counterproductive myths about the vernacular and its speakers. Allen 1985, Cheatham et al 2009, Hollie 2001, and Zuidema 2005 elaborate on what instruction embodying the basic premise of ‘awareness and respect’ might look like. *Dialects in Schools and Communities* (Adger, Wolfram, and Christian 2007), now in its second edition, provides a thorough treatment, at an introductory level, of the practical implications of the descriptive approach in each of the language arts. However, because ‘thinking like a linguist’ is more akin to a broad approach than an instructional strategy per se, see the list for Ideology, Beliefs, and Attitudes (I) for a more exhaustive list of works of this type. . . .

# A short citation list (abbreviated)

- Short Citations for Strategies for Instruction (S)  
[296 short citations, total; first 12 shown here]
- Aarons, et al. 1969
- Abrahams and Troike 1972
- Adger 1997
- Adger, et al. 1992
- Adger, et al. 1999
- Adler 1978
- Afaga and Lai 1994
- Alexander 1985
- Alim and Baugh 2007
- Allen 1969
- Allen 1972
- Amberg and Vause 2009 . . .

# A sample annotated entry:

## Le Page 1968

Le Page, Robert. 1968. Problems to Be Faced in the Use of English as the Medium of Education in Four West Indian Territories. In *Language Problems of Developing Nations*, ed. by J. A. Fishman, C. A. Ferguson & J. D. Gupta, 431-42. New York: John Wiley and Sons. 2 A B I K T

Le Page explores the language situation in the West Indian territories of Jamaica, British Honduras, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago, where most people spoke some variety of creolized English. Although Standard English was the gateway to higher education and career success, the failure rate on the English-language sections of the two Great Britain-based standardized examinations employed in the West Indies was between 70 and 90 percent. The education system, unfortunately, did not recognize language interference factors; they refused to consider the legitimacy of Creole as a language in its own right, and teachers even failed to recognize Creole aspects of their own speech. Students who were best at imitating standard forms were the ones who succeeded, while many otherwise talented students did not. As a remedy, Le Page recommends that teachers be trained in Standard English, that teaching materials be prepared that are sensitive to the West Indies environment and make use of contrastive analysis, that current teachers be retrained in these new ideas, and that radio and television language teaching programs be set up for use within schools.

# Other Bibliographic entries

- See annotated entries (by public. year) on handout:
  - Rentel and Kennedy 1972. Effects of pattern drill on phonology, syntax and reading of Appalachian children.
  - Zentella 1997. *Growing up Bilingual: Puerto Rican Children in New York.*
  - Hagemann 2001. A bridge from home to school. Helping working class students acquire school literacy.
  - Sharifian, Rochecouste and Malcolm 2004. 'But it was all a little confusing': Comprehending Aboriginal English texts.
  - Cheatham et al. 2009. 'Y'all listening? Accessing children's dialects in preschool"
  - Scott, Straker & Katz. 2009. *Affirming Students' Right to Their Own Language.*
  - Labov and Baker 2010. What is a reading error?
- Note other sample books featured on following slides

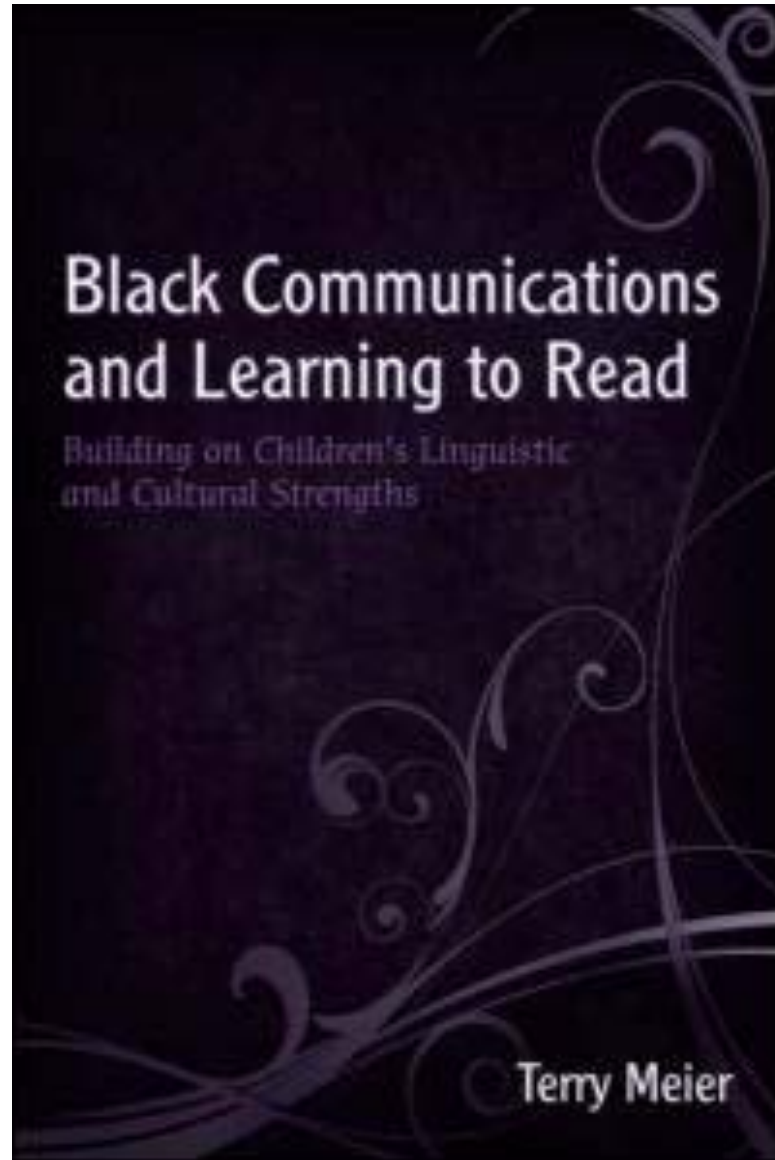
**Instructional  
Strategies -  
Elementary**

*Black Communications  
and Learning to Read:  
Building on Children's  
Linguistic and Cultural  
Strengths*

Terry Meier

2008

Teachers College  
Press



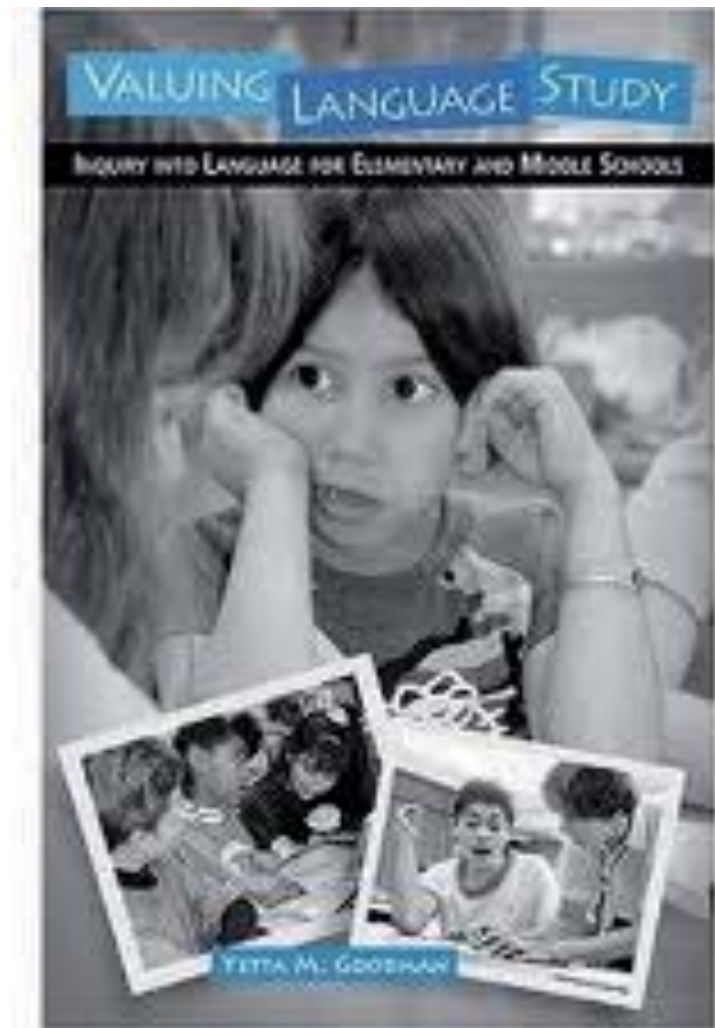
## **Instructional Strategies - Elementary**

*Valuing language  
study: Inquiry into  
language for  
elementary and middle  
schools*

Yetta Goodman

2003

NCTE



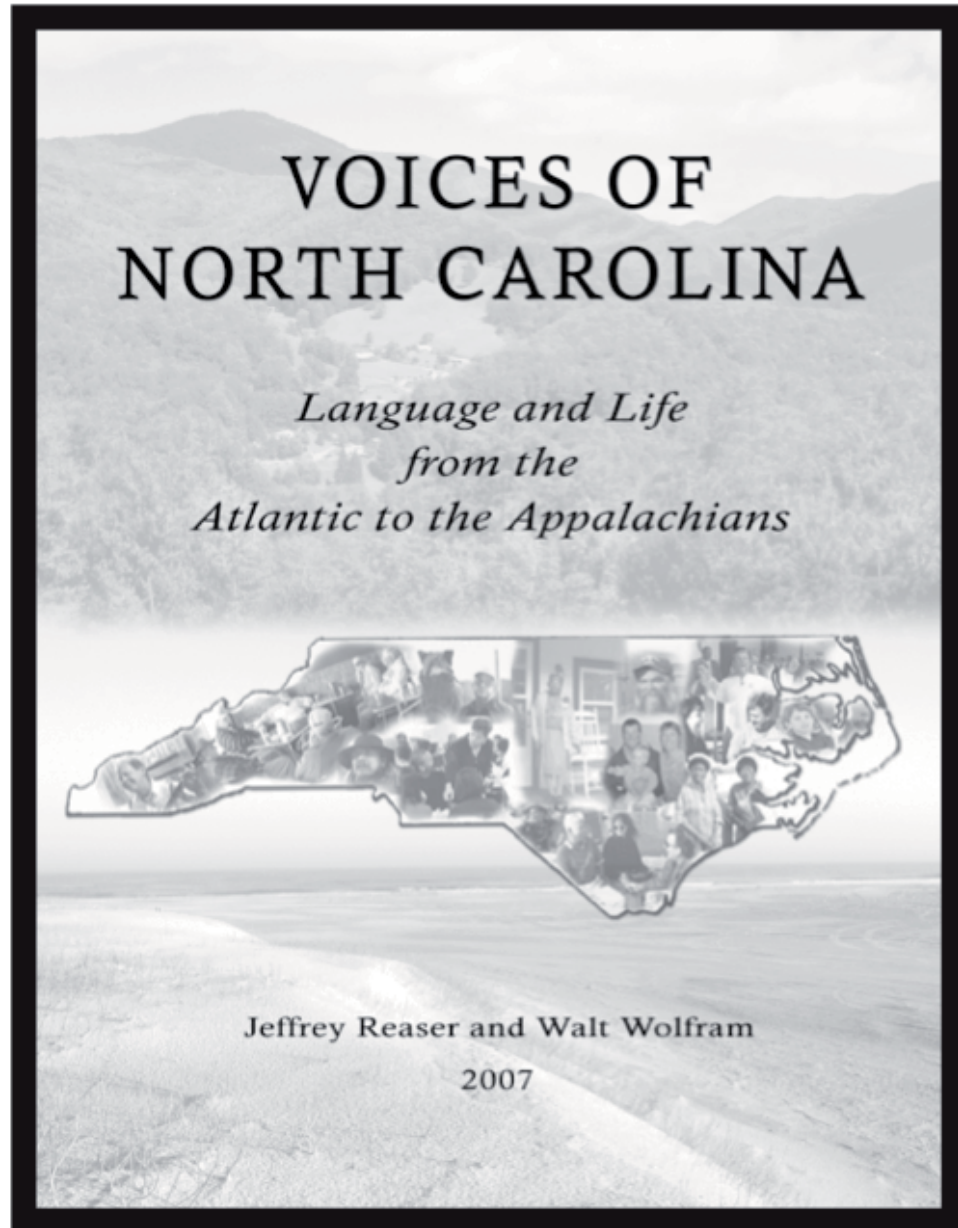
**Instructional  
Strategies – Middle  
School**

*Voices of North  
Carolina: Language  
and Life from the  
Atlantic to the  
Appalachians*

Jeffrey Reaser & Walt  
Wolfram

2007

[www.ncsu.edu/  
linguistics/  
download.php](http://www.ncsu.edu/linguistics/download.php)



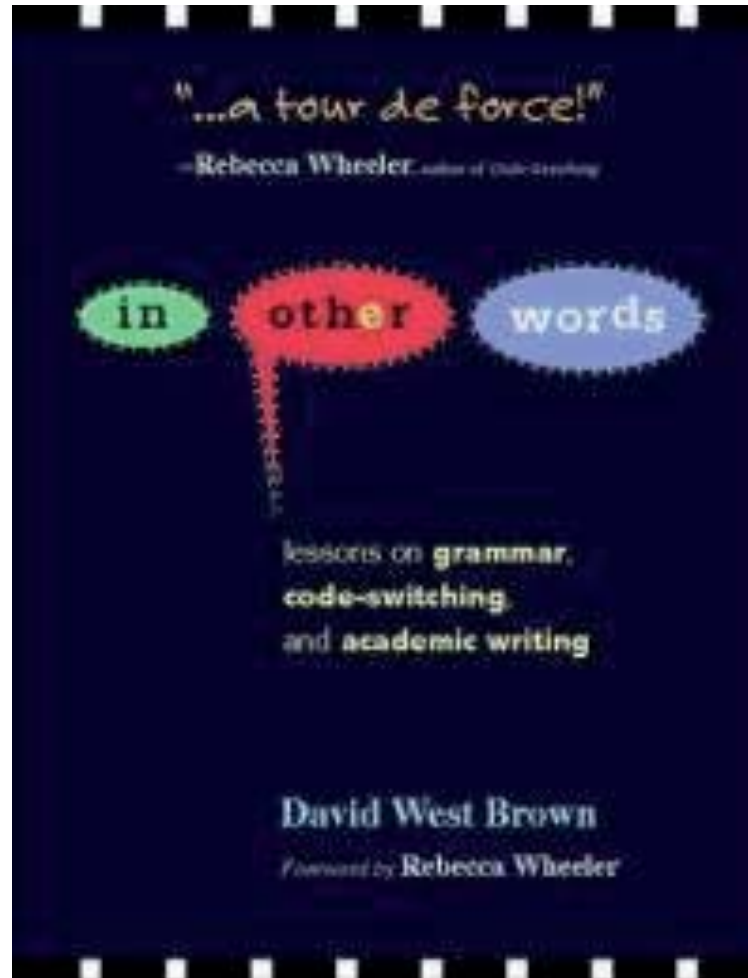
## **Instructional Strategies - Secondary**

*In other words: Lessons  
on grammar, code-  
switching, and  
academic writing*

David West Brown

2009

Heinemann



## LANGUAGE AND EDUCATION/VERNACULAR LANGUAGE VARIETIES

"In many respects, this work establishes a new standard for an effective reference compilation. This template includes an exhaustive, comprehensive tracking of references that relies on the social network of cooperative professionals as well as conventional reference sources from the literature; a rational, coherent segmentation of subject areas for organizing entries; a meticulous, exhaustive cross-indexing of entries by topic for more extensive reference connections; and an introductory essay for each topic and language variety that frames the issues and guides the reader to the prominent studies and the leading researchers. But this formula also has a human element. When these organizational and presentation procedures are adopted by the most distinguished, credentialed professionals who have led the field in engaged research, the result is a *tour de force* in bibliographic compilation that is unparalleled in the field. Regardless of status and experience, all of us are incredibly indebted to the authors for making our work more inclusive, representative, and efficient."

