Bidialectalism: the conflict 1949-74

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Bidialectalism--the conflict 1949-74

by

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INTRODUCTION

"She been knowin' Willy for a long time." Since first hearing this sentence uttered during a mid-session break in a high school drop-out class that I was teaching, I have had an interest and increased awareness of the problem of nonstandard black dialect. The word "problem" is used without reservation, for any speech that can render some segment of the population unintelligible to another, or can deprive its speakers of their equal share of the benefits society has to offer deserves to be called a problem. The purpose of this paper will be to survey representative scholarship on the genesis and nature of this problem. This survey will be primarily a chronological development of the bidialectal question, offered in the hope that some insight into the complexity of this issue may be gained.

Definition of Terms

There are several words that will be used repeatedly throughout this paper, and in the interests of clarity, it is best to specify their definitions now. The first is "dialect." Joan and Stephen Baratz, in "Negro Ghetto Children and Urban Education: A Cultural Solution," have offered a definition that seems ideal,

When linguists use the word dialect, they do not limit themselves to the way that people in different regions of a country
pronounce words. They refer to a total linguistic structure—the organized way that language grammatically relates certain words to other words; a dialect is a fully developed linguistic system.\(^1\)

While it is broad, this definition avoids the novice's error of regarding dialect as simply the different ways in which people pronounce the same word. The Baratz definition serves the needs of linguist, sociologist, anthropologist, and English teacher equally well. Their description closely resembles Joshua Fishman's more sociologically oriented term "variety," which many prefer as a less judgmental designation.

The term variety, on the other hand, merely designates a member of a verbal repertoire. Its use implies only that there are other varieties as well. These can be specified by outsiders on the basis of the phonological, lexical, and grammatical differences that they (the varieties) manifest.\(^2\)

The Baratz description of the term dialect also serves the needs of descriptive linguists who define dialect as, "A variety of language (geographical or social) that differs consistently from other varieties in phonology, morphology, syntax, lexis—or all of them."\(^3\)

The Baratz definition also addresses itself to the erroneous notion held by some laymen that dialect is a corrupt form of a language. It is proper, though, to think of dialect in terms of standard and nonstandard. In England the notion of a prestige dialect apparently came into being about the fifteenth century, when the London dialect became
standard by virtue of its pre-eminence in trade and politics. Similar social factors produced similar standardization in other European countries. Examples of prestige or standard dialects such as Parisian French and Castilian Spanish come immediately to mind.

While scholars have always had difficulty deriving specific definitions for the terms "standard" and "non-standard," owing primarily to the dynamic nature of living languages, the measure of what is standard has traditionally been the variety of language used by educated people in the performance of their public roles in a given time and place. Nonstandard varieties, simply enough, are those varieties whose significant features differ in greater or lesser degree from the standard. Although these designations may raise more questions than they answer in the realm of scholarship, the functional validity of the notions is demonstrated by the widespread circulation of grammars and style manuals, and the popular acceptance of their authority. It is, perhaps, through this rather intuitive approach to defining the terms standard and nonstandard, and in acknowledging these concepts as important markers of regional and social variety in language that we may most profitably regard the concepts of standard and nonstandard.

The next important term is "black dialect." William Labov, in his essay, "Language Characteristics: Blacks," provides us with the following characterization: "Many
features of pronunciation, grammar, and lexicon are closely associated with black speakers—so closely as to identify the great majority of black people in the northern cities by their speech alone."⁴ Labov is careful to note further that there is not an absolute correspondence between this type of speech and membership in the racial group, that those blacks who do speak the dialect speak it in varying degrees and with varying frequency, and that the speech pattern must not be connected therefore with any myth of biology. He is supported in these contentions by J. L. Dillard, who states,

The greatest risk in dealing with ethnic behavior patterns—including speech patterns—is that someone will conclude that those patterns are genetic in nature. To write of Black English, or Negro Non-Standard English, or of Negro dialect is to risk having someone conclude that the dialect differences are caused by physical traits—the infamous 'thick lips' theory. It also invites, from a professional point of view, irrelevant 'disproof'. A demonstration on the order of X is a Negro, and he speaks just like any other college professor' is too easy to perform. This is why it should be emphasized that social factors are more important than racial—or geographic—factors in determining dialect patterns.⁵

We may expand Labov's definition somewhat, as Jean Malmstrom suggests is necessary when she asks, "How can we explain both the consistent patterns of black Nonstandard recurring in widely separated parts of the country and also the systematic contrasts between black and white Nonstandard dialects?"⁶ We will, then, define black dialect as the set of features in
pronunciation, grammar, and lexicon that are consistent in black speech across the country and systematically different from all white dialects; further that these differences in pronunciation, grammar, and lexicon are so closely associated with black speech as to enable the majority of listeners to identify the race of the speaker by his speech alone.

