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An Investigation Into the Relationship Between Language Attitudes and Academic Performance in Northampton County, Virginia, Public Schools

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AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN

LANGUAGE ATTITUDES AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

IN NORTHAMPTON COUNTY. VIRGINIA. PUBLIC SCHOOLS

by

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ABSTRACT

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Glenda L. Rose
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This language attitude study targets third grade. fifth grade. eighth grade and high school students in the Northampton County. Virginia. Public School System. Two hypotheses were proposed. First. students exhibiting negative attitudes toward their own dialect have a lower performance level in language arts classes than students expressing positive attitudes. Second. factors such as sex. race. grade level. and level of exposure to other dialects are reflected in language attitudes. In order to determine the validity of these hypotheses. school officials were asked to identify five students performing well and five students having difficulty in the language arts. Ten third graders. fifteen fifth graders. five eighth graders. and six high school students participated in the survey. for a total of thirty-six respondents. Surveys were conducted at Kiptopeke Elementary. Northampton Middle and Northampton High Schools.

Students were first asked to look at a series of pictures and recount the series of events. These stories were captured on cassette tape. Students were then asked to listen to an audiotape recording of four speakers with four different dialects telling the story of "The Three Little Pigs." As they were listening to each speaker. students were asked to circle on a survey form their responses to four closed-choice statements rating the speaker's friendliness. intelligence. familiarity. and general character.

The results indicate three possible areas of correlation. Students who have been

exposed to several language varieties are more likely to stigmatize the local language varieties. Students performing well in the language arts have tended to reject the local variety in favor of the less stigmatized Standard Southern variety. African-American students are more sensitive to the dialect differences of their white and black instructors than are their white peers.

This paper is dedicated to
my late uncle. Jim Rose.
He showed me how to fight the good fight.
He encouraged me to never give up.
And he smiled through his suffering to make
everybody's life a little nicer.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"Language is the recorder of paternity. the expresser of Patrimony

and the carrier of phenomenology."

<div align="right">(Fishman 25)</div>

The humans had progressed very well: too well. perhaps. for their own good.

With the advantages of one purpose and one language. they had begun construction of a

tower that would reach high into the heavens. up to the Almighty Himself. It sounded like

an awesome goal. a momentous achievement. But the naive. albeit clever. humans had

too limited an understanding of the workings of the heavens to safely continue. Perhaps

some workers began to feel the effects of the thinning air as the tower reached its upper

limits. fainting from the physical strain. while others. undaunted. continued to build

heavenward.

Enough of this nonsense. declared their Creator when He visited the spectacle.

His command had been to spread out over the earth. not to congregate and build skyward.

To disrupt the project. God "confounded their language, that they may not understand one

another's speech" (*The Thompson Chain-Reference Bible*. Gen. 11:7). Confusion and

panic ensued. immediately halting construction. People raced through the camp looking

for someone they could understand. someone who could understand them.

Gradually. small bands of like-speaking people began to gather in the shadow of

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The format for this thesis follows current style requirements of the *Modern Langauge Association.*

the unfinished tower. Segregated by language, they deserted the plains of Shinar and moved outward over the earth. The place where the tower stood became known as Babel, which means "confusion" ("Babel, Tower of").

This version of the origin of multiple languages illustrates the awesome power of language to unify or divide. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis states that language is the means by which we understand and categorize the world, and the particular language we use colors how we perceive the world around us (Wardhaugh 216). When people approach a communicative interaction with different languages, or different versions of the same language, they are also approaching the interaction with different perspectives, different frames. Language thus deeply affects who we are and how we think about others and ourselves. Consequently, we develop strong feelings towards the variety of language we use, an almost filial attachment, as suggested by Fishman in the quote above.

When the feelings we have toward our language and the language of others enter the arena of public education, conflicts naturally arise. It is the responsibility of educators to identify their own prejudices with regard to language varieties and to take measures to disarm their students' instinctive mechanisms to protect the status of their own variety. Educators must also recognize that "more than any other debate in education, the study of language grapples with questions of power and identity" (Perry and Delprit xiii). How students perceive their language or the language of their teacher can affect how they perceive themselves as a whole and can critically affect their academic performance.

AN OVERVIEW OF LANGUAGE VARIATION

People often use the term "dialect" or "accent" to refer to how people speak. In

general, as seen in the documentary film *American Tongues*, people perceive themselves as speaking "normally" and everyone else as speaking a dialect or having an accent. In the film, various people are caught disparaging other dialects or accents. For example, Northerners complain that Southerners talk too slow and fail to get to the point while Southerners complain that Northerners are rude and talk too fast. Some people in the film even recognize that their language variety is not "standard" and either aspire to the "standard" or take pride in their colloquialisms. Indeed, "standard" and "non-standard" are defined by social acceptability, not by "technical assessment of linguistic patterning" (Wolfram, Adger and Christian 11).

According to Wolfram, a dialect is defined as "a variety of language associated with a regionally or socially defined group of people." This definition does not appear to be different from the popular understanding of the term. However, the primary difference is that to Dr. Wolfram, and linguists around the world, the term "dialect" does not have a negative connotation. To a linguist the concept of dialect is completely neutral, referring to the particular morphological, phonological, syntactic, and discourse patterns characteristic of the language, the "technical assessments of linguistic patterning." Dialects are sets of linguistic variables unique to a given set of people (Wolfram, Adger and Christian 1). To linguists, the term "accent" is similarly neutral, referring to the pronunciation patterns of a general dialect, but not to morphological, syntactic or discourse phenomena.

Here is an example of morphological dialect patterning: Appalachian English permits "a-" affixing of progressive aspect verbs in some instances. "We were a-fishin' when we saw the snake" shows how that characteristic immediately defines the speaker as

being from a particular region, and probably from a specific socioeconomic level. The use of /n/ for /ŋ/ is one phonological trait of Appalachian speech, as is the use of a modified /aɪ/ for /e/ in "snake."

Syntax, in such varieties as African American Vernacular English, or Black English, deviates from "standard" English in several ways. For example, copular "be" can be deleted in many circumstances, as can genitive -'s. "She late" and "That Tom hat" are perfectly grammatical sentences in AAVE. The grammatical meaning of these forms is carried by adjacency of the subject/adjective or possessor/possession, rather than by a morpheme. Another difference in the syntax system is the aspect system, which may cause non-AAVE speakers to misunderstand the precise meaning of what is being said and the time period to which it refers. For example, an AAVE speaker may say, "He done been sick," meaning "He has been sick for a long time," which might be interpreted as "He has been sick previously" by someone outside the dialect (McLucas; Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 171).

Beyond the word, sound, and grammar differences are the functions of discourse in cultural contexts. Discourse is a "socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or 'social network'" (Gee 3). In the study of dialects, discourse can be very important because of its close relationship to the distribution of power in the social hierarchy. Those groups which have access to social resources have "dominant discourses" (Gee 4-5).

Black sitcoms of the 60s and 70s often made note of this by having a token white speak in "high" language that the rest of the cast cannot understand. For example, the

white police officer in *Sanford and Son* would start off stating the nature of the violation or emergency, to which Fred and Lamont would respond with blank stares. The black officer would then "translate" into street talk. The same type of comic scenario was used on *Good Times, What's Happenin'?*, and *The Jeffersons*. Although people may laugh at the inability of people to understand one another on television, in real life the results are far from funny.

SOCIOLINGUISTIC VARIABLES

The relationship between social factors and linguistics is readily evident to the most casual observer. To be a member of a social group is part of each individual's personal identity. Identification with a group is frequently reflected in speech patterns. "It is often the case that a group's evaluative attachment to its membership is reflected in its feelings about its speech style" (Giles 325). Again, it is social acceptability that determines what is and what is not "Standard English" (Wolfram, Adger and Christian 11). Moreover, how people feel about speakers of "Standard" and "Non-standard" varieties is very strong and specific.

In one study, the non-standard group frequently concurred with the standard (dominant) group in the rating of speakers from both groups. The speakers were rated on how personable, intelligent, dependable, and ambitious they were. In a clear illustration of how dialect can color our perceptions, the speakers from the standard group were generally perceived as taller than those from the non-standard group (DiVesta 137).

Ethnicity, likewise, is a sociolinguistic factor that affects perception of individuals. In fact, "language...is often among the most salient dimensions of ethnic

identity" (Giles 326). Minority children recognize this very early in their education and become adept at switching to different forms. One kindergarten teacher observed that "...the black children regularly used different speech patterns when playing with each other and when playing with white children or teachers. They moved in and out of this speech with ease. They had no problems here" (Paley 28).

Gloria Anzaldua in her book *Borderlands* poignantly points out the relationship between linguistic identity and ethnic identity. "So, if you really want to hurt me," she writes, "talk bad about my language. Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity. I am my language. Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself" (59). Victor Villanueva, felt he was pushed into "racelessness" by academia, into "choosing to speak the language of the dominant." By doing so, he felt alienated from his own community without every feeling fully adopted into the dominant (white) community (59).

Race, however, is not the only social variable that affects linguistic choices. Social class also has a great deal of impact on what we say and how we say it. For example, in studying the oral stories of working class and middle class children, Bernstein found that working class children's stories were "freer, longer, and more imaginative." Middle class children tended to stick more to narrative form, paying more attention to how they were arranging the story than to the story's content (233). As children grow up, they learn social attitudes, which are consciously or subconsciously transmitted by adults, toward their particular way of speaking. They learn the social value of their dialect (Wolfram, Adger and Christian 11).