—Walt Wolfram, William C. Friday Distinguished University Professor, North Carolina State University, from the Foreword

More than fifty years of scholarly attention to the intersection of language and education have resulted in a rich body of literature on the role of vernacular language varieties in the classroom. This field of work can be bewildering in its size and variety, drawing as it does on the diverse methods, theories, and research paradigms of fields such as sociolinguistics, applied linguistics, psychology, and education.

Compiling most of the publications from the past half century that deal with this critical topic, this volume includes more than 1,600 references (books, articles in journals or books, and web-accessible dissertations and other works) on education in relation to African American Vernacular English [AAVE], English-based pidgins and creoles, Latina/o English, Native American English, and other English vernaculars such as Appalachian English in the United States and Aboriginal English in Australia), with accompanying abstracts for approximately a third of them.

This comprehensive annotated and topic-coded bibliography provides an invaluable resource for researchers, teachers, and all those interested in the complex issue of how knowledge about language variation can be used to help schools better appreciate and augment the intellect and creativity of students who speak a non-standard language variety.

**John R. Rickford** is the J.E. Wallace Sterling Professor of Linguistics and the Humanities and Pritzker University Fellow in Undergraduate Education at Stanford University, USA.

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### A co-publication of Routledge and NCTE

Cover image: *Synchopation III* by Gil Meyers, Getty.

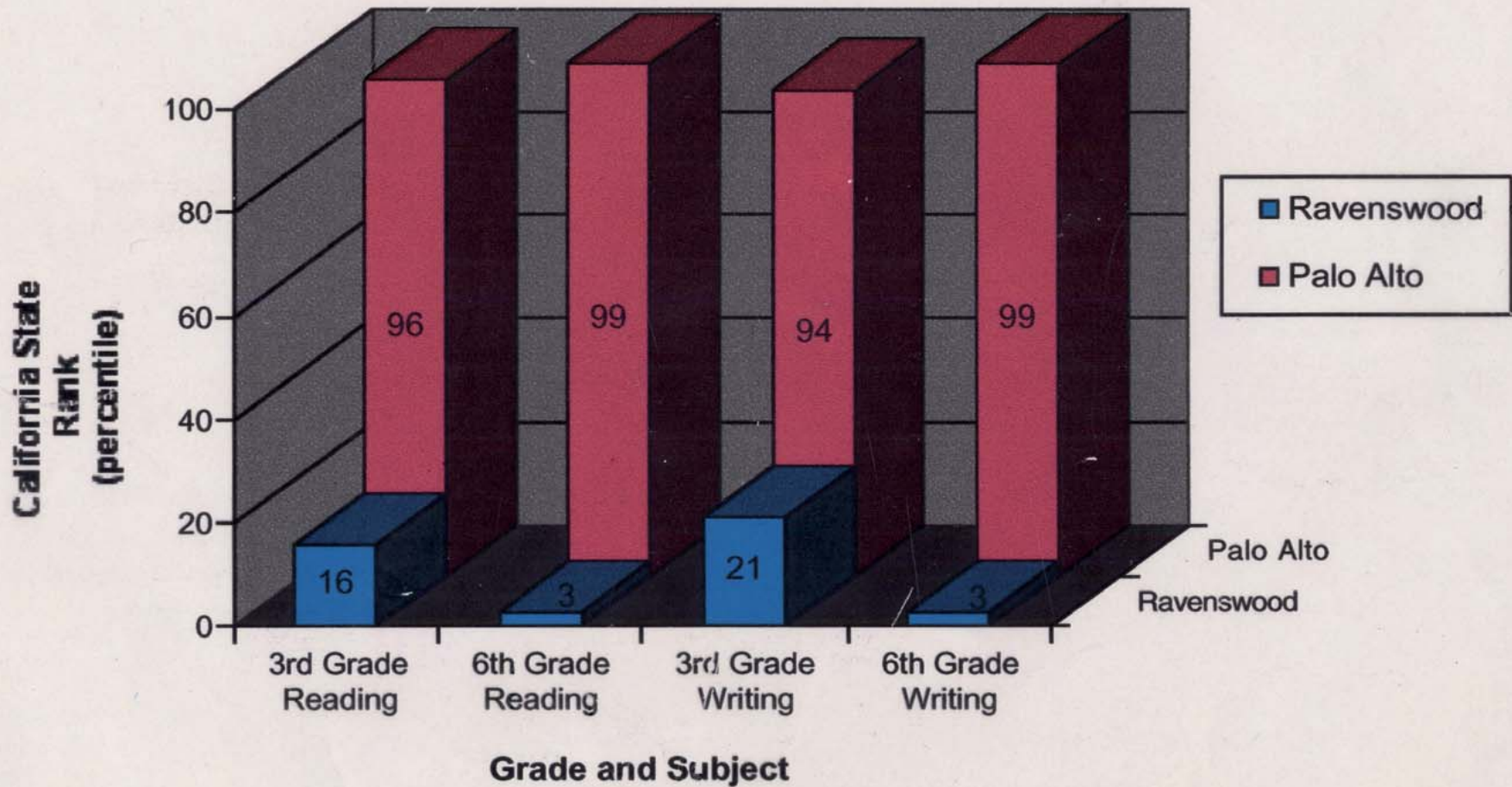
 **Routledge**  
Taylor & Francis Group  
[www.routledge.com/education](http://www.routledge.com/education)

 **NCTE**  
National Council of Teachers of English  
1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801-1096



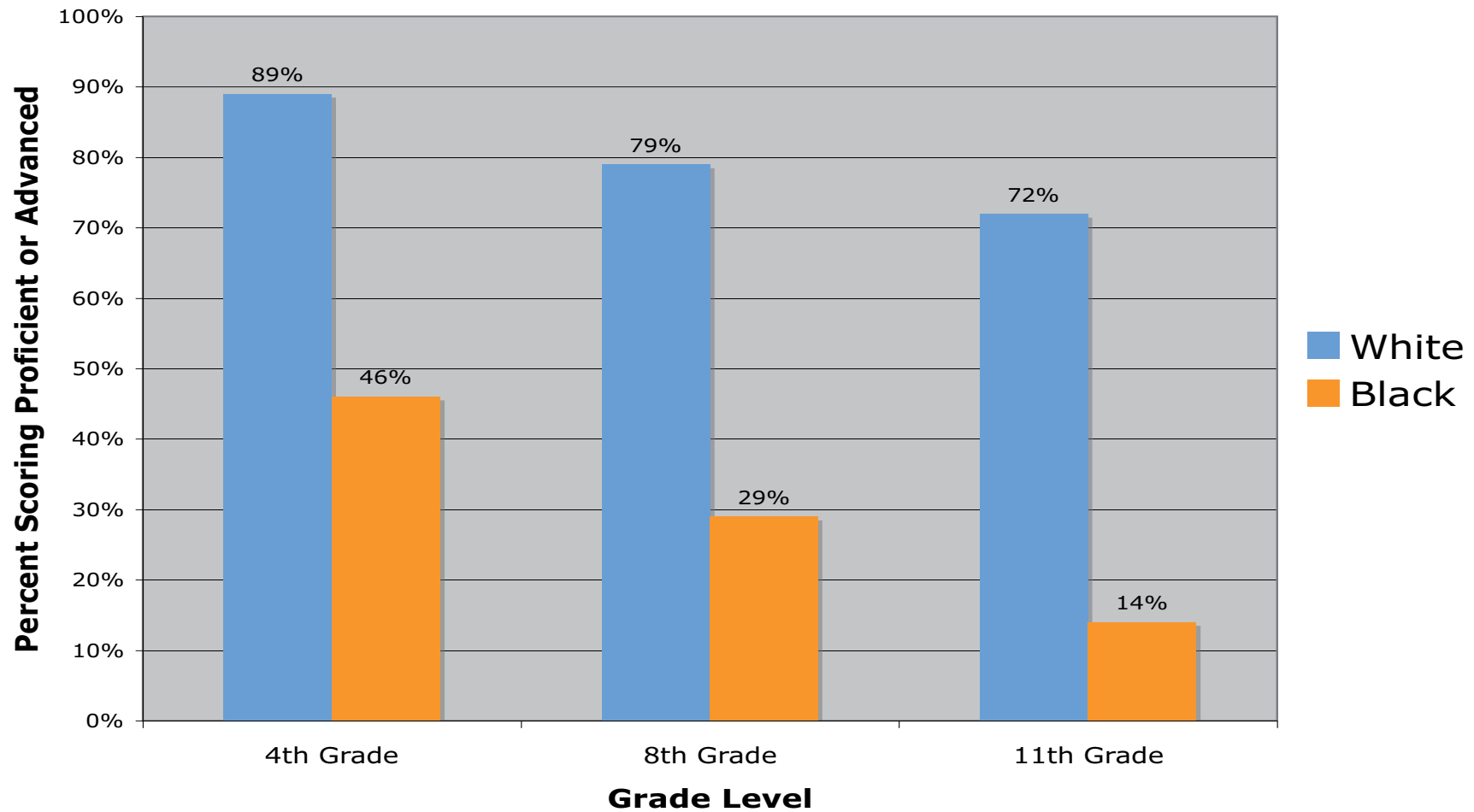
# B. Achievement Gap in Language Arts & Linguistic Strategies for Narrowing it

### Reading and Writing Test Scores, Palo Alto & Ravenswood School Districts 1990 (California Assessment Program - CAP)

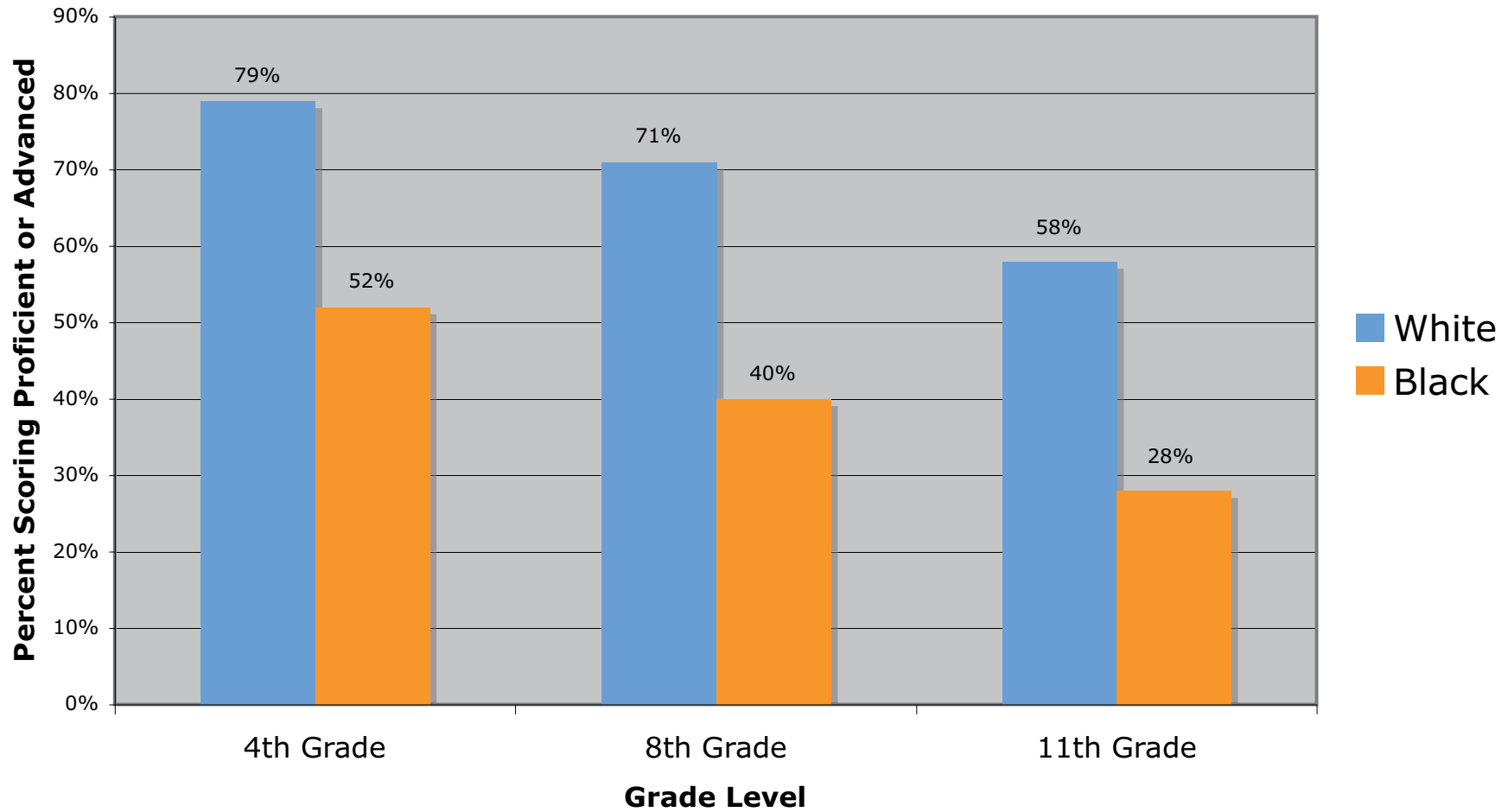


[Source: Peninsula Times Tribune, Nov. 8, 1990: A12]

