

EFFECTS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN VERNACULAR ENGLISH ON ENGLISH
LANGUAGE LEARNERS' ACADEMIC WRITING

by

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A Master's Project
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science in Education
Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
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May 2013

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CERTIFICATION OF PROJECT WORK

We, the undersigned, certify that this project entitled Effects of African American Vernacular English On English Language Learners' Academic Writing by Danika V. Johnson, Candidate for the Degree of Master of Science in Education, Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, is acceptable in form and content and demonstrates a satisfactory knowledge of the field covered by this project.



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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to provide a better understanding of how a community dialect, in this case African American Vernacular English (AAVE), impacted language acquisition of English language learners' (ELLs) in regard to written work. Using ten markers based on Thompson, Craig, and Washington's (2004) examination of morphosyntactic features of AAVE, this study investigated the writing samples of high school ELLs who resided in an AAVE prevalent community in New York State. Three writing samples per student were analyzed to determine the incidence and frequency of the ten AAVE markers. Results indicated ELLs' written work was not strongly influenced by living in an AAVE speaking community, but instead, incidences of markers were more likely attributed to the influence of ELLs' acquisition of the English language.

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Introduction

Although the United States has no official language, English is overwhelmingly used as the majority language in almost all aspects of society, including business, education, technology, and entertainment (Perez, 2000). In public schools, students that speak other languages at home (also known as English language learners, or ELLs) are expected to become fully proficient Standard American English (SAE) speakers in a matter of years. English proficiency helps to provide students social and academic success. The purpose of this study is to provide a better understanding of how community dialect, in this case African American Vernacular English (AAVE), impacts ELLs' language acquisition in regards to written work.

Statement of the Problem

Wolfram and Schillings (1998) assert that there are more than 14 distinct dialects within the United States alone. Relatively few studies have been conducted that examine how these community dialects affect the language acquisition of ELLs, especially dialect influence on writing. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 10% of all students who attend public schools are ELLs (IES, 2012). With roughly 4.7 million ELLs in this population, it is reasonable to assume ELL families could take up permanent residency in areas where the community dialect differs from SAE. This could include regions where AAVE is spoken, such as urban centers, as well as numerous Southern states, where the highest percentage of African Americans reside (Michigan Population Studies, 2012; Washington & Craig, 1994).

ELLs living in AAVE rich environments may face the challenge of learning SAE in an academic setting, as well as acquiring AAVE to manage community interactions. Additionally, they could be maintaining their native language in the home. Successfully navigating these

languages and dialects is not impossible, but it could have an impact on students' language acquisition.

Using markers based on Thompson, Craig, and Washington's (2004) examination of morphosyntactic features of AAVE, the purpose of this study was to examine the writing samples of high school ELLs who resided in an AAVE prevalent community in New York State. Each writing sample was analyzed to determine the incidence and frequency of ten AAVE markers.

The hypothesis was that ELLs residing in a predominately AAVE speaking community would exhibit some features of AAVE in their writing. While research has shown that the appearance of AAVE features in native AAVE speakers' writing decreases with age, (Ivy & Masterson, 2007; Thompson, Craig, and Washington, 2004) it was unclear if adolescent ELLs would demonstrate AAVE features. Finally, it was sought to be determined if markers existed as a result of AAVE, or as an influence from students' first language.

Theoretical Framework

English Language Learners and Second Language Acquisition Theories.

Noam Chomsky's *Universal Grammar* (UG) explains that all human beings are born with the innate ability to learn a language (Wright, 2010). While initially hypothesized in application to first language (L1) acquisition, it is now widely accepted that second language (L2) learners also access UG to develop their second language abilities (Wright, 2010). One theory that helps explain how people acquire a second language is Stephen Krashen's Monitor Model (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). One of Krashen's five hypotheses that explain second language acquisition is the *natural-order hypothesis*. The *natural-order hypothesis* explains that people acquire language in predictable sequences (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). This hypothesis makes it clear

that even explicit teaching of any language feature cannot be learned before the sequence is acquired by the learner (Wright, 2010).

Interlanguage grammar theory.

As ELLs continue to learn the L2 and develop rules of grammar, they begin to create a mental representation of grammatical knowledge that is referred to as interlanguage grammar (Corder, 1967, 1981; Selinker, 1972). The L1 can have a factor in the grammar aspects that are transferred into the L2. Examples include transfer as avoidance, where learners avoid constructions in the L2 that do not exist in the L1, differential learning rates, where similarities between the L1 and the L2 facilitate the learning rate, and overproduction, where learners overuse a structure in the L2 that is similar to a structure in the L1 (Schachter, 1974). However, interlanguage grammar is influenced by UG theory, in that cited patterns go beyond the language learners have been exposed to. These patterns are not directly taken from the L1 or the L2, but are observed systematically, thus an interlanguage grammar is formed. (Gass & Selinker, 1994; Wright, 2010).

ELLs and developmental sequences in SAE

Dulay and Burt (1974) propose there is a general order of grammatical morpheme acquisition that occurs during second language learning. (See Table 1). A combination of

Table 1

Grammatical Morpheme Acquisition Order

Order	Grammatical Morpheme	Example
1	Plural <i>-s</i>	Books
2	Progressive <i>-ing</i>	John <i>going</i>
3	Copula <i>be</i>	John <i>is</i> here
4	Auxiliary <i>be</i>	John <i>is</i> going
5	Articles <i>the/a</i>	<i>The</i> books
6	Irregular past tense	John <i>went</i>
7	Third person <i>-s</i>	John likes books
8	Possessive <i>'s</i>	John's book

the grammatical morphemes ELLs have mastered, and the interlanguage they have developed, will influence ELLs writing. For instance, many ELLs may omit or substitute the articles *a/the* (Huebner, 1983; Robertson 2000; Wexler, 2003), and have trouble distinguishing specificity versus definiteness (Fodor & Sag, 1982; Maclaran, 1982). Consequently, as ELLs progress through different stages of language acquisition they can exhibit different grammatical features, and various linguistic factors will determine the type and frequency of inaccuracies in their writing.

African American Vernacular English

AAVE is a variety of English that is spoken by some, but not all, African Americans (Ivy & Masterson, 2011). AAVE is a dialect with specific rules for form, content, and use, which differ from the rules normally seen in classroom settings and written English (Terry, 2006). SAE is the language used in academia and the business sector; it is essentially the language used to carry out the vital affairs of society (Perez, 2000). All other dialectal and regional variations of English are considered *non-standard* in contrast to SAE. Fogel and Ehri (2006) identify seven common AAVE syntactical features that are listed in Table 2.

Table 2

Common AAVE Syntactical Features

Syntactical Feature	Example
Omission of the possessive <i>-s</i> marker	SAE: Bob's friend AAVE: Bob friend
Omission of the past tense <i>-ed</i> marker	SAE: Yesterday she played AAVE: Yesterday she play
Omission of third-person singular <i>-s</i> present tense marker	SAE: Jessica lives AAVE: Jessica live
Omission of plural <i>-s</i> marker for general noun class	SAE: Three books AAVE: Three book
Omission of linking verb copula	SAE: He is tired AAVE: He tired
Subject expression	SAE: David goes to school AAVE: David he go to school
Indefinite article	SAE: an orange AAVE: a orange

Examples of African American English.

An example of AAVE is the plural *-s* absence on noun plurals. In the phrase *five cent*, the plural morpheme is absent because plurality has already been depicted by the *five* (Fogel & Ehri, 2006). Additionally, the most widely known characteristic of AAVE is the usage of the verb 'be'. Take the phrase "Erin be hungry", meaning Erin is usually and customarily hungry, versus the phrase "Erin hungry", implying Erin is hungry for a more temporary period of time (Fogel & Ehri, 2006). Here AAVE is actually more linguistically complex than SAE because it conveys two distinct meanings, where in SAE there is only the phrase "Erin is hungry" to express the same sentiment, but with no clarifying details (Perez, 2000).

African American English and impact on writing.

Recently there have been numerous studies completed regarding the writing skills of African American students, of which many focus on the presence or prevalence of AAVE

markers (Craig et al., 2009; Scott & Rogers, 1996; Thomas-Tate et al., 2006; Thompson et al., 2004; Wolfram & Whiteman, 1971).

The most widespread writing issue for AAVE speakers is the appearance of AAVE grammatical features within the text. Wheeler (2008) recognizes the five most prevalent AAVE grammar patterns that appear in student writing: subject-verb agreement, showing past time, possessive, showing plurality, and 'a' versus 'an'. Several researchers have also identified these AAVE features as areas of writing difficulty for AAVE speakers, as well as a plethora of other phonological and morphosyntactic features (i.e. present progressive *-ing* and copula *is* and *are* absence) (Ivy and Masterson, 2011; Terry, 2006; Thompson, Craig, & Washington, 2004).

However, not all speakers of AAVE will display these features in their writing. A study by Thompson, Craig, & Washington (2004) found that only 62% of students produced one or more AAVE dialectal feature in their writing samples, compared to 100% of students producing AAVE features in picture descriptions, and 92% production during oral reading. The percentages suggest that as the tasks become more formally academic in nature, the less likely it is students will use AAVE, but they do retain AAVE usage as dialect speakers. In Thompson, Craig, and Washington's study the results indicated *typically developing* African American third graders included contrastive and noncontrastive AAVE features in their speech.

Additionally, one factor affecting the frequency of AAVE features in writing appeared to be age. While younger AAVE speakers exhibited less ability in spelling and grammar than their monodialectal counterparts (Terry, 2006), older AAVE speakers showed a decrease in the amount of AAVE features that occurred in their writing (Ivy & Masterson, 2011). This correlates with Thompson, Craig, and Washington's findings that indicated a relationship between academic tasks and a decrease in AAVE usage. It would appear that younger writers had not yet

developed the ability to consider the differences between speaking and writing, in other words, had not yet developed a metalinguistic awareness of dialect shifting (Ivy & Masterson, 2011). As students got older, however, many were able to identify the differences between speech and writing, recognizing the formal nature of academic writing tasks required the use of SAE. Yet, AAVE features did appear in select writing samples from older students, even with their presumed knowledge of metalinguistic awareness. This indicates not all older students are able to make distinctions about language on their own.

A comparison of AAVE with ELLs' SLA.

While AAVE is a dialect of English, meaning it is *mutually intelligible*, it does not mean that AAVE speakers are fully proficient in SAE. In fact, according to Pandey (2000) AAVE speakers are similar to ELLs students when comparing evaluating literacy skills, and it can be postulated that SAE is much like a second language to AAVE speakers. However, this type of comparison is not always widely accepted. In 1996 the Oakland School Board in California created a resolution on Ebonics (an alternate term for AAVE). The school planned on giving AAVE speakers separate AAVE instruction in order for students to maintain the language, and use it as a tool for mastering SAE (Perez, 2000). Despite the plans similarity to separate ESL classes for ELLs, the public declared that because AAVE is not a distinct language and merely a dialect, AAVE speakers did not need support learning SAE.