The classification of different dialects does not mean that all people use the same

manner of speaking at all times. In fact, the process of defining a dialect, such as

Appalachian or African American Vernacular, is not based on individual occurrences of

variables within the subsystems of language. but on the likelihood and frequency of those

variables occurring. For example, a study of Appalachian English might show "a-"

affixing to occur only in 60% of the expected cases, but the fact that this variable is used

more frequently in Appalachian English than in other language varieties makes it one of

the defining features of that dialect.

In circumstances where speakers in a dyadic situation want to make themselves

more or less like the person with whom they are speaking, they will consciously or

subconsciously adjust the use of dialect variables accordingly (Trudgill. *Dialects in*

Contact 2). In one experiment with Welsh-born Englishmen, Bourhis and Giles found

that the subjects would make themselves more distinct from a speaker of Received

Pronunciation (RP) when the categories of Welsh-born and non-Welsh born were made

explicit. Dialect was modified to increase the feeling of group solidarity (129). The

researchers therefore concluded that a person may be in a situation where one is required

to agree with the information a person from outside the group is transmitting. yet still

maintain group solidarity through the use of accent divergence (131).

LANGUAGE, EDUCATION AND ATTITUDE

Language variation. therefore. cannot be irradicated. It must somehow be

accommodated in order to preserve the individual concept of worth. This is particularly

true in the classroom. "When learning language. the child learns its social meanings,

including the social meanings of accented speech...[that] the formal style is valued more

highly than the informal style, and standard English is valued more highly than non-standard forms" (DiVesta 137). A child learns not only how to speak, but how speaking itself is a social function, and therefore is evaluated in terms of social acceptability.

ACADEMIC REGISTER

Most students learn quickly that in order to succeed in school, they must conform to the language of school, which is termed academic register. One African American college student said:

> I came from d'ghetto and I am part of d'ghetto- and tha's for real. But, I hat to see a brother that kin righteously shoot you down wid all sorts of langs, and dent you be talkin' about economics or history and he don' know how to express himself any other way. You say, "Well, brother, you hip to d'slang, but you got a language barrier which ain't gonna get over." When you can speak standard, you kin be half and half. Da's not bein' phony, it just means you know how to get over to any group. (Folb 217)

One element of academic register is "Language Instruction Register," or LIR. This includes metalanguage terms such as "sound, letter, word, blend" and so forth. It is also characterized by careful attention to pronunciation and syntax. Failure to acquire LIR makes progress in school very difficult, if not impossible. In some ways, LIR is equivalent to "standard," so many parents and teachers place a great deal of emphasis on its acquisition (Destafano 107-109).

Nonetheless, how instructors communicate the importance of acquiring Academic Register is extremely important. Because how we speak is intricately intertwined with how we see ourselves, learning a different way of using our first language is, in many ways, like learning a second language; it can be threatening to our self-image and cause anxiety (O'Grady, Dobrovolsky and Aranoff 496).

AFFECTIVE FACTORS

The affective filter hypothesis that Stephen Krashen applies to Second Language Acquisition may also be applied to second dialect and second register acquisition. An affect is a "violently emotional reaction to a given situation" (Leontiev 67). Krashen holds that affects can inhibit the ability of the learner to learn and acquire a second language. Low motivation. lack of self-confidence and high anxiety can block the flow of information and inhibit acquisition of the target language (*Fundamentals of Language Education* 15).

In the Foxfire Project. Eliot Wigginton elicited a variety of negative sentiments from non-standard English speakers regarding typical English instruction in the classroom. "I hate English." wrote one student. "Because the grammar part give me trouble. And makes it hard for me to learn." Another student wrote. "To read out loud is like ordering a big fat F." Another student connected his problem learning with the instructor: "I don't like English because most of the time it doesn't make any sence. and sometimes the teachers that teach doesn't express things the right way for you to learn" (18).

Teachers play an integral part in students' creating negative or positive affective filters. A teacher who treats a student. or a student's dialect. negatively is also likely to underestimate the child's ability. causing the child to perform well under his or her potential. In fact. in several cases. children have been sent to speech therapy or even to classes for learning disabled students based on the teacher's response to their dialect (Wolfram and Christian 15,57; Wolfram, Adger and Christian 24). Unfortunately, the teacher may develop these strong attitudes based on hearing only one or two occurrences

of a non-standard form. However, once the attitude is formed, the teacher will assert that the child uses these forms "all the time." This categorical perception increases the likelihood that children will be expected to perform far below their ability (Destafano 93).

One case where this bias is clearly evident is in the decision of preparedness to read, made by teachers based primarily on student's ability to distinguish between sounds. Researchers have found that the level of auditory discrimination is not based on the child's dialect, but on the teacher's. Therefore, if the child does not seem able to distinguish between sounds that are allophonic in his or her dialect, but phonemic in the teacher's, the teacher makes the determination that the child is not yet ready to read, even though this is probably not the case. Children who speak AAVE may use /d/ for /th/, saying "dis" for "this." Because of this, the teacher may suggest delaying reading, even though the child is perfectly able to discriminate the phonemes of his or her dialect (Mays 8-9).

Teachers' attitudes, however, are only half of the equation. Teachers undoubtedly communicate negative attitudes to some of the children they teach, either consciously or subconsciously. As a result, these children "will soon develop strong feelings of linguistic insecurity" (Trudgill, *Accent, Dialect and School* 62). A power struggle thus ensues. The children and teacher enter a period of confrontation as to what constitutes adequate, correct and appropriate language for the classroom (Folb 214). The power relationship naturally places the students in a subordinate role, but tremendous adverse effects occur when the communication between teacher and student is hindered because of dialect differences (DiVesta 140). Students may begin to identify their teacher's dialect as "alien in some way and come to resent the social gulf between them that the linguistic

difference symbolizes" (Trudgill, *Accent, Dialect and School* 60).

Researchers have found a positive direct correlation between academic self-concept and achievement (Wang 15). Children will often adopt the negative attitude toward their dialect that a teacher has displayed. Adopting the negative attitude toward their dialect results in damage to the child's self-concept (Wolfram, Adger and Christian 24). Moreover, a child who senses that his dialect is not accepted will tend to avoid using it in the threatening situation (Trudgill, *Accent, Dialect and School* 62). As this pattern of silencing oneself continues, communicative competence is minimized, contributing to academic failure and a "sense of hopelessness" (Destafano 88, 115).

In one example, a student transferred from Georgia to a northern school. The northern teacher felt the child was underdeveloped linguistically and sent her to speech therapy, mainly to get rid of the Georgia dialect. The end result of her "therapy" was the development of a stutter that lasted for eight years (Destafano 87). In another example, over-correction of a student's writing resulted in his hiding under his desk the following year whenever he was asked to do a writing assignment (Destafano 115). One of my own friends moved from the Tidewater area of Virginia to metropolitan Chicago. As a result, both he and his sister were subjected to the humiliation of remedial language classes because they could not make themselves understood in their Southern dialects. Clearly the teacher's attitude can affect the student's academic career.

Students and parents are aware that attitude is quintessential to learning. In one study conducted in a low-income black urban community, teachers, parents, administrators and even children cited attitude as being the central significant factor in the academic success of students. In fact, in the study, attitude was given even more

importance than intelligence (Gilmore 57). One reason that this is the case is that attitude is associated with motivation (Krashen, "Aptitiude and Attitude" 161).

Integrative motivation, according to Krashen, is "the desire to be like valued members of the [target] community." The second type of motivation is instrumental, which is the desire to learn only as much as is necessary for practical or "utilitarian" reasons ("Aptitude and Attitude" 160). When students perceive a significant gap between the demands of the situation and their own abilities, they experience emotional tension. If the situation is perceived as being threatening in any way, students then experience stress. Emotional tension and stress cause "drying up and rigidity, lessening of attention, diminishing control over mistakes, worsening of the operative memory and lowering of the over-all work capacity... The dynamics of speech is harshly disrupted" (Leontiev 70-72). At this point, language no longer serves its function. Communication between teacher and student ceases because the student is not sure how he or she fits into a "cultural setting vastly different from her own" (Paley 56).

On the other hand, operational tension places pressure on students to perform tasks only slightly beyond their current ability, requiring students to stretch academically to a higher performance level. Students generally respond positively to operational tension, but negatively to emotional tension. In fact, when students from oral-based subcultures have negative attitudes toward the literacy-based dominant culture, they readily experience emotional tension. Thus, both integrative and instrumental motivation is diminished (Destafano 137-142). Internal and external attitudes toward their dialects can cause students to fail academically.

Attitudes begin developing very early, even before the school years. Children

from non-dominant subcultures often do not have the opportunity to acquire the aspects of the dominant discourse style which teachers expect them to have acquired in the early grades. For example, part of the early education of standard speakers is asking/answering shared knowledge questions. A mother may ask her child, "Where is the kitty?" though it is clear to both parent and child that the cat is sitting on the sofa. Many non-dominant cultures do not practice this type of interchange, but classrooms do. Therefore, the children of these cultures are at a disadvantage because they do not understand what the teacher is expecting from them when the teacher asks, "Where do the lunch boxes go?" If the question is an indirect command, the student not only fails to respond appropriately but, to the teacher, appears to deliberately respond inappropriately.

Paley described one situation where she thought that a child might have a learning disability and so "tested" her by asking her how many of a certain object there were. The child counted them out, "one..two..three.." up to ten. Paley then asked, "So how many are there?" The student gave her a blank stare and repeated the process of counting them. They repeated this interchange several times before Paley realized that the student thought she was answering the question in an appropriate manner when she counted them out one at a time, without giving a final "ten" at the end (79).

