

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 213 062

CS 503 767

AUTHOR
TITLE

Byrd, Marquita L.; Williams, Hampton S.
Language Attitudes and Black Dialect: An Assessment.
(1) Language Attitudes in the Classroom. (2) A
Reliable Measure of Language Attitudes.

PUB DATE
NOTE

Nov 81
15p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the
Speech Communication Association (67th, Anaheim, CA,
November 12-15, 1981).

EDRS PRICE
DESCRIPTORS

MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
*Attitude Measures; *Black Dialects; *Classroom
Communication; *Communication Research; Elementary
Secondary Education; *Language Attitudes; *Teacher
Attitudes; Test Construction; Test Reliability; Test
Validity

ABSTRACT

These two related papers provide information on
teacher attitudes toward black dialect use in the classroom and the
measurement of such attitudes. The first paper reports on data from
176 administrators, counselors, teachers, and student teachers,
revealing significant relationships between a teacher's definition of
black dialect, attitudes toward black dialect, and race of teacher.
The second paper describes the steps taken to refine and improve a
language attitude inventory (LAI) so that it could be used to
describe and to make inferences about teachers' attitudes toward the
use of black dialect in the classroom. The two versions of the LAI
and a bibliography on teacher attitudes and dialects are provided.
(RL)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

+ This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve
reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-
ment do not necessarily represent official NIE
position or policy.

LANGUAGE ATTITUDES AND BLACK DIALECT: AN ASSESSMENT

- (1) Language Attitudes in the Classroom
- (2) A Reliable Measure of Language Attitudes

by

Marquita L. Byrd, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Arts and Humanities
University of Houston
Downtown College

Hampton S. Williams, Ed.D.
Associate Professor
Educational Administration
University of Southern Mississippi

Papers presented at Speech Communication Association Convention, Anaheim
California, November 1981

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Marquita L. Byrd

Hampton S. Williams

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ED213062

SS03767

LANGUAGE ATTITUDES IN THE CLASSROOM

Marquita L. Byrd, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Arts and Humanities
University of Houston
Downtown College

Hampton William, Ed.D.
Associate Professor
Educational Administration
University of Southern Mississippi

Paper presented at Speech Communication Association
Convention, Anaheim, California, November, 1981

EDUCATORS' ATTITUDES TOWARD THE USE OF BLACK DIALECT IN THE CLASSROOM

The purpose of this investigation was to discover what was the relationship among the demographic characteristics of teachers, their definition of black dialect, and attitude toward its usage in the classroom. Based on the body of research dealing with teachers' attitudes toward the use of dialect the following hypotheses were posited:

- H₁: Of the differences among individual teachers, including race, sex, position, and years teaching experience, only race will make a significant difference in language attitude scores.
- H₂: Language attitudes are significantly related to definitions of black dialect.
- H₃: Language attitudes will differ according to the race of teacher and teachers' definitions of black dialect.

Subjects (N = 176) included administrators, counselors, teachers, and student teachers. These subjects came from intact classrooms, seminars and the public school system. Data were gathered in face-to-face settings and by mail.

A series of one-way analyses of variance, correlation and multiple regression were used to test the data. Based on the results each hypothesis was confirmed. Teachers' attitudes toward the use of black dialect in the classroom did not vary according to position, sex or number of years spent teaching. The only demographic variable which caused a significant difference in attitude scores was the race of teacher. Black teachers had a more positive attitude toward the use of black dialect than white teachers.

