

BLACK AMERICAN ENGLISH

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

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TO SUCCEED IS TO BE UNDERSTOOD

- IN MAINSTREAM AMERICA, TO BE UNDERSTOOD IS TO BE ABLE TO SPEAK AND TO USE STANDARD ENGLISH.
- WHAT IS STANDARD ENGLISH [SE]?
STANDARD ENGLISH IS THE ENGLISH SPOKEN ON THE MAJOR NATIONAL TV NETWORKS: NBC, CBS, ABC, CNN, etc. IN A MIDWESTERN (MINNESOTA TO MICHIGAN) DIALECT KNOWN AS “AMERICAN STANDARD ENGLISH” [ASE].
STANDARD ENGLISH IS ALSO KNOWN AS THE “LANGUAGE OF WIDER COMMUNICATION” [LWC] BECAUSE OF ITS WIDESPREAD USE IN THE MEDIA.

THERE ARE TWO SETS OF NORMS IN [SE]:

- **INFORMAL STANDARD** [USUALLY SPOKEN, SOMETIMES IN A REGIONAL DIALECT, WITH DISTINCTIVE PRONUNCIATION PATTERNS PREFERRED BY A GROUP OF SPEAKERS WHO ARE SET OFF FROM OTHERS GEOGRAPHICALLY, SOCIALLY, AND CULTURALLY] (Wolfram, et al, 1999)
- **THE FORMAL STANDARD** [WRITTEN LANGUAGE TAUGHT IN SCHOOL ACCORDING TO NORMS IN GRAMMAR BOOKS AND EVALUATED IN STANDARDIZED TESTS], MORE RECENTLY REFERRED TO AS ENGLISH USED IN A “FORMAL REGISTER.” (Ruby Payne, 2001)

BLACK AMERICAN ENGLISH

- MANY AFRICAN AMERICANS SPEAK AND USE A FORM OF ENGLISH THAT IS SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT FROM STANDARD ENGLISH.
- EVERY LANGUAGE SYSTEM CONTAINS RULES.
- THE RULES OF BLACK AMERICAN ENGLISH [**BE**] ARE FUNCTIONAL TO THOSE WHO USE THEM.
- THESE RULES ARE **SYSTEMATIC** AND ARE APPLIED OVER AND OVER AGAIN IN EXACTLY THE SAME WAY.
- MORE RECENTLY, BLACK ENGLISH HAS BEEN REFERRED TO AS ENGLISH USED IN A “CASUAL REGISTER.” (Payne)

UNAWARENESS OF THE RULES

- OFTEN, THE STUDENT WHO SPEAKS BLACK AMERICAN ENGLISH IS UNAWARE OF THE RULES OF STANDARD ENGLISH
- LIKewise, MANY TEACHERS ARE UNAWARE OF THE RULES OF BLACK AMERICAN ENGLISH
- THE “BLAME” SHOULD NOT BE PLACED UPON THE STUDENT OR THE TEACHER, BUT UPON “UNAWARENESS.”

BECOMING AWARE

THE PURPOSE OF THIS PRESENTATION IS TO PROVIDE KNOWLEDGE ABOUT SOME OF THE RULES AND FEATURES OF BLACK ENGLISH AS SPOKEN IN AMERICA.

HOW CAN WE, AS TEACHERS, BEST SUCCEED IN OUR “NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND” EFFORTS?

WE CAN BEGIN BY TRYING TO UNDERSTAND THE LANGUAGE SPOKEN BY AFRICAN AMERICAN CHILDREN

WHY MUST WE UNDERSTAND BLACK ENGLISH?

- ALL STUDENTS ARE TESTED ON THEIR KNOWLEDGE AND USE OF STANDARD ENGLISH [SE] [LWC].
- THESE TESTS DO NOT VALUE OR REWARD OTHER STRUCTURES OR FEATURES OF ENGLISH, AS FOUND IN BLACK ENGLISH.
- SUCCESS IN SCHOOL IS MEASURED BY HOW WELL THE STUDENT USES STANDARD ENGLISH.
- MANY AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS ARE “LEFT BEHIND” BECAUSE OF THEIR LOW SCORES ON STANDARDIZED TESTS IN READING AND WRITING.

TOOLS FOR UNDERSTANDING

- SOCIOLINGUISTS [ABRAHAMAS, DILLARD, BARATZ AND SHUY, LABOV, JOHNSON, WOLFRAM, DANDY, SMITHERMAN, ETC.] HAVE PROVIDED US WITH TOOLS TO BETTER UNDERSTAND—RATHER THAN CONDEMN—BLACK SPEECH.

TOOLS FOR UNDERSTANDING

THEY HAVE LONG CONTENDED THAT BLACK ENGLISH CONTAINS:

- **PHONOLOGY [SPEECH SOUNDS, PRONUNCIATION PATTERNS]**
- **LEXICON [VOCABULARY, TERMS, CODES, WORDSETS]**
- **GRAMMAR [WORDS, INFLECTIONS, SYNTAX, RULES]**
- **VERBS, AND OTHER FEATURES THAT ARE DIFFERENT FROM STANDARD ENGLISH.**

TOOLS FOR UNDERSTANDING

- TEACHERS WHO ARE AWARE OF THESE DIFFERENCES ARE BETTER PREPARED TO TEACH STANDARD ENGLISH TO AFRICAN AMERICAN CHILDREN.

WHAT IS BLACK ENGLISH?

- BLACK ENGLISH IS THE LANGUAGE OF BLACK AMERICA.

CAUTION: NOT ALL 36 MILLION AFRICAN AMERICANS CHOOSE TO SPEAK BLACK ENGLISH, ESPECIALLY THE EDUCATED MIDDLE AND UPPER INCOME BLACKS.

- BLACK ENGLISH HAS BEEN CALLED:
 - NONSTANDARD BLACK DIALECT
 - BLACK ENGLISH VERNACULAR [BEV]
 - AFRICAN AMERICAN ENGLISH [AAE]
 - AFRICAN AMERICAN VERNACULAR ENGLISH [AAVE]
 - EBONICS [USEB]
 - BLACK COMMUNICATIONS [BC]
 - BLACK POVERTY LANGUAGE
 - CASUAL REGISTER ENGLISH
 - RAP

WHERE DOES [BE] COME FROM?