The difference in discourse also shows up in show-and-tell examples. In one incident, a child was giving her show-and-tell presentation on her new coat but was repeatedly interrupted by her teacher to "stick to the point." The child was using an episodic discourse style common to her subculture. All of her points related to the coat, but not necessarily in a linear fashion, as the teacher expected. The teacher viewed her episodic style as a lack of ability to focus. The student viewed the teacher's assistance as

"interruptive. unappreciative. and confusing" (Michaels 105-109). Another child, as part of a class writing assignment. wrote about his favorite part of the circus. The Pink Panther. by relating it to the movies of the same name. The teacher corrected the paper by removing everything she did not understand. without trying to clarify. The student was unhappy with the new piece. but said. "She's the teacher so I have to listen to her." (Michaels 110-116). This type of socialization may lead children to believe that their language skills are not "valuable" in the academic arena. which in turn may lead once again to avoidance and loss of communication (Wolfram. Adger and Christian 107-108).

In addition to lacking the expected discourse style. many children lack the fundamentals of literacy necessary to get a good academic start. Jenny is an urban Appalachian mother whose son Donny was not performing well in school. causing her to seek outside help. What the "helper" found was that the house was almost totally without literacy. There were books in the home. but they were never read. Neither Jenny nor her husband. Big Donny. had finished high school. Jenny could read words only if they were presented to her in the same context: however. if the word was in another book or on another sign. she could not decipher it. More importantly. the investigator noted that the children never went through the stages of asking. "What does that say?" or pretending to read a book. They had no concept of writing as a means of communication. Knowledge was passed down orally. and if they did not know how to do something, they asked someone to show them. Purcell-Gates. the investigator. concluded that these early development stages had to be experienced before Little Donny was going to be able to catch up in school (30).

Nonetheless. most children recognize the importance of acquiring a standard

variety of English. One of the Foxfire students wrote: "I wish someone would help me to grow up and open my mind. If not, then I lose out my whole life. I guess I don't know how to think, or I don't know how to use what I've got. I want to change but I need help" (Wigginton 34).

THE EBONICS DEBATE

One issue in education that has received an incredible amount of media attention recently has been the so-called "Ebonics Debate." Although language issues in education have been around for decades, it was not until the Oakland school board released its controversial resolution in December of 1996 that people drew lines in the sand and took sides.

In Oakland, African American students made up 53% of the student population, but 80% of the suspension rate and 71% of special needs students. The average grade for African Americans was a D+. The school board resolution was intended to confront teacher biases. The assumption was that teaching teachers to accept and deal with the local dialect would improve student performance, a credible assumption. The Resolution stated that African American Vernacular English (AAVE) is a legitimate, rule-based, systematic language which should not be stigmatized. Rather, the use of dialect should be affirmed and maintained while helping students acquire fluency in Standard English (Perry and Delprit 3). No reasonable educator, and certainly no linguist, could dispute the theoretical underpinning of the resolution. However, the representation in the media, that Oakland was promoting teaching children in, and only in, the vernacular caused protests from all ranks, from White Supremacists to educated African Americans. Part of the fault

for the misunderstanding lies in the wording of the resolution. For example, the term

"genetic" was used in the sense of "primary" and not in its usual sense of "inherited." Lay

people, including the media, who read the resolution therefore thought the school board

was stating that AAVE was biologically inherent, a clearly erroneous interpretation.

The Linguistic Society of America responded by passing its own Resolution on

the Oakland "Ebonics" debate.

> Whereas there has been a great deal of discussion in the media and among the American public about the 18 December 1996 decision of the Oakland School Board to recognize the language variety spoken by many African American students and to take it into account in teaching Standard English, the Linguistic Society of America, as a society of scholars engaged in the scientific study of language, hereby resolves to make it known that:

>> a. 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. In fact, all human linguistic systems--spoken, signed, and written -- are fundamentally regular. 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. Characterizations of Ebonics as "slang," "mutant," " lazy," "defective," "ungrammatical," or "broken English" are incorrect and demeaning.

>> b. The distinction between "languages" and "dialects" is usually made more on social and political grounds than on purely linguistic ones. For example, different varieties of Chinese are popularly regarded as dialects," though their speakers cannot understand each other, but speakers of Swedish and Norwegian, which are regarded as separate "languages," generally understand each other. What is important from a linguistic and educational point of view is not whether AAVE is called a "language" or a "dialect" but rather that its systematicity be recognized.

>> c. As affirmed in the LSA Statement of Language Rights (June 1996), there are individual and group benefits to maintaining vernacular speech varieties and there are scientific and human advantages to linguistic diversity. For those living in the United States there are also benefits in acquiring Standard English and resources should be made available to all who aspire to mastery of Standard English. The Oakland School Board's commitment to helping students master Standard English is commendable.

d. There is evidence from Sweden, the US, and other countries that 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 this perspective, the Oakland School Board's decision to recognize the vernacular of African American students in teaching them Standard English is linguistically and pedagogically sound.

Opinions on how to go about teaching Standard English to speakers of AAVE vary greatly. During the late 60's and early 70's, the common trend of thinking was that speakers of AAVE should be taught Standard English as a foreign language. However, this is neither theoretically logical nor pragmatically possible. Theoretically, the difference determining whether spoken words are two languages or two dialects of the same language is often political in nature. Millions of Chinese speak mutually unintelligible dialects, but all consider themselves speakers of Chinese. Serbo-Croatian, the two major dialects of which are mutually intelligible, dissolved into Serbian and Croatian when Bosnia went into civil war.

The differences between AAVE and Standard are not so great as to make them mutually unintelligible, nor are there political reasons to identify them as distinct languages. Furthermore, in a practical sense, second language students tend to have the most difficulty acquiring forms that are only slightly different from their native tongue, such as sounds that are allophonic in their native tongue but phonemic in the target language. Treating AAVE as a foreign language might, therefore, make learning Standard more difficult, rather than less so. Treating AAVE as a foreign language "maximizes differences and tends to ignore the substantial similarity," encouraging more racial divisiveness rather than increasing mutual interracial respect (Destafano 89).

Most Black students do not have to be made aware of the differences between

AAVE and Standard English. They refer to Standard English as "proper, good English, the way to get over, school talk, proper grammar and the like. Non-standard use is seen as street talk, not too cool, low-class, kid's stuff, and, sometimes, bad English" (Folb 215). They make the distinction between the two codes in terms of good and bad. Identifying differences in this manner reflects a strong and pervasive attitude toward both dialects, which may, in fact, relate more to the success or failure of students in acquiring Standard English than to other socioeconomic factors.

PREVIOUS STUDIES OF LANGUAGE ATTITUDES AND EDUCATION

The predominant body of research on language attitudes has dealt with teachers' attitudes toward their students' dialects. Very little has been done to investigate the effect of students' attitudes toward their own or their teachers' dialects. However, those studies that have been conducted clearly indicate a positive correlation between attitude and academic success.

For example, Luberta Mays conducted a language-attitude study of Black second graders. Children were asked to choose which version of a sentence was right, a standard or non-standard variation. She proposed two hypotheses: First, "there is a positive correlation between the incidence of dialect speech of Black second graders and their perception that dialect speech is 'bad.'" Second, the use of dialect does not interfere with learning to read in the standard spelling system.

Her first hypothesis was found to be in complete error. The second graders more frequently identified the dialect pattern as being "right" over the standard English usage (Mays 62). In fact, children with more dialect variables tended to have lower preferences

toward Standard English in the auditory perception portion of the test. The more they spoke in dialect, the more the children perceived it as being "right." She concluded. therefore. that since children perceived their dialect as being "right," they had positive feelings toward their dialect (Mays 57, 64).

Her second hypothesis. that dialect did not interfere with learning to read, turned out to have some substance. Children did not have difficulty associating sounds with standard orthography. In fact, the correlation between reading in English and the spoken word appeared to be null (Mays 58). The only difficulty encountered was in a teacher occasionally misunderstanding what word a student was saying, giving that teacher the impression that the student was not reading correctly.

Mays intended to show that "the way the child perceives himself and his language. in the school environment. might perhaps be more important than teaching him Standard English from the first day of school." She concludes from her study that it is more important to encourage students to have positive attitudes toward language before teaching reading. writing. and so on. "When positive interaction occurs. the teacher will have an easier time teaching that child any number of things. even Standard English" (Mays 68).

Pamela Gay investigated negative attitudes of college freshmen writers. She surveyed. interviewed and tracked freshmen composition students identified as having problems in writing. She found that these unskilled writers were frequently not able to improve their writing without first improving their attitude toward writing (Gay 2). Moreover. she found that the causes of negative attitudes were many, including "teacher interference." Teacher interference encompassed negative teacher expectations. negative

feedback, unrealistic expectations, rigid rules, oversimplification and inappropriate assignments (Gay 5). In fact, negative teacher expectations and feedback were often cited as the primary causes of negative attitudes in students (Gay 7).

In 1998, I conducted a language attitude study in Tazewell County, Virginia where I asked students in the eleventh grade to rate four dialect speakers with regard to friendliness, intelligence, familiarity and character. Tazewell is an Appalachian community, and the students showed definite bias in favor or Southern Standard English and against AAVE and Northern Standard English. However, the most intriguing result was the low level of familiarity associated with Appalachian English. Students distanced themselves from the local dialect and associated themselves with the dialect of the teachers even if they actually spoke the local variety. Moreover, the students performing below average (earning a D or F in English) were far more likely to rate the local speaker as unfamiliar. They also tended to rate everyone lower in intelligence than those students who were making an A or B in English (Rose).