Results from a Pearson r revealed a statistically significant relationship between the definition of black dialect and attitudes toward black dialect. Lastly, a multiple regression analysis supported the hypothesis that there was a significant relationship between definition of black dialect, race of teacher

and attitude toward black dialect ⁽²⁾ usage. When all variables were entered into a stepwise regression analysis it appeared that definition and race were best suited for the prediction of attitudes towards the use of black dialect in the classroom.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adler, S. Poverty Children and Their Language: Implications for Teaching and Treating. New York: Grove and Struthing, Inc. 1979
- Bartatz, J.C. Should black children learn white dialect. American Speech and Hearing Association. 12 (1970), 415-417
- Bereiter, Curd; Engleman, S. Teaching disadvantaged Children in the Pre-School, Englewoods Cliffs: Prentiss-Hall, Inc., 1966
- Blodgett, E. and Cooper, F. Attitudes toward elementary teachers toward black dialect. Journal of Communication Disorders, 6 (1973) 12 1-133
- Byrd, M. and Williams, H. The development of a reliable measure of language attitudes, Paper presented at National Black Association of Speech, Language and Hearing Association Convention, Los Angeles, 1981.
- Carter, Ruth. A study of attitudes: Mexican American and Anglo elementary bilingual children's speech (Doctoral dissertation, University of Houston, 1976). Dissertation Abstracts International, 1976, 4942 A (University Microfilm No. 77-1502.)
- Covington, A. Teacher's attitudes toward black English: effects on student achievement, Unpublished doctoral dissertation, the University of Pittsburgh, 1972.
- Deutch, M. The role of social class in language development and cognition, American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 35 (1965), 78-88.
- Erickson, D. "F" get you honky!": a new look at black dialect and the school. Arthur Smith (Ed) New York: Harper & Row, 1972.
- Gordon, E. A Review of Programs of Compensatory Special Education in R.L. Jones (Ed) New directions in Special Education
- Gustin, J.T. The social perception of language variation: Black and white teachers' attitudes toward speakers from different racial and social backgrounds.

Unpublished doctoral dissertation, #10,056. The University of Michigan, 1970
in F. Williams, Explorations of the linguistics attitudes of teachers,
Massachusetts: Newbury House 1976.

Harrison, Deborah and Trabasso, Tom, (Ed) Black English: a Seminar,
Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1976.

Haskins, J. and Hugh, B. The language of black children in confrontation
with teachers' attitudes. The Psychology of Black Language. New York: Barres
and Noble Books, 1973.

Hewett, N. Reactions of Prospective English teachers toward speakers of
a non-standard dialect. Language and Learning, 1971, 21, 205-12

Hess, R. and Shipman, V. Early experience and socialization cognitive
modes in children. Child Development, 36, (1965) 862-886.

Jackson, R. The relationship between language diversity and self-concept
formation in children. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Maryland, 1977)
Dissertation Abstracts International, 1977-4048- A University Microfilm
No. 77-28, 739.

Monsees, E. and Berman, C. Speech and language screening in a summer
headstart program. Journal of Speech and Hearing Disorders 33 (1968) 121-127.

Naremore, R.C. Teachers' judgments of children's speech: A factor
analytic study of attitudes, Speech Monographs, 1971, 38, 17-27.

Sanford, Ruby. Teacher attitudes and black dialect. (Doctoral disser-
tation, Purdue University, 1977) Dissertation Abstracts International, 1977,
SSCA (University Microfilm No. 78 13116).

Seilgman, C.R.; Tucker, G.R.; and Lambert, W.E. The effects of speech
style and other attributes on teachers' attitudes toward pupils. Language in
Society 1972, 1, 131-42.

Tucker, G.R. and Lambert, W.E. White and Negro listeners' reactions to various American-English dialects. Social Forces, 1969, 47, 463-68.

Wiggins, E. The cognitive deficit - difficult controversy: a black sociopolitical perspective. Deborah Harrison and Tom Trabusso, (Ed) Black English: a Seminar, Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1976

Williams, F. and Associates, Explorations of the linguistic attitudes of teachers, Massachusetts' Newbury House, 1976.

Williams, F.; Hopper, R., Natalicio, D. The sounds of children. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1977.

Williams, R. and Wolfram, Walt. A linguistic description of social dialects. Paper prepared for the Committee on Communication Problems of the Urban and Ethnic Population, American Speech and Hearing Association, 1974.

