

SYNTACTIC VARIATIONS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN VERNACULAR ENGLISH (AAVE) IN IGGY AZALEA'S SELECTED SONGS

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Abstract

This study concerns on analyzing the syntactic variations of African American Vernacular English in Iggy Azalea's selected songs, Down South, 1800 Bone, Yo El Rey, Flexin Finessin, and My World. The data were analyzed based on the theory from Wolfram (2004) in order to identify syntactic variations of African American Vernacular English and Miller (2002) in order to compare syntactic variations between African American Vernacular English and Standard English. In conducting the study, the qualitative approach was used where the data and the result of the study were presented descriptively rather than statistically. The purpose of this study was to identify syntactic variations of African American Vernacular English (AAVE), to describe the differences between syntactic variations of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and Standard English (SE), and the last, to know which syntactic variations of African American Vernacular English were mostly used in Iggy Azalea's selected songs. Thus, from the study, there are eight types of syntactic variations of African American Vernacular English, copula absence, Invariant be, remote been, subject-verb-non-agreement, specialized auxiliary (finna), double negations, the use of ain't for negation, and demonstrative them. The most usage of syntactic variation of African American Vernacular English in Iggy Azalea's selected songs is Copula absence with 12 data from 37 data.

Keywords: *African American Vernacular English (aave), Iggy Azalea's songs, syntactic variations*

INTRODUCTION

Language is the important tool for human beings to communicate due to the role as a social creature. Human beings use language not only as a communication tool but also share information, gives ideas, and express feelings. Among many languages in the entire world, commonly people speak at least one language or two languages called bilingual or even more than one. Even though human beings speak the same language, it may occur that they speak different language dialect

which is different from one particular area to another that makes more variant in language.

Sociolinguistics is a study of language that uses in society. In social contact, the way human speaks are different from each other depends on the contexts that indicate such as politeness and also depends on speaker's background that indicates who they are and where they belong to in a community. Trudgill (1983) claims that Sociolinguistics is an area of study that deals with actually the way human beings apply language in social interaction in daily activity. However, human can adopt

what they do not belong to in some conditions including the way that human beings apply language itself. It is possible to occur due to interaction among people in multilingual circumstances that make people from different background share across their culture especially in language to each other. Even though they share across to each other, it is not totally adopted or shared and also has an impact of the speaker itself.

African American Vernacular English becomes the topic of this study due to this dialect is unique with its syntactic variation that quite different from Standard English and related to the historical background of working black class where this dialect is kind of vernacular language in United States. This dialect is popular in Sociolinguistics field even though there is another vernacular language in the United State such as Chicano English but not as popular as African American Vernacular English. AAVE itself is associated with social factors that dominantly spoken by African American as an identity as a student was interviewed by Richford and Richford (2000) who states that “it keeps me close to my family and friends, as well as serving as a living reminder of my history in this country as a member of a distinctive group.” It seems that this dialect reminds this student of his historical background that shows who they are, where they belong to and proud to use it even though only the minority group. The existence of African American Vernacular English still feels today with its syntactic variations but the usage of this English variant only in a specific area such as at home, with friends in a community and another informal institution.

Further, due to its kind of non-Standard English, African American Vernacular English still keeps its authenticity of syntactic variations which are different from the Standard English that has been standardized. The examples of syntactic variation that originally can be recognized as the syntactic variations of African American Vernacular English are the copula absence, “she nice” for Standard English “She is nice” or “They acting all strange” for Standard English “They are acting all strange” (Wolfarm& Estes, 2006)

and the usage of invariant, “he be here tomorrow” for Standard English “He will be here tomorrow” (Rickford, 1999). That is why this dialect is more popular by the sociolinguists due to it is influenced by the historical background of the speaker that make this dialect has its own syntactic variations.

In this study, based on the problems can be proposed as follows:

1. What are the syntactic variations of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) in Iggy Azalea’s selected songs?
2. What are the differences between syntactic variations of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) in Iggy Azalea’s selected songs and Standard English (SE)?
3. What are syntactic variations of African American Vernacular English mostly used in Iggy Azalea’s selected songs?