As a result of the study in Tazewell, I became more interested in possible factors affecting language attitudes in the classroom. I suspected that the findings of the study in Tazewell were not unique. Moreover, I hypothesized a strong relationship exists between language attitudes and academic performance. I therefore began the process of determining another population of students, primarily of speakers of a non-standard dialect, whom I could readily survey. As I was working on the Eastern Shore of Virginia on an unrelated project, I turned my attention to Northampton County, Virginia.

CHAPTER II

NORTHAMPTON PROJECT DESCRIPTIVES

The first white man on the Eastern Shore was Giovanni Verragano

who was sent out by King Francis of France to explore

for a northwest passage in 1523.

(Lilliston and Mapp)

COMMUNITY INFORMATION

The Eastern Shore is sometimes called the DELMARVA peninsula, since it is composed of all or parts of three states: Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia. This peninsula is a prominent land mass separating the Atlantic Ocean from the massive Chesapeake Bay. The southernmost counties of the Eastern Shore are in Virginia: Accomack to the north and Northampton to the south (Lilliston and Mapp). The base of Northampton County has been connected by man to Virginia Beach, Virginia via the longest bridge in the world, the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, 23 miles long and covering 17.6 miles of open water (*The Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel*).

John Smith visited by boat in 1608 and reported that the peninsula was inhabited by giant Indians. Skeletons found on the island have indicated that the indigenous tribe may have averaged over seven feet tall! The names of many of the towns reflect the Indian influence: Onancock (foggy), Chessnix (home of blue birds), Wachapreague (city by the sea), and Accomack (land across the water) are just a few examples (Lilliston and Mapp).

Because of the limited access to points off the Shore, the community has remained relatively isolated. The modern Eastern Shore area of Virginia is still considered completely rural by the Census Bureau. The total population for the 1990 census was calculated to be 13.061. The population swells during the summer harvest months as Spanish-speaking migrant workers swarm onto the Shore for seasonal work on the many corporate and private farms. In 1990, the population was reported to be 79.3% native Shore folk. Although the area has recently experienced an influx of "come-heres," or recent arrivals, more than 63% of the over-five population has always lived in the same house.

The median household income is only about $18,117. Roughly 27% of the population is considered to be below poverty level. In addition, more than 43% of adults over the age of 25 reported less than a high school education. The population is racially split almost in half, about 53% white and 47% black. Other racial groups are less than 1% of the total population, although the Hispanic numbers increase exponentially with migrant workers in the summer months (United States Census Bureau).

NORTHAMPTON COUNTY SCHOOLS

There are four schools in Northampton County, two elementary schools, a middle school, and a high school. All of the schools have been awarded the Blue Ribbon of Excellence by the Commonwealth of Virginia. Nonetheless, the school system is not without problems. The Standards of Learning (SOL) testing has shown the county's test scores to be far below the state averages, as table 1 reflects. Northampton County demonstrates an above average retention rate of students. Nonetheless, the percentage of

black males who drop out is 50% in Northampton, compared to the state average of 22%

(VDOE "1997-98 School Dropout Statistics").

Table 1: Standards of Learning Test Comparison (VDOE "Virginia School Performance")

School Grade Level	1997-1998 NCH Passing Rate in English	1997-1998 Virginia Passing Rate in English
Kiptopeke Elementary Grade 3	35.71%	54.73%
Kiptopeke Elementary Grade 5	48.35%	66.44%
Northampton Middle Grade 8	53.07%	65.99%
Northampton High	53.89%	71.13%

Table 2: Dropout Rate Comparison (VDOE "1997-98 Dropout Statistics")

	White Males	White Females	Black Males	Black Females
Virginia	33%	22%	22%	14%
Northampton	21%	8%	50%	11%

THE NORTHAMPTON PROJECT

Based on its standardized test scores, population composition, dropout rate and rural land cover, I selected Northampton County to be an excellent candidate for a language attitude survey similar to the one I conducted last year in Tazewell County. However, I wanted this study to be more longitudinal and to target specific student populations. Because of time constraints, rather than follow a class through twelve years of school, I decided to take a cross-sectional approach, selecting students from grades three, five, eight and eleven.

I proceeded with two hypotheses. First, that students performing well in language

arts (averaging a B or better) would respond more positively in the evaluation of speakers of their own dialect. Conversely, those making a C or lower would rate local speakers less highly. Second, factors such as grade level, race, sex, and exposure to other dialects would affect language attitudes.

Having received permission from the Northampton School Board to conduct the surveys, I requested that teachers or guidance counselors identify between ten and fifteen students from the third, fifth, eighth, and eleventh grades to participate in the survey. Students were to be selected based on length of residence in the area, with preference given to those who were native to those who were more recent arrivals. I also asked for equal numbers of students performing well in the language arts (i.e., maintaining an A or B average) and students who were having difficulty (earning a D or lower).

I provided the schools with permission slips for their records. Students were given the permission slips two weeks prior to the scheduled date for the surveys.

In preparation for the surveys, I printed demographic data cards and survey forms, and I selected a set of pictures from the SPEAK test, a standardized test given to non-native speakers of English. The demographic card included information such as age, sex, race, current letter grade in the language arts, and lines to identify other areas to which the student had had exposure. The SPEAK Test pictures were a comic strip series of six drawings in which a man sits on a freshly painted park bench and must take his jacket to the dry cleaners. Samples of these materials may be found in the appendix.

The survey sheet had partial statements on the left under which were four possible responses. Four columns across corresponded with the four samples the students were asked to rate.

The speakers were selected to be as similar as possible with the exception of their dialects. They all spoke a variety of Standard English flavored with the phonological and discourse patterns from their individual dialects. To avoid gender bias, all four speakers were female. To avoid education bias, all were currently or had been elementary school teachers. They were all asked to tell the story as though they were telling it to a classroom of children. To avoid age bias, all speakers were "middle-aged," being between 35 and 50 years old.

The possibility of different storytelling abilities was still a concern, so I sought a second opinion. Dr. Janet Bing listened to the tape for me and agreed that the storytellers, while different in styles, were fairly equivalent in their storytelling abilities.

The first speaker was a local from the Eastern Shore and had retained some of the features specific to that variety of Southern, for example, Canadian Raising of the /au/ diphthong. This feature appeared infrequently and was also present in the Southern speaker's dialect. However, the local white speaker also had a merger of the /ɪ/ and /i/ phonemes, realizing /ɪ/ as /iə/ before nasals. The result was a distinctive "Let me come /iən/" and /čɪnɪ čin čiən/ for "chinny-chin-chin."

The second speaker, from New Jersey, was readily identifiable from her r-lessness and discourse patterns ("Hey little pig"), as well as voice quality. The timing on her words was normally shorter than the other speakers. For example, she says, "So they kissed their Mom and Dad goodbye and took off." The last two words of the sentence are very short and clipped. She also frequently failed to use definite articles as in "Little pig replies" and "Wolf says."

The third speaker, from Portsmouth, spoke an older variety of the Tidewater.

Virginia dialect that I was initially afraid might be indistinguishable from the local variety. However. the data bear out that in fact the students were able to discriminate between the two different dialects of Southern.

On closer examination. the two varieties had some contrasting features that made them easily identifiable. One of the main differences was the realization of the phoneme /ɪ/ as stated in the discussion of the local speaker. The Tidewater speaker had the more prevalent "pen/pin" merger in place. The Tidewater speaker also had a distinct rise on the end of most intonation phrases that the local speaker did not. Also. the Tidewater speaker used a monophthongized /ai/. so that "time" was realized as /tam/. The local speaker used the more common /ai/.

The final speaker. the African American local speaker. spoke a variety that also sounded like Standard Southern. Her story was stated with exceedingly clear enunciation. which implies a definite attention to her own speech. Nonetheless. some features of Black English were present. Voice quality was one marked aspect. Another was an intonation pattern that started on a very high pitch and glided down without respect to words or phonemes. "So what do you think that big bad wolf did?" is one sentence where this style was used. A more common characteristic of Black English was the occasional substitution of /d/ for /ð/. as in "on [de] door."

An annotated transcript of the stories can be found in Appendix C.

All of the sample speakers recited the story of "The Three Little Pigs" as they recalled it. without reading or coaching. While sacrificing experimental control, this method allowed more of the speakers' dialect features to be manifested. The question of whether the students responded to the individual story or to the storyteller is valid.

However, the stories were fundamentally the same, varying only in minor details, such as the demise of the wolf.

The four statements to which students were asked to respond were as follows:

(1) This person sounds:

   (a) Very Friendly

   (b) Friendly

   (c) Not Very Friendly

   (d) Mean

(2) This person sounds:

   (a) Very Smart

   (b) Smart

   (c) Not Very Smart

   (d) Dumb (Stupid)

(3) This person talks like:

   (a) Most of the people I know

   (b) Some of the people I know

   (c) A few people I know

   (d) No one I know

(4) If this person were doing the voice for a cartoon fairy tale (like *Cinderella*), she would be:

   (a) The heroine (Cinderella)

   (b) The helper (Fairy Godmother)

   (c) The comic relief (That silly mouse, Gus)

(d) The villain (The wicked stepmother)

The planned procedure was as follows:

1. Introduce myself to the student participant and attempt to put him or her at ease.

2. Complete the demographic card. which identifies each student by number. and determine the level of outside influence on his or her dialect.

3. Have the student look at the SPEAK test picture and describe the sequence of events depicted therein. Record this speech sample on cassette tape.

4. Give the student a copy of the survey. to be marked with the identification number from the demographic card.

5. Ask the student to listen to each speaker tell the story of The Three Little Pigs and circle his or her response to the statements on the left while he or she is doing so.