- **BLACK ENGLISH IS A FUNCTIONAL FORM OF COMMUNICATION THAT EVOLVED FROM THE CREOLIZATION OF PLANTATION ENGLISH AND THE TRANSPORTED LANGUAGES SPOKEN BY ENSLAVED AFRICANS.**
- **BLACK ENGLISH REPRESENTS A CROSS-FERTILIZATION OF LANGUAGES NURTURED AND PASSED DOWN FROM ONE GENERATION TO THE NEXT IN AN ORAL AND AURAL TRADITIONAL CLIMATE, SINCE LAWS [BLACK CODES] MANDATED THAT ANY PERSON CAUGHT TEACHING A SLAVE TO READ OR WRITE COULD BE FINED AND PUT IN JAIL.**

CONTACT BETWEEN LANGUAGES

ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN TWO DIFFERENT SPOKEN LANGUAGES, BETWEEN THE COLONIZED AND THE COLONIZER, HAVE PRODUCED VARIANT FORMS OF EXPRESSION IN FIVE STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT FROM THE ORIGINAL “NATIVE” LANGUAGE OF THE COLONIZED TO THE “DOMINANT” ACADEMY MAINSTREAM STANDARD LANGUAGE OF THE COLONIZER.

STAGES OF CONTACT BETWEEN TWO LANGUAGES:

1. ORIGINAL
2. PIDGIN
3. CREOLE
4. DECREOLIZATION
5. DOMINANT

1. ORIGINAL

INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE OF PRIMAL [“FIRST” NOT PRIMITIVE] PEOPLE WHO WERE “DISCOVERED” BY OUTSIDE EXPLORERS AND SUBSEQUENTLY COLONIZED.

MOTHER TONGUE

“NATIVE” LANGUAGE

LANGUAGE EXISTING AMONG A GROUP OF PEOPLE LIVING IN ISOLATION WITH NO CONTACT WITH ANOTHER OUTSIDE LANGUAGE GROUP

e.g. AFRICANS;

AMERINDIANS

PRE-COLUMBIAN SOCIETIES

[BEFORE COLUMBUS]

2. PIDGIN

FIRST CONTACT LANGUAGE

***LINGUA FRANCA*, COMMON JARGON**

**MEDIUM OF DIVERSE LANGUAGE GROUPS OF PEOPLE WHO
HAVE NO FIRST LANGUAGE IN COMMON**

LANGUAGE OF TRADE AND COMMERCE

SIMPLIFIED USE OF DESCRIPTIVE NOUNS, VERBS, AND ADVERBS
e.g. “GO SMALL SMALL!” [GO SLOWLY]

**COMMON CORE WITH REGULAR PRINCIPLES OF SENTENCE
CONSTRUCTION [Dillard, 1972, P. 75], SHARED SOUND
FEATURES AND PATTERNS OF SPEECH**

INTONATION VARIATIONS

3. CREOLE

WHEN PIDGIN BECOMES THE ONLY OR PRINCIPAL LANGUAGE OF A SPEECH COMMUNITY (DILLARD, 1972, P. 300)

e.g. PLANTATION CREOLE (SPOKEN BY SLAVES), HAITIAN CREOLE, LOUISIANA FRENCH CREOLE. ETC.

***PATOIS* [PROVINCIAL/RURAL FORM OF SPEECH]**

A MIXTURE OF FEATURES FROM BOTH ORIGINAL AND DOMINANT LANGUAGES

e.g. “DID YOU HEARD WHAT I SAW?”

“I’M NOT PLAYIN’ WITH YOU, NO!”

“YOU GONNA PAY ME, FOR TRUE?”

(NEW ORLEANS CREOLE ENGLISH)

USE OF “ME” INSTEAD OF “I”

e.g. : “ME BE BORN AT JAMAICA.”

“ME ASK (*AXE, OX*) ME MUDDER.”

[ALSO IN FRENCH]: “MOI ALLER” [ME GO] INSTEAD OF “JE VAIS” [I GO]

4. DECREOLIZATION

BIDIALECTICAL MOVEMENT AWAY FROM THE USE OF SPOKEN CREOLE WITH AN INCREASING USE OF THE MAINSTREAM STANDARD DOMINANT LANGUAGE

**STYLE CHANGE, A VARIATION IN TERMS OF FORMALITY
[Dillard, 1973, P. 304]**

PROGRESSING FROM THE INTIMATE TO THE FORMAL AND SOMETIMES TO A “BOOGY” [*BOURGEOISIE*] STILTED UNNATURAL STYLE:

INTIMATE—A SERIES OF (UNSPELLABLE) NASAL SOUNDS, USUALLY ACCOMPANIED BY SHOULDER SHRUGS, UNDERSTOOD ONLY BY IN-GROUP MEMBERS

CASUAL—“I DUNNO”

SEMI-FORMAL—“I DON’T KNOW”

FORMAL—“I DO NOT KNOW”

“BOOGY” STILTED -“INDEED, I KNOW NOT”

5. DOMINANT

ACADEMY ENGLISH

**STANDARD FORM, MAINSTREAM LANGUAGE
USED BY HOLDERS OF POWER AND WEALTH**

LANGUAGE OF EUROPEAN COLONIZERS

**THE RATE OF MOVEMENT FROM THE ORIGINAL
LANGUAGE OF THE COLONIZED TO THE
DOMINANT LANGUAGE OF THE COLONIZER IS
OFTEN DETERMINED BY THE AMOUNT OF
SOCIAL CONTACT AND FREEDOM ALLOWED TO
THE COLONIZED.**

**SOCIAL ISOLATION AND SEGREGATION SLOWS
DOWN STANDARD ENGLISH LANGUAGE
ACQUISITION**

**IN THE SECTIONS THAT FOLLOW ARE
EXAMPLES OF FEATURES OF [BE].**

**I HAVE INSERTED A FEW
[PS]“PERSONAL STORIES” OF MY
EXPERIENCES AS A TEACHER IN ALL
BLACK PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS IN NEW
ORLEANS.**