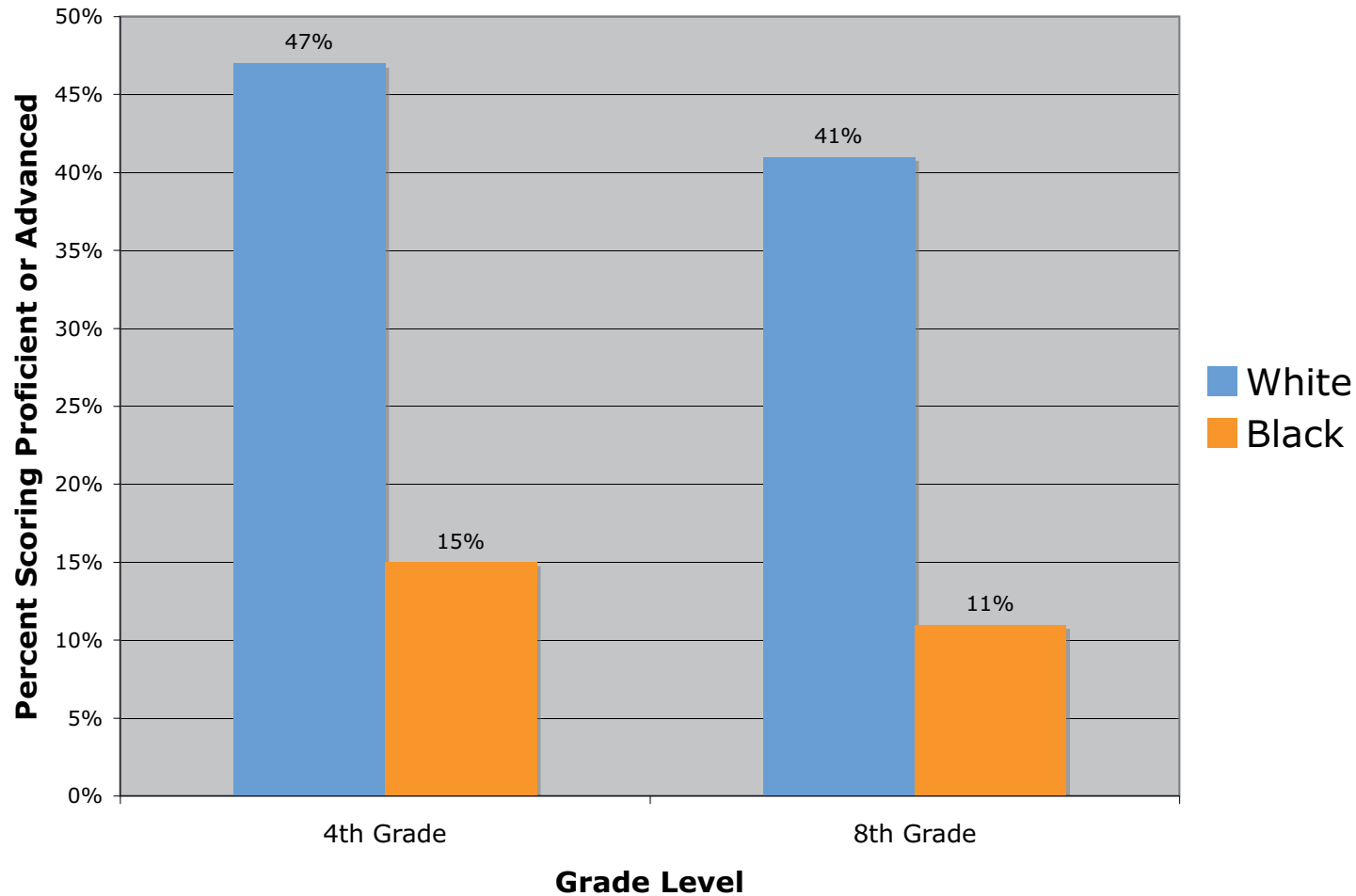
# 2010 STAR Language Arts Scores Oakland Unified District



# 2010 STAR Language Arts Scores State of California



# 2009 NAEP California Reading Assessment



# Relevant Non-Linguistic Factors

(cf. Rickford 1999b)

- Historical factors
- School resources and facilities
- Teacher training, pay, collaboration (cf. Evergreen, San Jose)
- High expectations, accountability, respect
- Racial prejudice and stereotype vulnerability (Claude Steele)
- Socioeconomic factors
- Involvement of psychologists and parents (James Comer)
- Afrocentric & culture-rich curricula (cf. Wisconsin)
- Home environment/parental factors (cf. Nadia in “I am a Promise” film)
- Peer-group attitudes (cf. Signithia Fordham, John Ogbu)

# Primary “solutions” favored by linguists

- **Dialect Awareness:** Help teachers, students, & parents to see that AAVE is systematic, & change negative attitudes and practices regarding it (e.g. don't ignore/ban it, over-correct students, or assume speakers are stupid).
  - Labov 1969, Piestrup 1973, Lippi-Green 1997, Wolfram et al 1999, Smitherman 2000.
- **Dialect Readers:** Use materials written in AAVE as an initial means of developing literacy skills, then transition students to literacy in SE.
  - Stewart 1969, Feigenbaum 1970, Simpkins and Simpkins 1981, Rickford & Rickford 1995.
- **Contrastive Analysis:** Contrast differences between AAVE and SE so that students can better identify and negotiate the differences between them.
  - Lado 1957, Crowell et al 1974, Taylor 1989, Harris-Wright 1999, Lausd & LeMoine 2001.
- **Reading Error Analysis:** Identify the kinds and frequencies of phonetic decoding errors that students make in reading so that teachers and students can reduce/eliminate them.
  - Labov 2001, Labov's website: [www.ling.upenn.edu/~labov/UMRP/UMRP.html](http://www.ling.upenn.edu/~labov/UMRP/UMRP.html) for information on the Urban Minorities Reading Project directed by Labov and Baker.

**“Solution” # 1:**

# **Dialect Awareness**

# LSA Resolution on the Oakland “Ebonics” Issue

- “The variety known as ‘Ebonics,’ ‘African American Vernacular English’ (AAVE), and ‘Vernacular Black English’ and by other names is systematic and rule-governed like all natural speech varieties.”
- “The systematic and expressive nature of the grammar and pronunciation patterns of the African American vernacular has been established by numerous scientific studies over the past thirty years.”
- “...there are also benefits in acquiring Standard English and resources should be made available to all who aspire to mastery of Standard English.”
- “...speakers of other varieties can be aided in their learning of the standard variety by pedagogical approaches which recognize the legitimacy of the other varieties of a language.”



From *Spoken Soul* (J.R. Rickford & R.J. Rickford 2000): In a January 1999 interview at Stanford with John Rickford, August Wilson explained that while he “really values and respects the way that Black people talk,” when he first tried to write plays in the early 1980s, he thought that “in order to create art out of it [Black talk] you have to change it.” So he would put high-flown language in the mouths of his characters: “Terror hangs over the night like a hawk.” In a 1996 article in *People* magazine, he was quoted as saying, “Back then I didn’t value and respect the way blacks talked—the everyday poetry of the people I’d grown up with.”

[From *Spoken Soul*]: But then, as he testified in 1999, he *changed*:

He realized that “art is WITHIN the language of the people. You don’ t have to change it. And so I began to write, and . . . before [when] I’ d try to write, the characters wouldn’ t SOUND RIGHT. It was stilted, it was stiff, it didn’ t work. Cause I was trying to CHANGE it instead of letting it be its own thing, you know. So once I decided to just let it be its own thing, then the characters started talking, and I was writing it down, couldn’ t shut ‘em up. You know, whereas before I had trouble writing a dia-logue, now it was easy, it flowed, because I accepted it.”

August Wilson’ s critically acclaimed plays are all rich in African American Vernacular English [AAVE]. The following scene from his play *The Piano Lesson* demonstrates this, and allows us to appreciate some of the systematic features of this variety.



# Transcript: The Piano Lesson

Boy Willie: Oh Doaker look at her, she **done** got big. **Ain't** she got big?

Doaker: Yeah, she gettin' up **dere**.

Boy Willie: How you doin', Sugar?

Maretha: Fine.

Boy Willie: This your uncle Boy Willie, from down South!  
Hey, that there Lymon. He my friend.

Maretha: Hi...

Lymon: How you doin'? You look jus' like your mama. I remember [when] you **was** wearin' diapers.

[Try to find all occurrences of copula/auxiliary is/are absence]

# Transcript: The Piano Lesson

Boy Willie: Oh Doaker look at her, she **done** got big. **Ain't** she got big?

Doaker: Yeah, she **Ø** gettin' up **dere**.

Boy Willie: How you **Ø** doin', Sugar?

Maretha: Fine.

Boy Willie: This **Ø** your uncle Boy Willie, from down South!  
Hey, that there **Ø** Lymon. He **Ø** my friend.

Maretha: Hi...

Lymon: How you **Ø** doin'? You look **jus'** like your mama. I remember [when] you **was** wearin' diapers.

[Green features are grammatical, red features phonological]

# Grammar

- Sentences like “she Ø gettin' up dere” and “He Ø my friend” exemplify the absence of copula/auxiliary *is* and *are*. As Labov (1968) first noted in his studies of Harlem--and this has been confirmed in dozens of subsequent studies elsewhere in the US--the “deletion” of inflected *be* is systematic, subject to the following “rules”:
  - Only present tense forms can be deleted, not past *was* or *were*.
  - Only *is* and *are* can be deleted; *am* contracts to *'m*, but doesn't delete (“I' m outta here” is ok in AAVE but not \* “I Ø outta here”)
  - Fully stressed forms (e.g. sentence final “That' s what he *IS!*”) don't delete. (You can't say \* “That' s what he Ø!”)
  - *is* and *are* delete least often (e.g. 25% of the time) when they come before nouns (e.g. “He Ø my friend”); somewhat more often (e.g. 45% of the time) when they come before adjectives (e.g. “He Ø tall”), and even more often (e.g. 65% of the time) before *Verb+ing* (as in “she Ø gettin' up dere”). This is also true of Caribbean varieties like Jamaican and Guyanese English.
- Contrast the use of invariant *be* to express habitual aspect
  - “He *be* walkin” (usually, regularly, as against “He Ø walkin” right now) for SE “He is usually walking/usually walks”

## Phonology (pronunciation)

- Pronunciations like *ju**s**'* exemplify what linguists refer to as the “Simplification of word-final consonant clusters.” The word-final cluster *st* is simplified by deleting the second or final consonant. Note, however, that in AAVE, as in other varieties of English, **both** consonants in the cluster must be voiced or voiceless for this simplification to take place. (Voiceless consonants are those in which the vocal folds are open and don't vibrate noisily during the production of the consonant, as in *s, sh, t, k*; voiced consonants are those in which the vocal folds are pressed tightly together, and open and close noisily and frequently during the production of the consonant, as in *z, n, d*.) Deleting the final consonant in a mixed voice cluster like *pan(t), jum(p)* is usually prohibited.
- Other “same voice” clusters exemplifying the simplification include:
  - *han'* for SE “hand” (final **nd** voiced)
  - *des'* for SE “desk” (final **sk** voiceless)
  - *pos'* for SE “post” (final **st** voiceless)
  - *pass'* for SE “passed” (note that the -ed suffix in this example is pronounced as [t]; final [**st**] voiceless)

# Use of Selected AAVE Features in Detroit, by Social Class

## USE OF SELECTED AAVE FEATURES IN DETROIT, BY SOCIAL CLASS

Feature	LWC	UWC	LMC	UMC
	%	%	%	%
Consonant cluster simplification <i>not in past tense</i>	84	79	66	51
Voiceless <i>th</i> $\theta \rightarrow f, t, \text{ or } \emptyset$ (p.84)	71	59	17	12
Multiple negation (p.156)	78	55	12	8
Absence of copula/auxiliary <i>is, are</i> (p.169)	57	37	11	5
Absence of third person present tense -s (p.136)	71	57	10	1
Absence of possessive -s (p.141)	27	25	6	0
Absence of plural -s (p.143)	6	4	1	0

LWC = lower working class; UWC = upper working class; LMC = lower middle class; UMC = upper middle class. Numbers are percentage amounts. *Source: Wolfram 1969*

## The pedagogical implications of dialect awareness: Piestrup's study of Black Artful vs. Interrupting teachers, Oakland, 1973

“The Black Artful group had *significantly higher reading scores* than the Interrupting and White Liberal groups . . .

Teachers in the Black Artful group used rhythmic play in instruction and encouraged children to participate by listening to their responses. They attended to vocabulary differences of Black children and seemed to prevent structural conflict by teaching children to listen for standard English sound distinctions. Children taught with this approach participated enthusiastically with the teacher in learning to read.

In contrast, teachers in the Interrupting group asked children to repeat words pronounced in dialect many times and interpreted dialect pronunciations as reading errors. . . . Some children from this group tediously worked alone at decoding without reading as they were able to read. Some children withdrew from participation in reading, speaking softly and as seldom as possible; others engaged in ritual insult and other forms of verbal play apart from the teacher.”

*From Ann Piestrup 1973; See [www.stanford.edu/~rickford](http://www.stanford.edu/~rickford) for this and other references, esp. paper “Using the Vernacular”*

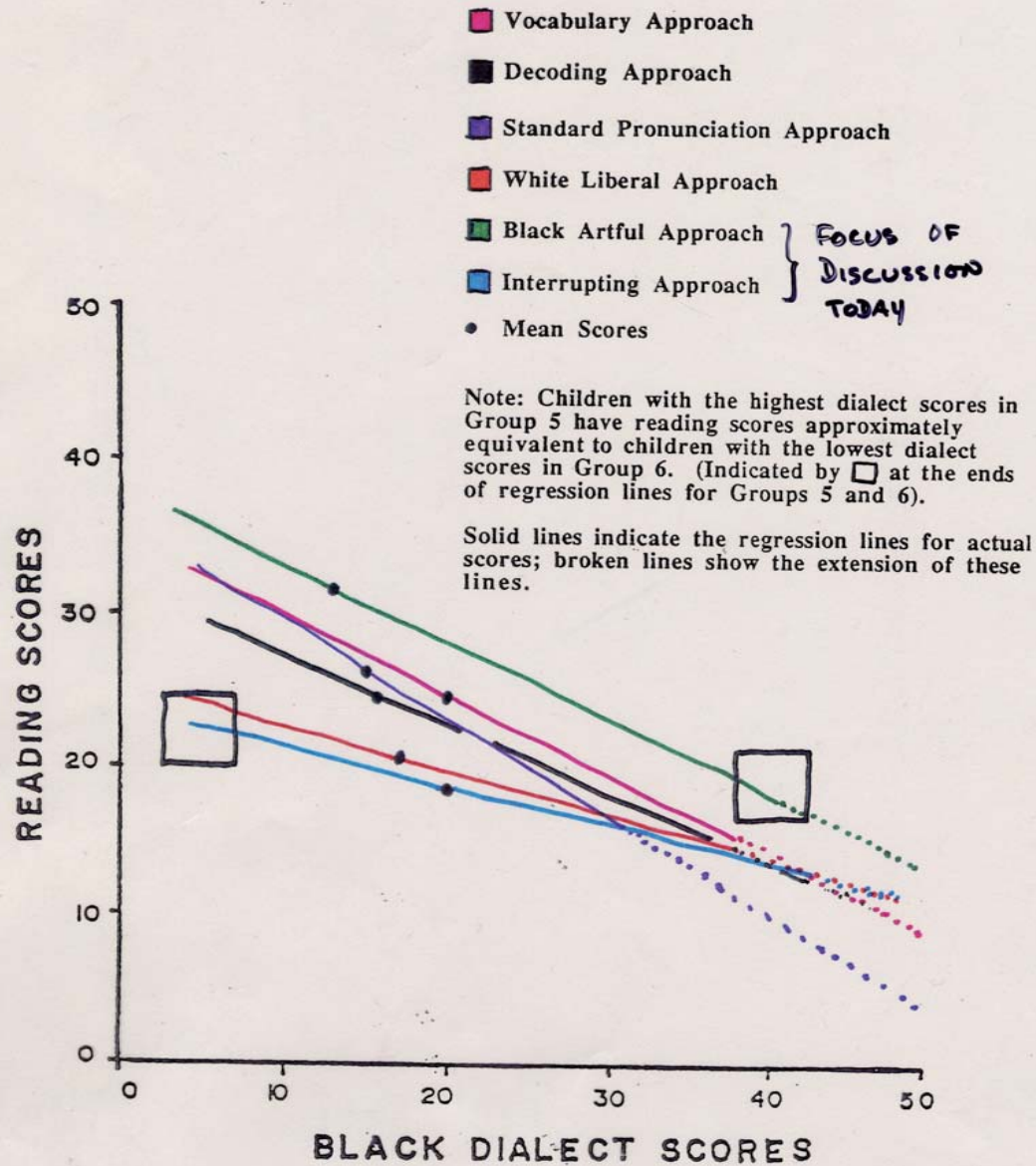
# Interrupting Approach

C<sub>1</sub> 'I want to –  
T Ba-ee, be.  
C<sub>1</sub> -- be somet' ing new. I want to be a calf –  
T A what?  
C<sub>1</sub> -- just like you.'  
T A colt.  
C<sub>1</sub> 'I want to be a calf –  
T No, that' s not calf, coolt –  
C<sub>1</sub> 'Colt.'  
T Coool, hear the 'o' sound?  
C<sub>1</sub> Co' t.  
T No, coolt.  
C<sub>1</sub> Colt, colt.  
T Lemme see, Jerry. One more time.  
C<sub>1</sub> Soo' t –  
T Good, colt.