Outside of the public realm AAVE has long been considered a legitimate linguistic system (Pandey, 2000) and there are comparisons that can be made between AAVE speakers and ELLs learning a second language. In both cases the L1 that is acquired has its own set of specific linguistic features and rules regulating how to use them. Again, in both cases students may develop an interlanguage while they are in the process of acquiring the L2. However, ELLs

living in AAVE speaking communities may develop an interlanguage that is not only influenced by their L1, but also by specific features of AAVE. Wolfram (1994) observed Puerto Rican adolescents in New York City, who had extensive contact with African Americans. As a result the Puerto Rican adolescents exhibited AAVE features such as habitual be, copula absence, and third person singular –s in their speech. Even those adolescents that had limited social interaction seemed to indirectly assimilate AAVE features (although they were not typically core features).

Hypothesis

While it is clear that AAVE speakers and ELLs are both attempting to become proficient SAE speakers, it is not as clear how this will affect the language acquisition of ELLs living in AAVE speaking communities. The interlanguage grammar theory, as well as results found by Wolfram (1994), suggests that the ELLs will create an interlanguage that combines the L1, L2, and community dialect. While the percentage of AAVE markers found in adolescent AAVE native speakers' writing is minimal, the prevalence of some markers could indicate susceptibility for older ELLs writing to be influenced by the community dialect. Therefore, it is hypothesized that English language learners *will* display some features of African American Vernacular English in their writing samples.

Methodology

Step One: Submit Human Subject Review (HSR) Proposal

A proposal was submitted to the Human Subjects Review board in December of 2011. Through the proposal, the researcher sought permission to conduct research in the western most counties of Upstate New York, specifically in an area where the prominent dialect was AAVE. The researcher wished to assess the effects of living in an AAVE community on ELLs' acquisition of English. The assessment would be completed through writing samples that adapted 10 markers of AAVE frequently used in the writing of native AAVE speakers.

Step Two: HSR Review

The Human Subjects Review board returned the proposal on December 6, 2011 citing six issues that needed to be addressed before approval was granted.

Step Three: Return HSR

The researcher addressed five of the six issues immediately, editing the proposal to reflect this. The last concern involved receiving confirmation from at least one principal granting permission to conduct research in their school.

Step Four: Delay of Research

The researcher contacted local schools with requests to conduct research. One of nine schools responded, but it was later discovered this school did not meet the research requirements. In April of 2012 the researcher decided to put the research on hold until the following school year began.

Step Five: HSR Approval Granted

In August of 2012 the proposal was resubmitted to the Human Subjects Review board, accompanied by an email from a secondary school principal granting permission to conduct

research. On August 13, 2012 approval to conduct research was given by the Human Subjects Review board.

Step Six: Research Date Arranged

After the previous principal left the building, approval was re-granted by the new principal in October 2012. Contact with the ESL teacher was made where the researcher explained the proposal and a date was set to conduct research.

Step Seven: Research Preparation

In preparation for research a numerical student roster was compiled, where each student was assigned an identifying number. Additionally, packets were completed containing six items: the student consent form, parental consent form, brief informational survey, and three writing tasks. The informational survey asked for gender, age, language spoken at home, and the number of years learning English. Each of the three writing tasks was created to target a different tense. Writing Task 1 asked students to write in the past tense, Writing Task 2 asked students to write in the present tense, and Writing Task 3 asks students to write in the conditional tense. (See Table 3 for a description of the writing tasks).

Table 3

Description of Writing Tasks

Task	Description
Writing Task 1	<p>Directions: Write about what you did last weekend, over Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. What activities did you do? Who were you with? Where did you go? Did you have fun? What did you want to do, but didn't? What did you eat? What did you see, hear, and smell? Be creative!</p> <p>Write as much as you can about your weekend. There are no wrong things to write about!</p>
Writing Task 2	<p>Directions: Write about things you like to talk about with your friends. Do you talk about sports? movies? music? TV? school? family? other friends? pets? places? dreams? your futures? the weather? religion? These are just suggestions, be creative!</p> <p>Write as much as you can about the things you talk about with your friends! There are no wrong things to write about!</p>
Writing Task 3	<p>Directions: Write about what you would do if you met a famous person? Who would the famous person be? Some suggestions are: a sports player you like? an actor or actress? the President? a religious person? an author? a TV star? What would you like to do with the famous person? Would you go to the movies with them? Out to dinner? To the beach? What would you talk about with the famous person? How would you feel meeting the famous person? Nervous? Excited? Happy? These are all suggestions, be creative!</p> <p>Write as much as you can about what you would do if you met a famous person. There are no wrong things to write about!</p>

Each packet was numbered to match an identifying number on the student roster. Lastly, columns were added to the student roster to create a table that acted as a checklist for all the associated paperwork (the checklist acted as the research instrument). The research instrument was designed specifically for this research study, making it a valid instrument for assessing the student sample.

Step Eight: Description of the Community and Sample

The secondary school was located in a large, urban district with a student population of over 800 pupils within the building. Demographically the school was divided as follows: 86% Black or African American, 5% Hispanic or Latino, 2% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, 5% White, 1% Multiracial. 4% of the student population was categorized as ELLs. The socio-economic status of the school was low, with 69% of students eligible for free lunch and 4% eligible for reduced-price lunch. The school was qualified as a low performing school, not meeting annual yearly progress in English Language Arts or mathematics, as well as citing a 46% graduation rate. In addition, the annual attendance rate was 76% with 30% student suspensions.

The surrounding community consisted of 38% children living in poverty with 67% single-parent families. One in eight homes were vacant, and there were five incidences of crime every day (University at Buffalo Regional Institute, 2011). District policy stated that students could attend any school within district boundaries, therefore the student population contained a mixture of students. Approximately 1,268 students left the neighborhood to attend other public schools, 379 students stayed in the neighborhood to attend one of the schools, and 1,629 students entered from outside of the neighborhood to attend schools in the neighborhood. Specifically only 8% of students that attended the secondary school were residents of the neighborhood the

school resided in. The school had a high mobility rate, 320 students either entering or leaving over the span of seven months in the 2010-2011 school year (University at Buffalo Regional Institute, 2011).

Sample

The student sample that participated in this study consisted of male and female high school students, who varied in age from 16-19. The participants had all been identified as ELLs by New York State, meaning they received pull-out English as a Second Language (ESL) services during the regular school day. The subjects were all adolescents living in the surrounding school district, where AAVE was the dominant dialect in more than one community. The AAVE dominant communities were determined by looking at the New York State Report Cards percentage of African American students, as well as informal interviews with current and former personnel concerning the usage of AAVE within the school.

The sample contained 8 males and 10 females. (See Table 4).

Table 4

Gender of Sample

Male	Female
8 (44%)	10 (56%)

Note: Data may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

According to the data collected, 44.4% of the total sample were 16 years of age, 27.7% were 17, 22.2% were 18, and 5.5% were 19. (See Table 5)

Table 5

Age of Sample

Age	Amount
16	8 (44.4%)
17	5 (27.7%)
18	4 (22.2%)
19	1 (5.5%)

Note: Data may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

In terms of language use 22.2% spoke Arabic, 16.6% spoke Bengali, 5.5% spoke Burmese, 11.1% spoke Chin, 5.5% spoke Farsi, 5.5% spoke Mai-Mai, 27.7% spoke Spanish, 5.5% spoke Swahili, 5.5% spoke Vietnamese, and 5.5% spoke Zomi. (See Table 6.)

Table 6

Description of Languages

Language	Amount
Arabic	4 (22.2%)
Bengali	3 (16.6%)
Burmese	1 (5.5%)
Chin	2 (11.1%)
Farsi	1 (5.5%)
Mai-Mai	1 (5.5%)
Spanish	5 (27.7%)
Swahili	1 (5.5%)
Vietnamese	1 (5.5%)
Zomi	1 (5.5%)

Note: Data may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Finally, the students all varied in the amount of years they had spent learning English. The percentages are as follows: 5.5% had been learning English for 1 year, 16.6% for 2 years, 22.2% for 3 years, 11.1% for 4 years, 11.1% for 8 years, 5.5% for 9 years, and 11.1% for over 10 years. The "Other" options that were written in included: 5.5% learning English for 15 years, and 11.1% for 17 years. (See Table 7.)

Table 7

Number of Years Learning English

Year	Amount
1 year	1 (5.5%)
2 years	3 (16.6%)
3 years	4 (22.2%)
4 years	2 (11.1%)
8 years	2 (11.1%)
9 years	1 (5.5%)
Over 10 years	2 (11.1%)
Other: 15 years	1 (5.5%)
Other: 17 years	2 (11.1%)

Note: Data may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Step Nine: Writing Task 1 Administered

In October 2012 the researcher presented a brief explanation of the research to the student sample. After working through the research packet (i.e. consent forms, survey, writing tasks) the students read the student consent forms to themselves and either signed or did not sign. The students then completed the informational survey. Finally, students were given 15 minutes to complete the first writing task “What did you do over the weekend?”

Step Ten: Writing Task 1 Data Stored

The researcher collected the student consent forms, informational surveys, and the writing samples. Each collected item was placed in a separate section of an accordion folder, i.e. student consent forms in one section, writing samples in one section, etc.

Step Eleven: Writing Task 1 Data Recorded

The researcher checked off all collected items next to the identifying student numbers on the roster. For example, if a student handed in the student consent form, the informational survey, and completed the writing task, a check was placed in each of these columns. The

student roster was continuously checked in this way as each new piece of paperwork was collected throughout the research.

Step Twelve: Writing Task 2 Administered and Data Recorded

Two weeks after the first writing task, the second writing task was administered to the student sample. The participants were again given 15 minutes to complete the assignment “What do you and your friends talk about?” Additionally, parent consent forms were collected from students who had them. At the end of the allotted time period all the writing samples were collected by the researcher and filed into the correct folder sections. Lastly, the student roster checklist was updated to reflect the collected paperwork.

Step Thirteen: Writing Task 3 Administered and Data Recorded

Two weeks after the second writing task, the third writing task was administered to the student sample. Students were given the agreed upon 15 minutes to complete the task “What would you do if you met a celebrity?”. All paperwork was filed into the appropriate sections of the folder. Lastly, the student roster checklist was updated to reflect the collected paperwork.

Step Fourteen: Writing Task Make-up Day

Two weeks after the third writing sample, a make-up day was arranged for students who were absent during the other days writing tasks were completed. Students were given 15 minutes for each writing task they had to complete. All paperwork was filed into the appropriate sections of the folder. Lastly, the student roster checklist was updated to reflect the collected paperwork.