FEATURES OF BLACK ENGLISH

- PHONOLOGY
- "SOUNDS MEAN MORE TO ME THAN PLAYING A LOT OF NOTES" – BB KING (Bluesman)
- TEACHERS WHO USE A PHONICS APPROACH TO TEACH READING SHOULD BE AWARE OF THE REPERTOIRE OF SOUNDS IN BLACK ENGLISH.
- KENNETH R. JOHNSON, WALT WOLFMAN, BARATZ, AND OTHERS HAVE PRESENTED SPECIFIC CHARACTERISTICS, PHONOLOGICAL AND GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURES, AND FEATURES OF BLACK ENGLISH. HERE ARE SOME OF THEIR RESEARCH FINDINGS:

KENNETH R. JOHNSON:

LANGUAGE CONSISTS OF SYSTEMATIC SOUNDS THAT PEOPLE MAKE WITH THEIR VOCAL CORDS

THERE ARE TWO SOUNDS:

- 1. VOICED (A “BUZZ” OCCURS IN THE VOCAL CORDS)**
- 2. VOICELESS (NO BUZZING SOUND IN THE VOCAL CORDS)**

Sounds occur in a word in 3 ways:

Beginning (Initial) sound

Middle (Medial) sound

Ending (Terminal) sound

e.g. The sound “**TH**”

[SE] speakers have **2** sounds for TH

[BE] speakers have **5** sounds for TH depending on whether they are “voiced” or “voiceless” and where they occur in a word (Initial, Medial or Terminal)

Some examples of the TH sound in [SE] and [BE]:

- VOICELESS/INITIAL POSITION:

[SE] = Thing, thank, thigh, thought

[BE] = *Thing, thank, thigh, thought*

(NO DEVIATION)

- VOICED/INITIAL POSITION:

[SE] = This, that, them, these, those

[BE] = *Dis, dat, dem, dese, dose*

THERE IS A “DUH” SOUND SUBSTITUTED FOR THE “TH” SOUND IN THE BEGINNING OF THE WORD

THE “TH” SOUND

- VOICELESS/MEDIAL:

[SE] = Bathroom, birthday

[BE] = *Bafroom, burfday*

THERE IS AN “F” SOUND SUBSTITUTION

- VOICED/MEDIAL:

[SE] = Mother, brother

[BE] = *Muvah, bruvah* [“MY MUVAH COOK GRITS.”]

THERE IS A FRICATIVE “V” SUBSTITUTION

NOTE: WHEN USING PROFANITY IN COMBINATION WITH THE “F” WORD [AS IN M.F.], [BE] SPEAKERS PRONOUNCE “MOTHER F_____” CORRECTLY IN [SE].

THE “TH” SOUND

- VOICELESS/TERMINAL:

[SE] = With, mouth, path, both, South

[BE]= *Wif, mouf, paf, bof, Souf*

THERE IS AN “F” SUBSTITUTION AT THE END

[BE] SPEAKERS ENTER KINDERGARTEN SAYING “WIF” AND GO THROUGH GRADUATE SCHOOL SAYING “WIF.” IN SPITE OF GOOD INTENTIONS, THE SCHOOLS HAVE NOT CHANGED MANY FEATURES OF BLACK SPEECH.

PS: [PERSONAL STORY]

I TAUGHT MATH FOR 8 YEARS IN ALL BLACK PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS IN NEW ORLEANS. ON THE BOARD I HAD WRITTEN THE FOLLOWING EQUATION:
 $3A + 3B = 33.$

AN AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENT READ:
" TREE AEY PLUS TREE BEE EQUAL TOITY-TREE."

I REALIZED THAT THERE WAS A COMPLETE ABSENCE OF THE USE OF THE "TH" SOUND.

REMEDY: THE NEXT DAY, I WROTE ON THE BOARD:

"THE THINKER THREW THREE THOUSAND THINKING THOUGHTS TO THEM, THESE, THEY AND THOSE."

STUDENTS WERE ASKED, IN A CARING WAY, TO IMAGINE THAT THEY HAD CANDY STUCK ON THE FRONT OF THEIR TEETH AND HAD TO REMOVE IT BY STICKING THE TIP OF THE TONGUE OUT BEYOND THEIR FRONT ROW OF TEETH, AS THEY SAID THE ABOVE EXPRESSION AT LEAST 20 TIMES DURING THE DAY.

THERE WERE NO MORE "TREES" OR "TOITYS" MENTIONED IN MATH. IN ADDITION, STUDENTS WERE TAUGHT THAT IN THIS MATH EQUATION, THE SYMBOL = IS PRONOUNCED "EQUALS" [WITH AN S AT THE END], NOT "EQUAL."

[BE] RULE

- PLURAL ENDINGS: If in the context of the sentence one finds a reference to “more than one” (plural), it is not necessary to add an “s” to the noun
e.g. 50 cents = *50 cent*
- THE CONTEXT CLARIFIES THE MEANING. e.g. “HE HAD A SECOND HAR TRANSPLANT”

CONSONANT REDUCTION

B D G K P T

(Consonant sounds in these letters are often not spoken or omitted)

e.g. **[SE]** **[BE]**

NUMBER = *NUMMER* [“GIMMIE YO’ NUMMER.”]

COMB = *COM’* [“SHE COM’ HER HAIR.”]

COLD = *COL’* [“I WENT AN GOT ME A COL’.”]

GOING = *GOIN’* [“YOU GOIN’ OR NOT?”]

MASK = *MAS’* [“ZORRO WOE A MAS’.”]

HAPPEN = *HAH’UM* [DAS DA WAY IT HAH’UM]

HEART = *HAR* also **HARD** = *HAR* [“DA’S HAR’.]

TEST = *TES* [“TEACHER, WHEN WE GON’ HAVE A TES?”]

TES PRESENTS ANOTHER PROBLEM. WITH THE OMISSION OF THE ENDING “T”, TES NOW ENDS IN A **SIBILANT SOUND**. WORDS THAT END IN “S” WHEN PLURALIZED, WE ADD “ES” TO THE WORD: e.g., KISS-KISSES; BOSS-BOSES; HENCE: TES-TESES.