# Black Artful Approach

T If you have on clothes that are all tattered, what do they look like?  
CLASS Ragged. Raggelly.  
T Wait, wait. One person, whatchoo say?  
C<sub>2</sub> Raggelly.  
T Raggelly.  
C<sub>3</sub> Teacher!  
C<sub>4</sub> They torn, they torn up.  
C<sub>2,3</sub> They got, they got –  
T They got what?  
C<sub>4</sub> -- they got holes in 'em.  
T OK. Anything you wanta say, Melinda?  
C<sub>5</sub> And dey have, dey have – all the shoes are raggy too.  
T Shoes are raggy –  
C<sub>2,3</sub> An' clothes.  
T Wait just a minute.  
C<sub>4</sub> His (clothes) are raggelly, and his pants are raggelly, and a, his –  
C<sub>6</sub> I know.  
C<sub>5</sub> -- hat is raggelly.  
C<sub>6</sub> I know.  
C<sub>5</sub> -- and his shirt is raggelly.  
T Danelle?  
C<sub>7</sub> And his body is ragged.  
CLASS (Giggles.)

# Extended Regression Lines for Six Teaching Styles



**“Solution” # 2:**

# **Dialect Readers**

# Caribbean Precursors & Parallels

- 1950s:** R.B. Le Page: suggests Jamaican children be taught in JC rather than SE for 1<sup>st</sup> year or two of schooling. Vere Johns in *Kingston Star* damns this a “pernicious and insulting idea”
- 1968:** Le Page reports LOW (10-20%) pass rates on GCE “0” levels in four W.I. territories, and advocates taking Creole Vernaculars into account in teaching English.
- 1975:** Trinidad Ministry of Education introduces new primary school syllabus. Lg. Arts section provokes widespread controversy. Contra 1946 syll., it recognizes vernacular as “gramm. Structured, systematic form of English...”
- 2005: Hubert Devonish & UWI pilot bilingual Creole/English program in 5 Jamaican schools, w. 530 students. One grade 2 teacher reports improvements in student’s lg arts grades (*The Star*, 11/3/05, p. 26). But others object (*J’ca Observer* 11/14/05, p.

3)

1. Tore Osterberg, in his 1961 book, *Bilingualism and the first school language – an educational problem illustrated by results from a **Swedish** dialect area* (Väster-bottens Tryckeri, Umeå), describes an experiment in which an experimental group of dialect speakers (D) in the Piteå district of Sweden was taught to read first in their nonstandard dialect, and then transitioned to standard Swedish, while a parallel control group (R) was taught entirely in standard Swedish. After thirty-five weeks, he found that:
  - **“...the dialect method showed itself superior both when it was a question of reading quickly and of rapidly assimilating matter...”**
  - **“The same applied to reading and reading-comprehension.”**

2. Tove Bull, in a 1990 article entitled “Teaching School Beginners to Read and Write in the Vernacular” (in *Tromsø Linguistics in the Eighties*, Novus Press, Oslo), discusses a **Norwegian** research project conducted between 1980 and 1982 in which ten classes of beginning students, including nearly 200 students each about 7 years old, were taught to read and write either in their Norwegian vernaculars (Dialect group) or in the standard language (Control group). After assessing their progress on several measures, Bull concluded that:

- **“...the vernacular children read significantly faster and better than the control subjects.”**



At School  
Everyday Talk

Book 6

Psycholinguistics Reading Series  
Board of Education—City of Chicago

Leaverton

He like us.

When we be good, he be happy.

When we be bad, he be mad.



At School  
School Talk

Book 6

Psycholinguistics Reading Series  
Board of Education—City of Chicago

He likes us.

When we are good, he is happy.

When we are bad, he is mad.

# ***Rappin' with Jesus:***

## ***The Good News According to the Four Brothers***

### **D-I-V-O-R-C-E Doesn't Spell Relief**

Jesus finished up in Galilee and went back to Judea, right across from the Jordan River. As always, brothers and sisters followed Him and begged Him to heal their sick. But behind them were those swoll-headed Pharisees, looking for a way to trap Jesus into saying something that would discredit Him.

“Hey, man. Do you think divorce is all right?”

“Nah, it ain't right. In the beginning the Almighty made a brother and a sister and told 'em to join together as one. A brother leaves his mother and goes to his wife, and no brother can destroy what the Almighty has put together.”

“Okay, if that's true, why did Moses let folks divorce each other?”

Jesus told them. “Moses was tired of you guys clowning him over everything he told you not to do, so he gave you some slack, that's why. But I'm here to set the record straight. Divorcing your wife is a no-no, except should she be jocking another brother. And if a brother marries a sister who has divorced her husband, it's still the same sin.”

*Source: McCary, P. K. interpreter. Rappin' with Jesus: The Good News According to the Four Brothers. African American Family Press, 1998.*

# Shine

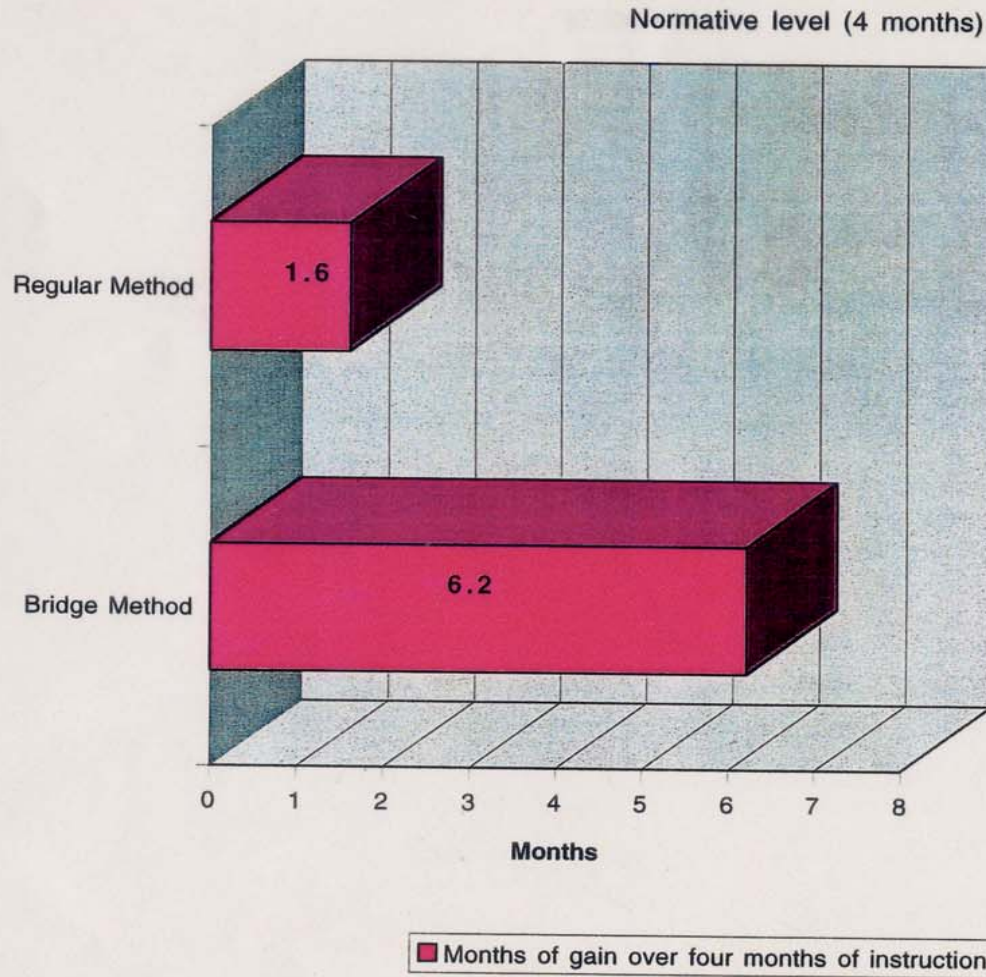
## A Story in Black Vernacular

This story come from Black folklore, you understand. Black folklore is stories that Black folk have told and sung for a whole lot of years. This here story is all about Shine, a strong Black man! Maybe you heard other stories about Shine. Now come here and check out mine.

You ever hear of the *Titanic*? Yeah, that's right. It was one of them big ships. The kind they call a ocean liner. Now this here ship was the biggest and the baddest ship ever to sail the sea. You understand? It was suppose to be unsinkable. Wind, storm, iceberg — nothing could get next to it. It was a superb ship, the meanest thing on the water. It could move like four Bloods in tennis shoes. It was out of sight!

Source: Simpkins and Simpkins 1997. Bridge.

**FIGURE 4:**  
**Reading Gains using Regular vs. Bridge Methods, Grades 7-12**



Source: Simpkins &  
Simpkins  
(1981:238)

**“Solution” # 3:**

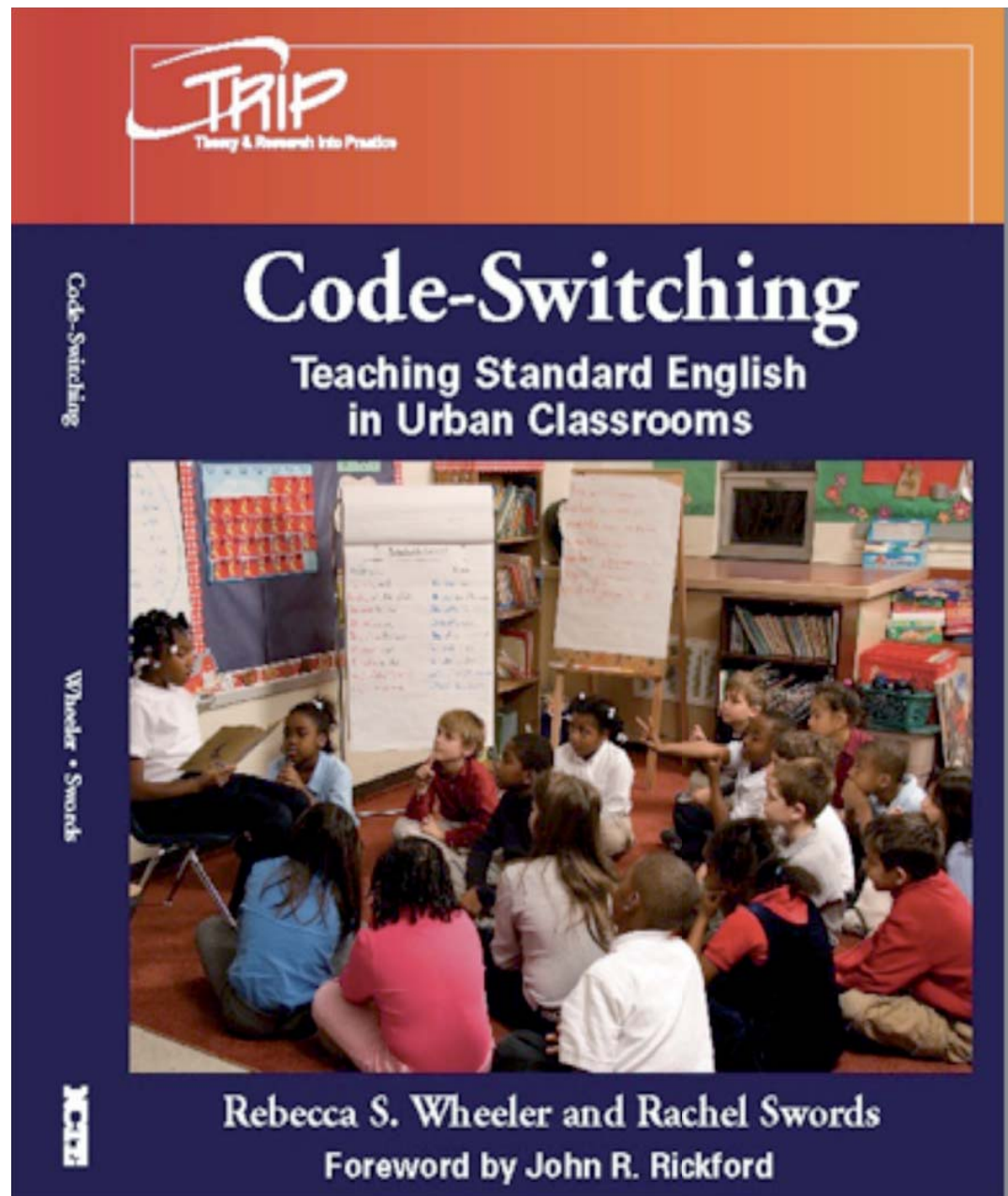
**Contrastive  
Analysis  
(Bidialectalism)**

*Contrastive Analysis* involves explicit comparison between the features of one language variety (e.g. AAVE, informal language, home talk) and those of another (e.g. Standard English, formal language, school talk) to help students understand the differences between the varieties more clearly, and to improve their ability to switch fluently between them, via drills and other exercises.

1. Henry Parker and Marilyn Crist in their (1995) book, *Teaching Minorities to Play the Corporate Language Game* extol the virtues of the bidialectal contrastive analysis approach, which they have used successfully with vernacular speakers in Tennessee and Chicago at the preschool, elementary, high school and college levels.
2. The ten year old program in De Kalb county, Georgia, where 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students in eight schools are taught to switch from their “home speech” to “school speech” is another one in which contrastive analysis methods have proven effective. According to Doug Cummings (*Atlanta Constitution* Jan. 9, 1997, p. B1), “The program has won a ‘center of excellence’ designation from the National Council for Teachers of English. Last year, students who had taken the course had improved verbal test scores at every school.”
3. Wheeler, Rebecca S., & Rachel Swords. 2006. *Codeswitching: Teaching Standard English in Urban Classrooms. A Grammar-Based Approach*. National Council for Teachers of English.

**A path of**

**Teacher  
transformation**



# POSSESSIVES

“In Standard English, possessive inflectional endings are obligatory and are produced as /s/, /z/, or /iz/, depending on whether the final sound in the base noun is voiced or voiceless or whether the final sound is /s/, /z/, /sh/, /ch/, or /j/ (as in bridge). In Black English Vernacular, the possessive morpheme is frequently deleted. Possession is presumably marked by intonation and word order.”

From *Proficiency in Standard English for Speakers of Black Language [SEP]*

**INSTRUCTIONAL****FOCUS:**

Possessives (Morpheme /s/ with nouns)

**OBJECTIVE:**

Given structured drill and practice contrasting the use of possessive nouns, the students will be able to differentiate between standard and nonstandard usage and to formulate sentences using the standard form in response to statements or questions.