DATA COLLECTION

I collected the data in two days. One day was spent gathering responses from the third and fifth grade students at Kiptopeke Elementary. There. I was set up in a room in the library. Students were sent to me one at a time. Ten third graders and fifteen fifth graders returned their permission slips and were able to participate. Of these. five students had greater than 50% outside influence. The percentage of influence was determined by the child's self report of the amount of time he or she spent living in places

off the Shore, or visiting places for a week or more annually off the Shore. Although I asked for A/B or D/F students only, I was given three C students. I had hoped to draw comparisons between the best and worst performers. With the inclusion of the C students. I had to alter the plan, placing these "average" performers with the D/F group.

The only difficulty at Kiptopeke was with the last five fifth graders (respondents 21-25). Because of time constraints, these students gave their speech sample independently but took the listening survey as a group. They were not permitted to talk to one another or share opinions. While this risk to internal validity is a concern, it is not a risk large enough to require excluding their data. The students acted independently and did not interact during the listening survey.

The second day presented a different set of challenges. At the Middle School, only five students returned their permission slips and were available for the survey. The data collection room was a textbook storeroom behind which were two more offices. People were constantly coming into and going out of these offices, which certainly had to be distracting. The students showed a great deal of maturity, however, in conducting the requested tasks in a focused manner.

The High School provided a conference room, which was very quiet. The staff were extremely helpful in ensuring that the surveys were not interrupted. However, all of the students who returned permission slips were not in attendance, so I ended up with only six respondents at the High School level. Moreover, I had requested 11th grade students, but only 2 of the 6 respondents were 11th graders. I decided to group the high school responses together, reasoning that the difference between middle and high school would nonetheless be evident.

CHAPTER III

DATA PRESENTATION

THE SAMPLE POPULATION

The entire sample population involved a total of thirty-six students from grades three. five. eight. nine. ten and eleven. The ninth. tenth and eleventh graders were all attending the high school and are grouped together under the heading of "high school" in the data analysis. Because of the small sample population size, and because participants were not selected at random. the analysis in this report must be considered as describing the sample population only.

Among the thirty-six students are sixteen who self-reported to have lived on the Eastern Shore their entire lives. to have no family off the Shore with whom they visit on a regular basis. and to have never left the Shore for any prolonged period of time. In this report. these students are collectively termed "Pure Locals." In addition. eleven of the remaining students are different from the Pure Locals only in that they have left the Shore for one or two weeks a year. These two groups are jointly referred to as "All Locals" in the analysis. The remaining nine students will be termed "Come-Heres." which is the local term used for persons who are not native to the Shore. The demographic composition of the population is given in Table 3.

Table 3: Sample Population Demographics (All Locals in parentheses)

SEX			RACE			GRADE LEVEL		LETTER GRADE	
Male =	22	(17)	White =	14	(09)	3rd = 10	(09)	A = 12	(10)
Female =	14	(10)	Black =	21	(17)	5th = 15	(09)	B = 10	(07)
			Hispanic = 1		(01)	8th = 5	(05)	C = 4	(04)
						H.S. = 6	(04)	D = 4	(03)
								F = 6	(03)

GENERAL DATA

Table 4. below. gives the frequency distributions for the entire population in each

of the four categories: friendliness. intelligence, familiarity. and general character. It is

important to note that a rating of one is the most positive response and a rating of four is

the most negative response. The ratings for All Locals is again in parenthesis.

Table 4: Frequency Distribution (All Locals in Parentheses)

N = 36 (n=27)	Eastern Shore White		Northern (NJ)		Southern (VA)		Eastern Shore Black	
Friendliness								
1 = VERY F.	10	(08)	12	(10)	22	(18)	18	(16)
2 = F.	16	(12)	11	(08)	12	(09)	14	(08)
3 = NOT VERY F.	06	(05)	12	(08)	01	(00)	03	(02)
4 = MEAN	04	(02)	01	(01)	01	(00)	01	(01)
Intelligence								
1 = VERY SMART	06	(06)	07	(07)	21	(15)	15	(12)
2 = SMART	16	(12)	12	(09)	11	(10)	15	(11)
3 = NOT VERY S.	11	(07)	14	(10)	03	(02)	04	(03)
4 = DUMB/STUPID	03	(02)	03	(01)	01	(00)	02	(01)
Familiarity								
1 = MOST PEOPLE	02	(02)	03	(02)	05	(03)	07	(06)
2 = SOME PEOPLE	09	(09)	05	(04)	10	(08)	10	(09)
3 = FEW PEOPLE	15	(10)	13	(10)	09	(07)	09	(05)
4 = NOONE	10	(06)	15	(11)	12	(09)	10	(07)
Character								
1 = HEROINE	04	(03)	04	(04)	12	(09)	13	(11)
2 = HELPER	22	(17)	01	(00)	12	(11)	11	(10)
3 = COMIC RELIEF	06	(04)	17	(15)	08	(05)	07	(03)
4 = VILLAIN	04	(03)	14	(08)	04	(02)	05	(03)

It is interesting to note that only local students credited the local white storyteller

as being very intelligent. They also were the only ones to identify the local white

storyteller as speaking like most or some of the people they know. Table 5 gives the

mean response of all students in each of the four categories. Again. the higher the

number. the more negative the responses in that category.

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Table 5: Mean of Responses (All Locals in parentheses)

N = 36 (27)	Eastern Shore White		Northern		Southern		Eastern Shore Black	
Friendliness	2.11	(2.04)	2.06	(2.00)	1.47	(1.33)	1.64	(1.56)
Intelligence	2.31	(2.19)	2.36	(2.19)	1.56	(1.52)	1.81	(1.74)
Familiarity	2.92	(2.74)	3.11	(3.11)	2.78	(2.81)	2.61	(2.48)
Character	2.28	(2.26)	3.14	(3.00)	2.11	(2.00)	2.11	(1.93)

From this table. it is more evident that the local students rate the storytellers more positively in almost all categories than do the Come-Heres. The greatest difference in rating are in the intelligence and familiarity of the local white speaker. the intelligence and general character of the Northern speaker. the friendliness and general character of the Southern speaker. and the familiarity and general character of the local Black speaker.

CORRELATIONS

Outside exposure may not appear to make very much difference in the frequency and means tables above. but it shows up as a factor in correlation measures. To reiterate. there are three levels of outside influence: (1) Pure Locals. (2) Other Locals. and (3) Come-Heres.

Table 6 gives Spearman's rho for each of the speakers in each of the categories as they correlate with outside exposure. Spearman's rho is used to determine the strength of a correlation between two sets of ranked data. A perfect score of +1 reflects a direct correlation. while a score of -1 reflects a perfect. inverse correlation. A score of zero implies no relationship exists. The further the score is from zero. the stronger the relationship is considered to be (Blalock 434).

The ratings show a moderate to strong relationship between the level of outside influence and how the students rated the Local White speaker in terms of intelligence,

familiarity and character. Oddly enough, there is little or no relationship between the level of outside of influence and friendliness of the Local White speaker. For example, a rating of outside influence of "1" (meaning local) was moderately correlated with a rating of "1" (most people I know) for the familiarity of the local speaker, resulting in a rho of .381. This score also means that the converse is true: the rating for outside influence of "3" (more than 50%) was moderately correlated with a rating of "4" (no one I know).

As for the Northern speaker, the strongest correlation is in intelligence and character, meaning the more exposure to outside dialects, the more likely the students were to give them a negative rating. This was highly unexpected and I mention it as a curiosity only. I suspect that since New Jersey is fairly close to the Eastern Shore of Virginia, that the students were more familiar with this dialect than I originally anticipated, which is why they would rate her more positively in general than the Come-Heres.

The correlation between level of outside influence and ratings of the Southern speaker are very slight and only seen in the rating of friendliness and general character.

However, the ratings of the Eastern Shore Black storyteller reflected a moderate to strong correlation to outside influence in all four categories. That is, students who were in group one, Pure Locals, exhibited a tendency to rate this storyteller more highly (1 or 2) in friendliness, intelligence, familiarity and general character.

Table 6: Spearman's Rho for Outside Influence and Speaker Ratings

|	Friendliness	Intelligence	Familiarity	Character
Local White	.070	.237	.381	.231
Northern	.105	.392	.107	.423
Southern	.159	.091	-.007	.137
Local Black	.250	.310	.324	.352

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

In the previous chapter. I presented data linking language attitudes to three factors: level of outside exposure. race. and academic performance. In this chapter. I intend to show why these factors are important and how they may affect curriculum planning and teacher training.

FACTOR ONE: OUTSIDE EXPOSURE

The data reflect a relationship between outside exposure and the ranking of the speakers. The following graph is a summary of the information in Table 6.