The last term we must consider is "bidialectalism." I propose that it be described as the fluent use of standard dialect in appropriate social situations by speakers whose first or usual language is black nonstandard dialect. We may profitably regard bidialectalism as a special instance of diglossia. That term was originally applied to societies which concurrently recognized two or more languages. The co-existence of these languages within a single society was dependent on each code's serving functions distinct from all other codes existing within that society. As Fishman notes,

This separation was most often along the lines of an H(igh) language, on the one hand, utilized in conjunction with religion, education and other aspects of high culture, and an L(ow) language, on the other hand, utilized in conjunction with everyday pursuits of hearth, home, and lower work sphere.7

With the advance of sociolinguistic studies, the term diglossia has been recognized as applicable not only in multilingual societies, but also in those which recognize vernacular and classical varieties and those which employ several dialects. In these situations, it is important to
It is not uncommon for the H variety alone to be recognized as 'official' in diglossic settings without this fact threatening the acceptance or the stability of the L variety within the speech community.8

In diglossia, then, there is a precedent set for the viability of bidialectalism as a method of language planning. I have chosen to use the term bidialectalism to distinguish the instance of black dialect in the United States which, at this point, exists largely as a potentially diglossic situation.

In light of the fact that this paper is concerned with the bidialectal conflict, a survey only of currently credible theories in this area will be undertaken. The purpose of this paper is simply to indicate where we currently are in the area of black dialect, and how we got here. To cite the many false starts in theories about black dialect would be not only misleading, but in many instances would lend dignity to such notions as that black dialect is the result of biological inferiority or linguistic deficiency. Further, this study will take care to follow a state-of-the-question approach rather than arguing for or detailing procedures for implementing any bidialectal instructional method.

The issues to be addressed in the following material will be the importance of the Creolist hypothesis in black English, the use of the Creolist hypothesis in formulating the proposal to teach standard English as a second dialect
(TESD), modifications in the TESD approach, and arguments of scholars opposed to enforced bidialectalism. Consideration will be given to such issues as phonology, and catalogues of grammar and usage differences as these questions arise in the context of the bidialectal controversy, but they will not be considered as separate problems.
THE CREOLIST HYPOTHESIS REGARDING BLACK ENGLISH

Before the 1930's for those interested in the question of the derivation of American English, the answer was a simple and unequivocal one. Our English, it was said, like the other manifestations of our culture, came from a dialect of Midland British speech. Our ancestors, whether they came on the Mayflower or followed in the decades after, brought it with them; and those who may have immigrated from non-English speaking countries adopted it so routinely and completely that within three generations, comprehension of the original non-English tongues was lost. There were and are vast numbers of case histories to illustrate the validity of this theory; however they are all of one class. We find in these examples people who left their native lands looking for an America whose streets were paved with gold, who were anxious to become a part of the American Dream. What they left in nearly every case was poverty, oppression, and misery; and they were only too happy to adopt anything that would lead them out of that nightmare existence.

A moment's careful listening to black speech anywhere in the United States would have invalidated the pat assumption of the strict pre-eminence of Anglian culture here. Theories though, especially social ones, are notoriously adaptable when it comes to reaffirming the political and economic views of their proponents. The differences between
black and white speech were explained by the assertion that the Negro has imperfectly developed speech organs which render him incapable of reproducing English perfectly, and further, that there is evidence his childlike mind can not deal with the complexities of learning a civilized language. As Raven McDavid characterized the faulty proposition,

At the beginning of the century, the opinions held concerning the relationships between Negro and white speech may be summed up in two ethnocentric statements, both frequently heard today: 1. The regionally ethnocentric statement by Northerners that the 'quaintness' and 'primitiveness' of what they considered Southern speech was due to the influence of the Negro. 2. The racially ethnocentric statement that the Negro contributed nothing of himself from his African heritage except a few exotic words, but that the essential characteristics of Negro speech—even of Gullah—were to be derived from British provincial speech or from lapses into quasi-baby talk by a simple people physically and intellectually incapable of mastering the sounds and structure of English.

Both of these statements, we will find, contained elements of truth. But neither was the whole truth. The first statement has had comparatively little currency and done little damage. But the second has been institutionalized as part of what Herskovits calls 'the Myth of the Negro past.'

This second stance, investigated by McDavid, Melville Herskovits, and others, purported to describe a linguistic reality. The purpose it actually served, however, was originally the need to justify chattel slavery and later, to rationalize the caste system that evolved to replace slavery in a democratic state. Refusal to acknowledge the validity
of the African cultural heritage of the slaves made it easier, both morally and practically, to fit them into new patterns on the plantations where they worked. The civilization from which the slaves came was held to be so primitive and undeveloped that it just naturally fell, in the face of the obviously superior white culture. After the abolition of slavery, these assumptions translated into the "White Man's Burden," and he nobly responded to the cause of lifting the Negro from the misery of his ignorance and superstition, if not his economic destitution.

The myth persists in the minds of those who need to believe it, but with the publication, in 1949, of Lorenzo D. Turner's seventeen years research on the Gullah dialect of the South Carolina Sea Islands, these views lost the support of the serious scholarly community. Turner's work dealt with the identification of Africanisms surviving in the Gullah dialect, a task he was uniquely qualified to undertake due to his familiarity with several African languages. In a personal communication to Melville J. Herskovits, Turner summed up his findings:

Up to the present time I have found in the vocabulary of the Negroes in coastal South Carolina and Georgia approximately four thousand West African words, besides many survivals in syntax, inflections, sounds, and intonation . . . I have recorded in Georgia a few songs the words of which are entirely African. In some songs both African and English words appear. This is true also of many folk-tales. There are many compound
words one part of which is African and the other English. Sometimes whole African phrases appear in Gullah without change either of meaning or of pronunciation. Frequently African phrases have been translated into English. African given names are numerous.