Based on identifying the problems, the purpose of analyzing African American Vernacular English (AAVE) are as follows:

1. To identify syntactic variations of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) in Iggy Azalea’s selected songs.
2. To describe the differences between syntactic variations of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) in Iggy Azalea’s selected songs and Standard English (SE).
3. To know which syntactic variations of African American Vernacular English are mostly used in Iggy Azalea’s selected songs.

There are the similarities and the differences between the previous studies and this study. The similarity is on the focus of study where this study and the previous studies focus on African American Vernacular English and the differences between this study and the previous studies are in the theory used and the object term where the writer uses wolfram’s theory and Iggy Azalea’s selected songs as the object of the study, Giyandari uses Chomsky’s theory and *The Help* movie as the object, Pratiwi uses theory of Richford and *The Help* Novel as the object, and Prastitasari uses Chaika’s theory and *Hustle & Flow* movie as the object.

In society, language takes an important role due to the usage as a communication tool.

The functions of language itself are to express feelings, share information, and give ideas. Language and society are connected to each other and the study of this term called sociolinguistics where sociolinguists are interested in both as Holmes (2013) who states “Sociolinguists are interested in explaining why we speak differently in different social contexts, and they are concerned with identifying the social functions of language and the ways it is used to convey social meaning.” It seems that human uses language in different ways depends on the contexts and from the language they use it has a function of language itself such as to express something, to give information, an argument and so on.

Wardhaugh (2006) defines dialect is a subordinate language variety, such as Texas English and Swiss German are, respectively, dialects of English and German. Even though people speak the same language, dialect makes language a bit different in pronunciation, grammatical, or lexical. Mostly dialect is interpreted geographically even though it is not always considered as a regional factor only due to dialect also has another factor such as social factor. Both are connected to each other to know who the speaker is and where the speaker belongs, as Finnegan (2008) claims that dialect is associated with the characteristics of the language variety in a particular area or social group. Thus, dialect classified into two types, regional dialect, and social dialect.

a. Regional Dialect

Regional dialect is types of dialect variant spoken in a particular area of a country. Every particular area has its own word that is not typically the same from one particular area to another particular area and the way they speak is quite different even though they speak the same language that makes language more variant as Holmes (2013) reports some regional dialects in a real life that are some British dialects, such as Scouse (Liverpool), Cockney and Geordie have different names that make them easy to distinguish to another group significantly. Therefore, regional dialect is related to geographical factor that makes each particular area has its own dialect that shows who they are and where they are from.

b. Social Dialect

Social dialect is type of dialect variant related to social factors. This type of dialect gives a big proportion in considering the background of the speaker and there are some factors of social dialect such as social class, religion, or ethnicity influencing this dialect. Wardhaugh & Fuller (2015), social class, religion, and ethnicity are the main factors of the various factors involved in social dialect that come from among social groups while regional dialect is based on a geographical item. As Finnegan (2008) who reveals in the United State, Eventhough white American community and Black American community live in the same city, they may speak different English variety and the same as the speech characteristics of middle-class and working-class speaker easily to be distinguished. Therefore, social dialect is associated with social factor that affects the way human beings speak.

AAVE stands for African American Vernacular English. It is kind of vernacular language or treated as non-standard English which is used by Afro-American people dominantly spoken in a specific area in United State. AAVE is believed as the dialect of Black slavery that became a working class a long time ago in rural south as Wolfram (2007) states that Black English Vernacular is language variety of working-class Blacks. However, the speaker of African American Vernacular English recently is not only related to the historical items but it has been adopted in some particular area in United State that influenced to each other.

Syntactic Variations of AAVE

Syntactically, African American Vernacular English has its syntactic variations. Due to it is kind of non-Standard English, this English dialect is different from Standard English in United States or called as Standard American English (SAE) especially in syntactical elements.