Figure 1: Spearman's Correlation - Outside Influence and Ratings of Speakers
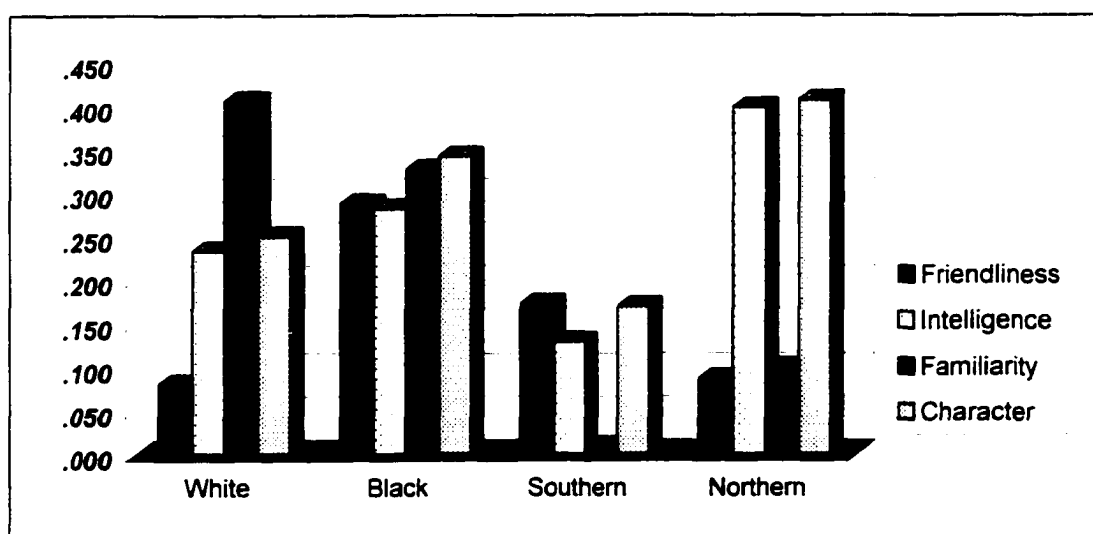
To review. the correlation between outside exposure and ranking of speakers is strongest for the ranking of local speakers. Local students rated the local speakers with more positive ratings (1s or 2s) than did Come-Heres (3s or 4s). Ratings of the Southern

speaker reflect the weakest relationships, which is logical since the majority of the Come-Here's came from other parts of the South. Both locals and Come-Here's would be equally likely to rate the Southerner at any given level. The Northern speaker shows almost no relationship for friendliness and familiarity rankings, but moderate to strong relationships for rankings in intelligence and character.

The students who had the most outside exposure were more likely to rate the local speakers poorly in almost all arenas. Conversely, those who had less outside exposure were more likely to rate the local speakers positively. This trend implies that the students who had little outside exposure had not learned to stigmatize the strong Southern variety of English spoken on the Shore, while the Come-Here's, who had been exposed to other dialects and therefore more of the biases regarding dialects, had adopted those biases and rated the speakers accordingly. The fact that the Come-Here's negatively rate the Northern speaker, who had a strong New Jersey accent, is further evidence of this hypothesis. She is not rated negatively in *friendliness* and *familiarity*, which are more personal attributes, but in *intelligence* and *character*. This prejudice against the Northern speaker is general in nature, rather than specific to her as an individual. Conversely, the local students may not have acquired a prejudice against their own dialect nor against the New Jersey dialect *in general.*

This may at first seem counter-intuitive. One would think that more exposure to other dialects should result in less bias, not more. However, these students were not exposed to the dialects they encountered off the Shore in a vacuum. They experienced these dialects along with the commentary of friends, teachers and parents. General biases against strong Southern *and* strong Northern dialects is prevalent in the United States. It

is even reflected in television. For example. Gomer and Goober Pyle had strikingly stronger Southern accents than Sheriff Andy Taylor in *The Andy Griffith Show*. One example of the bias against a strong New York accent is similarly reflected in the character of Joey Tribiani on the sitcom *Friends*. Although all of the "friends" on the show are supposedly New Yorkers. only Joey has a strong Northern accent. It is interesting to note that Joey. Gomer. and Goober are all portrayed as good-natured but stupid. (More academic examples of this type of stereotyping can be found in the *American Tongues* documentary.)

In summary. Northampton students who have not had to interact consistently with persons of other dialects have similarly not formed as negative opinions about their own dialect and its speakers as students who have interacted frequently with other dialects.

FACTOR TWO: RACE

In Table 5. I presented the mean responses of students to both the white and black local speakers. This table showed that overall the students preferred the local black speaker to the local white speaker . This may in part be accounted for by the ratio of black to white students participating in the survey (21:14). When the data was weighted for race. however. no large variation in means was observed.

Nonetheless. students show a distinct preference for the speaker's of their own race. as the Figure 2 indicates. It is again important to note that the *higher* the rating. the more *negative* the response. Black students on average rated the local white speaker more negatively than white students did. White students on average rated the local black speaker more negatively than black students did.

Figure 2: Comparison of White and Black Students' Responses to White and Black Local Speakers
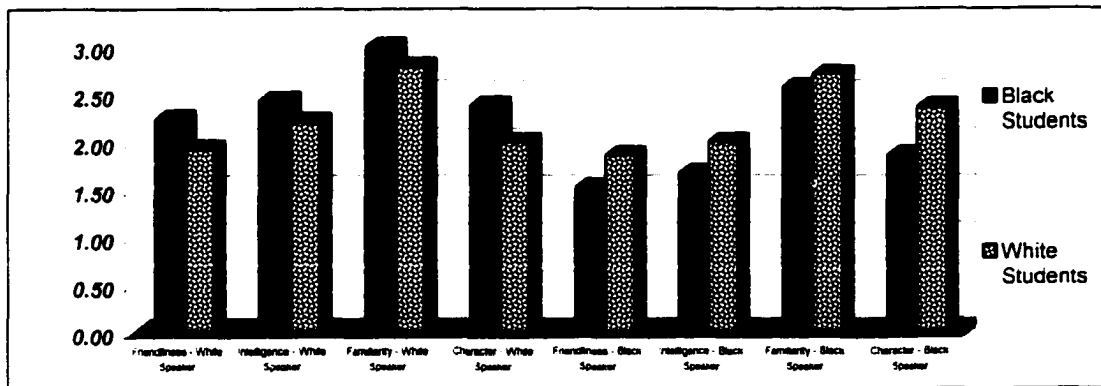
However. this preference of the students toward speakers of their own race is not completely equal across both races. There is a far stronger preference of black students toward the black speaker. Conversely. there is a far stronger prejudice of the black students toward the white speaker. Figure 3 shows the mathematical difference in the means in how students rated the two local speakers. White students showed a slight preference toward the white speaker. but the difference in the means is very small. On the other hand. the difference in the means of how black students rated the two local speakers is considerably greater. showing a distinct preference for the local black storyteller.

Figure 3: Comparison of Difference in Mean of Responses toward Local White and Local Black Speakers by White and Black Students
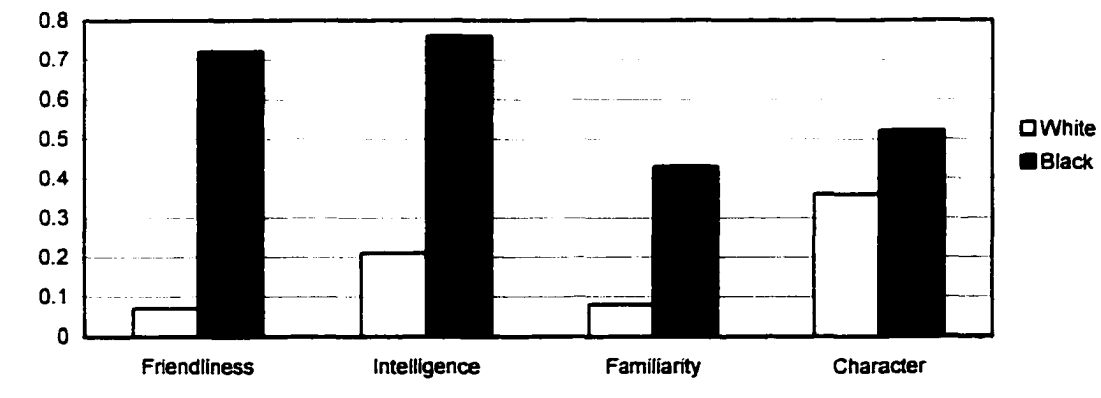
What might this suggest to educators? One implication is that educators need to

be aware of race in the classroom. and in particular of racial biases in dialects. A black

student with a local white teacher may be responding negatively to instruction based, in

part. on the instructor's dialect. This further suggests that teachers may need to be

educated about the effect of language attitudes in the classroom so that they can respond

appropriately. addressing the problem directly or indirectly as the case would warrant.

FACTOR THREE: ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Results regarding academic performance did not turn out quite as expected. It

appears more was going on with responses to the Southern speaker than to either of the

local speakers. Figure 4 compares the Spearman's rho coefficient for familiarity of the

three speakers. It shows that there was almost no relationship between how well students

were performing and how well they recognized the local white dialect. But there was a

moderate to strong relationship between performance and recognition of the local Black

dialect. and an even stronger relationship between academic performance and recognition

of the Southern dialect.

Figure 4: Comparison of Spearman's Rho for Familiarity
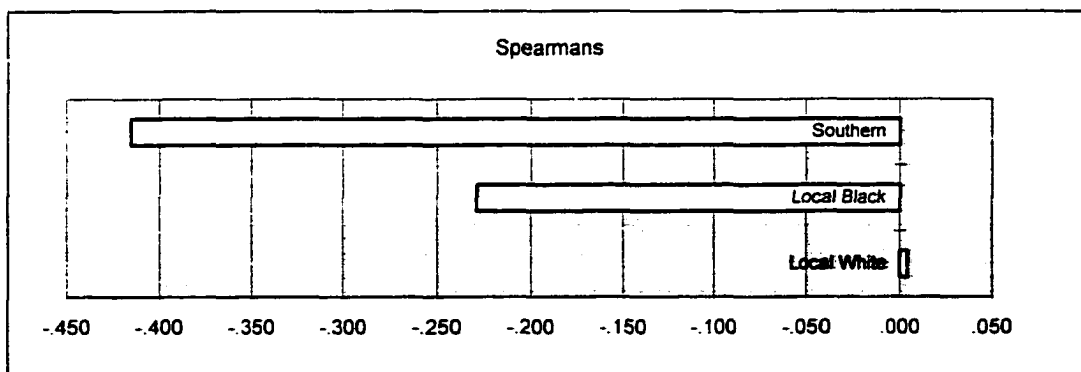
This comparison is for all students. but if students are separated by race, the

results are even more curious, as Figure 5 shows. According to this graph, it is evident

than white students who are performing well are far more likely to recognize the Southern

dialect that white students who are performing poorly. Furthermore, white students

performing poorly fail to recognize the Southern dialect. Moreover, there is virtually no

relationship between the academic performance of whites and their ability to recognize

the local black dialect.