As if the implications of Turner's original work were not impressive enough, further research into the Creoles of South America and the Caribbean brought even more conclusive arguments for putting away the myth of the Negro past. McDavid summarizes this material, which indicates relatively undifferentiated Creoles for an extensive distance down the Atlantic Coast of the Americas.

... many structural features of Gullah are also to be found in creolized languages of South America and the Caribbean, in the pidgin-like trade English of West Africa, and in many African languages--this preservation of fundamental structural traits is a more cogent argument for the importance of the African element in the Gullah dialect ... Perhaps the most significant of all, ... like the languages of West Africa described by Westermann and Ward, Gullah has a far less complex system of vowel phonemes than any known variety of English; furthermore, Gullah has a remarkable uniformity, not only in phonemic structure but in the phonetic shape of vowel allophones, along a stretch of nearly four hundred miles of the South Atlantic coast, in the very region where there is a greater variety among the dialects of white speech than one can find elsewhere in English-speaking North America--a uniformity difficult to explain by chance, or by any of the older explanations of Negro speech.

Herskovits states the implications of these Creole studies well when he says:
The assumptions underlying the approach to the study of syntax and idiom in the New World Negro speech to be given below developed out of an intensive analysis of texts recorded in Dutch Guiana in 1929, and may be recapitulated as follows: The Sudanic languages of West Africa, despite their mutual unintelligibility and apparent variety of form, are fundamentally similar in those traits which linguists employ in classifying dialects, as is to be discerned when the not inconsiderable number of published grammars of native languages, spoken throughout the area from which the slaves were taken, are compared. This being the case, and since grammar and idiom are the last aspects of a new language to be learned, the Negroes who reached the New World acquired as much of the vocabulary of their masters as they initially needed or was later taught to them, pronounced these words as best they were able, but organized them into their aboriginal speech patterns. Thus arose the various forms of Negro-English, Negro-French, Negro-Spanish and Negro-Portuguese spoken in the New World, their "peculiarities" being due to the fact that they comprise European words cast into an African grammatical mold. But this emphatically does not imply that these dialects are without grammar, or that they represent an inability to master the foreign tongue, as is so often claimed.  

The underlying unity of these Creoles, and the consistent direction of their deviation from the standard European languages whose vocabularies they use, especially in an area which shows so much dialect diversity in the standard tongue spoken, makes a strong case for a common African link in their ancestry. For verification, Creolists turned to the African languages and trade pidgins spoken even today in the areas from which the majority of slaves were taken. Herskovits cites a number of deviations in West African trade pidgins
corresponding in form to the New World Creoles, and even indicating that some of the pidgin and Creole idioms are literal translations from the African languages. These deviations were found not only in the English pidgins, but also the French. He summarizes his position as follows:

It may be well to restate the conclusions arrived at on the basis of comparing taki-taki with Negro English in the New World, pidgin English in Africa, Ashanti idioms and West African grammatical form as illustrated in Yorube, Ewe, Fo, Ge, Twi, Mende, Hausa and other West African languages.

1. Parallels to taki-taki were found in Jamaican speech in the Bahamas, and in the Sea Islands of the United States.

2. Similar parallels were also found in pidgin English as spoken in Nigeria and on the Gold Coast, as well as in such specimens of Negro-French spoken by natives with no schooling as were available.

3. Phonetic peculiarities which Negro speech exhibits in the New World were met with in African pidgin, and it was possible to trace them to African speech.

Therefore, it must be concluded that not only taki-taki, but the speech of the other regions of the New World we have cited, and the West African pidgin dialects, are all languages exhibiting, in varying degrees of intensity, similar African constructions and idioms, though employing vocabulary that is predominantly European.

In recapitulating the account thus far then, while scholars acknowledge that the African languages of the slaves were mutually unintelligible, they were still more structurally similar to each other than to any European language. This premise is reinforced by the fact that the majority of the slaves were taken from the western coast of Africa whose
languages are all of the Sudanic family. The trade pidgins and Creoles follow the known pattern of development of these varieties in reducing the number of grammatical features of the learned language, and in substituting new vocabulary items while retaining the old grammar. The cultural and economic isolation of the slaves served to perpetuate these forms to the point where Creole was the first and only language of several generations. This theory is made more credible by the fact that it allows for the normal patterns of cultural transmission of language, and other socialization data, demonstrated by social scientists.

The applications of this theory to black speech in the United States should be obvious. Turner and the other Creolists have certainly documented a Creole ancestor in the case of Gullah, and identified elements of Creole structure in the English of many other blacks. Such scholarship points to a Creole ancestor for black speech as we know it today. This hypothesis seems especially likely in view of the fact that most of the slaves sold in America were first moved through Caribbean ports, where they undoubtedly learned the English Creole from other slaves and from slavers, if, indeed, they didn't know the trade pidgin already.

In keeping with the hypothesis that black English has a legitimate history and shows normal patterns of cultural transmission, Creolist scholars allow that the original Creole moved steadily in the direction of standard English.
The bulk of black speech does derive from the speech of whites with whom the slaves worked and lived. It has been pointed out that some items of vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation in black speech can be traced to relic English forms of the seventeenth century. The preservation of these forms may be accounted for by the cultural and economic isolation of blacks, even after the Civil War. It must be acknowledged, however, that the borrowing has not been only in one direction. As McDavid noted:

The Linguistic Atlas indicates that many words noted by Turner as of African origin have been taken over by Southern whites and spread far beyond the areas in which the plantation system flourished. The foci from which these words have apparently spread had large Negro populations early in their history.15

He proceeds to point out that not only items of vocabulary, but evidence of common African practices in grammar, phonology, and intonation exist throughout the South. These phenomena can also be accounted for by assuming normal cultural transmission patterns.