**LEVEL:**

Teacher Judgment

**MATERIALS:**

1. Pair of multiple response cards labeled same and different for each student.
2. Pair of multiple response cards labeled standard and nonstandard.

**PROCEDURES:**

1. In order to assess the students' ability in auditory discrimination, the teacher will lead the students in the following drill. Students will respond by displaying a same or different response card.

**DISCRIMINATION DRILL:****Teacher Stimulus****Student Response**

This is Joe car.  
This is Joe's car.

Different

That is Steve's house  
That is Steve's house.

Same

This is Monika's jump rope.  
This is Monika jump rope.

Different

Where is Jim's skateboard?  
Where is Jim skateboard?

Different

Is that Doug's football?  
Is that Doug's football?

Same

There is Pam's school.  
There is Pam school.

Different

This is Joe car.  
This is Joe's car.

Different

2. Teacher will explain and model the standard form and have students repeat several examples giving additional help where needed.
3. Teacher will lead the students in the following drill. Students will respond by displaying standard or nonstandard response cards.

**IDENTIFICATION DRILL:**

**Teacher Stimulus**

Mary brother is little.  
 Bill store is closed.  
 Tom's truck is red.  
 Ted frog jump high.  
 Jerome's cate is gray.  
 Terry bicycle go fast.  
 Jackie's coat is blue.  
 Kevin lunch box black.

**Student Response**

Nonstandard  
 Nonstandard  
 Standard  
 Nonstandard  
 Standard  
 Nonstandard  
 Standard  
 Nonstandard

4. To check for understanding, the teacher will call on individual students to respond to questions and statements similar to those in the following drill. Students will respond in complete sentences using the standard form. Students should be instructed to listen for only one nonstandard feature and to respond in complete sentences. Contractions are acceptable.

**TRANSLATION DRILL:**

**Teacher Stimulus**

Jesse Truck is red.  
 Monica school is large.  
 Larry jacket is black and  
 Brian mother is ill.

**Student Response**

Jesse's truck is red.  
 Monica's school is large.  
 Larry's jacket is black and brown.  
 Brian's mother is ill.

5. In the following drill, the students will generate their own sentences in response to the teacher stimulus. The student responses listed here are but examples.  
 Students should be instructed to respond in complete sentences, although sometimes in every day speech we do not. Contractions are acceptable.

**Teacher Stimulus**

Is that Jessie house?  
 Is that John mother?  
 Are those Monica skates?  
 That is Toby milk.  
 Where are Jerry shoes?  
 Where is Cassandra coat?

**Student Response**

Yes, that is Jessie's house.  
 No, that is not John's mother.  
 Yes, those are Monica's skates.  
 No, that is not Toby's milk.  
 Here are Jerry's shoes.  
 Cassandra's coat is hanging  
 on the hook.

The more recent trend is to minimize the use of DRILLS in CA, and to use examples from literature or music to demonstrate the linguistic versatility which many of the best African American writers and singers possess.

E.g., from the late Nina Simone, AAVE in “Ain’ t No Use Baby”:

Ain't no use, baby, I'm leavin' the scene.

Ain't no use, baby, You  $\emptyset$  too doggone mean.

Yes, I'm tired of payin' the dues

Havin' the blues, gettin' bad news,

Ain't no use, baby.

And Standard English in “To Be Young Gifted and Black”:

When you feel really low

Yeah, there's a great truth you should know

When you're young, gifted and black

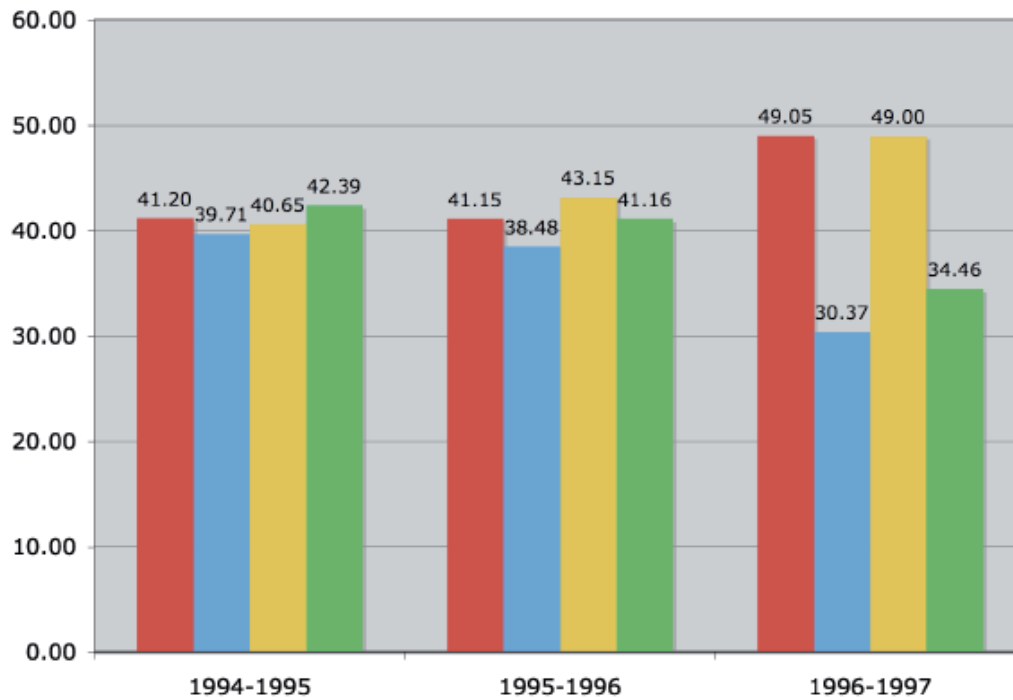
Your soul's intact

# De Kalb Bidialectal Communication Program

## Student Progress Comparisons

*Kelli Harris-Wright*

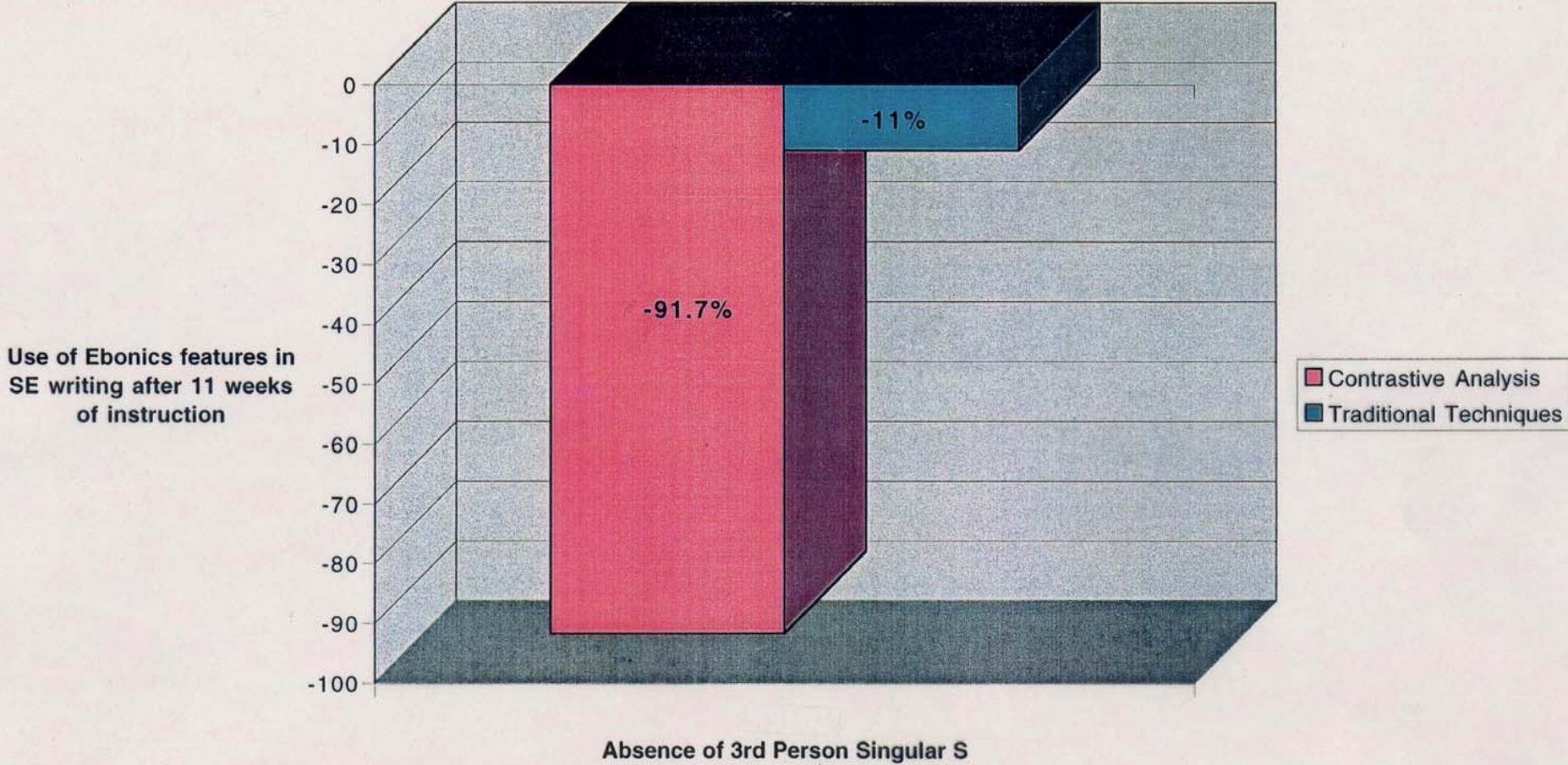
### ITBS - Reading Composite



Control	1994-1995	1995-1996	1996-1997
PRE	41.20	41.50	49.05
POST	40.65	43.15	49.00
POST - PRE	<b>-0.55</b>	<b>2.00</b>	<b>-0.05</b>
Bidialectal			
PRE	39.71	38.48	30.37
POST	42.39	41.16	34.26
POST - PRE	<b>2.68</b>	<b>2.68</b>	<b>3.90</b>

While the effect of Contrastive Analysis (CA) on reading scores in the DeKalb study is clear enough, HOW it achieves this effect remains to be explained. The effect of CA on Writing, especially on students' ability to use Standard English rather than Vernacular forms in their formal writing, is more transparent, and it has been documented in more studies.

**FIGURE 3b:**  
**Effect of Contrastive Analysis vs. Traditional Techniques Among Aurora University Undergraduates**



Source: Taylor (1991:149)

**Mean Scores and Gains for Experimental (AEMP = Academic English Mastery Program) and Control Writing Groups, Los Angeles Unified School District, 2000**

<b>Group Test</b>	<b>Mean Pretest Score</b>	<b>Mean Posttest Score</b>	<b>Gain</b>
Experimental Writing	10.80	13.30	2.50
Control Writing	9.06	10.74	1.68

Source: Maddahian and Sandamela 2000, cited in Rickford, J. 2002, "Linguistics, education and the Ebonics firestorm." In GURT 2000, ed. By J. Alatis et al.

# From Julie Sweetland's (2006) Stanford PhD study of elementary schools in Cincinnati, Ohio

1. Mean scores of student ability to revise written vernacular text toward Standard English:

Sociolinguistic Approach (CA)	68.9%
Writing Process (No CA)	64.4%
No Treatment (No CA or WP)	60.4%

2. Mean scores of student's writing (by outside raters) on Conventions trait rubric:

	Pretest	Posttest	Gain	SIG?(p<)
Sociolinguistic Approach	2.79	3.09	0.30	YES .00001
Writing Process	3.03	3.11	[0.08]	NO .37
No Treatment	2.68	2.88	0.20	Yes .016

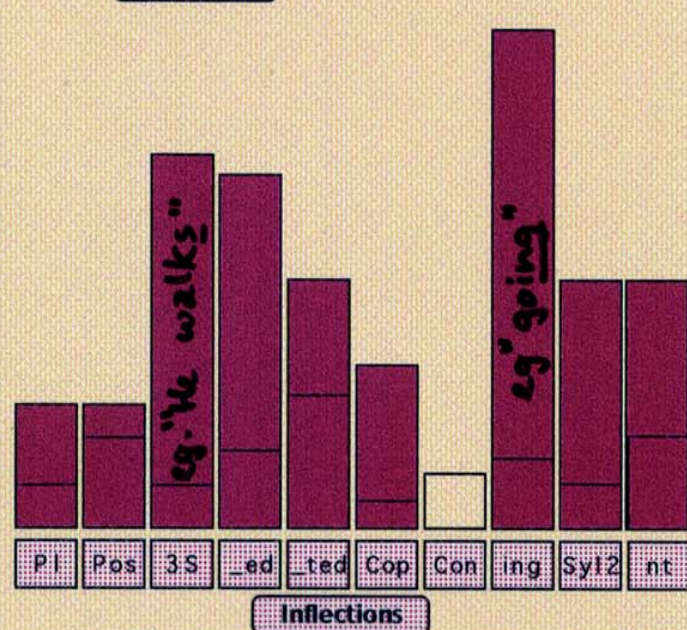
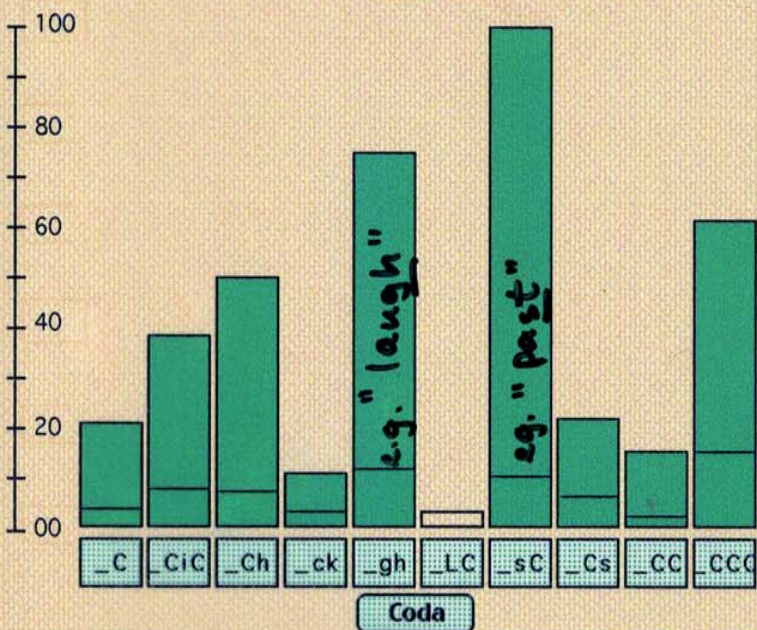
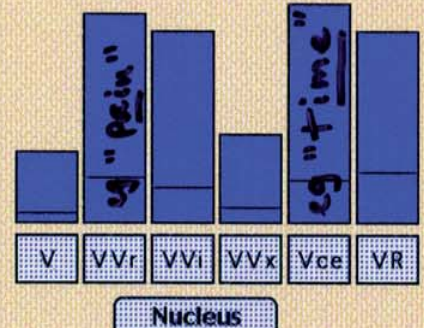
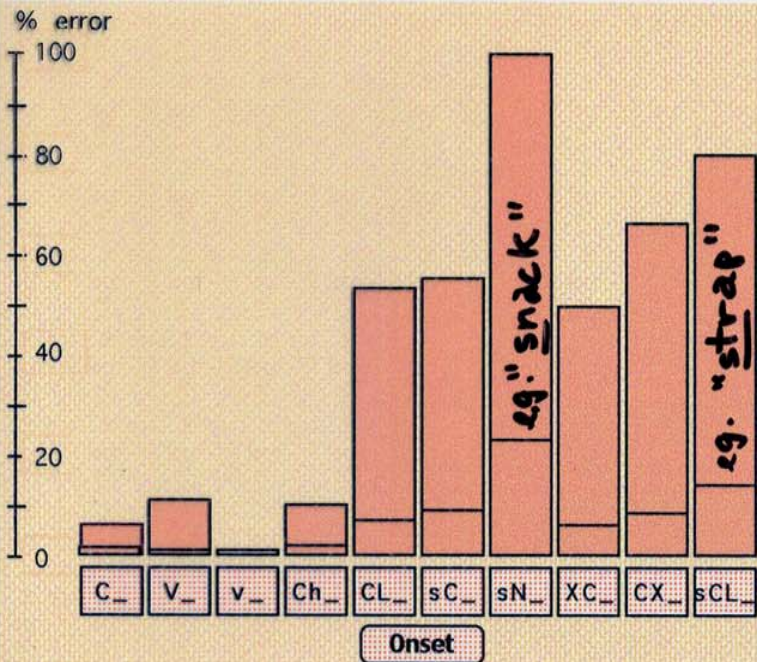
**“Solution” # 4:**