Step Fifteen: Preparation to Analyze Data

The 10 adapted AAVE markers were converted into a checklist, with the markers in columns vertically and horizontal columns for each writing sample #1, #2, and #3. At the top of each checklist was a space to write the student identifying number, where a separate checklist

was used for each writing sample. Furthermore a data table was created for each of the 11 markers that provided a definition and one or more examples of what that marker looked like in a writing sample. The data table was to be used during the assessment of each writing sample to assist the researcher in identifying a specific marker.

Step Sixteen: Analyzing the Data

Data was collected in the form of a checklist that can be seen in Table 8.

Markers of AAVE that appear on the checklist are based on Thompson, Craig, and Washington (2004), who identified all of these markers in the writing and speaking samples of their study participants. Marker 1 refers to *contemplative done*, where done is used to emphasize a recently completed action. For example, “Done set the fire” to indicate someone has just set the fire. Marker 2 refers to *multiple negation*, where two or more negatives are used in a clause. For example, “It not raining no more” to indicate it is no longer raining. Marker 3 refers to *indefinite article*, where ‘a’ is used regardless of the vowel context. For example, “One day she met a eagle” where the SAE would call for ‘an’ in front of the vowel. Marker 4 refers to *copula absence, not inflected present tense ‘to be’*, where the progressive verb conjugation is entirely left out of the third person ‘to be’. For example, “John going to the store” which lacks the SAE required ‘is’. Marker 5 refers to *zero preposition*, where prepositions are variably included. For example, “She sat and looks birds” which lack the necessary preposition ‘at’. Marker 6 refers to *appositive pronoun*, where both a pronoun and a noun, or two pronouns, are used to signify the same referent. For example, “and the other people wasn’t” which lacks ‘they’. Marker 7 refers to *zero article*, where the articles ‘the’ and ‘a’ are variably included. For example, “This cake is best present” which normally would require ‘the’ in front of best. Marker 8 refers to *zero past tense*, where -ed markers are variably included on regular past verbs and present forms of

irregulars are used. For example, “As soon as she open her mouth she fall straight down” which uses the incorrect tense of open as well as fall. Marker 9 refers to *habitual be*, where ‘be’ is consistently used instead of is. For example, “the coffee be cold” instead of the SAE version “the coffee is cold”. Finally, Marker 10 refers to third person singular inflectional suffix –s, where ‘s’ is not included in the third person singular. For example, “he need to get a book” or “she want us to pass”.

Keeping a specific AAVE marker in mind, the researcher read through a writing sample looking for evidence of that marker. Going down the checklist, the researcher would re-read the writing sample looking for the next specific AAVE marker. If any marker appeared, a check would be made in the column for that writing sample. For example, if ‘lack of plural –s’ appeared in writing samples #1 and #2 a check would be placed in those columns on the checklist.

Table 8

AAVE Marker Master Check List Used by Researcher

AAVE Markers	Writing Sample #1	Writing Sample #2	Writing Sample #3	Totals
Completive done-done is used to emphasize a recently completed action “done set the fire”				
Multiple negation -two or more negatives used in a clause “it not raining no more”				
Indefinite article -a is used regardless of the vowel context “one day she met a(n) eagle”				
Copula absence, not inflected present tense “to be” -except in 1 st person, “John (is) going to the store”				
Zero preposition -prepositions are variably included “she sits and looks (at) birds”				
Appositive pronoun -both a pronoun and a noun, or two pronouns, used to signify the same referent “and the other people (they) wasn't”				

Zero article-

articles a/the are
variably included
“this cake is (the)
best present”

Zero past

tense—ed

markers are
variably included
on regular past
verbs and present
forms of
irregulars are
used “as soon as
she open(ed) her
mouth, she fall()
straight”

Habitual “be”-

“the coffee be
cold”

**Third person
singular****inflectional**

suffix –s-“he
need(s) to get a
book” “she
want(s) us to
pass”

Total amount of
markers

Results

Findings

Initial findings demonstrated AAVE markers appeared in ELL students' writing. As can be seen in Figure 1, nine of the ten markers, all but *completive done*, appeared at least once in all writing samples. Writing Task 1 showed eight appearances of AAVE markers, with Writing Tasks 2 and 3 each exhibiting five markers total, again, as can be seen in Figure 1. Three of the ten AAVE markers, *zero preposition*, *zero article*, and *zero past tense*, appeared at least once in each writing sample. In terms of frequency, most markers appeared less than five times per writing task, however there were five writing tasks where the frequency equated to five or more (*zero preposition*, *zero article*, *zero past tense*, *habitual be*, and *third person singular -s*).

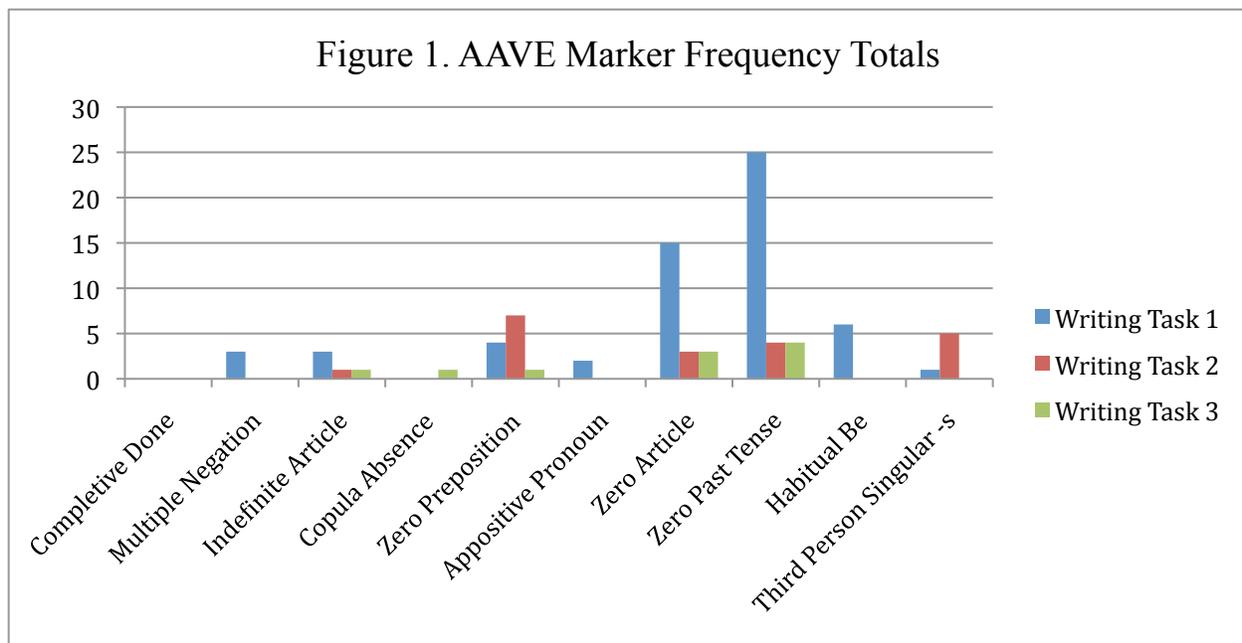


Figure 1. AAVE marker frequencies for all writing samples.

As shown in Figure 2, the most frequently identified marker was *zero past tense*, with 33 instances. Twenty five (25) of the instances appeared in Writing Sample 1, four in Writing Sample 2, and four appeared in Writing Sample 3.

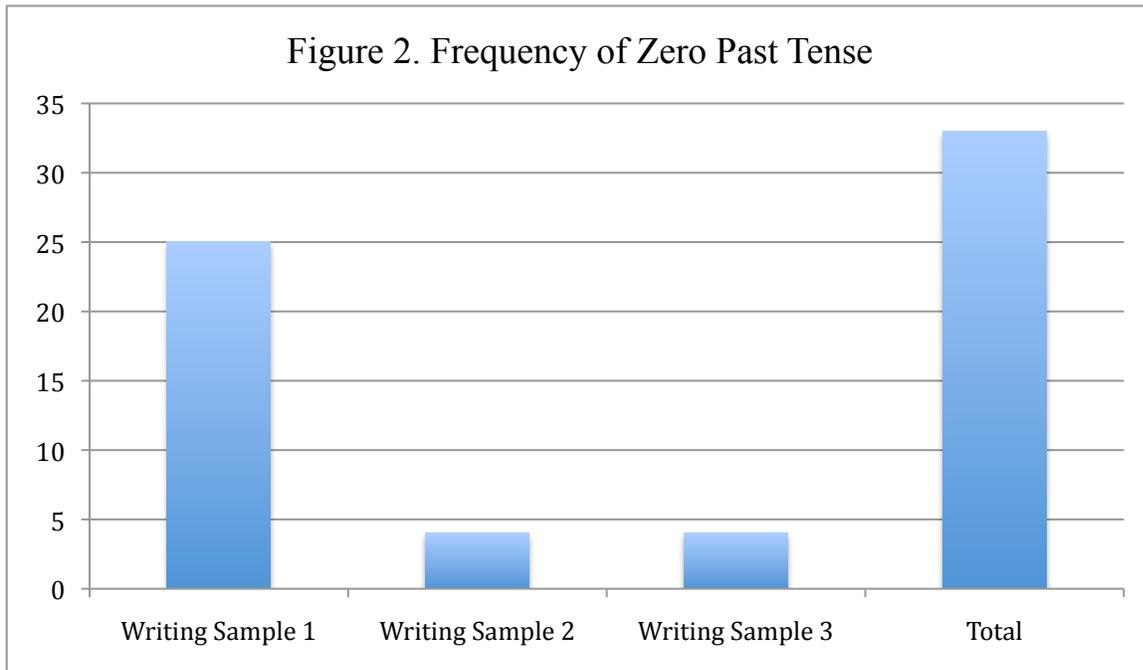


Figure 2. Frequency of *zero past tense* in the three writing samples.

Figure 3 shows the second most frequently identified marker was *zero article*, with 21 instances.

Writing Sample 1 had 15 appearances, Writing Sample 2 had three appearances, and Writing Sample 3 showed three appearances as well.