Acceptance of these notions, aside from their obvious importance in current race relations, is vital from another standpoint. Once their validity has been acknowledged, scholars and educators are free to use the methods and results of the Creole studies in determining the exact relationship between black and white English, and will then be equipped to
plan a program of language arts that accommodates both of these segments of the American population, and facilitate communication between them.
Once it became clear to those who labor in the academic fields that black English could not be viewed as an archaic form of standard English, psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, educators, and linguists went to work to form new theories about the way black people, especially those from the ghetto, speak. The results of their studies were diverse and superficially impressive, but they all bore the stamp of the same thinking as the old Anglian theory. They began with the assumption that the black man is just a white man in different colored skin, that his culture and his history are not substantially different from the WASP heritage of America. Consequently the black emerged as a figure of an aberrant white, and his differences were viewed as deficiencies. Shuy sums up the results of this research in the following manner.

Early childhood educators have told him that he is non-verbal, that he has defective hearing and that his language signals cognitive deficits. Speech people have told him that he is deficient and suffering from a kind of pathological weakness. English teachers have dismissed him as inarticulate and ignorant of the most fundamental aspects of grammar and pronunciation. Reading teachers have considered him illiterate. Psychologists have observed that he deviates from the prescribed norm. 16

Shuy and others criticize these judgments because, they maintain, they were arrived at on the basis of assumptions that are valid for a middle-class white child, not a poor black
child, of the same chronological age. The theorists ignore the fact that a youngster may be nonverbal in a setting that intimidates him, such as a clean and well-lit psychologist's office, or when dealing with a teacher who ridicules his speech, while he is obviously very verbal on the playground or at home. They ignore the fact that a child's speech may reflect such concepts as possession, plural number, negation, and passage of time not in the standard way, but in a different regular, and predictable grammatical form. These theorists ignored the fact that the "prescribed norm" the child is deviating from is not the norm of the strata of society to which he belongs. In addition, it seems incredible to find such a high incidence of pathological problems in this one segment of the population when only about 5% of all children suffer from any kind of neuro-physiological or psychological problems that would cause their speech to be deficient. 17 All of this should indicate that scholars and students must look elsewhere for assumption.

A clue on where to begin may be found in the previous section, dealing with the rise of the Creolist hypothesis. The origins of black English, indeed black cultural norms, can be traced back to a creole ancestor; but the development did not stop there. William A. Stewart continues its history in a pair of articles called, "Sociolinguistic Factors in the History of American Negro Dialects," and "Continuity and
Change in American Negro Dialects." As the slaves had longer contact with the language situation in the New World, their speech more or less gradually moved in the direction of standard. The process was accelerated in areas where the black/white ratio was the smallest, but it did slowly take place even on large plantations. Decreolization progressed further with the development of a caste system among the slaves whereby some were used as house servants and had greater contact with the standard speech, or were even given some education as part of their privileged status. While black speech was changing, with the increased access to standard, white speech did not remain unchanged. The children of both races often played together, and white youngsters up to the age of four or five were heard to speak an almost unmodified Gullah. As a result, there were many African borrowings into the white dialect. After the Emancipation, black dialect took another rapid shift in the direction of standard speech with an increased availability of education to both poor and affluent blacks. The speech heard today gives striking testimony to the similarity of the two dialects, but Stewart notes, the similarities may not be as striking as they appear. In the later article he gives the following comparison, which is but one of many possible.

Standard English: We were eating--and drinking, too.
White Non-standard: We was eatin'--an' drinkin', too.
Negro Non-standard: We was eatin'--an' we drinkin', too.
Gullah: We bin duh nyam--en' we duh drink, too.
If we compare word forms, Negro nonstandard appears more similar to standard and nonstandard white speech than to Gullah. If we compare sentence structure, a different relationship emerges. In all of the dialects, the subject pronoun and auxiliary in the conjunctive clause can be repeated, but generally are not. Both standard English and white nonstandard normally omit the subject pronoun and the second verb auxiliary; although when one is present, they both must be. Negro nonstandard and Gullah often repeat the subject pronoun, but not the auxiliary in the conjunctive clause. This re-alignment is made more impressive when we see it repeated in other English Creoles.

Jamaican Creole: We ben a nyam--an' we a drink, too.
Sranan (Surinam): We ben de nyang--en' we de dringie, too.
W. African Pidgin: We bin de eat--an' we de dring, too.19

It appears that the word-form similarities are the result of a conscious effort on the part of the Creole-speaking blacks to "mend" their speech, while Creole grammar patterns were less subject to conscious manipulation and remained largely unchanged.