**Linguistically  
Informed Pedagogy  
(especially Reading  
Error Analysis)**

**Labov's (1995) suggestions for teaching Language Arts in the integrated classroom (to speakers of AAVE, Latino English, and other vernacular dialects), based on three decades of linguistics research:**

- Principle 1: Teachers should distinguish between mistakes in reading and differences in pronunciation. (E.g., the kid who reads mist as miss, or Ruth as Ruf, or “He walks home every day” as “He walk home every day” has not “misread” in the sense of not being able to decode the letters and correctly interpret their meanings; on the contrary, he/she has probably decoded correctly, but he/she has reproduced the word or sentence according to the vernacular patterns of AAVE.)
- Principle 2: Give more attention to the ends of words (than beginnings)
- Principle 3: Present words in phonological contexts that preserve underlying forms (E.g., For past tense, use words like tested rather than walked, where final -ed is likely to be lost)

Whitney H.



- Onset
- C\_ single consonant, cat
  - V\_ initial vowel, at
  - v\_ unstressed vowel, about
  - Ch\_ digraph, chat
  - CL\_ obstruent+liquid, track
  - sC\_ sibilant+stop, stack
  - sN\_ sibilant+nasal, snack
  - XC\_ silent C + C, knack
  - CX\_ C+silent C, wreck
  - sCL\_ 3 consonants, strap
- Nucleus
- V single vowel, back
  - VVr, regular vowel pair, pain
  - VVi, irreg. vowel pair, bowl
  - VVx, excep'l vowel pair, said
  - VR, r-controlled vowel, store
- Coda
- \_C lone consonant, cat
  - \_CiC geminate, pass
  - \_Ch digraph, path
  - \_ck /k/ digraph, back
  - \_LC liquid+stop, hard
  - \_sC sibilant+stop, past
  - \_Cs stop+sibilant, cats
  - \_CC 2 stops, fact
  - \_CCC 3 consonants, first
- Inflections
- \_Pl plural, cats
  - \_Pos possessive, cat's
  - \_3S verbal /s/, likes
  - \_ed, contracted /ed/, liked
  - \_ted, uncontr. /ed/, added
  - Cop copula, that's
  - Con contraction, you'll
  - ing progressive, going
  - Syl2 two syllables, palace
  - nt



IRM

**The Individualized Reading Manual**

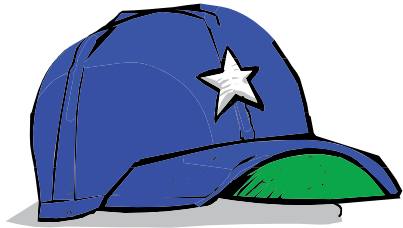
A Reading Text for Tutors and Children

by Bill Labov and Bettina Baker



# The silent-e rule

The vowel **a** can make two sounds as in **ta**p and **ta**pe.  
If you add silent-e to the end of a word, you change the short sound to the long sound.



make

**ca**p

into



**ca**pe

# Practising the silent-e rule with Usher's lyrics

See it's a **shame** that when you're working hard  
doing well people **hate** you

Yeah buying nothing else but the best for yourself they really **hate** you

Yeah you got to **live** for you and no one else

Don't let them **make** you feel **like** you're not being real

Just **live** how you want to **live** you got to do for you



Exception:  
before v

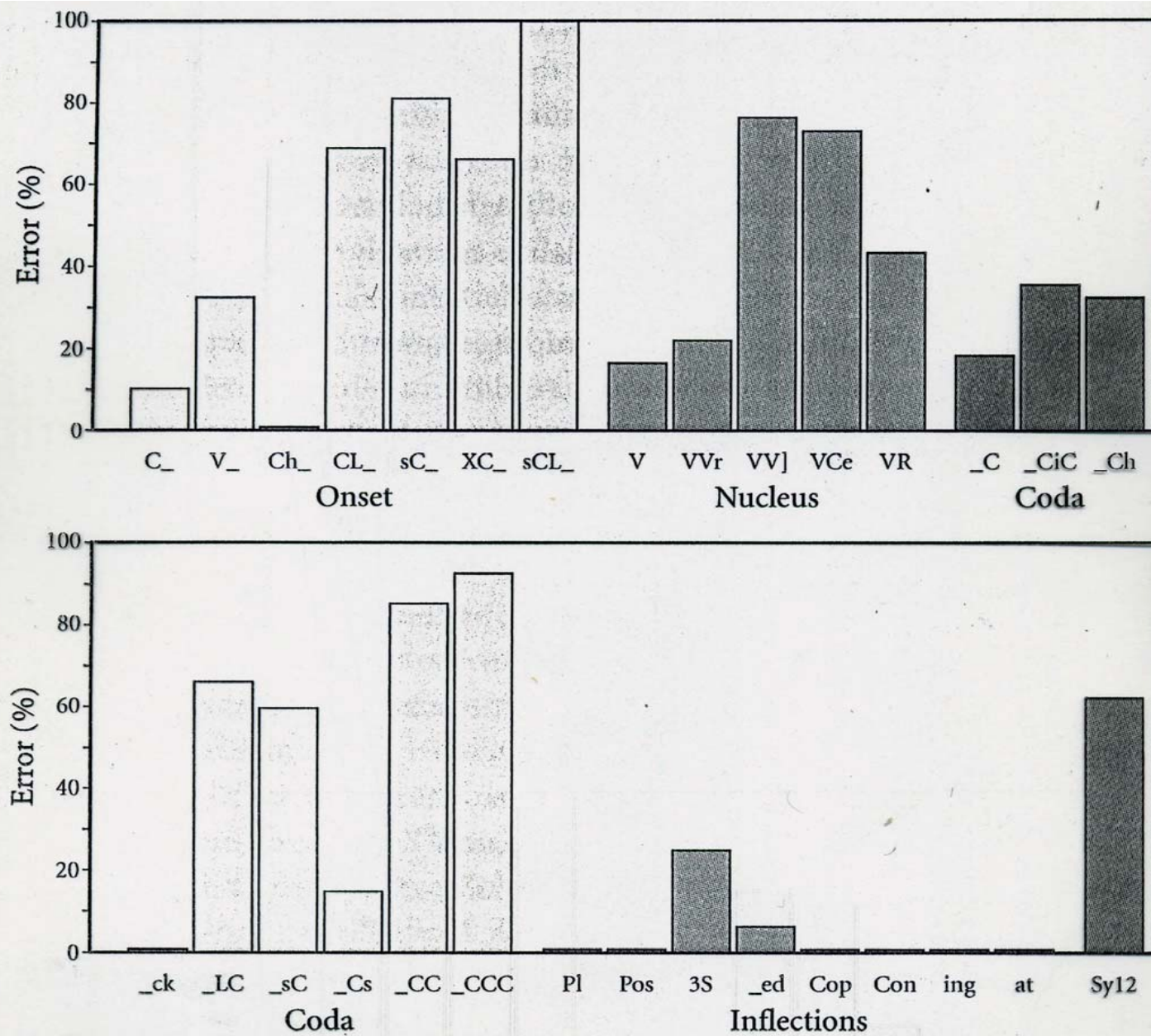
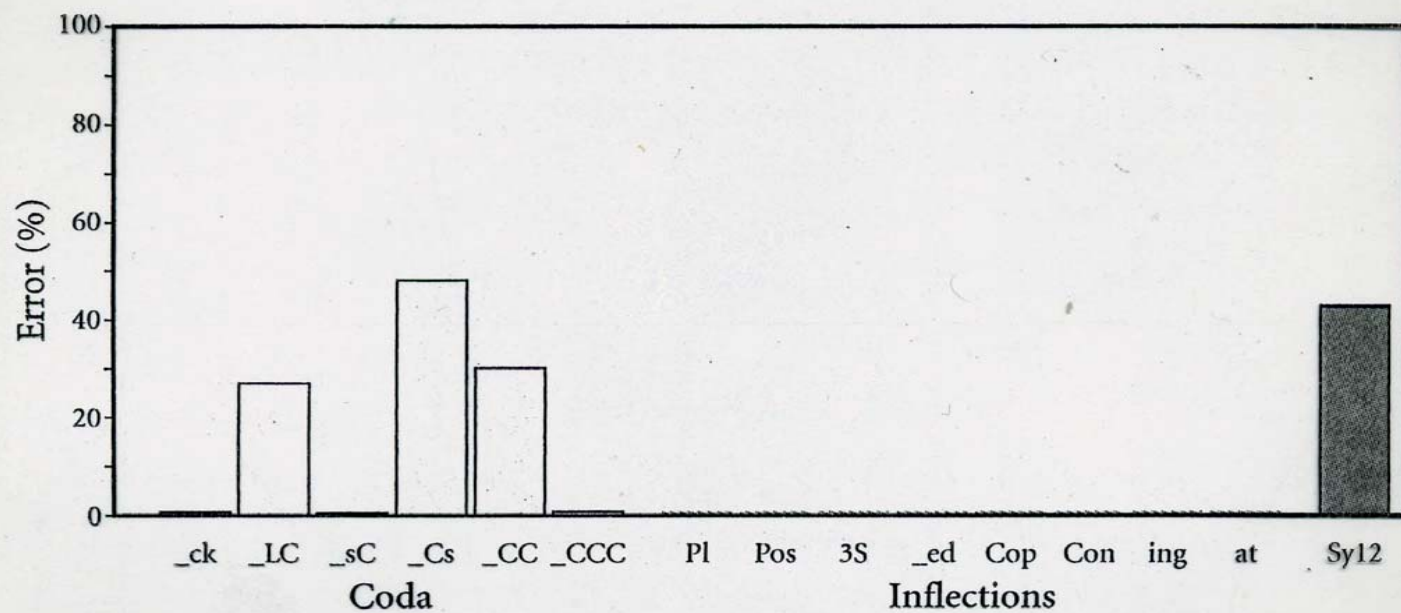
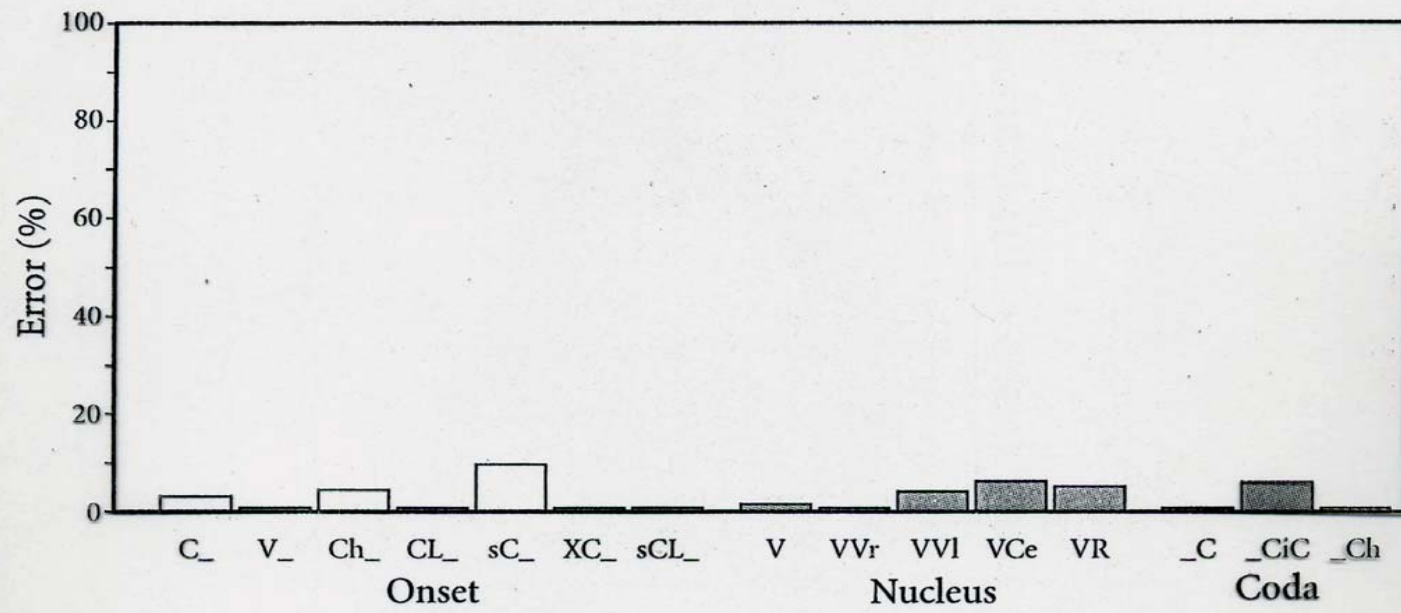


Figure 5. Pre-intervention reading error profile for Alena K., 9, grade 4, Davis School, with Below Basic II reading level