Wolfram, W., Sociolinguistic premises and the nature of non-standard dialects. Arthur Smith (Ed) Language Communication and Rhetoric in Black America. New York: Harper & Row, 1972.

A RELIABLE MEASURE OF LANGUAGE ATTITUDES

Marquita L. Byrd, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Arts and Humanities
University of Houston
Downtown College

Hampton S. Williams, Ed.D.
Associate Professor
Educational Administration
University of Southern Mississippi

Paper presented at Speech Communication Association Convention, Anaheim
California, November 1981

ABSTRACT

The intent of the authors was to refine an existing language attitude inventory (LAI) so that it could be used to describe and to make inferences about teachers' attitudes toward the use of black dialect in the classroom. The LAI (Blodgett & Cooper, 1973), in its original form, consisted of six definitions, ten questions eliciting attitudes toward black dialect, and two demographic items. The original authors used the LAI to produce only descriptive data on teachers' language attitudes. In the present study, issues surrounding the reliability of the LAI were addressed. In the pilot study, using the original form of the LAI, the data, when analyzed for internal consistency, resulted in an alpha coefficient that was unacceptably low (.26). In the revised form of the LAI, with modifications of the items and of the response-choice structure, the reliability of the instrument was increased to .7146. The LAI, in its revised form, appears to be a reliable and statistically defensible instrument which allows for the data to be analyzed using both descriptive and inferential methods.

Figure 1

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI LANGUAGE PROJECT
(Instrument developed by University of Alabama)¹

A great deal of study in the past few years has been directed toward improving communication in the educational system. One of the areas in which there is current interest is that of language usage in the classroom. We need your professional opinion concerning what black dialect is, and what it means to you as an educator.

Before proceeding, please circle the number within each of the demographic variables listed below that pertains to you.

A. <u>Position</u>	B. <u>Race</u>	C. <u>Sex</u>	D. <u>Years in Teaching</u>
1. administrator	1. black	1. female	1. 0
2. counselor	2. white	2. male	2. 1-5
3. teacher	3. other		3. 6-10
4. student teacher			4. 11-15
			5. 16-20
			6. 21-25
			7. 26 and over

The following is a list of definitions of black dialect. Please check the ONE definition that, in your professional opinion, most clearly describes what black dialect is.

1. One of the non-standard forms of English spoken by minority groups. It is characterized by differences in grammar, word usage, and pronunciation.
2. An underdeveloped language, consisting of many grammatical errors, poor pronunciation, and deficient vocabulary.
3. A variety of English spoken by a minority group, suitable for use in the minority community, but unacceptable outside this community.
4. An undesirable form of English spoken by a disadvantaged minority, consisting of deviant grammatical forms, poor word usage, and sub-standard pronunciation.
5. A different, but equally acceptable, form of English.
6. An uneducated way of speaking that is difficult to understand, poorly developed, and incapable of expressing complicated ideas.

PLEASE GO TO THE NEXT PAGE

(2)

Please answer the following questions based on your classroom experience with black dialect. Only "yes" or "no" answers are needed. Please circle the one answer that, in general, most nearly describes your experience.

- | | | |
|-----|----|---|
| yes | no | 1. Do dialect speakers in your classroom have difficulty following spoken directions? |
| yes | no | 2. Do you have difficulty understanding the speech of children with black dialect? |
| yes | no | 3. Do you think that Board of Education should provide special speech and language help for dialect-speaking children? |
| yes | no | 4. Do dialect speakers, in general, seem as intelligent as non-dialect speakers? |
| yes | no | 5. Do you attempt to eliminate dialect from the speech of children in your class? |
| yes | no | 6. If so, have you been successful at all? |
| yes | no | 7. Do language subjects (such as spelling, composition, and reading) seem to be more difficult for dialect-speaking than for non-dialect-speaking children? |
| yes | no | 8. Do you think parents should eliminate black dialect from their speech? |
| yes | no | 9. Do you think dialect-speaking children can make satisfactory progress in school without changing their speech? |
| yes | no | 10. In general, does the dialect result in communication problems in your classroom? |

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION

Blodgett, E., & Cooper, E. Attitudes of elementary teachers toward black dialect. Journal of Communication Disorders, 1973, 6, 121-133.