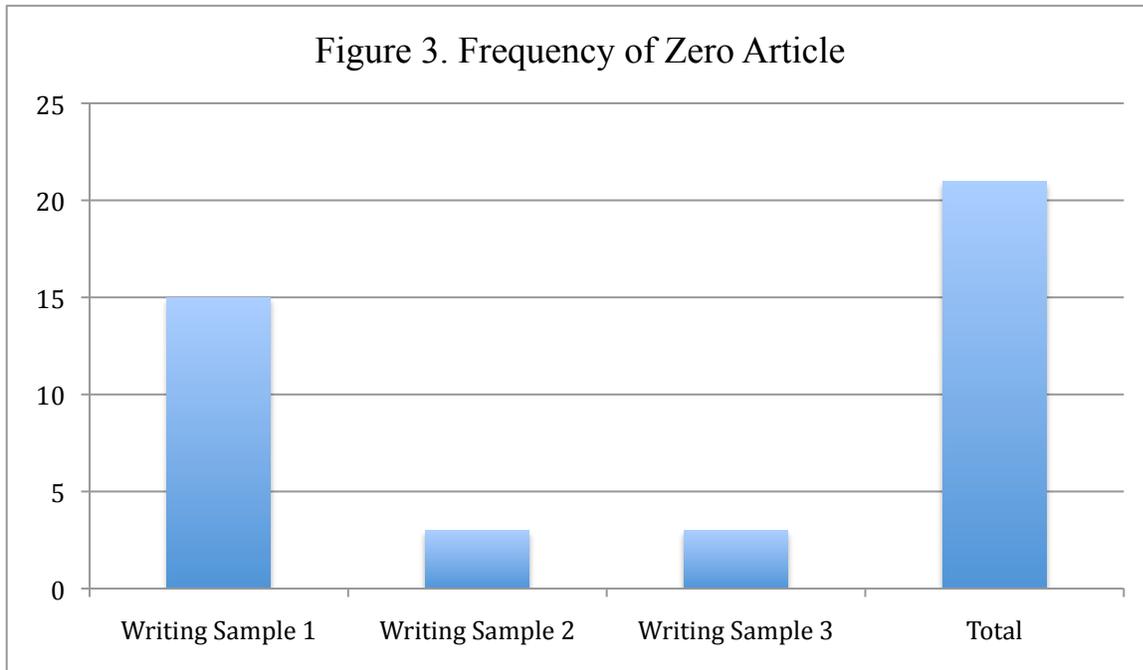


Figure 3. Frequency of zero article in the three writing samples.

As shown in Figure 4, the third most prevalent marker to appear was *zero preposition*, with a frequency of 12. Four of the instances appeared in Writing Sample 1, seven in Writing Sample 2, and one in Writing Sample 3.

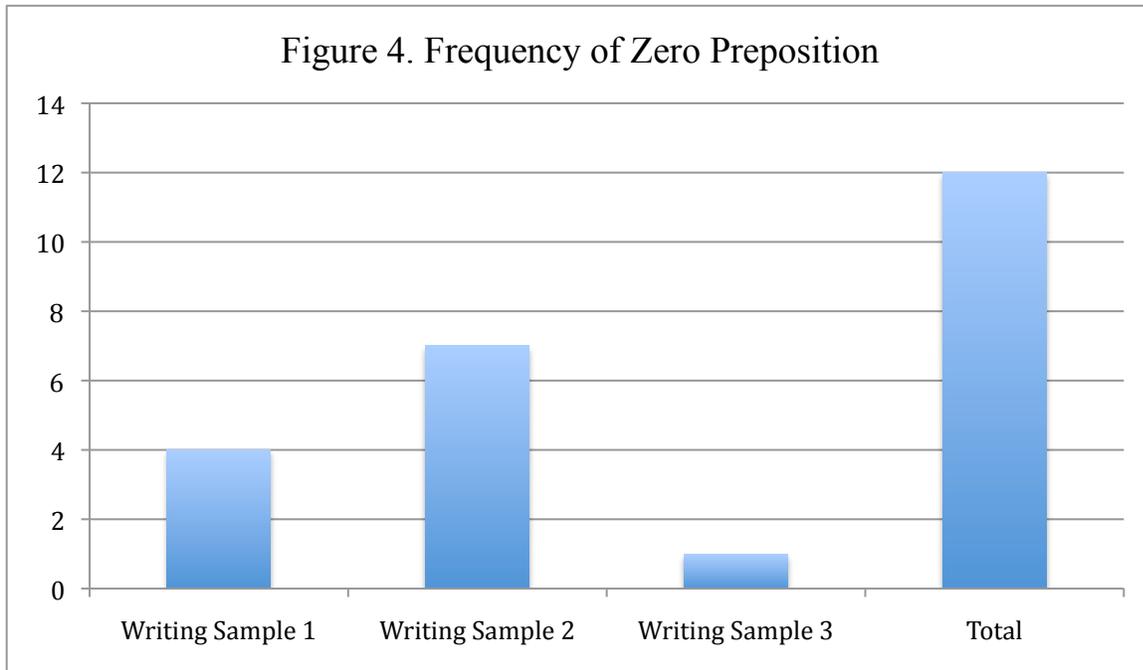


Figure 4. Frequency of zero preposition in the three writing samples.

Figure 5 shows the fourth most prevalent marker was *habitual be*, with a frequency of six. All six of the instances appeared in Writing Sample 1.

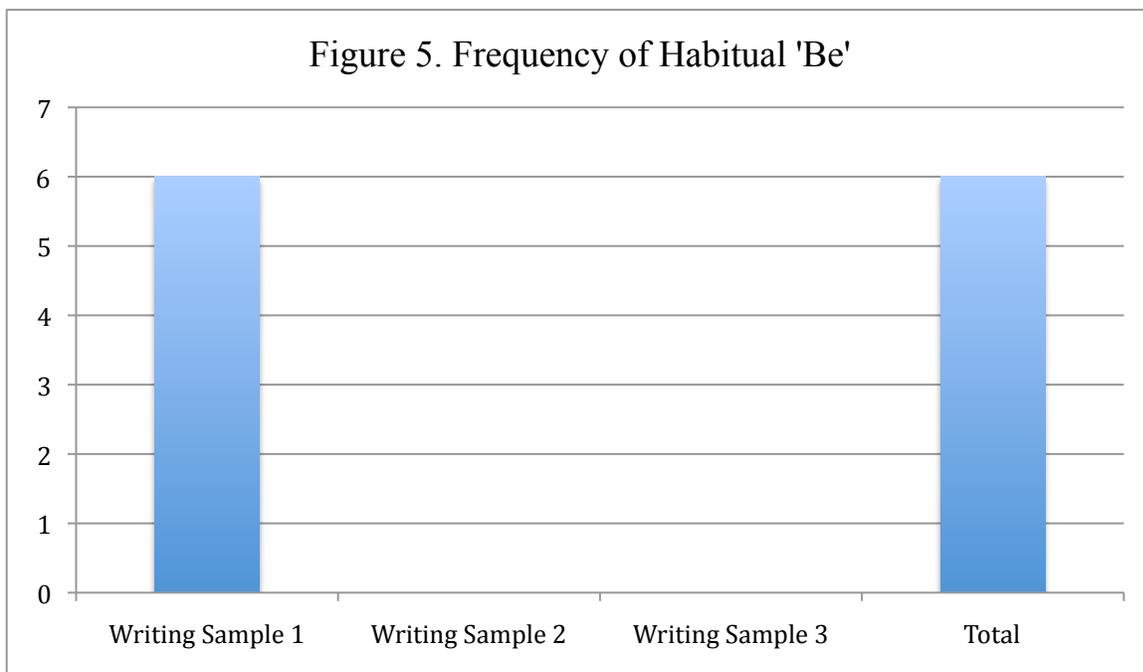


Figure 5. Frequency of *habitual be* in the three writing samples.

As can be seen in Figure 6, the *third person singular -s* marker appeared six times total as well. One of the instances appeared in Writing Sample 1, five in Writing Sample 2, and zero in Writing Sample 3.

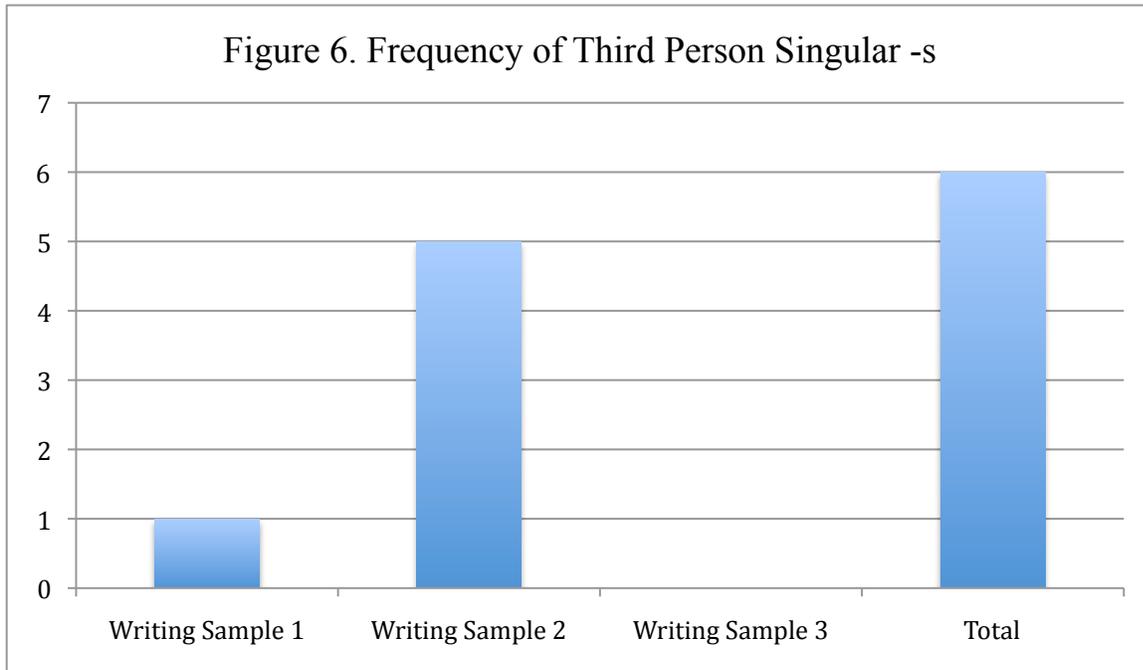


Figure 6. Frequency of *third person singular -s* in the three writing samples.

As shown in Figure 7, the *copula absence* marker appeared four times total. Zero instances appeared in Writing Sample 1, three in Writing Sample 2, and one in Writing Sample 3.