FEATURES OF BLACK ENGLISH

- [“TEACHER, HOW MANY TESSES WE GON’ HAVE?”] THE TEACHER MAY RESPOND: [“DON’T SAY TESSES, SAY TESTS!”]. THE [BE] SPEAKER MOST OFTEN CAN’T HEAR THE DIFFERENCE. THE SAME IS TRUE FOR MASK: MASS-MASSES; FLASK-FLASSES [“HOW MANY FLASSES YOU BROKE IN THE LAB THIS YEAR?”]
- THE “SIZ” PLURAL ENDING (I FOUND IN NEW ORLEANS)
e.g. ANTS = ANTSIZ [“LOOK AT ALL DEM ANTSIZ?”]
ARTISTS = ARTISIZ [“WHERE THE ARTISIZ IS AT?”]
- A COMMON USAGE:
[SE] [BE]
ASK = AXE

LET US COMPARE ANOTHER FORM OF [BE] FROM CARIBBEAN CREOLE IN JAMAICA [JE] IN THE PRONUNCIATION OF “ASK” IN THE FOLLOWING SCENARIO:

- The teacher asks each pupil to get permission from his/her mother to go on a field trip. The next day, in response to the question: “Did you ask your mother?” the teacher heard:
 - [SE] *I asked my mother and she said that it was o.k.*
 - [BE] *Ah axe ma mama ‘n she say it be cool.*
 - [JE] *Me ox me muddah (or “mooma” in rural Jamaica) ‘n she say dat be fine mon fo’ go onna trip, ‘long as yo teacher ‘member me mine run ‘pon you.*
- **SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION: TRANSLATE [JE] & SHARE**
- **[JE] TRANSLATION: “I ASKED MY MOTHER AND SHE SAID THAT IT WOULD BE FINE, MAN, FOR ME TO GO ON A TRIP, AS LONG AS YOUR TEACHER REMEMBERS THAT I HAVE YOU CONSTANTLY ON MY MIND, (THAT I AM CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR SAFETY.)”**

[PS] PERSONAL STORY

- I TAUGHT THE STANDARD ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION OF “ASK” AS FOLLOWS: “FIRST YOU HAVE TO SAY ‘ASS’ AS IN JACKASS. THEN YOU ADD A SOFT ‘KUH’ SOUND.” WE REPEATED IT TOGETHER SEVERAL TIMES: “ASS-KUH.”

- OTHER FORMS OF OMISSION

L-lessness (The letter “L” is omitted)

e.g. HELP=*HEP*; SCHOOL=*SCHOO*;
MYSELF=*MA’SEF*

R-lessness (The letter “R” is omitted)

e.g. CAROL=*CAL*; HAROLD=*HAL*

DOOR = *DOE*; FLOOR = *FLO*’; MORE = *MO*’

A SAMPLE OF SOME OTHER PRONUNCIATION FEATURES

[SE]

OUT HERE

LIBRARY

SUPPOSED

SINK

FRIEND

PIN

WANT TO

GOT TO

USE TO GO

CHILDREN

OFTEN CAME

[BE]

OUT CHERE

LIBERRY

‘POSED

ZINK

FRIEN’

PEN

WANNA

GOTTA

USE-DA GO

CHIL’RUN

USE-TA COME

A SAMPLE OF SOME OTHER PRONUNCIATION FEATURES

[SE]

ABOUT

BEFORE

BIRTH CERTIFICATE

FIFTY

DOESN'T HAVE ANY

OIL WELL

CORNER

SINCE

SURE

TIN

FISH

[BE]

'BOUT

'FO

BURF SUSTIFICUT

FITTY

AIN'T GOT NO

ALL WHEEL

CORNAH or CORNDA

CENTS

SHO' or SHORE

TEN

FEESH

LEXICON (VOCABULARY, CODES, WORDSETS)

BLACK ENGLISH SPEAKERS HAVE A LARGE REPERTOIRE OF SLANG WORDS UNCOMMON TO STANDARD ENGLISH. MOST OF THE SLANG WORDS WE FIND IN AMERICA WERE COINED BY JAZZ MUSICIANS AND INNER CITY RAPPERS.

AS SOON AS A SLANG WORD ENTERS THE MAINSTREAM AND IS USED BY STANDARD ENGLISH SPEAKERS, BLACK ENGLISH SPEAKERS OFTEN STOP USING THE WORD AND INVENT A NEW WORD. HOWEVER, SOME WORDS LIKE “COOL” AND “CRIB” REMAIN IN PERENNIAL USE FOR DECADES.

[BE] RULE

- **INVERSION** = When the Standard English word takes on the opposite meaning (bad = good). [“YOU ‘N YO’ BAD SELF!”]
- Words that indicate the possessive: *THEY* for **THEIR**
- [SE] THEIR [The boys put their hats..]
- [BE] THEY [The boys put *they* hats...]

[BE] RULE

One can judge the importance of a concept in a culture (group) by counting the number of labels (words) that the people in the culture have for the concept. (K.R. Johnson)(e.g., Alaskan Indians have 26 words for “snow”: *wet snow, dry snow, slushy snow, melting snow, hard snow*, etc., because snow is a very important concept to Alaskan Native Americans.)

SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY:

How many words can you think of for “Money?”

[PAUSE 1 MINUTE BEFORE CONTINUING]

ANSWERS: Book, Bread, Cake, Cash, Cheddar, Cheese, Chump Change, Coins, Crumbs, Dough, Eagle, Fitty, Green, Jingle, Loot, Moola, Scrilla, The Benjamin, etc.

PSYCHOLOGICAL INTENT OF A WORD:

KEN JOHNSON STATED THAT A WORD MAY HAVE THREE PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS:

- ***POSITIVE*** (COMPLIMENTARY, PRAISING, ETC.)
- ***NEGATIVE*** (OFFENSIVE, DEROGATORY, INSULTING)
- ***NEUTRAL*** (CARRIES NO VALUE JUDGEMENT)

SOME WORDS CAN HAVE ALL THREE INTENTS ABOVE, DEPENDING UPON THE CONTEXT IN WHICH THE WORDS ARE USED.