Figure 2

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI LANGUAGE PROJECT
(Instrument developed by University of Alabama)

A great deal of study in the past few years has been directed toward improving communication in the educational system. One of the areas in which there is current interest is that of language usage in the classroom. We need your professional opinion concerning what black dialect is, and what it means to you as an educator.

Before proceeding, please circle the number within each of the demographic variables listed below that pertains to you.

A. <u>Position</u>	B. <u>Race</u>	C. <u>Sex</u>	D. <u>Years in Teaching</u>
1. administrator	1. black	1. female	1. 0
2. counselor	2. white	2. male	2. 1-5
3. teacher	3. other		3. 6-10
4. student teacher			4. 11-15
			5. 16-20
			6. 21-25
			7. 26 and over

The following is a list of definitions of black dialect. Please check the ONE definition that, in your professional opinion, most clearly describes what black dialect is:

1. One of the non-standard forms of English spoken by minority groups. It is characterized by differences in grammar, word usage, and pronunciation.
2. An underdeveloped language, consisting of many grammatical errors, poor pronunciation, and deficient vocabulary.
3. A variety of English spoken by a minority group, suitable for use in the minority community, but unacceptable outside this community.
4. An undesirable form of English spoken by a disadvantaged minority, consisting of deviant grammatical forms, poor word usage, and substandard pronunciation.
5. A different, but equally, acceptable, form of English.
6. An uneducated way of speaking that is difficult to understand, poorly developed, and incapable of expressing complicated ideas.

PLEASE GO TO THE NEXT PAGE

Figure 2

-2-

Please answer the following questions based on your classroom experience with black dialect. Please circle the letter of the ONE answer that, in general, most nearly describes your experience.

1. Dialect speakers in your classroom have difficulty following spoken directions.
a. strongly agree b. agree c. disagree d. strongly disagree
2. You have difficulty understanding the speech of children with black dialect.
a. strongly agree b. agree c. disagree d. strongly disagree
3. You think the Board of Education should provide special speech and language help for dialect-speaking children.
a. strongly agree b. agree c. disagree d. strongly disagree
4. Dialect speakers, in general, seem as intelligent as non-dialect speakers.
a. strongly agree b. agree c. disagree d. strongly disagree
5. You attempt to eliminate dialect from the speech of children in your class.
a. always b. frequently c. sometimes d. never
6. Language subjects (such as spelling, composition, and reading) seem to be more difficult for dialect-speaking than for non-dialect speaking children.
a. strongly agree b. agree c. disagree d. strongly disagree
7. Parents should eliminate black dialect from their speech.
a. strongly agree b. agree c. disagree d. strongly disagree
8. Dialect-speaking children can make satisfactory progress in school without changing their speech.
a. strongly agree b. agree c. disagree d. strongly disagree
9. Dialect use results in communication problems in your classroom.
a. strongly agree b. agree c. disagree d. strongly disagree

¹Elizabeth Blodgett and Eugene Cooper, "Attitudes of Elementary Teachers Toward Dialect", Journal of Communication Disorders, Vol. 6(1973): 121-33.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION

References

- Blodgett, E., & Cooper, E. Attitudes of elementary teachers toward dialect. Journal of Communication Disorders, 1973, 6, 121-133.
- Cohen, J., & Cohen, P. Applied multiple regression/correlation analysis for the behavioral sciences. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1975.
- Cronbach, L. Coefficient alpha and the internal structure of tests. Psychometrika, 1951, 16, 297-334.
- Nunnally, J.C. Psychometric theory. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1967.
- Williams, F. (Ed.). Explorations of the linguistic attitudes of teachers. Rowley, MA: Newbury House, 1976.
- Williams, R.L. (Ed.). Ebonics: The true language of black folks! St. Louis, MO: Institute of Black Studies, 1975.