1) Pre-Verbal Marker

- a) Copula Absence
- b) Invariant *be*
- c) Completive Done

- d) Sequential be Done
- e) Remote Been
- f) Simple past had + verb
- g) Specialized auxiliaries
- h) Irregular verb
- i) Subject-verb non-agreement

2) *Negation*

- a) The use of ain't
- b) Negative concord

3) *Nominal*

- a) The absence of suffix –s in inflectional possessive and plurals
- b) Pronominal
- c) The use of y'all

4) *Question formation*

In every English-speaking country has its Standard English. Literarily, Standard English is English that has been standardized. According to Wardhaugh (2006), the process where a language has been codified in some way called standardization. For instance, In UK they have their Standard English called as British English (BE), in Australian they have their Standard English called as Standard Australian English (SAE) and in US they have their Standard English called as Standard America English (SAE). Those are mostly used in a formal institution such as education, government and so on. Yule (2006), Standard English is easier to explain in terms of the written language rather than the spoken language such as vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar which is obviously related to education and broadcasting in public contexts. Those are mostly used in a formal institution such as education, government and so on in order to use the language properly.

The language that human builds needing a process to make a sentence and the process itself is not as simple as human beings speak. To make a complete sentence, it needs a process started from a word into a complete sentence associated with grammatical system which studied in Linguistics field especially in Syntax as Miller (2002) states Syntax deals with how words are arranged to build phrases, and how phrases are arranged to build clauses

or bigger phrases, and how clauses are arranged to build sentences. Syntax discusses about the structure of sentence that human makes all day which is how a sentence is constructed.

In answering the problem statements, the writer used the theory of Wolfram (2004) which highlights four syntactic variations of African American Vernacular English, preverbal marker, negation, nominal and question form used in purpose to help in analyzing the syntactic variations of African American Vernacular English in Iggy Azalea's song. In addition, the theory of Miller (2002) is used to compare syntactic variations between African American Vernacular English and Standard English.

METHOD

The primary data sources were taken from Iggy Azalea's song, Down South, 1800 Bone, Yo El Rey, FlexinFinessin, and My World and the secondary data sources were taken from journal articles and books.

There are some steps to collect the data from Iggy Azalea's song, Down South, 1800 Bone, Yo El Rey, FlexinFinessin and My World. Firstly, the writer listened to Iggy Azalea songs, Down South, 1800 Bone, Yo El Rey, FlexinFinessin, and My World one by one repeatedly and carefully. Secondly, the writer underlined the syntactic variations of African American Vernacular English found in Iggy Azalea's song. The last, the writer noted the syntactic variations of African American Vernacular English as the data found in her song.

After finding and collecting the data from Iggy Azalea's song, the writer arranged some steps in analyzing the data. First, the writer classified the data based on types of syntactic variations of African American Vernacular English. Next, the data put on a table based on the types of syntactic variations of African American Vernacular English. The last, analyzed syntactic variations of African American Vernacular English by using Wolfram theory (2004) and compared to Standard English by using Miller theory (2002) descriptively.

DISCUSSION

Analysis of Syntactic Variations of AAVE

1. *Copula absence*

One of the syntactic variations of African American Vernacular English is the absence of copula, *is* & *are*. In Standard English, the subject must be followed by copula (*she is*, *he is*, *you are*, *they are*, & *we are*) when it is in non-verbal sentences, progressive sentences, and passive sentences while for African American Vernacular Language, the copula commonly will be dropped after the subject. As the writer found some copula absence in Iggy Azalea's selected songs.

2. *Invariant be*

For African American Vernacular English, invariant *be* indicates habitual aspect and future continuous tense while in Standard English "be" depends on the subject (*I am*, *he is*, *she is*, *it is*, *you are*, *we are*, and *they are*) followed by habitual "usually" + verb (ing) and will + be + verb (ing) indicate future continuous tense. As the writer found some invariant *be* in Iggy Azalea's selected songs.

3. *Remote been*

For African American Vernacular English, remote *been* indicates the action happens in a long time ago which is the same as present perfect with the pattern *have/has + been*. However, in African American Vernacular English, the auxiliary verb "have/has" will be eliminated. As the writer found some remote *been* in Iggy Azalea's selected songs.