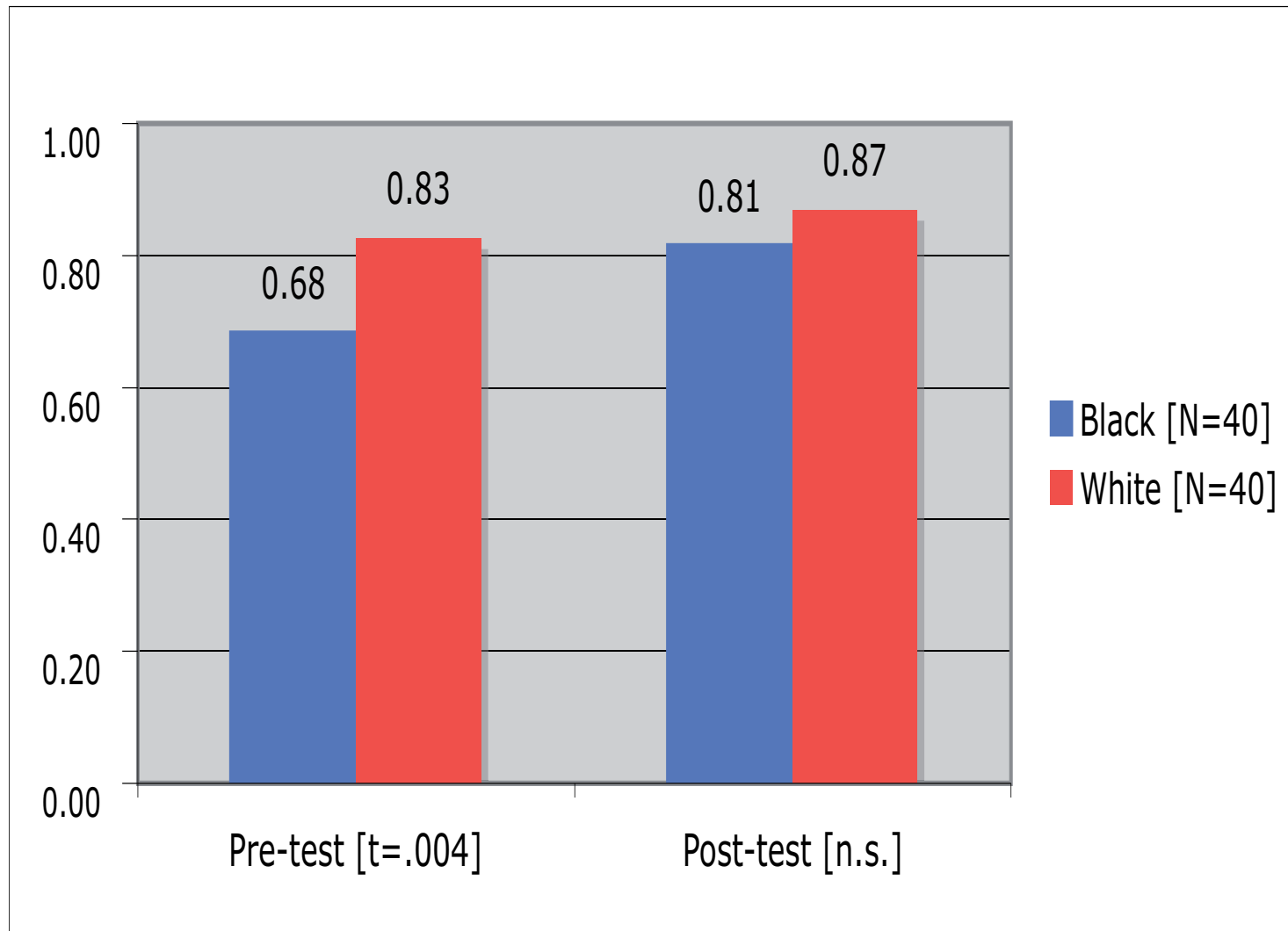
**Figure 6.** Post-intervention reading error profile for Alena K., 9, grade 4, Davis School, with Below Basic II reading level

## Progress in reducing the minority differentia;:

The effect of 40 hours of instruction with the Individualized Reading Program

Proportion read correctly of 25 words with final -CCC spelling, before and after instruction in California schools, grades 2-4, 2001-2004

*thought, catch, caught, hands, branch, works, didn't, might. . .*



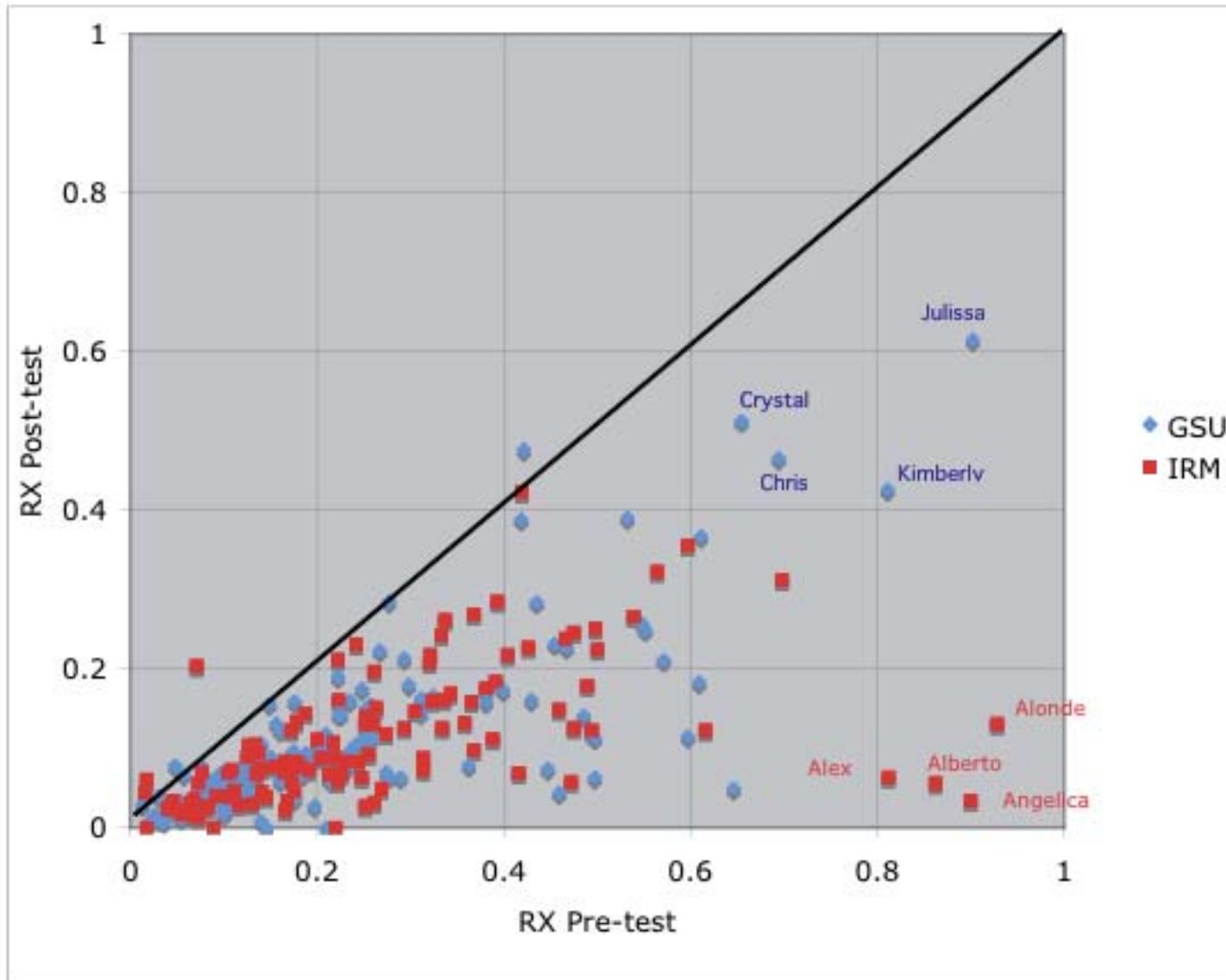


Fig 8: 2005 Comparison of Pre-test & Post-test errors on the RX test a (diagnostic test of phonetic decoding) between the Individualized Reading Manual (IRM, Labov) and the Georgia State University (GSU) approaches. GSU is a version of the SRA/Distar (Engelmann) approach. Named students had lowest pretest scores.

# California Reading/Language Arts Criteria for 2008/09 texts

## *Struggling Readers Extra Support, Kindergarten Through Grade Eight*

6. The purpose of these materials is to provide guidance for teachers and support for students to allow them to successfully participate in and progress through the daily lessons from the Basic Program with their peers. Instructional materials provide comprehensive guidance for teachers and effective, efficient, and explicit instruction for struggling readers (any student experiencing difficulty learning to read and may include students who use African-American vernacular English, English learners, and students with disabilities). Additional instructional support for students who use African-American vernacular English who may have difficulty with phonological awareness and standard academic English structures of oral and written language, including spelling and grammar

C. Practical exercises for the classroom,  
drawing on work of my former PhD student,  
Julie Sweetland, a former classroom teacher  
and director at the Center for Inspired  
Teaching, now Director of Learning at  
Frameworks Institute.

Introducing language  
variation to elementary  
students

Using children's literature to  
spark a metalinguistic  
conversation

# Curriculum evaluation study

Julie's (2006) Stanford PhD dissertation, which I was privileged to supervise:

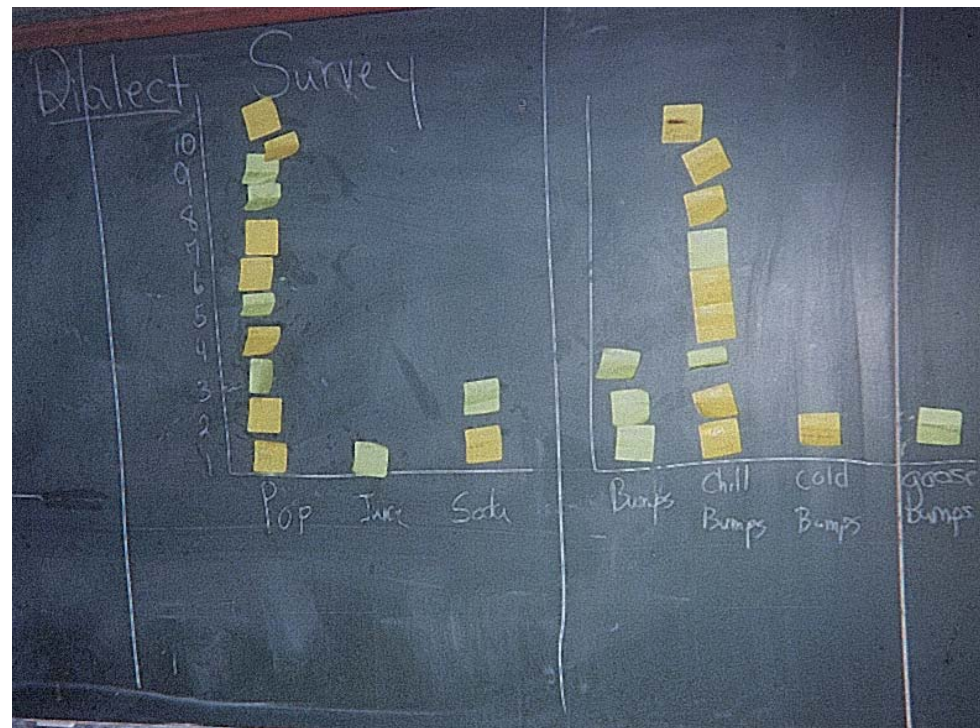
- Developed a language arts curriculum applying insights from research in sociolinguistics and education
- Trained teachers to implement the curriculum
- Supervised/observed the implementation of the curriculum
- Evaluated the intervention by comparing multiple outcomes for students in experimental classes with outcomes for well-matched comparison groups

# Curriculum designed for classroom

- A Sociolinguistic Approach to Writing: Curriculum and Evaluation Design
- Unit One: Language Awareness
- Unit Two: Writing in the Standard
- Unit Three: Writing in the Vernacular
- Impact Data
- Resources for teaching for sociolinguistic diversity

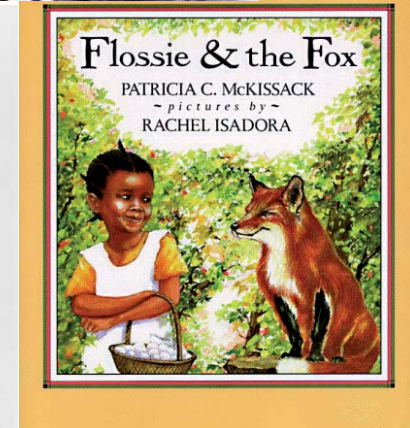
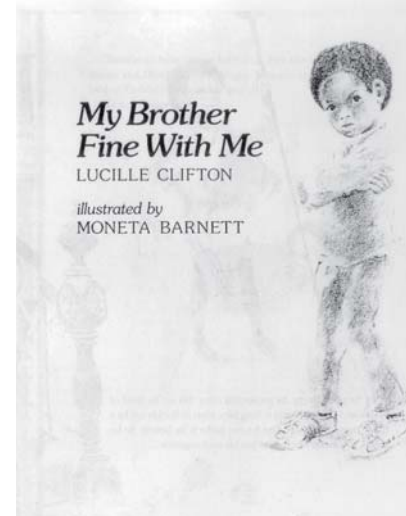
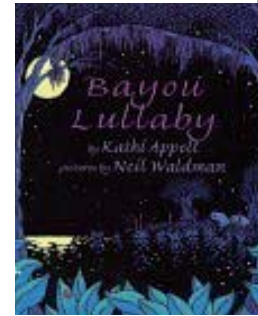
# Starting with lexical variation

Class bar graph illustrating responses to “sweet fizzy drink that comes in a can” and “little points of skin that come up on your arm when you’re cold”

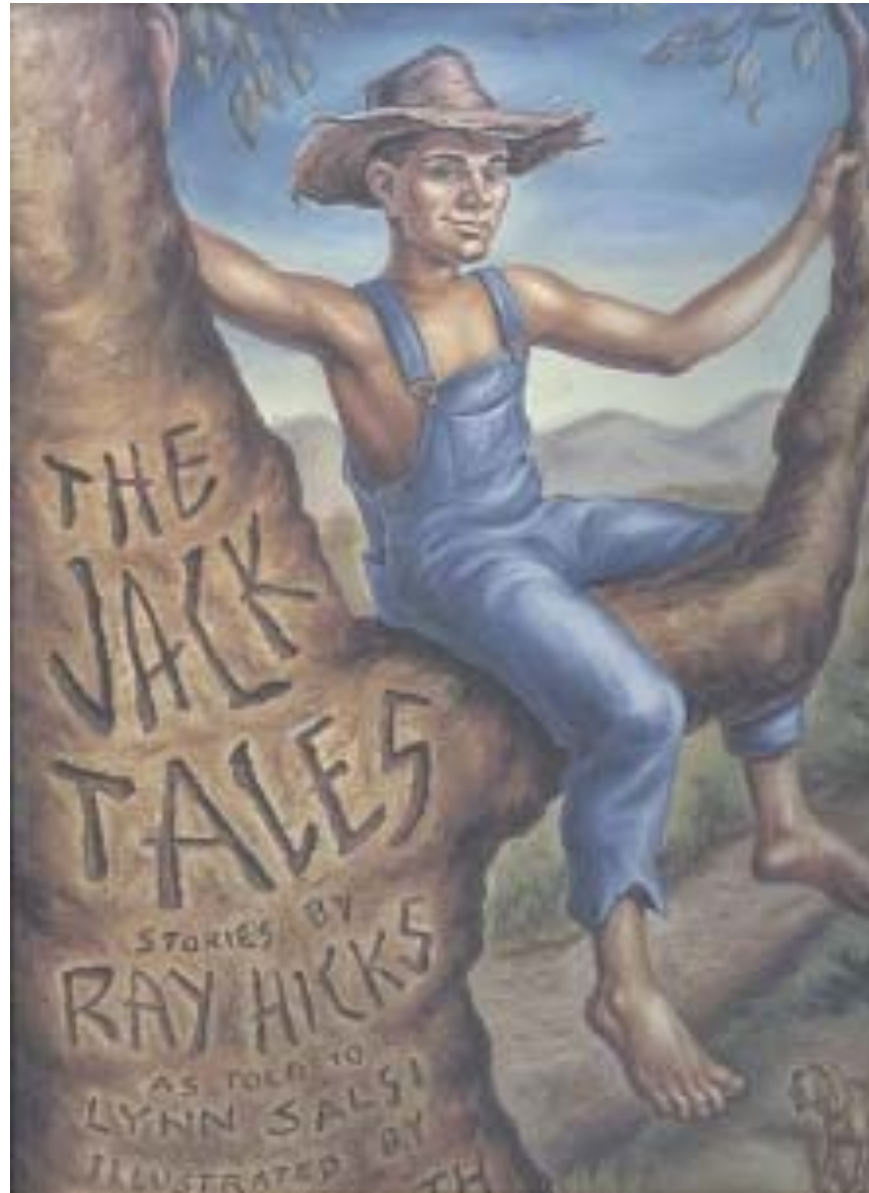


# Illustrating regional and social variation through picture books

“An appropriate dialect awareness program includes the indigenous dialect of the community along with other representative varieties.”  
(Wolfram 1999:63)