Stewart and associates, then, carry the work of McDavid, Herskovits, and Turner one step farther, and theorize a generalized Afro-American dialect in existence today, the features of which may be more or less present in any given speaker. In accord with this observation and with the social
reality that speaking in this way is a detriment to upward mobility, Stewart proposes a program of bidialectalism based on the methods of the aural-oral approach to teaching English as a second language. This method is based on a comparative linguistic effort to determine the likely areas of interference from native speech and directing drills in the target language to counteract them. To accomplish the necessary data-collection, Stewart helped found the Center for Applied Linguistics, and among the prime exponents of CAL's programs has been the National Council of Teachers of English, and the Modern Language Association of America. 20

This aural-oral method has the advantages of being a recognized one in language teaching, with its format basically established, and directed at speakers who show a language difference. It does not purport to be a strictly remedial approach, but recognizes the cultural and language validity of the student's own dialect. It offers the student the choice of either accepting or rejecting instruction in standard dialect and the consequences that go with either decision. It offers students on both sides of the color line the opportunity to study language systems and language dynamics, and may thereby increase mutual respect between the speakers of both dialects. It conforms with the educational goal to teach all citizens to be literate contributors to society.
As ideal as this solution sounds, there remain many problems in perfecting teaching materials. A complete contrastive analysis is, as yet, far from complete. The central difficulty in formulating this analysis, aside from the relative infancy of Creole studies, is the problem of determining which features of speech are black English and which are important differences that need to have special consideration in a teaching program. The surface similarity of this black dialect to standard English presents the linguist collecting data with a considerably harder task in formulating contrastive distinctions than would a completely foreign language. Because the study of phonological differences is more easily made and is more complete, current available materials concentrate on phonology and not grammar, although grammar is acknowledged to be the more important factor in a negative social judgment. Material for training teachers is not completed or readily available. There is difficulty in determining at what point along the continuum negative judgment is suspended, and finally it has not been determined at which level of schooling it would be most efficient to begin instruction in standard English.

The problems, indeed, are difficult ones, but they are confined mainly to areas where further research will eventually be able to resolve them. The biggest problem, that of defining this problem as an important one, needing to be studied, has been resolved already.
MODIFICATIONS IN THE TESD APPROACH

In view of the fact that the positions presented thus far form the core of the bidialectal movement and controversy, it seems wise to briefly recapitulate before proceeding with the examination of alternative courses. When Creolist scholars began studying the many pidgin varieties that exist along the Atlantic coast of the Americas, they encountered a number of similarities. These similarities were so great in number, and observed in such a large geographic area that they could not be judged chance occurrences. Further, these similarities in the pidgins diverged consistently from the standard dialects spoken in the area, and they fell in categories that linguists use to classify dialects. After viewing all these facts together, Creolist scholars advanced the notion that these pidgins possibly had a common ancestor. The linguistic characters of these pidgins, and the fact that the geographic area in which they occurred had been prominent in slave trade led the scholars to hypothesize that that ancestor was a trade pidgin used during slaving times. Investigations of the native languages and pidgins in the areas of western Africa from which the slaves had been taken bore out that hypothesis. This discovery was important because it showed that the language, and other cultural traits, of the people who spoke the American pidgins had historicity and manifested a normal pattern of transmission and change in a
degree far greater than had previously been recognized. Elements of the west African cultural systems emerged then to give an underlying unity to behavior that had been formerly regarded as random deviation from the mainstream culture.

In the realm of language, William A. Stewart recognized a quasi-foreign language situation existing in the United States in the form of black dialect, and together with his associates recommended that the contrastive analysis techniques used in teaching English to speakers of other languages be adapted to teach standard English to people who used black dialect exclusively (TESD). The TESD position maintains that with the co-existence of two dialects so superficially similar the opportunities for misunderstanding an utterance are greatly increased. J. L. Dillard puts the figure at roughly 10%. While this figure appears quite small, the fact that it operates in the area of race relations which have usually been marked by tension and distrust gives it added significance. In addition it is widely acknowledged that this form of speech impedes the upward mobility of its speakers due to the negative social judgments associated with its use. We must put part of the blame for this situation on the schools and English teachers, in particular, whose normative approach to language has taught that standard speech is good and non-standard speech is sloppy or bad. As Roger D. Abrahams states the problem, "variation from American standard English
is regarded by the middle-class sector of the population (white and black) as prima facie evidence of social deviance, incompetence or worse. 22 We have, in effect, thrown the baby out with the bath water by failing to recognize that our society is not an amalgam or "melting pot" of ideas from widely diverse cultures, but is a pluralistic one whose traditions and ethics range on a broad continuum.

Further evidence of the fact that we have designated certain sections of our population as "throw-aways" are the astoundingly poor school records and high drop-out rates among our minority students. William Labov states,

Negro children in the central urban ghettos do badly on all school subjects, including arithmetic and reading. In reading, they average more than two years behind the national norm. Furthermore, this lag is cumulative, so that they do worse comparatively in the fifth grade than in the first grade. Reports in the literature show that this bad performance is correlated most closely with socio-economic status. Segregated ethnic groups, however, seem to do worse than others: in particular, Indians, Mexican-Americans and Negro children. 23

Part of this lag may be attributed to a cultural difference. Where middle-class values place more emphasis on the academic skills of reading and writing, the Afro-American heritage places a higher peer esteem on verbal skills, those embodied in practices like jiving, sounding, playing the dozens, and fancy talk. Studies however, have shown that the majority of ghetto inhabitants do express a belief in middle-class values
and a hope for attaining that life-style.24

Learning to read well is an important part of school achievement because successful completion of assignments in all other areas often depends on the ability to decipher the printed page, and an adequate education is essential in our highly technical era. While, as Labov points out, "there are factors operating that are more important than native intelligence or verbal ability--culturally-determined values and attitudes that interfere with the process of learning to read,"25 there are also a number of linguistic factors in black English that hamper mastery of reading skills. Labov, in his article, "Language Characteristics: Blacks," gives some examples that point this fact out more clearly.