4. *Subject verb non-agreement*

In agreement rule, the verb should be followed by suffix *-s/es* to indicate subject-verb agreement which depends on the subject. When the subject is third singular person (*he*, *she*, and *it*), it needs suffix *-s/es* after the verb that indicates the verb is an agreement to the subject. However, the inflectional suffix *-s/es* to indicate subject verb agreement will be dropped in African American Vernacular English. As the writer found some subject verb non-agreement in Iggy Azalea's selected songs.

5. *Specialized auxiliaries*

Come, *steady*, and *finna* are the specialized auxiliary of African American

Vernacular English which each specialized auxiliary has its own function. For example, *come* indicates indignation state, *steady* indicates activity that occurs continuously, and *finna* indicates immediate future or planned event. As the writer found one of specialized auxiliary in Iggy Azalea's selected songs.

6. *Negative concord*

Negative concord or double negation is commonly used by many African American Vernacular English Speakers in their daily communication which put double negation in a sentence to indicate negative sentence. In addition, it is also possible for Standard English has two negations in a sentence however double negations for Standard English indicating positive sentence rather than negative sentence. As the writer found negative concord in Iggy Azalea's song.

7. *Use of ain't for negation*

African American Vernacular English speakers use *ain't* to indicate negation in a sentence. While Standard English has the pattern to *be+not* as *I am not*, *He/She/It is not*, and *You/We/They are not* to indicate negation, the speaker of African American Vernacular English put *ain't* only to indicate negation such as *I/You/We/They/He/She/It ain't*. Here the writer found the usage of *ain't* in Iggy Azalea's song. As the writer found the use of *ain't* for negation in Iggy Azalea's song.

8. *Demonstrative them*

For African American Vernacular English, *them* is commonly used as demonstrative which is for Standard English it should be *the*, *this*, *that*, *those*, and *these*. As the writer found the usage of *them* as demonstrative in Iggy Azalea's selected songs.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the study that the writer has been conducted from Iggy Azalea's selected songs (*Down South*, *1800 Bone*, *Yo El Rey*, *FlexinFinessin*, and *My World*), the writer found and recognized eight types of syntactic variations of African American Vernacular English from thirty-seven data. The eighth of syntactic variations of African American Vernacular English found in Iggy Azalea's

selected songs are Copula absence, Invariant be, remote been, subject-verb-non-agreement, specialized auxiliary, negative concord, the use of ain't for negation, and demonstrative them where those are syntactically different from Standard English.

The differences between African American Vernacular English and Standard English are the absence of copula forms of is & are which Standard English uses it as auxiliary verb, invariant be for habitual aspect which Standard English uses "is/am/are", remote been to indicate specific aspectual action in the distant past which Standard English added have/has before been, subject verb non-agreement for there is no agreement between verb and subject, specialized auxiliary finna to indicate an immediate future or planned event which Standard English uses pattern be about to, double negations for negative sentence which Standard English only uses one negation, the use of ain't for negation which Standard English uses pattern be + not and demonstrative them which Standard English uses these/those.

Next, based on the eighth types of syntactic variations of African American Vernacular English that is used by Iggy Azalea in her selected songs, the usage of eight types of syntactic variations is different from each other, where the copula absence is the most used by Iggy Azalea about 12 data from 37 data. The second is subject-verb-non-agreement about 6 data from 37 data. The third is negative concord about 5 data from 37 data. The fourth is the use of ain't for negation about 4 data from 37 data, and demonstrative them about 4 data from 37 data. The fifth is invariant be about 3 data from 37 data. The sixth is remote been about 2 data from 37 data. The last is specialized auxiliary about 1 data from 37 data. Thus, copula absence as syntactic variation of African American Vernacular English are mostly used in Iggy Azalea's selected songs about 12 data from 37 data due to copula absence (is & are) mostly appears in adjective form, verb (ing) and refers to the social factors of African American Vernacular English itself.

African American Vernacular English is part of Sociolinguistics which an interesting topic to be analyzed where the syntactic variations of African American Vernacular English became the limitation focus of the writer's study in Iggy Azalea's song. The further study can analyze other interesting aspects of African American Vernacular English phonologically or semantically by using the other experts and objects in order to enlarge knowledge.

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