VOCABULARY: [BE] LEXICON WITH [SE] MEANINGS (2003)

[BE]

KRUNK

BLING BLING

SICK WID [WITH] IT

DIS

ROLL THROUGH

[SE]

HYPER, EXCITING, ENERGETIC, "UP" TIME, HOT

BEJWELED; GOLD CHAINS; SPARKLING

IMPASSIONED WITH SOMETHING GOOD

TO INSULT, PUT DOWN SOMEONE

PASSING THROUGH; SHORT VISIT

VOCABULARY: [BE] LEXICON WITH [SE] MEANINGS

[BE]

[SE]

411	DETAILS; GIVE ME THE DETAILS OR FACTS
CRIP, C-STEP	A DANCE
SHINE	JEWELRY
ICE	DIAMONDS
ICED OUT	WEARING A LOT OF DIAMOND JEWELRY
JIGGED, JIGGED OUT	LOOKING GOOD
WACK	SOMETHING CRAZY; OUT OF IT; NORMLESS
WORD!?.	REALLY! WHAT? AGREEMENT; YES.
‘TUDE	A POOR OR BAD ATTITUDE
TIGHT	UPSET, ANGRY
PHAT	FINE, GOOD, BEAUTIFUL
WILDIN’ [<i>WHILE-LIN</i>]	ACTING CRAZY; BRAGGING; LOST CONTROL
ROLLIN’	HIGH ON ECSTASY (DRUGS)
HYPNOTIC	ALCOHOL [BLUE DRINK]
BEASTIN’	YELLING AT SOMEONE; AN AUTHORITARIAN TEACHER
WHO IS MAKING	A STUDENT DO A HARD TASK
RAP	TALK; RHYMES-TO-A-MUSICAL-RHYTHM-PATTERN
MAD; COOL	GOOD; THE BEST
DIG	TO UNDERSTAND
SMOOVE	CALM, MELLOW, NICE PERSON
WHIP	CAR
SHOES; DUBS	RIMS ON A CAR
HIP	SMART, AWARE, “WITH IT”

VOCABULARY: [BE] LEXICON WITH [SE] MEANINGS

[BE]

[SE]

THE TRUTH	THE REAL DEAL, BEST THING GOING
DUMB	EXCELLENT; VERY SATISFYING
SHORTIE	A GOOD LOOKING GIRL
WIFEY	MAIN GIRLFRIEND
DADDY	MAIN BOYFRIEND
GRUB	FOOD
GEAR	CLOTHES
KICKS, BUNNIES	SNEAKERS
AIR FORCE ONES, G-NIKES	GANGSTER NIKE SNEAKERS
AIR JORDAN 18	SNEAKERS WORN BY MICHAEL JORDAN
SOLDIERS	REBOK CLASSICS IN SNEAKERS
CRIB	HOME
THE HOOD	THE (HOUSING) PROJECT
COP	BUY or GET
WEAK	A SUCKER
5-0; PO-PO	COPS, POLICE, AUTHORITY
BLITZED	ALL PARTIED OUT, STONED
SCRED	SCARED
BAGGED	ARRESTED
BOB; GAT; HEAT	GUN
BODIED	KILLED
CELLY	CELL PHONE
O.G.	ORIGINAL GANGSTER [LEADER]

VOCABULARY: [BE] LEXICON WITH [SE] MEANINGS

[BE]

[SE]

THE CAN	JAIL
SMOKE	WEED (MARIJUANA)
BLUNT	GETTING HIGH
JACK	PHONE
CHILL OUT	TO STOP ACTION OR HANG OUT
HOMES; HOME	A PERSON FROM THE SAME TOWN
DOG; GOD	FRIEND
HOMEBOY, HOMIE	A GOOD FRIEND
HOMESLICE	BEST FRIEND
SPORTIN'	TO WEAR A NEW STYLE; SHOW OFF
FRONT or FRONTIN'	TURNING ON A FRIEND; BACKSTABBING
BOOK; SCRILLA; CAKE	MONEY
BOUNCE	LEAVE [<i>"LET'S BOUNCE"</i>]
WE OUT-TEE	WE ARE LEAVING
JETTIN'; DIPPIN'	LEAVING QUICKLY
SCRUB	A BUM; NOT GOOD IN SPORTS OR ANYTHING
STEP OFF	BACK OFF; BEAT IT; LAY OFF; CROKE
YO	A CALL TO SOMEBODY
FRESH	NEW
A'IGHT or I-GHT	OK, ALL RIGHT
SICK	GOOD LOOKING SNEAKERS
TYPE	VERY [<i>"I'M TYPE HUNGRY!"</i>]

WORDS ARE WORDS

IF THE BLACK ENGLISH SPEAKER LACKS A STANDARD ENGLISH WORD, HE HAS A REPERTOIRE OF SLANG WORDS IN HIS VOCABULARY AVAILABLE FOR USE.

IN THE AVOIDANCE OF PENDING CONFLICTS, ARGUMENTS, OR FIGHTS, TEACHERS SHOULD TUNE IN TO ADDITIONAL EXPRESSIONS LIKE:

[BE]

[SE]

WHY YOU ALWAYS GRILLIN' ME?

WHY ARE YOU STARING AT ME?

WHY YOU TRIPPIN'

WHY ARE YOU GETTING UPSET?

WHY YOU ALWAYS IN MY GRILL?

WHY ARE YOU IN MY BUSINESS?

NONE OF YO' BEESWACK?

NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS

SEE ME FIVE

TAKE IT OUTSIDE; LATER ON

WE'RE GOING TO FIGHT AFTER

SCHOOL.

A'IGHT, I'M DOWN.

ALL RIGHT, I'LL BE THERE.

TALK TO THE HAND

[A WOMAN WAVES HER HAND IN THE

FACE OF ANOTHER WOMAN] I DON'T

WANT TO

HEAR IT! I'M NOT

LISTENING.

SHUT UP 'FO I SPAZ ON YOU!

SHUT UP BEFORE I BEAT YOU UP!

[PS] PERSONAL STORY:

“A WORD A DAY KEEPS IGNORANCE AWAY.”

TO EXPAND STUDENTS’ VOCABULARY IN STANDARD ENGLISH, HAVE THEM CREATE A “BOOK OF NEW WORDS”. HERE’S HOW IT WORKS: UPON ENTERING THE ROOM, THE STUDENT FINDS A NEW WORD ON THE CHALKBOARD, A DEFINITION OF THE WORD, AND ITS USE IN A SENTENCE.

e.g.: Eloquent (*adj*): marked by forceful and fluent expression; vivid and moving persuasiveness.

“THAT WAS AN ELOQUENT SPEECH.”