On the other hand, black students who are performing well are equally as likely to

recognize the Southern dialect as the local black variety and students who are performing

poorly are less likely to make this connection.

Figure 5: Comparison of Spearman's Rho for Academic Performance and Familiarity by Race
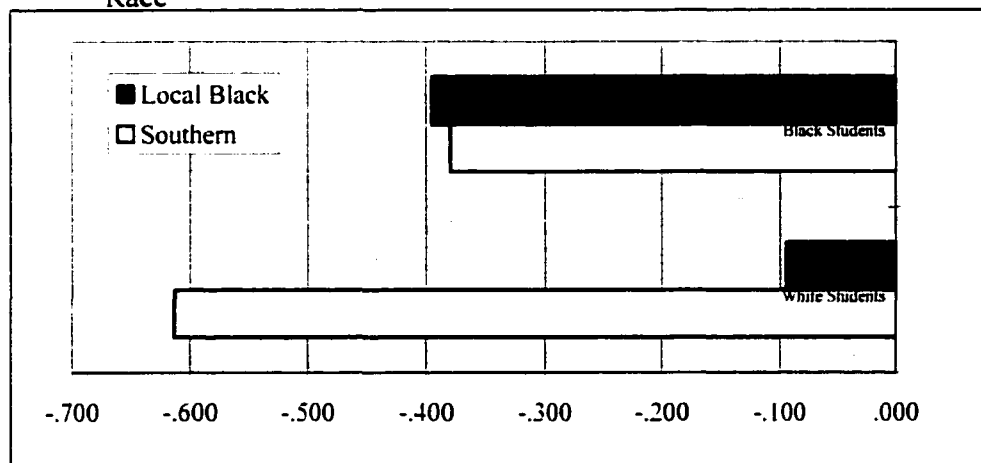
The explanation for the ability of students to identify (or fail to identify) the local

White dialect is perhaps a result of the language variety being a strong version of the

Southern dialect, which is stigmatized. A comparison of means encourages this

explanation, as seen in Figure 6. It shows that while successful performers are more

likely to recognize the Southern variety over the local White variety, troubled performers

are more likely to identify the *local* variety.

This suggests that the students who are performing less successfully are more familiar. and more willing to identify with. the local white variety than are students who are performing well. The question. then. is: Why are students who are able to identify the less stigmatized Southern variety able to perform better in school? Have they been acculturated to reject the local variety as part of academic survival? Are students who have not developed a bias against the local dialect being graded fairly in school? Particularly. are students who *speak* the local stigmatized dialect being graded fairly? These questions are beyond the scope of this study.

Figure 6: Comparison of Means for Familiarity by Academic Performance
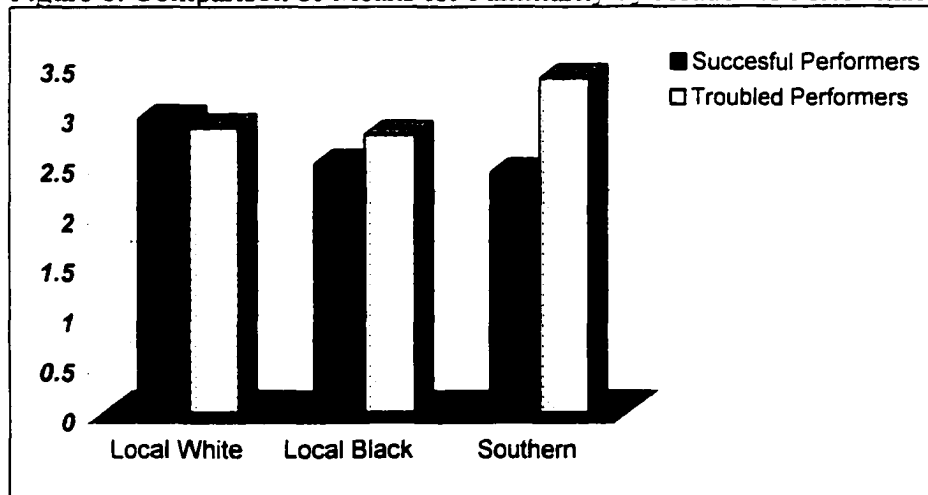
CONCLUSIONS

To review. this study has suggested three attributes of student language attitudes in Northampton County Public Schools.

1- The level of direct exposure to other language varieties increases the likelihood of bias against the local stigmatized varieties. Students who have lived off the Shore or

have extended interactions with family off the Shore are more likely to indicate bias toward the local dialect.

2- Race is still an issue in the Northampton classroom. This is illustrated through the difference in how black and white students rate local speakers of the other race. Therefore. white teachers in particular need to be sensitive to the responses of their black pupils that may be based on dialect differences. The converse may or may not be true. This study suggests that white students are equally critical of both white and black dialects.

3- Students who perform well in the classroom have learned to recognize and. perhaps. adopt the less stigmatized Southern dialect. Black students who perform well tend to adapt to or adopt Southern without rejecting their local variety, but white students make a choice. White students who perform poorly are not able to identify Southern as well as white students performing well.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The questions suggested by the data are provocative. However. the data of this study can only *suggest*. It is limited in scope to the sample population only. To be of more use to both linguists and scholars. this study could be repeated at one or all of the grade levels. taking a random sample of sufficient size to warrant a high degree of confidence and a lower degree of error.

One of the issues that deserves more attention is the change in language attitudes over time. In order to observe when language attitudes are in flux developmentally, a longitudinal study of one group of students would be necessary. This is feasible on the

Eastern Shore since out-migration is relatively small and generally occurs immediately after graduation. This type of study would help educators and linguists identify when children are developing their linguistic identity. What factors lead to the rejection of the local variety in favor of less stigmatized varieties?

Another possible variation would be to use child speakers as the storytellers and have teachers and students rate them. This would indicate whether there is any relationship between teacher bias and student bias. There exists a sufficient body of literature to substantiate that students respond to teacher bias, but to what degree? How are biases communicated and internalized by students? A more general sociolinguistic attitude survey, on such issues as parents, school, subjects, locality and so on, would help to answer some of these questions and simultaneously control for confounding variables that this survey was not designed to take into consideration.

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APPENDIX A: COPY OF SURVEY SHEET

	Speaker 1 *ESWVE*	Speaker 2 *SNAE*	Speaker 3 *SSAE*	Speaker 4 *ESAAVE*
This person sounds:				
Very Friendly	F1	F1	F1	F1
Friendly	F2	F2	F2	F2
Not Very Friendly	F3	F3	F3	F3
Mean	F4	F4	F4	F4
This person sounds:				
Very Smart	I1	I1	I1	I1
Smart	I2	I2	I2	I2
Not Very Smart	I3	I3	I3	I3
Dumb (Stupid)	I4	I4	I4	I4
This person talks like:				
Most of the people I know	R1	R1	R1	R1
Some of the people I know	R2	R2	R2	R2
A few people I know	R3	R3	R3	R3
No one I know	R4	R4	R4	R4
If this person were doing the voice for a cartoon fairy tale (like *Cinderella*), she would be:				
The heroine (Cinderella)	C1	C1	C1	C1
The helper (Fairy Godmother)	C2	C2	C2	C2
The comic relief (the silly mouse...Gus)	C3	C3	C3	C3
The villainess (the wicked stepmother)	C4	C4	C4	C4

APPENDIX B: COPY OF SPEAK TEST PICTURE

Now please look at the six pictures below. I'd like you to tell me the story that the pictures show, starting with picture number 1 and going through picture number 6. Please take one minute to look at the pictures and think about the story. Do not begin the story until I tell you to do so.
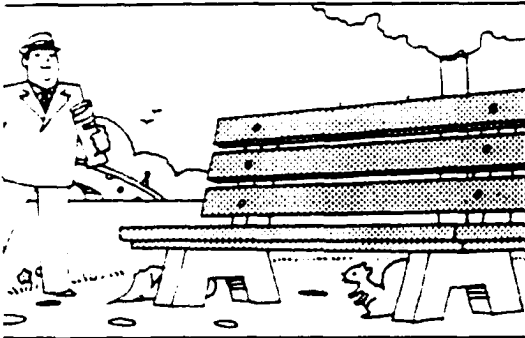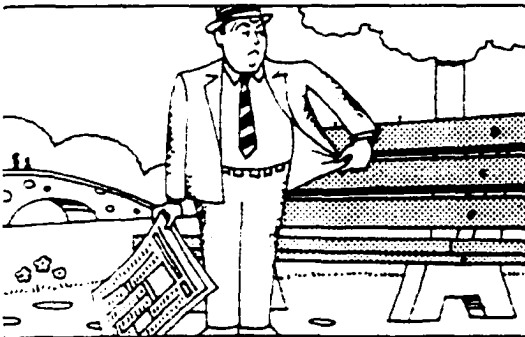