In black English, there is a tendency to simplify consonant clusters. They may be converted to a schwa or glide, or be eliminated altogether. The combined effect of several of these consonant simplification rules will add to the total number of homonyms that occur in black English that are not present in the standard dialect, and will contribute to the unexpected character of their outcomes. For example, the reduction of consonants /ld/ to /Ø/ has the final result of producing homonyms such as told=toll=toe. Misunderstanding in speech may result, difficulty in recognition of words in their standard spellings will almost certainly result when all the phonological variables are taken together. This, however, is not the only or even the most
serious problem.

Very often, the consonant clusters that are simplified are the same consonant clusters that represent the principal English inflections. The loss of the final /r/, for example, has an effect on the realization of the standard English possessives, so that a phrase like "their book" may come out sounding like "they book." The loss of the final /l/ affects future forms, so that in Black English "she'll go" = "she go." All of the grammatical forms are present in black English, but linguists engaged in contrastive analysis have not yet determined if the difference in representation is phonological or grammatical, and this presents a problem in formulating teaching materials using the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) methods. Even more importantly, it presents a problem in the classroom when a student has read a passage correctly according to the rules of his own dialect and has understood the passage as intended, but is reprimanded or corrected by his teacher for a difference that is strictly phonetic, and that both he and the other students who have been listening do not hear or feel to be significant. The cumulative effect of these experiences is the loss of confidence by the student in his ability to decode the printed word, and eventually loss of confidence in the writing system itself when it bears so little direct correlation to his language as it is spoken. The end result is that this student
gives up on the task of learning to read, falls behind in all his other academic endeavors, and may ultimately give up on his education altogether.

Dialect speakers have demonstrated a receptive competence in standard speech, that is they understand it although they may not speak it perfectly. Therefore, drills that maintain both content and interest are difficult to formulate. Often, in order to keep interest high, drills are short and fast paced, but length and speed are two aspects of the drill that increase the likelihood of a nonstandard response. Role playing, another method used in the EFL program, can also be used to keep interest high, but there is always the danger that the student will become so engrossed in his acting part that he will forget to respond in the target dialect and so not get the practice the drill was intended to give. In addition, even assuming that the student receives good instruction and practice in learning the standard dialect during his language arts class, he is returned to a nonstandard speaking environment where he gets no reinforcement or practice for what he has been taught.

The assumption that the student can receive good instruction is sometimes a rather dubious one. Most teachers are members of the middle class who have been taught a normative view of language. They often have a negative view of nonstandard speech and of its speakers. In short, no matter how
well intentioned, instructors may neither respect nor trust their students, and yet they are expecting respect and trust from their students. This is a very difficult situation in a classroom. Often these teachers conceive of themselves as the standard-bearers for middle class language and values and will use the EFL program as a remedial one. No matter how upwardly mobile a student may aspire to be, the demand that he reject the language and culture that tie him to his home, family and friends is an unfair one, and one that could do him much psychological harm.

Roger D. Abrahams has designed an alternative proposal to foster bidialectalism. First, the teachers and administrators must accept the language the child brings to any learning situation, and encourage him to speak it with no negative judgment stated or implied. Second, the teacher must use whatever pride each child has in his experiences, including his language, to encourage him to write, giving him whatever technical help he may need. In so doing, the teacher would develop the child's pleasure in making his experiences a permanent record. After this has been accomplished, the teacher would develop reading skills by fostering the child's natural desire to share his experiences with others and to learn of their experiences. Through his reading, a natural appreciation of different styles and techniques of writing should emerge. A child would essentially be
taught to read in his own dialect, sparing him the double task of learning to read and simultaneously translate what he has read into his own dialect. Studies have shown that appreciation of different varieties of language appropriate to the social situation develops much later than the simple internalization of grammatical rules. We have a clear example of this in the age-grading movement of black dialect. At early to mid-adolescent stage, then, instruction in standard dialect would begin and the student could intelligently select whichever dialect served him as the best tool for communication in a given situation.

This program demands further research into black English in order to formulate basic dialect texts in all fields to be used in the elementary grades. It also demands reform in teacher education programs in order to train teachers who can deal intelligently with nonstandard dialects. Fortunately, many of these reforms are already underway in universities, but they must be expanded to include retraining of teachers already in the field. The program does have the outstanding advantages of reducing the number of tasks a child must learn to perform at one time, and of using his justifiable racial and cultural pride in propelling him as a literate and psychologically sound individual into the mainstream of American life where he can enrich us all.
ARGUMENTS FROM THE OPPOSITION

Pragmatic and scholastically sound as the programs for bidialectalism appear to be, there have been strong arguments made against their implementation. The objections fall into three main categories. First, critics argue that because dialects of the same language are, by nature, mutually intelligible if the speakers take due time and care, a program of enforced bidialectalism is not necessary. Second, even the proponents of bidialectal programs admit that the scholarship that is needed for their successful implementation is not currently available. Third, opponents argue that the notion of bidialectalism is not consistent with our national goals or ideals.