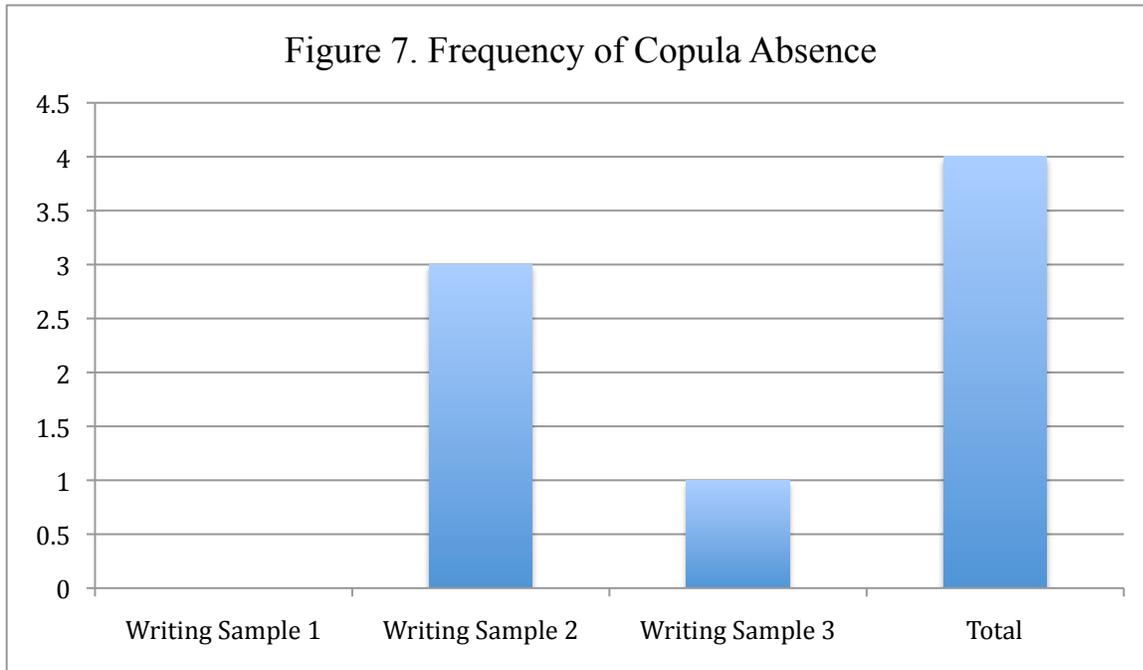


Figure 7. Frequency of *copula absence* in the three writing samples.

Figure 8 shows that the *multiple negation* marker appeared three times total, all instances in Writing Sample 1.

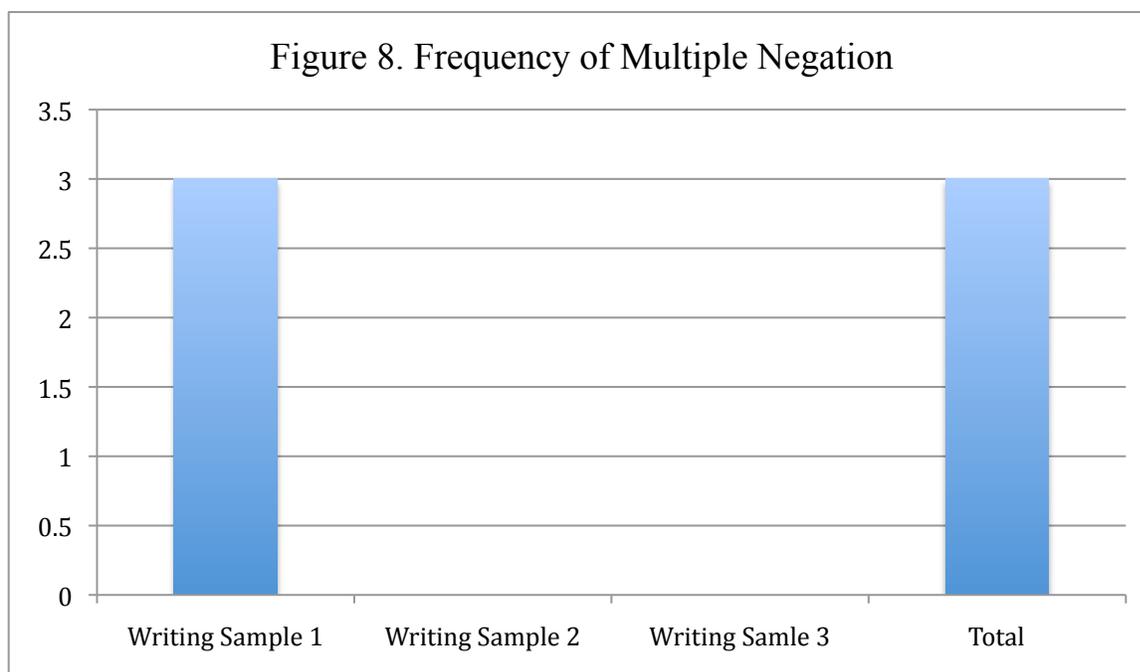


Figure 8. Frequency of *multiple negation* in the three writing samples.

As can be seen in Figure 9, the *indefinite article* marker appeared three times total. Two instances appeared in Writing Sample 1, zero in Writing Sample 2, and one in Writing Sample 3.

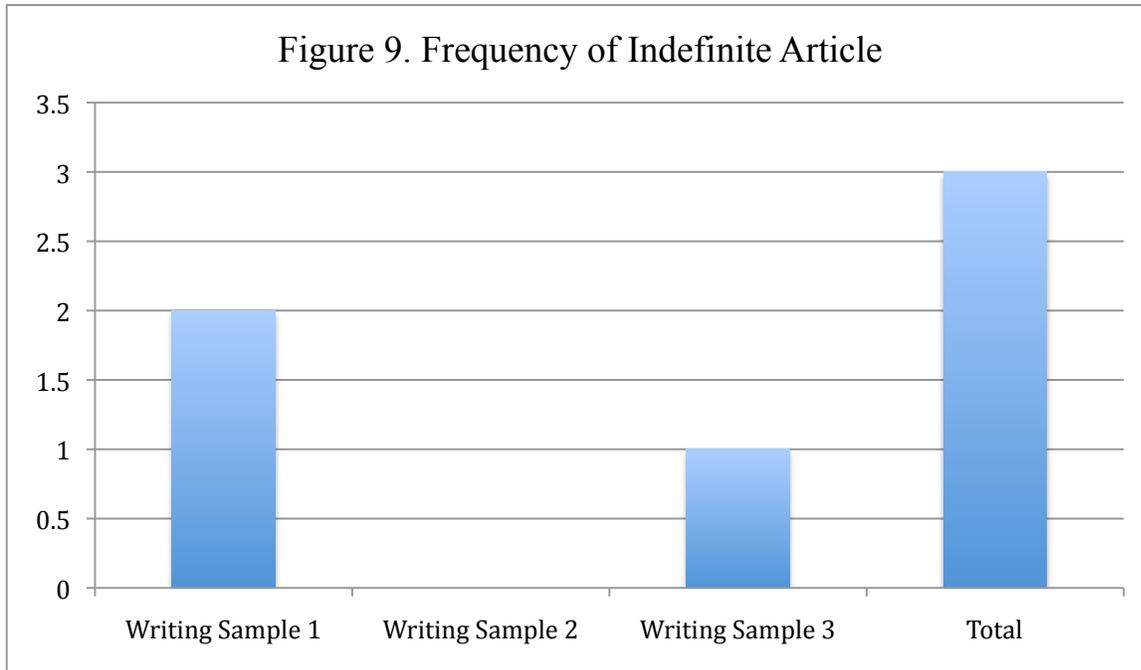


Figure 9. Frequency of *indefinite article* in the three writing samples.

As shown in Figure 10, the *appositive pronoun* marker appeared a total of two times, both of the instances in Writing Sample 1.

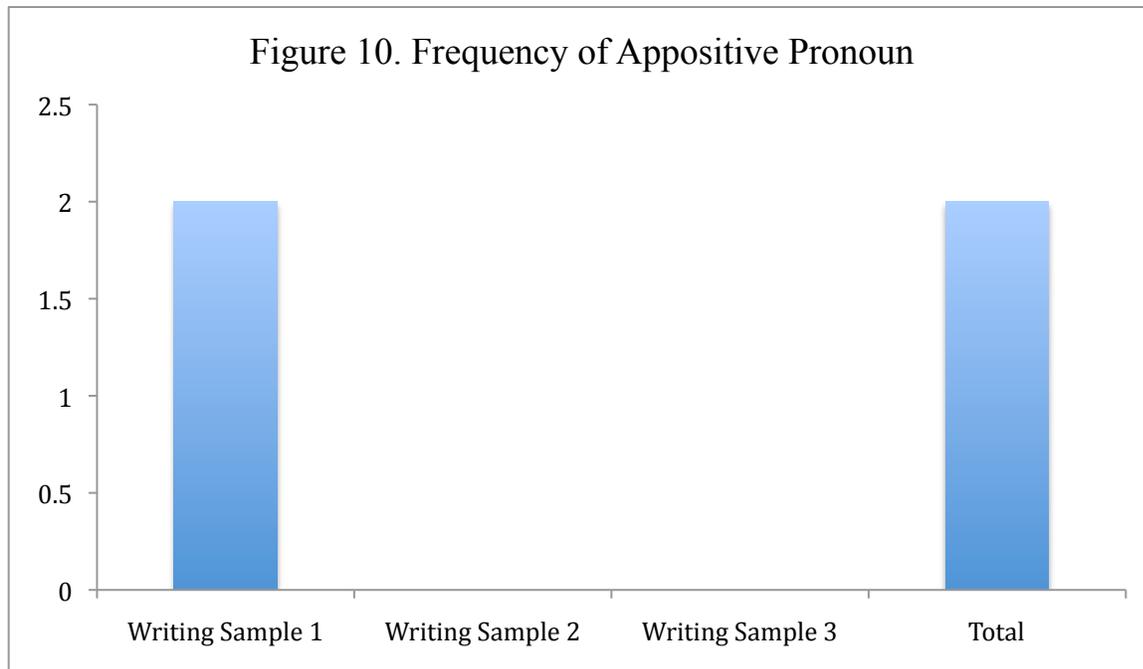


Figure 10. Frequency of *appositive pronoun* in the three writing samples.

Finally, Figure 11 designates how the *completive done* marker did not appear in any of the writing samples.

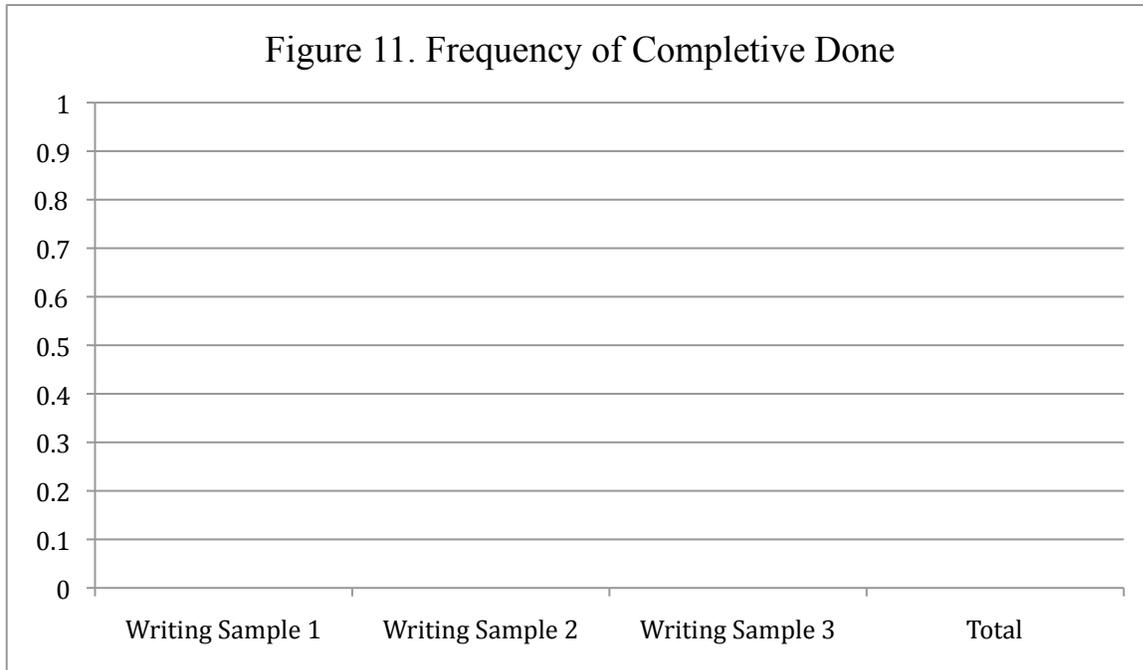


Figure 11. Frequency of *completive done* in the three writing samples.