-8-
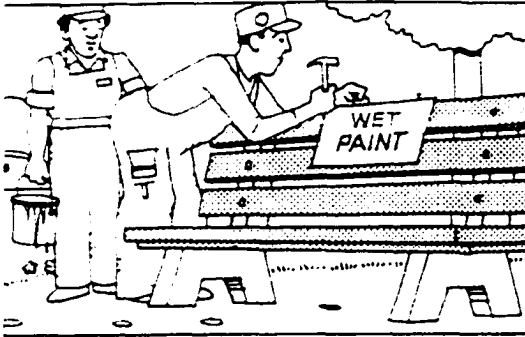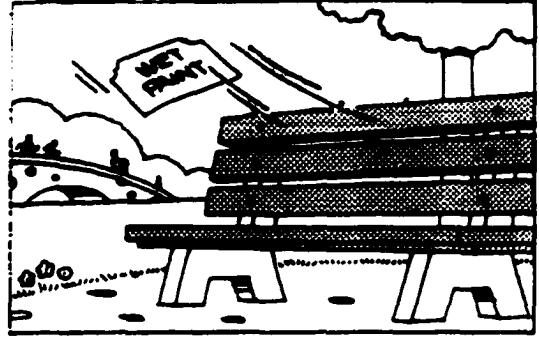
APPENDIX C: TRANSCRIPTS OF "THE THREE LITTLE PIGS"

Speaker One - Local White

Three little pigs who went out into the world to build their own houses. The first little pig
      /aut/-raised   /hauziz/-not raised

decided he would make his house of straw. So he got his straw and mud together and put

his house together... and along comes the wolf and he says. "Little pig, Little pig let me

come in. And the wolf. and the pig says. "Not by the hair of my chinny chin chin." So the
  /iən/   /činı čin čiən/

little. the wolf says. "I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house in." And the pig said.
                        /iən/

"Go 'head." He said. so he huffed and he puffed and [whooo-sound] he blew the house
  /gohɛd/

in. So the little pig ran to..to his brother who was down the road who had built himself a
/iən/

house of sticks. Along comes the wolf and the wolf says. "Little pig. Little pig let me
  /ı/

come in." And the pig says. "Not by the hair of my chinny chin chin." And the wolf says.
  /iən/   /činı čin čiən/

"So I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house in." So the wolf huffs and he puffs and

just quick as can be he blew that house of sticks down. And that little pig escapes and
(note colloquialism)

runs to his brother's house who had built another house down the road made of bricks. So
(elongated)   (diphthongized)

the wolf comes and he knocks on the door. And he says. "Little pig, Little pig, let me

come in." And the pig says. "Not by the hair of my chinny chin chin." He said. "So I'll
                       /iə/

huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house in." So he huffed and he puffed and he puffed

and he huffed and he huffed and he puffed but he <u>couldn't</u> blow in that hou..down that
(strongly accented)

house made of bricks. So he decides he's going to have to a find a way to get these little
/gənəhæftə/

pigs. So he knocks on the door again. And he says, "Little pig, little pig, let me come in."
/əgiən/

And he says, "Not by the hair of my chinny chin chin." So he climbs up on the roof and

he's going to come down the chimney. How-ever, the three little pigs are inside and they

put a pot of water on in fireplace. So that wolf, he climb-slides down the chimney and
/oən/

Into the water he goes and of course cook the wolf and maybe they even <u>EAT</u> the wolf
(strongly accented)

and the little..three little pigs live happily ever after.

<u>Speaker Two- Northern</u>

Once upon a time there were three little pigs. It was time for them to go out on their own.

So they kissed their Mom and Dad goodbye and <u>took off</u>. Each pig wanted to build their

own house. The first pig built his house out of straw. Just as he finished building and

closed the door behind him he hears the wolf in the yard <u>screaming at him</u>. "<u>Hey</u> Little

Pig, Little Pig, Let me come in."_Little pig replies, "Not by the hair of my chinny chin
note absence of definite articles

chin."_Wolf says, "I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house in." So he huffed and he

puffed and he blew the poor little pigs house in. <u>Don't forget now</u>, there were three little

pigs. Let's talk about the second one. The second one, built a house out of twigs. So

here comes that wolf again looking for a pig dinner. He starts shouting again, "<u>Hey</u> Little

Pig, Little Pig, Let me come in."_Little pig replies, "Not by the hair of my chinny chin chin."_Wolf says, "I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house in." So he huffed and he puffed..blew the poor little pig's house in. Let me just tell you this, every time the wolf blew a pig's house down, the pigs managed to escape. Now, the big bad wolf goes to the third little pig's house. This pig was smarter than the average pig because he built his house out of bricks. So the mean old wolf starts his song and dance. " Hey Little Pig, Little Pig, let me come in." Little pig says, "Not by the hair of my chinny chin chin." "All right then, I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house in." He puffed and puffed, and huffed and puffed some more. Then he almost passed out. He couldn't blow the house down, so wha'd he do? He climbed up the chimney and went down it to get into the house. But guess what. The pig outsmarted him and put a kettle of boiling water under the chimney. And ker-plunk! That's where the wolf landed... in that kettle of boiling water. And that night, the three little pigs ate themselves wolf stew for dinner. And that is the end of this story.

Speaker Three - Southern

Once upon a time there were three little pigs. And they decided it was time for them to go
          /tam/
out into the world on their own and each build their own house. So each little pig took a
                 diphthongized /o/
different road. First little pig decided to build his house out of hay. Well the wolf came
            diphthongized /o/
along. He was over in the distance watching. HE came up to the little pig's door. "Little

pig, little pig, let me come in." Shoo, that first little pig said, "No. No, not by the hair of
          /ın/
my chinny chin chin." "Then I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house down," said
          /ın/

the wolf. Well that little pig got out just in time and he ran to the house of the second

/tam/

little pig. The second little pig had built his house out of straw. And that wolf came up to

the door of the second little pig and he said, "Little pig, little pig, let me come in."

/ɪn/

"Not by the hair of my chinny chin chin." said the second little pig. So the wolf huffed

/ɪn/

and puffed and he blew that house down. And the first and second little pigs got out just

in time. And they ran into the house of the third little pig. Well the third little pig, boy he

/ tam/

was a smart pig. He had built his house out of bricks. Wolf came up to the door and he

said, "Little pigs, little pigs, let me come in." "No, no, not by the hair of my chinny chin

chin." said the pigs. So the wolf blew and he blew and he blew and he just could not

knock that house down. So he got up on the roof. And the little pigs were smart. They

had built a little fire. And that pig came dow…that wolf came down the chimney and

when he did…whooo..he got burned and he ran out of that house and those three little

pigs never ever ever saw him again. The end.

Speaker Four - Local Black

A long, long time ago, in a land of make believe, lived three little pigs. Now the three

little pigs decided that it was time to leave Mom's home. They each decided to go out and

build a house. The first little pig decided to build his house of straw. He built a lovely

straw house. But how long do you think it will last with a big, bad wolf walking by? A
note intonation contour

long came that big, bad wolf. He knocked on the door and said, "Little pig, Little pig, let
/nakdɔndə/

me in." And the little pig said, "Not by the hair of my chinny chin chin." So what do you

think that big, bad wolf did? Well, he huffed and he puffed and he blew the house down.

The first little pig got away and ran to the second little pig's house which was made of

sticks. The wolf continued on his walk and came to the stick house. He knocked on the
/də/

door and said, "Little pig, little pig let me in." And that second little pig said, "Not by the

hair of my chinny chin chin." So he huffed and he puffed and he blew the house in. Well

the first little pig and the second little pig ran to the third little pig's house. Now this little

pig took a lot of pride in building his house. He built a brick house. The first and the

second little pig began to settle right in and felt at home. Can you guess who came

knocking? Yes, the big, bad wolf. He knocked, and he knocked but the third little pig did

not let him in. So he huffed and he puffed and he huffed and he puffed, but he couldn't

blow the house down. Oh by now the three little pigs were having a good time laughing

at the big bad wolf. Now you know that big bad wolf couldn't let the little pigs laugh at

him. So what do you think he did? Yep, he climbed on top of the house and decided to

go down the chimney. Well, by this time the three little pigs were planning on making a

pot of soup. And they had the water boiling, waiting for some meat. What kind of soup

do you think the three little pigs had? The end.

VITA

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Education:

9/98 -8/00

Old Dominion University. Norfolk. Virginia
Degree: Master of Arts   *Major:* Applied Linguistics
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8/87 - 5/97

Old Dominion University. Norfolk, Virginia
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8/93 - 2/96

Providence Bible College. Norfolk, Virginia
Degree: Bachelor of Arts   *Major:* Biblical Studies
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Degree conferred: 6/96

Business Experience

1/99 -1/00

Research Assistant
Old Dominion University Social Science Research Center
Responsible for creating. implementing. supervising and analyzing surveys for research. Coordinated work groups of academic and community leaders.

9/97 - present

ABE/ESL Level 1 Instructor
Norfolk Public Schools
Teaching basic English (listening. speaking. reading and writing) to students from many different cultures with different academic levels.

4/96 - present

Delivery Route Supervisor
Haverty Furniture Company
Duties include supervision of delivery drivers. customer service. materials management. office management. performance evaluation and more.

Other Teaching Experience:

9/99 - 12/99   Teaching Intermediate Grammar at ODU's English Language Center
8/92 - 1/97   Teaching "emergency" English to refugees
8/94 - 4/95   Youth Minister at Hispanic Mission. Non-English environment.
                      Taught conversational English two nights per week.

Miscellaneous:
• Member of the Southeastern Conference on Linguistics (SECOL)
• Member of VATESOL (Virginia Association of TESOL)
• Presented paper on "Language Attitudes in Appalachian High Schools" at SECOL, April 1999
• Winner of the 1999 Reza Ordoubadian Award for best graduate paper presented in a calendar year at SECOL conferences
• Excellent computer skills. including computer aided instruction of English and SPSS.