THE STUDENT COPIES THE NEW WORD UNDER THE CORRESPONDING ALPHABET FILE PAGE IN HIS/HER PERSONAL “BOOK OF NEW WORDS.”

THE TEACHER AND STUDENTS READ THE CORRECT PRONUNCIATION OF THE NEW WORD THREE TIMES.

STUDENTS ARE ASKED TO CREATE NEW SENTENCES AND TO SPEAK TO 20 PERSONS DURING THE DAY USING THE WORD “ELOQUENT.” ADDITIONAL RETENTION STRATEGIES CAN BE FOUND IN Phyllis Nobile’s “AGGRESSIVE LEARNING.”

INTONATION VARIATIONS

- **BLACK ENGLISH HAS ITS ROOTS IN ANCESTRAL TONAL-RHYTHMIC LANGUAGES THAT CAME FROM AFRICA. IT IS NOT JUST THE “WHAT” [THE CONTENT THAT IS CONTAINED IN THE SPOKEN MESSAGE] BUT “HOW” THAT MESSAGE IS DELIVERED. THIS INVOLVES THE USE OF A WIDE RESERVOIR OF “TONES” AND INFLECTIONS IN THE VOICE, RANGING FROM A HIGH FALSETTO TO A LOW BASS, INCLUDING TONES IN BETWEEN.**
- **BLACK SPEECH IS A DEPARTURE FROM A MAINSTREAM MONOTONE.**

INTONATION AND FEELINGS

- **VOICE QUALITY IS AFFECTED BY THE PSYCHOLOGICAL OR EMOTIONAL STATE OF THE SPEAKER. IF THE TOPIC IS EXCITING OR JOYFUL, THE VOICE MAY RISE TO A FALSETTO LEVEL. WHEN IT IS TIME TO BE CALM, COOL AND COLLECTED, THE VOICE DESCENDS INTO A BASS LEVEL. OFTEN, ONE CAN HEAR BLACK SPEECH IN A SLUR OF INDEFINITE PITCH AS FOUND ON THE SOUNDTRACK OF THE TV DANCE SHOW, “SOUL TRAIN,” AS THE VOICE MOVES FROM A HIGH FALSETTO TO A LOW BASS IN ONE CONTINUOUS NOTE OR SOUND.**
- **WHEN READING A STORY TO AFRICAN AMERICAN CHILDREN, TEACHERS SHOULD MAXIMIZE THE RANGE OF TONAL INFLECTIONS IN THE VOICE, GIVING EACH CHARACTER A DIFFERENT VOICE LEVEL OR QUALITY [AS IN THE STORY OF THE THREE BEARS].**

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING SCENARIO:

AT A SOCIAL GATHERING, THREE YOUNG AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN ARE TALKING ABOUT THE MEN IN THE ROOM.

THINK/PAIR/SHARE ACTIVITY:

- **HAVE SOMEONE READ THE DIALOGUE.**
- **PAIR UP WITH SOMEONE TO DISCUSS THE MEANINGS**
- **SHARE THOUGHTS WITH EVERYONE IN THE ROOM**

DIALOGUE—3 YOUNG WOMEN:

--S'UP GIRL?

--'SAP 'NIN?

--DIS PARTY BE KRUNK.

--CHECK OUT HOMES!

--YO, BLING BLING?

--ICED OUT FOR DAYS!

--GIMMIE THE 411. HE THUGGIN?

--NAW, HE COOL!

--YEAH, HE PACKIN'

--WORD! STEPPIN' CRIP, DEF!

■ **--AN' HE HEAVY IN CLASS**

■ **--OFF THE DAMN CHAIN
(laughter)**

■ **--WHO DAT BRUTHA?
(looking at another man)**

■ **--A SCRUB; HE NUTTIN'**

■ **--WORD?**

■ **--HE BE DOIN' WET.**

■ **--THA'S WACK!**

■ **--AN' HE ALL-UH-TIME BE
BLOWIN' YO' SPOT.**

■ **--I HEAR THAT.**

■ **--WORD!**

TRANSLATION: 3 YOUNG WOMEN

[BE]

[SE]

--S'UP GIRL?

--'SAP 'NIN?

--DIS PARTY BE KRUNK.

--CHECK OUT HOMES!

--YO, BLING BLING?

--ICED OUT FOR DAYS!

--GIMMIE THE 411. HE THUGGIN'?

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--WORD?

--HE BE DOIN' WET.

--THA'S WACK!

--AN' HE ALL-UH-TIME BE BLOWIN'
YO' SPOT.

--I HEAR THAT.

--WORD!

--WHAT'S UP GIRLFRIEND?

--WHAT'S HAPPENING?

--THIS PARTY IS EXCITING, "UP"! HOT!

--LOOK, A LOCAL GUY

--HEY, YOU MEAN THE GUY WEARING SHINING
JEWELRY

--HE WEARS A LOT OF DIAMOND JEWELRY

--TELL ME ABOUT HIM. IS HE A THUG?

--NO, HE LOOKS "TOGETHER"

--YES, HE IS WELL-ENDOWED

--GOOD! HE SURE CAN DANCE THE "CRIP."

--AND HE'S SMART IN SCHOOL

--AMAZING! BREATHTAKING!

--WHO'S THAT GUY?

--A BUM; HE'S A GOOD-FOR-NOTHING

--WHY?

--HE SMOKES MARAJUANA LACED WITH PCP (ANGEL
DUST) AND EMBALMING FLUID

--THAT'S NOT GOOD; THAT'S OUT OF IT

--AND HE'S ALWAYS REVEALING YOUR PERSONAL
BUSINESS IN PUBLIC. HE CAN'T KEEP A SECRET.

--OH, YES

--REALLY! FORGET ABOUT HIM!

GRAMMAR AND OTHER FEATURES

THE TEACHER ASKS: “DID YOU DO YOUR HOMEWORK?”

[BE] CHILD REPLIES: “TEACHER, I BEEN DONE DID DAT!”

MANY TEACHERS CRINGE UPON HEARING THE ABOVE AND SIMILAR BLACK ENGLISH EXPRESSIONS. THEY SHUDDER IN A BELIEF THAT THE CHILD USES SLOPPY OR POOR ENGLISH. EVEN WORSE ARE TEACHERS WHO REFER TO THE CHILD AS COMING TO SCHOOL WITHOUT LANGUAGE.