Discussion

Limitations of the Findings

A few limitations to the findings were observed. The small sample size of 18 made it difficult to generalize results to a larger population. Additionally, the researcher experienced attrition across the study; each writing task (1, 2, and 3) had fewer and fewer samples collected, with Writing Task 3 having the fewest. This made it difficult to draw the most accurate conclusions about why certain markers were appearing or not appearing. Again, due to attrition, the results of this study are difficult to generalize. Finally the largest limitation to the findings was an unexpected sample due to where the student participants resided. While the majority of the school population did speak AAVE, and came from AAVE speaking environments, pupils hailed from neighborhoods all across the public school district. Therefore, the ELLs in the sample could have been living in neighborhoods where AAVE was not the community dialect, and in fact could have lived in communities where their L1 was the majority language spoken. This could explain why AAVE was not strongly influencing their writing.

Conclusion

ELL writing was *not* strongly influenced by AAVE features. The overlap of the two markers, zero past tense and zero article, and the general lack of other common AAVE features in the writing, suggest that the ELLs writing was not strongly influenced by living in an AAVE speaking community. The only marker that seemed strongly influenced by AAVE was *habitual be*, but as this was only one of ten markers it does not show overwhelming support for the original hypothesis. Instead, the appearance of markers that are also grammatical morphemes part of the natural order of English language acquisition, indicate that the majority of influence came from ELLs' acquisition of English.

Influence of English Language Acquisition

Only three of the ten markers (*zero preposition, zero article, and zero past tense*) appeared at least once in each writing sample. These aforementioned markers seem to be attributed more to the ELLs' process of acquiring English than to any AAVE influences. For example, the two most frequently identified markers (*zero past tense*, with 33 instances, and *zero article*, with 21 instances,) as well as the fourth most identified marker (*third person singular –s*, with six instances,) are three of the eight grammatical morphemes identified in ELLs' sequential acquisition of language as is consistent with Dulay and Burt (1974). The overlap of the markers with the sequential acquisition morphemes, in congruence with the relatively low frequencies of other AAVE markers, suggests that these three markers appeared due to the influence of English language acquisition, and therefore most likely are not related to the influence of AAVE.

Tense of the writing prompt shows more evidence for influence of English language acquisition. Writing Task 1 asked the students to write in the past tense, which produced the most frequent appearance of markers (58), and Writing Task 2 was written in the present tense, which had the second most frequent appearance of markers (22). This evidence correlates with second language acquisition order, where the present tense is learned first, followed by the past tense. As shown earlier, *irregular past tense* is the sixth grammatical morpheme an ELL learns (Dulay & Burt, 1974), again possibly showing support for English language acquisition over AAVE influence.

L1 Spanish Speakers Use of Habitual Be

The *habitual be* marker was found a total of six times across all the writing samples. Despite the low frequency of *habitual be*, it is important to note that this marker only appeared in the writing samples of ELL's whose first language was Spanish. These results coincide with

Wolfram's (1994) results, which stated the speech of L1 Spanish-speakers in Harlem was influenced because of close interactions with the AAVE community. The small sample size and low frequency of the *habitual be* marker make it difficult to draw definitive conclusions. Still, because the marker does not appear in *any* other writing samples besides the ELL's with the Spanish L1, it seems that *habitual be* is the only marker that may appear due to the influence of AAVE.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research would be extremely beneficial in determining how community dialects affect acquisition of English for ELLs. Larger sample populations, with additional writing samples collected, could help determine more conclusive results. Speaking and listening samples could be collected as well to evaluate a more comprehensive view of how community dialects affect language acquisition. Especially important would be to assess the exact communities where the students live and what community languages, if any, are spoken there. Hopefully, with more research and conclusive results, the educational community can understand interlanguage influences, and create best practices for English language learners who live in areas where non-standard versions of English are spoken.

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Appendix

Request for Human Subjects Review

Part I

Project Name: African American English Markers in English Language Learners Writing Samples

Principal Investigator #1: Danika Johnson

Check one of the following: Faculty/Staff Principal Investigator
 Student Principal Investigator

Signature of Principal Investigator #1

Department: _____ Phone Number: _____

Campus _____

Address: _____ Email _____

Address: _____

Principal Investigator #2:

Check one of the following: Faculty/Staff Principal Investigator
 Student Principal Investigator

Signature of Principal Investigator #2

Department: _____ Phone Number: _____

Campus _____

Address: _____ Email _____

Address: _____

(Additional Principal Investigators' information should be in the same format on an attached sheet.)

STUDENT PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS MUST LIST THE SUPERVISING FACULTY MEMBER AND HAVE THE FACULTY SPONSOR SIGN THE FACULTY VERIFICATION THAT APPEARS BELOW.

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Kate Mahoney

Faculty Verification: I have read this student's Application for Human Subjects (Part I and Part II). I accept responsibility for the manner in which this study will be carried out. I am convinced that benefits from this research outweigh any risks.

Signature of Faculty Sponsor

Number of Subjects: 100

Type of Subjects: Male Female

Check all that apply: Adults, note the age range: _____

Special subjects (Protected classes)
_____ Pregnant women Children (<18 years of age)
_____ Individuals with disabilities _____ Prisoners
_____ Other vulnerable
group _____

Type of Procedures:

Check all that apply

_____ Review of records _____ Interview _____ Hypnosis
_____ Observation _____ Audio taping _____ Deception
_____ Videotaping _____ Photographs _____ Self-disclosure
_____ Threats/Embarrassment _____ Survey (mail-in, phone, in-person, in-class, on-line)
_____ Standardized Tests _____ Recording of identifiable personal data
 Other (specify) Writing Samples

Where will research take place? Off campus Indicate place Middle and High Schools in WNY

_____ On campus Indicate place _____

Time and Length: Date study will begin 09/01/2012 Date study will end 06/30/2013

Will subjects be compensated? No Yes
If yes, specify nature and/or amount _____

Under what terms will subjects be compensated: _____

Who will obtain consent? Danika Johnson, primary (student) researcher. Please see Appendix B for the student and parent consent forms.



I have completed the CITI On-Line Human Subjects Protection Training. A Certificate (or copy) is:

(Circle one)

on file in the Research Office.

Attached.

NOTE: For students, the supervising faculty member must also have completed the training.

Committee Use Only

Type of Review: Exempt Expedited Full Committee Emergency

Approval Date _____ Closure date: _____

Memorandum received:

Starting Research: Yes No
Ended Research: Yes No

Application for the Use of Human Subjects - Part II

Please address each numbered item in the order given. Incomplete applications will be returned to the principal investigator. If there are sections that are not applicable to your research, please explain why. Use the following as your guide:

- 1. Name the principal investigator. Describe his/her qualifications and any relevant experiences; attach a copy of the vitae of the principal investigator and faculty sponsor, if appropriate. If a student has been identified as the principal investigator, the role of the faculty sponsor(s) in guaranteeing compliance with the procedures outlined in this application as well as compliance with the regulations governing the use of human subjects must be mentioned.**

Faculty sponsors should meet with student researchers to review human subjects protection and to monitor data collection.

Danika Johnson is the principal (student) investigator. Ms. Johnson holds a New York State Initial Certification in English for grades 7-12, and is a candidate for New York State Professional Certification in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages. She is in her final year of the TESOL program, and must finish the following courses to obtain her degree: EDU 671 (TESOL Practicum/Seminar) and EDU 690 (Master's Thesis/Project). Her other courses have been fulfilled. Ms. Johnson's teaching experiences include numerous observations, one-on-one and group tutoring, as well as 15 weeks of student teaching.

- 2. Explain the procedures involved to carry out your study in detail. What is the overall goal of your study and what are your specific objectives? What will you do? What will the subjects do? A list of the steps in your study is often helpful. It is important that you**

describe your research protocol in enough detail that an uninformed reader can understand what is involved in your research project.

Purpose and Goal

The purpose of this study is to determine if English language learners, who reside in communities where African American Vernacular English is the dominant dialect, display markers of African American Vernacular English in their writing samples. The primary (student) investigator's hypothesis is that English language learners *will* display features of African American Vernacular English in their writing samples.

Definitions Pertinent to the Study

English language learners (ELLs) are students who speak a language other than English at home, and are not yet fully proficient in academic and social English (Wright, 2010).

African American Vernacular English (AAVE) is a dialect of Standard American English (SAE) that differs in form, content, and use (Terry, 2006). AAVE is spoken by some, but not all African Americans (Ivy & Masterson, 2011).

The goal of this study is to fill a gap in the research between ELLs and AAVE. This will be one of the relatively few studies conducted that examines how community dialect can affect the language acquisition of ELLs, specifically in their writing. According to the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, the ELL growth rate of pre-K-12 students between 1995 and 2006 exceeded 57% (Wright, 2010). With such a large portion of the student population consisting of English language learners, it is reasonable to assume many will take up permanent residency in areas where the community dialect differs from SAE. This includes many urban areas, as well as numerous Southern states, where the highest percentage of African Americans reside (CensusScope, 2000; Washington & Craig, 1994).

ELLs living in AAVE rich environments face the challenge of learning SAE in an academic setting, as well as acquiring AAVE to manage community interactions. Additionally, they could be maintaining their native language in the home. Successfully navigating these languages and dialects is not impossible, but it could have an impact on ELLs learning. This study will attempt to provide an understanding of how community dialect implements itself into ELLs written work. From there, it is possible to develop strategies for explicitly teaching SAE, and for furthering the success of ELLs in the classroom.

Procedure

Step One: All principals of potential participating schools will be sent an email by the principal (student) investigator, Danika Johnson, asking permission to conduct research within their schools (See Appendix A for copy of email). The writing tasks and informational survey will be shown to the administrators in order to gain full consent. Each administrator will respond via email, either granting Danika Johnson approval or not granting approval.