**Regional  
variation  
lesson  
elicits, then  
redirects,  
language  
attitudes**



# Excerpt of grade-level reading on Appalachian English

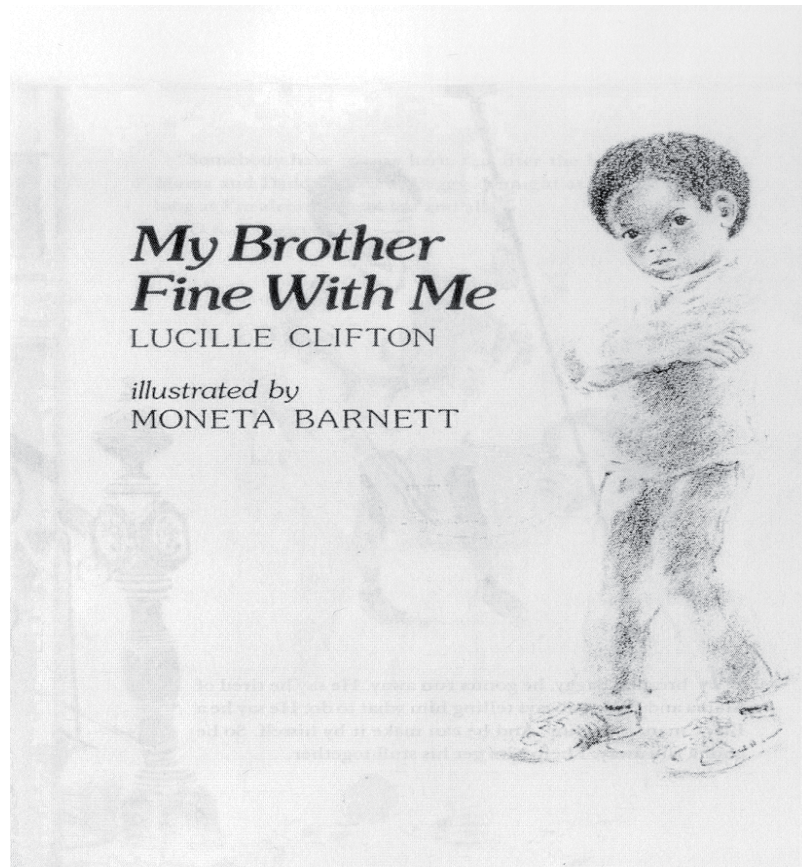
“Everybody lives in the mountains has an accent all to theirself.” Now that you’ve heard a sample of Appalachian English, I’m sure you agree. People who grow up in the Appalachian Mountains in West Virginia, Virginia, Kentucky, and North Carolina tend to speak a dialect that people from other parts of the country definitely notice. What people don’t usually realize is that this dialect has a unique history...

# Regional dialect exercise evokes student empathy and sense of fairness

I ~~rem~~ remember that we talked about how Appalachian people talk different. Also I learned that some people aren't prejudice about color they can be prejudice about the way people talk. Another thing is just because someone talks different doesn't mean they are not educated.

Some things my classmates said were that when they ~~are~~<sup>hear</sup> someone talk different they may think something different than they really are. When you judge somebody by the way they talk that is like judging somebody about the way they dress or the color they are.

# Children's literature legitimizes vernacular



“I help him get his stuff ready for the running away. He don't even know what he need. He ain't got nothing but his whistle and a pick. I put in his toothbrush and a washcloth. He get all his minibike pictures. He collects them.”

(Clifton 1975)

# Kids learn to analyze language

## This Language Fine with Me

Name Patrick

The chart below lists five grammatical features of African American English. The examples of each feature are taken from *My Brother Fine with Me* by Lucille Clifton.

Look at the sentences on the next page. Try to figure out which grammatical feature each one contains—it helps to compare them to the examples. Cut the sentences out and put them in the chart where they belong.

Absent "Is/Are"	Unchanging "Be"	Past Tense "Done"	He/she/it verbs without -s	Double negatives
He say he Ø a Black man, a warrior.	I got a girlfriend name Peaches and she <u>be</u> waiting for me everyday.	Now he <u>done</u> run away.	He get_ all his minibike pictures.	He <u>ain't</u> got <u>nothing</u> but a whistle and a
10. Baggy's real name Wayne.	2. It be fine.	4. I done got used to him, you know.	5. Peaches just get on my nerves.	13. We can't go over there if it ain't nobody for Peaches' little sister to play with.
3. He a drag.	15. Me and him be looking at them all night and he be making motor sounds...		1. If he want to.	11. Don't you worry 'bout me none, girl.
12. My brother fine with me.			7. He don't even know what he need.	
14. We gonna have a house full of old stale peanut butter and jelly.			8. "O.K.," Baggy say.	
6. I'm eight years old and he five.			9. He grin all simple.	

# Kids develop a sophisticated perspective on AAVE in literature



Ms. M: Why might a writer write this way?

Jaleel: Because that's how she talk.

Dominic: Because she want to!

Merris: So people from other places and other countries and stuff can see how people in her neighborhood talk.

LaRhonda: Because that's how the little girl would talk for real, like it makes sense for that character.

# Addressing language variation in writing

Using contrastive analysis to  
foster standardized usage

# Creating a teachable moment: Using contrastive analysis in context

Expose students to a literature read-aloud that models a divergent syntactic feature.



Engage students in high-interest writing activity that emulates the model.

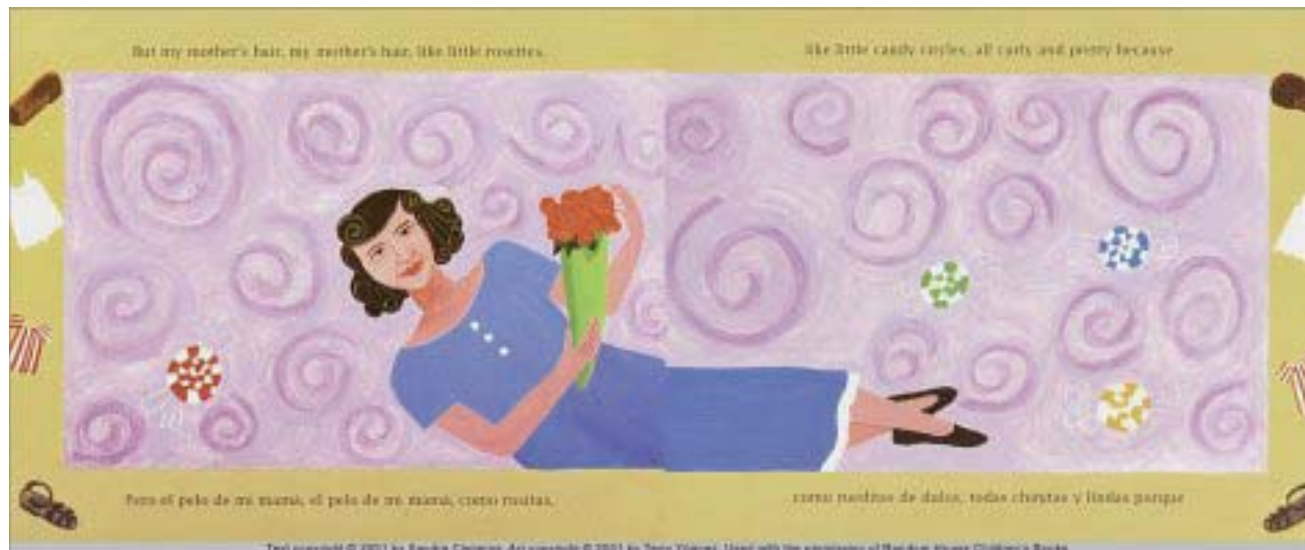


During revision process, use variation in student writing to motivate contrastive analysis.

# Creating a teachable moment: Contrasting possessive systems in context

- Teacher reads *Hairs/Pelitos* by Sandra Cisneros aloud.

“Everybody in our family has different hair.  
My papa’s hair is like a broom, all up in the air...  
Carlos’s hair is thick and straight. He doesn’t need to comb  
it.



# Creating a teachable moment: Contrasting linguistic systems in context

- Students write their own versions of the book—typically including a large number of possessive constructions.
- During revision process, teacher focuses on ‘apostrophe s’ in ‘everyday’ and ‘formal’ language—but not to exclusion of higher-level concerns such as effective use of imagery.



# Kids encounter a contrastive, rather than a corrective, approach

## Compare and Contrast Chart

### POSSESSION: Showing Who's Got What

EVERYDAY LANGUAGE	STANDARD LANGUAGE
Owner + Owned	Owner + 's + Owned
Mama hair is pretty.	Mama's hair is pretty.
That kid bike got stolen.	That kid's bike got stolen.
We went to my aunt house for dinner.	We went to my aunt's house for dinner.

# Editing with contrastive analysis

Good. Y' all found so many good ways to help Nyasia with her punctuation. Now, here, I notice something that I saw in lots of your papers. [Underlines the phrase *daddy hands*.] See how it says *daddy hands*? That' s an example of what we were talking about the other day when we were changing the sentences with the animals. It' s Everyday Language. [Changes overhead slide to a compare-and-contrast chart.] Here' s the Everyday, with no apostrophe s. For Standard, over here, you need an apostrophe s. That' s to show possession, to show that something belongs to somebody. There' s two ways to do it, the Everyday way and the Standard way. Who would like to read the examples?

## My Family Skin Tones

Everyone in my family has different skin tones. I'm as light as the sun rising in the morning. Mama skin is as brown as caramel in a twix bar. Destiny is as dark as somebody's hair. Tony is as dark as chocolate cake. Daddy skin is as golden as freshly baked bread. Grandmother Ester skin is as light as a fresh lemon. My grandfather is as dark as coco. Back in the day he use to work in the hot sun that kissed his beautiful soft coco skin.

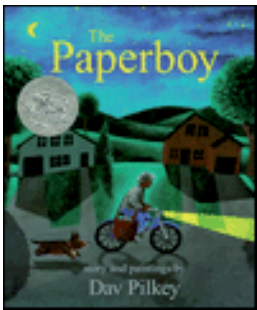
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6<sup>th</sup> grade Mrs. Bertram

# Other targeted features



- Past tense –ed



- Third person singular –  
s



- Multiple negation

Creating an asset-based  
space

Providing opportunities for  
expression in the vernacular



# Tapping funds of knowledge

Jalon: This one's a robber. Look, he got a bag on his back. He got a stereo in it that he stole.

Richard: This one is Malcolm X's brother!

Jalon: Malcolm X's brother, and this one's Muhammad Ali's brother. And this one's Michael Jackson's brother-in-law.

Richard: This one is Martin Luther King. Cause he a preacher.

Jalon: That don't look like no Martin Luther King! Look like Cesar Chavez.

Richard: Seriously, though, he looks like the reverend at my church. Reverend Prince.

## Character Monologue Prompt

In a dramatic monologue, **one character tells a story directly to the audience, revealing personality.** A monologue can be funny, sad, or exciting, and it is a good little story all on its own. But it also has a hidden purpose--to reveal character. A character monologue “gives away” what the speaker is really like on the inside. Your job is to **write a monologue—a story told in the voice of the character** you’ve been assigned. It should be in the first person, told as if the character is actually talking.

**Write your first draft here.** The starter sentence will help you focus on telling a story instead of just describing your character or making a list of his/her characteristics.

# Teachers see students' hidden fluency



“They loved the Homies. Like, I’ve never gotten them to write so much. This is the first time. Before they were like, “How many sentences does it have to be? How long does it have to be?” And I had one kid who filled out the whole front, whole back, and starting on a new page. So I mean, it was the kids that normally, kids who don’t want to write, or don’t like to write, or aren’t motivated to write, actually, were writing this time.”

Rich Lite

Was up" I go by Rick. I got a big game commin' up tomorrow and today. We're goin' to play against the Raptors today. Tomorrow we're playin' against the Lakers. Oh by the way I play ball, basketball. Played since I was 21 and now I'm 30. I play for a pretty good team. We go by the name "Domis #1". Yeah, that's right.

Man bro, we've won every game till yesterday. After we lost the game yesterday I was mindin' my own business when Mr. Hey I won the game today pay me some respect come up and punch me right in the face. Sure did start a fight with me.

I got 3 hot rides two Lamborghinis and an H<sup>2</sup> Hummer Limo. My H<sup>2</sup> got heated leather seats. It got a dvd player and X-box hook up (I had an X-box). It's covered with gold chrome. It's got real gold spinners. Care the things that are spinning rims. It also got a sun roof and a tv in back of each seat head. (which is 11 TVs). I forgot, it also got 4 X-box hook ups, and game and cd holder. It got surround sound and everything. My Lamborghinis are platinum with red interior and 500 speed.

I be livin' in a nice crib. It got a big gameroom with every thing. It got a gamecube, Xbox, ps, ps2, mintendo, and mintendo 64. I have every game. It got a widescreen 59" plasma too. Man you bet I got a giant basketball court. Hey "Rick" Oh sory there my blog game call. See y'all.

'My Rich Life'  
10 year old African  
American male author

...Man, bro, we've won every game till yesterday. After we lost the game yesterday Mr. Hey I won the game today pay me some respect come up and punch me right in the face. Sure did start a fight with me...

# Teachers came to appreciate the value of writing in the vernacular

“I think when we did the Homies, I think [at first] they felt a little confused, like, I’ m supposed to do what? You know, it’ s okay for me to do this? So I think it’ s something that should be started early, as they learn to write from the beginning, and then develop it through the years. At this point in time it’ s hard, for them, to go, oh, I don’ t have to, you’ re not gonna get on my case if I don’ t use, you know. But I think that’ s a neat concept. Because some of the stories they wrote with the Homies were really cool, and they threw in the Everyday Language. And if they had not used that, it would have taken away the effect of the piece.”

*--5<sup>th</sup> grade partner teacher*

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

- All the “solutions” to the achievement gap discussed today (Dialect Awareness, Dialect Readers, Contrastive Analysis, Individualized Reading Manual, Julie’s Classroom Strategies) share a respect for the language and culture children bring to school, and a willingness to build on them in helping the children do better in English/lg arts, in school, and in life.

- The lesson applies as well to children who come to school speaking Spanish, or Navajo, or Marathi or Hupa or Yurok. If we treat their languages--these complex instruments of sound and meaning--as assets rather than burdens, or as resources to be built on rather than embarrassments to be avoided, ignored or derided, we are more likely to succeed in teaching children to read and write, and, indeed, much more.