GRAMMAR AND OTHER FEATURES

NOTHING COULD BE FARTHER FROM THE TRUTH!

IN EVERY COUNTRY IN THE WORLD, CHILDREN GROW UP SPEAKING THE LANGUAGE OF THE SURROUNDING COMMUNITY WITH ITS NUANCES OF DIALECT, STRUCTURE, AND VOCABULARY. THE BLACK ENGLISH SPEAKING CHILD IS FOLLOWING THE RULES OF THE BLACK ENGLISH SPEAKING COMMUNITY.

VERB CONJUGATION:

[BE] RULE: A REVERSAL: THE PAST TENSE IS INTERCHANGED WITH THE PAST PARTICIPLE

e.g.:

<u>PRESENT</u>	<u>PAST</u>	<u>PAST PARTICIPLE</u>
----------------	-------------	------------------------

[SE] DO	DID	HAVE DONE
---------	-----	-----------

[BE] DO	DONE	DONE DID
---------	------	----------

[DONE=HAVE]

VERB CONJUGATION:

[SE]

[BE]

TAKE, TOOK, HAVE TAKEN

TAKE, TAKEN, DONE TOOK

SING, SANG, HAVE SUNG

SING, SUNG, DONE SANG

WRITE, WROTE,

WRITE, WRITTEN,

HAVE WRITTEN

DONE WROTE

[BE] RULE: "DONE" IS SUBSTITUTED FOR "HAVE"

[SE]

[BE]

"I HAVE DONE" becomes "I DONE DID"

"I HAVE TAKEN" becomes "I DONE TOOK"

"I DONE GOT OVER IT" (SONG LYRIC)

[BE] RULE: "BEEN DONE" IS USED FOR THE FAR DISTANT PAST, [PAST COMPLETIVE], IT HAPPENED A LONG, LONG TIME AGO. THUS: "I BEEN DONE DID DAT!" ["DAT"= THAT]

SYNTAX [WORD ORDER]

TO BE OR NOT TO BE

According to E. Dandy (1991,p.69), “The verb **to be** has forms: AM, IS, ARE, WAS, WERE, WILL BE, BEEN that vary according to tense and number.

DANDY STATES THAT:

Black communicators omit **be** to show *temporary* condition: SHE TIRED.

They use **be** to show *repeated* action: SHE (ALWAYS) BE TIRED

THE USE OF “BE”

“BE” INCLUSION

HE BE THERE! HE BE ALL UP IN YO’ FACE

MEANS: *HE WAS THERE OR HE USUALLY IS THERE*

“BE IS OMITTED

HE THERE

MEANS: *HE IS THERE NOW.*

AGAIN, TIME IS AN IMPORTANT VARIABLE. IN TALKING ABOUT THE FUTURE, “BE” MAY BE:

OMITTED: *HE RUN TOMORROW*

OR INCLUDED: *HE BE RUNNING TOMORROW*

PRONOUN POWER

THERE IS ANOTHER FEATURE I'D LIKE TO CALL "PRONOUN EMPOWERMENT," WHERE THERE IS A FUSION BETWEEN THE SUBJECT PRONOUN AND THE VERB.

IN SPOKEN BLACK ENGLISH, "BE" AND "DO" ARE OFTEN OMITTED BECAUSE THE LOCUS OF IMPORTANCE IS UPON THE PERSON IN THE FORM OF THE PRONOUN:

EXAMPLES OF PRONOUN EMPOWERMENT

YOU A STORY (*YOU'RE A LIAR*)

[THE "ARE" IS NOT NEEDED BECAUSE ALL ATTENTION IS IN THE PRONOUN "YOU."]

WE NOT TREATED RIGHT. [BEFORE NEGATIVES]

HOW HE KNOW? [THE VERB "DO" IS IN THE "HE"]

HE THE ONE! [BEFORE NOUN PHRASES]

WE IN IT. [BEFORE PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES]

OTHER FEATURES OF BLACK ENGLISH

COMPRESSED PHONETICS [CONTINUOUS SOUND IN ONE WORD]:

WASWRONWITCHOO? [WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOU?]

ADDED PREPOSITION FOR BALANCE:

HE UPPED AND DIED.

SHE DONE DRANK UP ALL THE WINE.

WHO YOU WAITIN' ON? [INSTEAD OF “FOR”]

ADDED DOUBLE PREPOSITION:

I'M GONNA MAKE IT ON TO THE CRIB.

“SOMETIMES YOU HAVE TO SPEAK TWO LANGUAGES JUST TO SURVIVE IN AMERICA, AND YOU KNOW HOW THAT ARE.”

--Julian “Cannonball” Adderley, Jazzman

DOUBLE NEGATIVES = STRONG POSITIVES

HE AIN'T GON' LAY NUTHIN' ON NOBODY NO MORE!

[HOW YOU SAY SOMETHING IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN USING “ANYTHING” OR “ANYBODY” OR “ANYMORE.”]

THE AFOREMENTIONED CHARACTERISTICS AND FEATURES OF BLACK AMERICAN ENGLISH ARE BUT A FEW EXAMPLES OF A LANGUAGE SYSTEM THAT IS SYSTEMATIC AND FUNCTIONAL.

CONCLUSION

ANY PERSON WHO SPEAKS ENGLISH IN AMERICA SPEAKS A DIALECT [ACCENT] OF ENGLISH. [e.g., BOSTON TO MISSISSIPPI, BROOKLYN TO NEW ORLEANS, CALIFORNIA TO ALABAMA, OREGON TO NORTH CAROLINA...ETC.]

E PLURIBUS UNUM (ONE COMPOSED OF MANY): EACH DIALECT IS IMPORTANT AND ADDS TO THE CULTURAL ENRICHMENT OF AMERICA.

WE CAN TEACH ALL CHILDREN STANDARD ENGLISH AS WELL AS ALLOW FOR CULTURAL LINGUISTIC DIFFERENCES.

THE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION HERE IS: **HOW DOES KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF LANGUAGE DIFFERENCES ENABLE A TEACHER TO HELP STUDENTS SUCCEED IN SCHOOL?**

NO MATTER WHAT THE LANGUAGE:

“WHAT CHILDREN CAN THINK ABOUT
THEY TALK ABOUT.