Basil Bernstein writes thus, with regard to the proposition of necessity:

That the culture or subculture through its forms of social integration generates a restricted code, does not mean that the resultant speech and meaning system is linguistically or culturally deprived, that its children have nothing to offer the school, that their imaginings are not significant. It does not mean that we have to teach these children formal grammar, nor does it mean that we have to interfere with their dialect. There is nothing, but nothing, in dialect as such, which prevents a child from internalizing and learning to use universalistic meanings.27

By definition, all languages and dialects of any language are equal because they are equally adequate in fulfilling the purposes of communication between their users. If this were
not so, the language or dialect would, of necessity, change or cease to exist. Also by definition, all dialects of any given language are mutually intelligible to the people who speak that language, for their grammars are, "simply equal sets that intersect in vast and important ways." This is not to deny that there are often some dialect relationships that cause problems in that mutual intelligibility, and time and patience on both sides must be invested to unravel the meanings. It is also, however, not to maintain that major educational programs should be undertaken to assure understanding. As Wayne O'Neil states,

It is reasonable to assume that where general mutual intelligibility exists among the speakers of the several dialects of a language, it will be extremely difficult (because it serves no purpose) for the speakers of one dialect to learn to produce rather than simply understand the other dialect. The dialect differences may of course be quite obvious and plain and even interesting, but if no real problem of understanding hangs on them, to learn to mimic one of the other dialects is to work away at some artifact of a task that has nothing to do with language and communication. Indeed if we were to set up an experiment whose goal was to get speakers of one dialect to learn to speak another dialect, the subjects would be bewildered by any arguments that counterfactually claimed there to be a problem of intelligibility.

In addressing themselves to the problem of the possibility of teaching students to be bidialectal, the opponents of the programs turn to the admission that the necessary scholarship in comparative linguistics is lacking. James Sledd argues,
Whatever one thinks of teaching standard English by methods like those for teaching foreign languages, contrastive analyses of our different dialects are a prerequisite—but a prerequisite which has not yet been supplied . . . neither the structural nor the generative grammarians have yet produced a satisfactory basic description of even standard English. 30

Proponents of the TESD programs do not deny the allegation, nor do they deny Sledd's further charge that adequate teaching materials and methods of evaluation are currently not perfected. Dr. Roger Shuy admits,

A majority of the materials currently available for teaching standard English to nonstandard speakers rest on the uneasy assumption that TESOL techniques (for teaching English as a second language) are valid for learning a second dialect. They do this without any solid proof. We do not have a viable evaluation tool at this time nor are we likely to get one until the linguists complete their analysis of the language system of nonstandard speakers. 31

Assuming that, with another twenty years research, these problems of scholarship and pedagogy could be resolved, and there is little doubt of the possibility, we, as a nation, must ask whether we can sanction the underlying assumptions and motives, and the likely outcomes of such a program. The opponents of all bidialectal programs argue that, "The basic assumption of bi-dialectalism is that the prejudices of middle-class whites cannot be changed but must be accepted and indeed enforced on lesser breeds." 32 They maintain that such an approach to solving our racial tensions runs counter to our national philosophy and is in reality an attempt at,
"total assimilation and total standardization," which would at best produce alienated and self-hating individuals who would achieve just enough upward mobility to be stranded between black and white cultures.

Such opponents of TESD as Sledd and O'Neil urge that we first of all examine our priorities before accepting the professed goals of bidialectal programs. The justification of the biloquist position has been stated as the enhanced opportunity at upward mobility for minority citizens. Yet that, "itch to get ahead" has already produced a society of "no deposit, no return" overconsumers, and sooner or later that abuse and depletion of our natural resources will result in an environment that is physically and spiritually unfit for human habitation. If this is true, and we need only glance at the front page of our local newspapers to entertain an uncomfortable feeling that it is, why have so many federal and corporate dollars been spent on programs that may assure more people will be corrupted by the "businessman's ethic?"

The reason, Sledd and O'Neil maintain, is that if we waste enough of a student's time at a task that is unnecessary and likely foredoomed to failure we,

serve to render school children skilled enough to be exploited but finally uneducated, used to failure, and alienated enough not to oppose exploitation; thus for them to continue to agree that they had their chances to succeed in a free and open society but that they had failed.
While the impressive jargon of the bidialectal movement promises reform, say the anti-TESD linguists, it delivers the current power structure intact and maintains the status quo without a whimper.

What does the opposition offer as an alternative? Not a great deal in the way of specific programs, but a lot in the way of idealism. Sledd, in his article, "Doublespeak--Dialectology in the Service of Big Brother," suggests that we:

1. Teach some higher ambition than to "get ahead."
2. Do all we can to decentralize power and regain control of our own lives again.
3. Do whatever we must to end the social isolation of our minorities, so that if dialect differences did not disappear of themselves, they would lose their stigma.
4. Teach our students how language is used to control us and lead us to judge by criteria which have no bearing on actual worth.
5. Teach our white students about black lives and culture, because white ignorance is a larger obstacle to social justice than black English.
6. Educate our students to open and enrich their minds, not to make them interchangeable parts in the corporate machine.
What Sledd, O'Neil, and their associates are advocating is more than a simple program of language planning. They suggest that we need to take a serious look at the values that we live by in contrast with those that we profess. In the inevitable discrepancy between the two, we may find the real roots of many of the problems we face as a nation and thereby make a more intelligent, creative, and profitable start in planning programs with a broader, multi-issue, foundation and with more flexibility in meeting changing realities.