Step Two: A numeric roster will be created, with each student in the class being assigned a

different number. Each number will correspond to the same number on a packet of papers that includes: the student consent form, parent consent form, brief informational survey, and copies of the writing tasks (See Appendix B).

Step Three: Danika Johnson will explain the purpose and hypothesis of this study to the classroom teacher and students. Danika Johnson will then distribute the numbered packets with the student consent form. Each student will choose whether or not to participate and sign. Additionally, students will complete a brief informational survey where they will check off their gender, age, first language, and length of time learning English. This information will be used when analyzing the collected data. Danika Johnson will collect all the packets with the consent forms and informational surveys from the students. Folders marked by a number corresponding to each packet of papers will be created for each student. One folder will exist for student and parent consent forms, a second folder will hold the informational surveys, and a third folder will be designated for writing samples. After receiving the packets with the consent forms and informational surveys Danika Johnson will remove the student consent forms from the packets and place them in the consent forms folder with the corresponding number. She will then remove the informational surveys and place them in the appropriate folder with the corresponding number. Danika Johnson will also place a check on the student roster next to the name of each student who consents to participate.

Step Four: Danika Johnson will redistribute the packets of papers to all students. Danika Johnson will explain to the class that any student wishing to participate in the study must have their parents sign the parent consent form (See Appendix B). After students have taken the packet of papers home, Danika Johnson will collect all packets. Danika Johnson will remove the parent consent forms from the packets and place them in the consent form folder with the corresponding number. The principal (student) investigator will place a check on the student roster next to the name of each student whose parents consented that their child could participate. Only students who have parental consent, and who give consent themselves, will participate in this study.

Step Five: The classroom teacher will redistribute the packets, which now only contain the writing samples. The teacher will go over the directions of the writing task to ensure that students understand what is being asked of them. Each student will individually complete the first writing task. They will have the duration of the class period to write. If the classroom teacher cannot allot an entire class to the writing task, a shortened period of time will be determined. At the end of the period the classroom teacher will collect all student writing samples and hand them to the principal (student) investigator. Danika Johnson will remove the first writing task and all student writing samples from the packet and place them in the writing sample folder with the corresponding number. Students will complete two more writing tasks over the course of the next two weeks. The two additional writing tasks will follow the aforementioned protocol of distribution, collection, and placement into the numbered folders.

Step Six: Once all writing samples are collected from participating students, the primary (student) researcher will determine if the writing samples contain markers of African American English. This data will be recorded on a checklist, and once compiled, analyzed by Danika Johnson. After one year, the consent forms, student writing samples, informational surveys, and

student roster will be shredded.

- 3. Describe the individuals who will participate in your study, noting their age (or age ranges), gender, ethnic background, and health status (if known). Mention other characteristics that make your subjects identifiable (for example, “elderly males living in supervised living arrangements in rural Chautauqua County). There are protected classes of subjects (i.e., pregnant women, children under the age of 18 years, individuals with disabilities, prisoners, and any individual viewed as vulnerable). If your subject pool includes members of these protected classes or has the potential for inclusion of these protected classes, full Human Subjects Review Committee review will be necessary and the more complete your Request for Review, the more likely a timely approval will be issued.**

The individuals who will participate in this study are male and/or female high school students, who vary in age from 14-19. The participants will have all been identified as English language learners by New York State. The individuals will all be adolescents who live in a community where African American Vernacular English is the dominant dialect in [REDACTED] of Western New York.

- 4. Identify the data you hope to collect and how you will collect those data. Mention all instruments you will use and attach a copy of these instruments to your application. Please note that if you are using a piece of equipment, you just need to describe that equipment. Describe how you will use the information you collect; that is, to further research on your topic, to further research, to provide some form of treatment, to improve student performance, etc. Describe what will happen to the data/videotapes/audiotapes you collect upon the completion of the study.**

Data will be collected from each participating student's three different writing samples. Each writing sample will concern a topic that allows students to write informally, giving the opportunity for markers of AAVE to appear. Data will be collected in the form of a checklist (See Appendix C). Markers of AAVE that appear on the checklist are based on Thompson, Craig, and Washington (2004), who examined different phonological, morphosyntactic, and combination (phonological and morphosyntactic) features of AAVE in picture description, oral reading of SAE text, and writing. The markers are as follows: consonant cluster reduction, syllable deletion, subject-verb agreement, indefinite article, zero copula/auxiliary, zero preposition, appositive pronoun, zero article, zero past tense, consonant cluster reduction + zero plural, and consonant cluster reduction + zero past tense. Thompson, Craig, and Washington (2004) identified all of these markers in the writing samples of their study participants. Danika Johnson will examine each student writing sample. When a marker of AAVE appears, she will check off the feature in the appropriate column of the checklist.

As mentioned earlier, all students in the class will complete the writing tasks. It will be voluntary for students to have their writing samples used in this study. However, data will only be used from students who have both individual and parental consent forms signed. The writing samples intend to determine if ELLs who live in communities where AAVE is the prevalent dialect

display markers of AAVE in their school writing.

The collected data and subsequent analysis will be used to bridge a gap in the literature between ELLs and AAVE. The primary (student) researcher hopes that if published, this study will bring attention to the linguistic challenges of ELLs who live in areas where SAE is not the primary dialect. Students in these types of situations face more language challenges than their standard ELL counterparts. Recognizing that ELLs are being influenced by the local dialect will allow educators to implement specific strategies, such as contrastive analysis instruction and codeswitching, that teach ELLs how to work successfully with language.

- 5. Describe how you will recruit subjects for your study and how you will handle obtaining their informed consent for participation. Informed consent is one of the most important components of conducting research that involves living human subjects. State who will obtain consent and what information on your study will be provided to potential subjects. Federal regulations mandate that if a research study involves subjects under 18 years of age, consent must be obtained from the parent or legal guardian AND the minor child. You must have two separate forms when minor children are involved in your research: a parent form and a child consent form. Here at *Fredonia*, a child's consent form must be included in research protocol involving children ages 5 to 17 years. The language used in a minor child consent form must be appropriate to the age of the child. You must attach a copy of all consent forms to your application.**

Subjects for this study will be recruited based on their status as ELLs, where only ELLs will be eligible to participate. Subjects will also live in communities where AAVE is the prevalent dialect. This will be concluded by looking at Census information to determine which communities have a large African American population. Once these areas have been identified, informal phone interviews will be conducted with educators in these school districts about the use of AAVE in their classrooms. Finally, all principals of potential participating schools will be sent an email by the principal (student) investigator, Danika Johnson, asking permission to conduct research within their schools (See Appendix A for copy of email). The writing tasks and informational survey will be shown to the administrators in order to gain full consent. Each administrator will respond via email, either granting Danika Johnson approval or not granting approval to conduct research in their schools.

A numeric roster will be created, with each student in the class being assigned a different number. Each number will correspond to the same number on a packet of papers that includes: the student consent form, parent consent form, brief informational survey, and copies of the writing tasks (See Appendix B). Danika Johnson will explain the purpose and hypothesis of this study to the classroom teacher and students. Danika Johnson will then distribute the packet with the informed consent forms to all students. Each student will choose whether or not to participate and sign. Danika Johnson will collect all the packets with the consent forms from the students. Folders marked by a number corresponding to each packet of papers will be created for each student: one for consent forms, one for the informational surveys, and one for writing samples. After receiving the packets with the

consent forms, Danika Johnson will remove the student consent forms from the packets and place them in the consent form folder with the corresponding number. The principal (student) investigator will also remove the informational surveys and place them in the surveys folder with the corresponding number. Danika Johnson will place a check on the student roster next to the name of each student who consents to participate. Danika Johnson will redistribute the packets of papers to all students. Danika Johnson will explain to the class that any student wishing to participate in the study must have their parents sign the parent consent form (See Appendix B). After students have taken the packet of papers home, Danika Johnson will collect all packets. Danika Johnson will remove the parent consent forms from the packets and place them in the consent form folder with the corresponding number. The principal (student) investigator will place a check on the student roster next to the name of each student whose parents consented that their child could participate. Only students who have parental consent, and who give consent themselves, will participate in this study. The numbered student folders will only ever be in the possession of Danika Johnson. When not in use, the student roster and folders will be stored in the locked office of Dr. Kate Mahoney faculty supervisor, on the SUNY Fredonia campus.

6. This component contains four parts:

- a. Identify any potential risks: physical, psychological, social, legal, or another type of risk. Mention the likelihood of these risks occurring and their seriousness. Describe alternative treatments that might be advantageous to the subjects.**
- b. Where appropriate, state how you will ensure that your subjects receive necessary medical or professional intervention if they have adverse effects to your treatment/research protocol.**
- c. Tell how you will maintain the safety of your subjects during your study.**
- d. If there are risks in your study, tell how the risks are balanced by the benefits to be gained by the subjects from their participation in your study. Also mention the relationship of the risks to the knowledge that will be gained from your study.**

Risks might include anger, sadness, or general upset at the writing task prompts. Students may be uncomfortable writing about personal events. In these cases, students may choose to leave the study and can be given an alternative assignment from the classroom teacher. The participating schools will have counselors on-site if necessary. The likelihood that the writing task prompts will produce adverse emotion reactions is minimal, and most likely will not be of a serious nature. There is no safety, legal, physical, or social risk factor to this study.

The potential risks to the participants of the study will be neutralized by the fact that identities of the students will be kept separate from the writing samples. One copy of the numeric student roster will exist and after one year it will be destroyed. Additionally, any identifying information from the informational surveys will always be kept separately from the consent forms and student roster, keeping student identities confidential. Potential risks of this study will also be balanced by the possible knowledge that the results may yield. If ELLs are showing markers of AAVE, the primary (student) researcher can work with the classroom teacher to help the ELLs become more aware of their language use, and ultimately more successful in academic work.

This type of intervention and implementation could also be applied on a larger scale to all schools with ELLs in AAVE prevalent areas.

- 7. If your study deals with a sensitive issue and/or the data you collect deals with criminal acts, sexual conduct and behavior, drug and alcohol use, sensitivity and awareness to potential risks, and/or liabilities to your subjects, you will need to clearly state the precautions taken to minimize risks or liabilities.**

This study does not deal with sensitive issues, criminal acts, sexual conduct and behavior, or drug and alcohol use.

- 8. Mention how you will prevent any risk to violating the confidentiality of the subjects involved in your study.**

Students will be assigned a number that will be used on all consent forms, informational surveys, and writing tasks, keeping their identity confidential. The consent forms, informational surveys, and writing tasks will be kept in three separate folders in order to keep identifying information as separate as possible. Danika Johnson will be the only person in possession of all consent forms, informational surveys, and writing tasks/writing samples in their respective folders. The master numeric student roster list will also only be in possession by Danika Johnson. All materials will be kept in the locked office of Dr. Kate Mahoney, faculty supervisor, on the SUNY Fredonia campus. After one year, the numeric student roster, as well as all consent forms, informational surveys, and writing samples, will be shredded.