WHAT THEY TALK ABOUT
THEY CAN WRITE.

WHAT THEY CAN WRITE,
THEY CAN READ.

WHAT THEY CAN READ,
OTHERS CAN ALSO READ.”

--(Allen, 1976)

LANGUAGE IS POWER

CULTURALLY SENSITIVE TEACHERS CAN TEACH BLACK ENGLISH SPEAKERS TO USE STANDARD ENGLISH, THE “LANGUAGE OF SUCCESS IN MAINSTREAM AMERICA.”

THIS PRESENTATION IS ONLY THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG, A FRESH BEGINNING, A RENEWED LOOK AT BLACK ENGLISH. THERE IS MUCH MORE.

HOW THEN TO PROCEED?

SOME TEACHING TECHNIQUES:

- BE NOT AFRAID TO CORRECT--IN A CARING WAY—CHILDREN WHO SPEAK OR WRITE IN NONSTANDARD ENGLISH.
- START WITH THE CHILD'S HOME LANGUAGE.
- NEVER BELITTLE OR MAKE FUN OF A CHILD'S HOME LANGUAGE (MOTHER TONGUE).
- HELP CHILDREN UNDERSTAND THE PURPOSE FOR LEARNING STANDARD ENGLISH.
- BE FRANK! LET STUDENTS KNOW THAT IN MOST OF THE JOB MARKETS IN AMERICA, THE USE OF STANDARD ENGLISH IS A REQUIREMENT.

SOME TEACHING TECHNIQUES

- EXPLAIN THAT STANDARD ENGLISH IS “ANOTHER WAY” OF SPEAKING. IT SHOULD NOT “REPLACE”, “ELIMINATE” OR “EXTINGUISH” THE CHILD’S HOME LANGUAGE.
- A BLACK ENGLISH SPEAKING CHILD ONCE TOLD A TEACHER: “BUT MY MOMMA SAY IT THAT WAY.” THE TEACHER REPLIED: “YES, YOU’RE RIGHT, YOUR MOTHER’S WAY IS ONE WAY OF SAYING THIS. NOW, I’M GOING TO SHOW YOU ANOTHER WAY TO SAY THE SAME THING IN STANDARD ENGLISH.”
- FOR YOUNG CHILDREN, ALLOW THEM TO COPY PORTIONS OF “BOOKS-OF-THEIR-CHOICE” WRITTEN IN STANDARD ENGLISH. ALSO, EXPOSE CHILDREN TO BOOKS WRITTEN BY AND ABOUT AFRICAN AMERICANS THAT MAY CONTAIN BLACK ENGLISH.

SOME TEACHING TECHNIQUES

- USE TAPE RECORDERS: ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO READ STANDARD ENGLISH LITERATURE WHILE RECORDING THEIR VOICES. WHENEVER POSSIBLE, DO THE SAME THING WITH A VIDEOCAMERA.
- USE TECHNOLOGY: WIRELESS COMPUTERS, WORD GAMES, PROGRAMS THAT REINFORCE LANGUAGE.
- INSIST THAT CHILDREN USE COMPLETE SENTENCES AT ALL TIMES: WHEN ASKING A QUESTION, WHEN ANSWERING A QUESTION, AND WHEN CONVERSING IN SMALL GROUPS.
- EMPHASIZE THE USE OF STANDARD ENGLISH THROUGH “READERS THEATER” WITHIN THE CLASSROOM IN A RELAXED, NON-THREATENING ATMOSPHERE.

SOME TEACHING TECHNIQUES

- INCREASE THE RETENTION OF STANDARD ENGLISH VOCABULARY USING “AGGRESSIVE LEARNING” TECHNIQUES: (SEE RECOMMENDED READING LIST)
- **DAP** THE WORD (**D**EFINE, **A**SSOCIATE, **D**RAW A **P**ICTURE SHOWING THAT YOU UNDERSTAND THE MEANING OF THE WORD).
- CONTINUE TO TEACH STANDARD ENGLISH RULES OF GRAMMAR AND PRONUNCIATION.
- REINFORCE LANGUAGE ACQUISITION WITH CHORAL READING, CALL AND RESPONSE ACTIVITIES, PARTNER READING, MOVEMENT AND MUSIC, SONG LYRICS, HUMOR (JOKE BOOKS, RIDDLES), APPROPRIATE MAGAZINES AND COMIC BOOKS REFLECTING THEIR INTERESTS.
- USE DRAMA: PUT ‘EM ON THE STAGE! PRESENT SCHOOL PLAYS WHERE CHILDREN READ OR MEMORIZE STANDARD ENGLISH DIALOGUE. PARENTS LOVE IT!
- **EXCITE, WRITE AND RECITE**: USE POETRY AND THE “SPOKEN WORD.” ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO WRITE AND RECITE (PERFORM) ORIGINAL POEMS.

AFFECTIVE DOMAIN: FEELINGS ARE IMPORTANT

- REMEMBER TO CONSIDER THE FEELINGS OF THE CHILD.
- IMAGINE THIS: SUPPOSE YOU WERE ASKED TO SPEAK AND WRITE EXCLUSIVELY IN BLACK ENGLISH.
- HOW WOULD YOU FEEL?

SUGGESTED READINGS

SINCE THE LEGAL OUTCRIES IN ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN, IN THE EARLY 1970s, AND AGAIN IN OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA, IN THE MID-1990s, MUCH HAS BEEN WRITTEN ABOUT BLACK ENGLISH AND EBONICS.

TO BETTER UNDERSTAND HOW TO MEET THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING STANDARD ENGLISH, THE FOLLOWING LIST OF READINGS IS RECOMMENDED.

A COMPREHENSIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY IS INCLUDED.



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TO GET A COPY OF THIS POWERPOINT:

<http://people.uncw.edu/martinezm>

[See: Black American English]

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THE NEW YORK CREW

BEN “You know what I’m sayin’” THOMPSON

Dr. PERCY HEATH

And my wife, MARJORIE

FOR THEIR INSIGHTFUL COMMENTS.

ANGELA EDWARDS FOR HER TECHNOLOGICAL EXPERTISE

DEAN CATHY L. BARLOW FOR HER GRANT SUPPORT,

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