There is little disagreement that an examination and realignment of priorities may be in order. Advocates on many sides of many issues have called for it, and often it seems like the simplest, most logical place to start. The suggestion is so frequently and casually offered that it is not recognized for what it fundamentally is, a call to social revolution. In the past such movements have been undertaken only under the most desperate of circumstances, and we may well wonder whether the positions taken by the opponents of bidialectalism may, therefore, serve again only to reinforce the status quo. Many of the points they make must be conceded though. Beyond a doubt, implementation of bidialectal programs is not currently feasible. Desegregation and multicultural education would probably do much to advance the cause of social justice. Increased awareness of language dynamics across the board is desirable. Beyond this, we must
acknowledge that the cry, "If not bidialectalism, then what?" is not a valid response to, "Why bidialectalism?"
CONCLUSION

The reader may well ask at this point, what has been resolved? The answer is simple. Nothing has been resolved, and resolution was not the purpose of this paper. The purpose was to illustrate the complexity of the bidialectal issue. It began with the discoveries of the Creolist scholars regarding the ancestry of black English through which dialectologists recognized elements of foreign language structure in the speech of ghetto blacks. A program using EFL techniques was proposed to foster a diglossic situation and enable black dialect speakers to overcome the stigma attached to their style of speech. A number of problems arose from such a proposal, however. Necessary contrastive analysis on the dialects was not completed, instructional and evaluative techniques were not perfected, adaptations in teacher training had not been carried out, and the danger that the bidialectal program might be used as a remedial rather than an alternative program was recognized. It was realized, consequently, that a number of major adjustments needed to be made in the TESD approach. Additionally, a broadening of the basic TESD program was viewed as a promising new avenue for improving the reading and writing skills of ghetto students insofar as difficulty with those skills was associated with dialect differences. These programs were not universally accepted, though. They were criticized on the basis that
such programs are not really necessary for clear communication and so were a waste of precious class time. Further the scholarship needed to make bidialectal programs effective did not exist and so foredoomed student efforts to failure with resultant loss in self-esteem. Finally, the charge was made that the biloquist schemes were, in the long run, no more than establishment maneuverings to preserve the status quo.

Research on black English is still in progress, and the issue remains a very open question. Certainly one of the most encouraging aspects of this research is the fact that it is being done on a broad, inter-disciplinary basis. The literature reflects an increasing awareness of contributions from not only linguists, but also anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, and educators. There is also an increasing awareness that this research is being carried out with real people, and that whatever proposals are advanced will be carried out in a world which demands an intricate blend and balance in all areas of human endeavor. With this in mind, it becomes our duty not only to evaluate the quality of our scholarship, but also the workability of our programs, and the ethical implications of our labors as well.
NOTES


6 Jean Malmstrom, "Dialects--Updated," in Bentley and Crawford, Black Language Reader, p. 20.

7 Fishman, p. 74.

8 Fishman, p. 76.

There is a widespread notion among psychologists that some environments are better than others for stimulating language and learning growth. This assumption is, I believe, an outgrowth of the psychologist's confusion between general language development and the acquisition of standard English, which causes him to think that he must explain a "language deficit." According to researchers of this school, among the most detrimental factors is the "inadequacy" of the ghetto mothering patterns. The ghetto mother, they say, is so taken up with survival--"subsistence behaviors"--that she is too exhausted to talk to her children. Such a notion tells us more about the psychologist's lack of knowledge about the ghetto mother than it does about her real role. It also assumes that there is a minimal amount of language that must be present for language to be learned and that Negro mothers do not give this to their children. Part of this notion is that language is only learned from one's mother and that the language learned from her is underdeveloped.
It is also presumed that the mother of a black child does not know how to stimulate or reinforce her child so that learning can occur. Under that assumption is the idea that such things as reading a book and singing to a child are essential behaviors in order for language to develop. Finally, it is presumed that she encourages passive, withdrawn behavior in her children because verbal ability is not highly valued in the ghetto community.

It seems as if all these assumptions have evolved because of misconceptions of what language is and how it functions. The psychologist has constructed elaborate environmental and psychological explanations of differences in language behavior but the elaborate-ness is unnecessary. The assumptions have been used after the fact to explain data erroneously--they have no experiential base.

from Joan C. Baratz, "The Language of the Ghetto Child," in Bentley and Crawford, Black Language Reader, p. 79.


20 While it is not the purpose of this paper to deal with specific methodology, the student who wishes to pursue this matter may profitably consult: Ruth I. Golden, Improving Patterns of Language Usage (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1960), Su-san C. Lin, "An Experiment in Changing Dialect Patterns: the Chaflin Project," College English, 24 (May 1963), pp. 644-47, Su-san C. Lin, Pattern Practice in

Dillard, p. 42.


For an example of one such study see Ulf Hannerz, Soulside, Inquiries into Ghetto Culture and Community (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969).


O'Neil, p. 186.


33 Robert B. Kaplan, "On a Note of Protest (In a Minor Key): Bidialectism vs. Bidialectism," College English, 30 (February 1969), 389.

34 O'Neil, p. 190.
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