If you have questions about your research project or how this application should be completed, please feel free to contact any of the following individuals:

Maggie Bryan-Peterson, Human Subjects Administrator and Director, Office of Sponsored Programs

Phone: 673-3528; e-mail: petersmb@fredonia.edu

Barbara Mallette, Chair, Human Subjects Committee, Professor, College of Education

Phone: 673-3311; e-mail: barbara.mallette@fredonia.edu

Cheryl Drout, Member, Human Subjects Committee, Chair, Psychology Department

Phone: 673-3129; e-mail: cheryl.drout@fredonia.edu

Alan Laflamme, Member, Human Subjects Committee, Chair, Sociology Department

Phone: 673-3205; e-mail: alan.laflamme@fredonia.edu

Bridget Russell, Member, Human Subjects Committee, Associate Professor, Speech Pathology/

Audiology Phone: 673-4616; e-mail: bridget.russell@fredonia.edu

Sally Turner, Member, Human Subjects Committee, Director, Counseling Center

Phone: 673-3424; e-mail: sally.murphy@fredonia.edu

Appendix A

Sample Letter of Consent for Principals

Danika Johnson
 E262 Thompson Hall
 SUNY Fredonia
 Fredonia, NY
 14063

Month, Day, 2012

Mr./Mrs./Ms./Dr. XXX XXX
 School Address

Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./Dr. XXX,

My name is Danika Johnson and I am a graduate student at SUNY Fredonia. For my Master's thesis project in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) I am looking to conduct research in local schools.

My research question concerns the writing of adolescent English language learners (ELLs) who live in areas where their language acquisition may be influenced by the community in which they live. I would like to look at whether or not certain community dialect features are present in ELLs' writing.

The purpose of this email is not to seek *consent* for conducting research in your school, as the consent would come from the actual participants. I am writing to you for two reasons:

1. I am trying to determine if your school would be a good fit for my research project. I would like to know if, or how many, ELLs are enrolled in ESL classes at your school?
2. Secondly, if there were ESL classrooms and you feel that I would be able to conduct my research at your school, would I be able to approach the ESL teachers and students to gain consent?

I would very much appreciate a brief email response with a ballpark number of students. If you have additional questions about my research project, please feel free to ask.

Thank you so much in advance for your help, and I hope you have a wonderful week.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns please contact the following:

Danika Johnson
 Graduate Student Researcher
 SUNY Fredonia
 College of Education
john0286@fredonia.edu

Dr. Kate Mahoney
 Faculty Research Advisor
 E254 Thompson Hall
 SUNY Fredonia
 Fredonia, NY 14063

Maggie Bryan-Peterson, CRA
 Director & HSR Administrator
 Office of Sponsored Programs
 E230 Thompson Hall
 SUNY Fredonia

Kate.Mahoney@fredonia.edu Fredonia, NY 14063
716-673-3528

Sincerely, Danika Johnson

Appendix B

Consent Forms, Informational Survey, and Writing Tasks

Sample Student Consent Form

My name is Ms. Johnson, and I am a graduate student at SUNY Fredonia. I am doing a study to learn about the different ways students write. I want to look at the writing of students who speak a language other than English outside of school.

If you agree to be in my study, I am going to ask you a few questions about yourself. I will ask you your age, gender, what language(s) you speak other than English, and how long you have been learning English in school.

I will also ask you to complete three different writing assignments in class with your teacher, over three weeks. The writing assignments will be about what you did last weekend, what you talk about with your friends, and what you would do if you met someone famous. The writing assignments are about your thoughts and experiences, so there are no wrong things to write about.

You may feel uncomfortable or upset writing about personal events. If this happens you will be given an alternative assignment and do not have to participate in the study.

The information collected from this study could help other English language learners become more successful in school.

It is your choice to be in this study. You will not get into trouble if you don't want to participate. You can ask questions about the study anytime. If you decide later that you don't want to be in the study anymore, you can stop right away without any penalty.

If you sign this paper it means you have read everything here and that you want to be in the study. If you don't want to be in this study, then do not sign this paper. Being in this study is your decision.

Your signature: _____	Date: _____
Your printed name: _____	Date: _____
Researcher signature: _____	Date: _____
Researcher printed name: _____	Date: _____

If you have any questions you can contact the following:

Danika Johnson
 Graduate Student Researcher
 College of Education
 E262 Thompson Hall
 SUNY Fredonia
 Fredonia, NY 14063
john0286@fredonia.edu

Dr. Kate Mahoney
 Faculty Advisor
 E274 Thompson Hall
 SUNY Fredonia
 Fredonia, NY 14063
Kate.Mahoney@fredonia.edu

Maggie Bryan-Peterson
 Human Subjects Administrator
 Office of Sponsored Programs
 E230 Thompson Hall
 SUNY Fredonia
 Fredonia, NY 14063
 Maggie.Bryan-
 Peterson@fredonia.edu

Sample Parental Consent Form

Dear Parent,

My name is Danika Johnson, and I am graduate student at SUNY Fredonia. For my Master's Thesis Project I am conducting research in local schools.

I am asking your child to participate in a research study. This form is designed to give you information about this study. I will describe this study to you, and you can decide if your child will participate or not.

Principal Investigator: Danika Johnson
 Graduate Student Researcher
 College of Education
 E262 Thompson Hall
 SUNY Fredonia
 Fredonia, NY 14063
john0286@fredonia.edu

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Kate Mahoney
 E254 Thompson Hall
 SUNY Fredonia
 Fredonia, NY 14063
Kate.Mahoney@fredonia.edu

What the study is about:

The purpose of this research is to look at the different language students use while writing. Specifically, I am looking at students who are English language learners, meaning they speak a language other than English at home or outside of school. This research will look at students' writing styles.

What I will ask your child to do:

I will ask your child to fill out a short informational survey about themselves. I will ask them their gender, age, first language, and how long they have been learning English. Then, I will ask them to complete three writing assignments in class, one per week for three weeks. The writing assignments will ask them to write about what they did last weekend, what they talk about with

their friends, and what they would do if they met someone famous. After your child finishes the writing assignments, I will analyze their writing samples, looking at the different styles of writing.

Confidentiality:

Since this study involves minors, confidentiality is very important. Your child will be assigned a number, and this number will be used on all paperwork throughout the study. The list with the student numbers will only be seen by the graduate and faculty researchers, and will be kept in a secure location on the SUNY Fredonia campus. One year after the study is completed, all associated paperwork will be destroyed.

Risks and discomforts:

Your child may be uncomfortable with the writing topics. If this is the case, they may choose not to participate in the study any further, and will be given an alternative assignment by their classroom teacher.

Benefits:

Your child will help researchers understand how English Language Learners write. Looking at different writing styles of students today may help teachers figure out the most successful way to educate English language learners in the future.

Taking part in this study is voluntary and your child can decide on their own if they want to participate. Only those students who have permission from their parents *and* sign a consent form themselves, will be included in the study. Students will not get into trouble if they decide not to do the study. You, and your child, can ask questions about the study anytime. If you, or your child, decide later not to be involved with the study, participation will stop right away.

If you have questions, comments, or concerns you can contact the main researcher, Danika Johnson, at E262 Thompson Hall, SUNY Fredonia or through email, john0286@fredonia.edu. You may also contact the faculty supervisor, Dr. Kate Mahoney at Kate.Mahoney@fredonia.edu or by phone at 716-673-4656. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your child's right as a subject in this study, you may contact the Human Subjects Administrator, Maggie Bryan-Peterson, at the Human Subjects Review Committee: 716-673-3528 or Maggie.Bryan-Peterson@fredonia.edu.

Statement of Consent

I have read the above information and understand it fully. I give consent for my child to take part in this study.

Your child's name: _____

Your signature: _____

Your printed name: _____

Researcher signature: _____

Researcher printed name: _____

Date: _____

Date: _____

Date: _____

Date: _____

Sample Informational Survey

Facts About Me

Directions: Place an 'X' on lines that are true for you.

Example: I am ___ Male. I am ___ Female.

If you are a **boy** mark **male:** X **Male.** If you are a **girl** mark **female:** X **Female.**

- 1) I am ___ Male.
I am ___ Female.
- 2) I am ___ 11 years old ___ 12 years old ___ 13 years old ___ 14 years old ___ 15 years old
___ 16 years old ___ 17 years old ___ 18 years old ___ 19 years old
- 3) The language I speak at home is: _____
- 4) I have been learning English for ___ 1 year ___ 2 years ___ 3 years ___ 4 years ___ 5 years
___ 6 years ___ 7 years ___ 8 years ___ 9 years ___ 10 years ___ More than 10 years

Sample of Writing Tasks

Writing Task 1

Directions: Write about what you did last weekend, over Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. What activities did you do? Who were you with? Where did you go? Did you have fun? What did you want to do, but didn't? What did you eat? What did you see, hear, and smell? Be creative!

Write as much as you can about your weekend. There are no wrong things to write about!

Writing Task 2

Directions: Write about things you like to talk about with your friends. Do you talk about sports? movies? music? TV? school? family? other friends? pets? places? dreams? your futures? the weather? religion? These are just suggestions, be creative!

Write as much as you can about the things you talk about with your friends! There are no wrong things to write about!

Writing Task 3

Directions: Write about what you would do if you met a famous person? Who would the famous person be? Some suggestions are: a sports player you like? an actor or actress? the President? a religious person? an author? a TV star? What would you like to do with the famous person? Would you go to the movies with them? Out to dinner? To the beach? What would you talk about with the famous person? How would you feel meeting the famous person? Nervous? Excited? Happy? These are all suggestions, be creative!

Write as much as you can about what you would do if you met a famous person. There are no wrong things to write about!

Appendix C

Data Instrument-Checklist

African American English Markers Checklist

Student Number: _____

AAE Markers	Writing Sample #1	Writing Sample #2	Writing Sample #3
Consonant cluster reduction			
Syllable deletion			
Subject- verb agreement			
Indefinite article			
Zero copula/auxiliary			
Zero preposition			
Appositive pronoun			
Zero article			
Zero past tense			
Consonant cluster reduction + zero plural			
Consonant cluster reduction + zero past tense			
Total amount of markers			

Reference

- Ivy, L. & Masterson, J. (2011). A comparison of oral and written English styles in African American students at different stages of writing development. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools*, 42, 31-40.
- Terry, N. (2006). *Relations between dialect variation, grammar, and early spelling skills*. New Haven, CT: Haskins Laboratories.
- Thompson, C., Craig, H., & Washington, J. (2004). Variable production of African American English across oracy and literacy contexts. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools*, 35, 269-282.
- Wright, W. (2010). *Foundations for teaching English language learners*. Philadelphia, PA: Caslon, Inc.