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FACULTAD DE COMUNICACIÓN, LINGÜÍSTICA Y LITERATURA
ESCUELA DE LINGÜÍSTICA

DISERTACIÓN PREVIA A LA OBTENCIÓN DEL TÍTULO DE LICENCIADA EN
LINGÜÍSTICA APLICADA CON MENCIÓN EN ENSEÑANZA DE LENGUAS

AFRICAN AMERICAN VERNACULAR ENGLISH

**An analysis of Kevin Hart's humor in the movie 'What Now?' and the perception of
English speakers in the United States about AAVE**

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QUITO, 2020

“If you can’t fly then run, if you can’t run then walk, if you can’t walk then crawl, but whatever you do you have to keep moving forward.” – Martin Luther King Jr.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my beloved parents Marlon and Amparo, and my family who have been the motor and enthusiast of this and almost every accomplishment in my life.

To my brother Beto and my closest friends for being full of support and encouragement throughout this whole process.

To my dear director Enrique who believed in my view from the beginning and had my back when things became difficult.

To one of my amazing professors Janine Matts for her passion, advice, help and support throughout all this educational process.

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Abstract

This research project is mainly a descriptive-synchronic analysis of African American Vernacular English based on Kevin Hart's comedic repertoire, specifically two of his stand-up comedy shows "What Now?" and "Let Me Explain". Additionally, this project focuses on portraying the opinion of different speech and social communities have not only about this specific dialect but also about English in general.

Resumen

Este trabajo es principalmente un análisis descriptivo-sincrónico del inglés vernáculo afroamericano basado en el repertorio humorístico de Kevin Hart, específicamente en dos de sus espectáculos de comedia stand-up "*What Now?*" y "*Let Me Explain*". De igual manera, este proyecto se enfoca en representar la opinión que tienen diferentes comunidades lingüísticas sobre este dialecto en específico pero también sobre el inglés en general.

INTRODUCTION

There have been some studies done on AAVE, such as Saucier, O'Dea and Strain, (2016), and two published theses written at PUCE by Maldonado (2018) and Ruiz (2019) that relate to AAVE occurring in different environments. In addition, there is a thesis done by Soto (2020) which concerns humor as well. However, no study has been conducted on a comparison and contrast between Standard American English and the variety previously mentioned at PUCE. In addition, this project will also be dealing with humor in the African American context since the data is from a stand-up comedy show.

This project is intimately related to the social context of the United States and the discrimination and stigmatization that this variety suffers. It not only occurs to the variety itself but also to its speakers since they are the ones using it instead of using SAE. The project is driven by the idea of social vindication/assertion and support to the African American community and its linguistic variety.

While I was studying Linguistics at PUCE, I discovered my love for varieties of English when I had the opportunity to study the subject of Sociolinguistics. In that class, we were able to observe that there is not just one type of English in the world and that it is important to be aware of it. The language variety that impacted me the most was AAVE (African American Vernacular English), since it has its own grammatical rules and it is considered “bad” or “poor” American English by non-linguists. It creates importance as well, personally due to the fact that my origins come from African roots, my dad is African Ecuadorian and his mother was too. I feel a connection to this specific variety of English even when they do not exactly have the same roots.

As it was previously mentioned, this study focuses on a non-standard variety of English: AAVE. Since it is based on a specific dialect of English, this study can be considered as descriptive-analytical, as it will describe the features of AAVE and Standard American English (SAE) by comparing them and turning AAVE into SAE in one AAVE speaker's stand-up comedy show. It is also synchronic as only one specific period of time and place is being studied. The study presents qualitative data gathered from contrastive analysis and an interview with open-ended questions. This present dissertation will also answer the following questions: what are the grammatical differences between AAVE and SAE? What attitude do Americans have towards it? And why is this variety so discriminated?

This project is not going to take the phonological aspect of AAVE into account since the focus lies in the morpho-syntactic aspect that this variety exhibits.

The main objective of this study is to portrait the grammatical differences between African American Vernacular English and Standard American English in the context of the United States of America. Whereas, the specific objectives focus on illustrating the opinion of Americans from different social groups such as Caucasian, Latino and African American, about this variety; determining the most common traits of AAVE used by Hart; and, indicating Hart's position concerning identity.

For the methodology, the first part of the study consists of selecting a video that contains AAVE. In order to show the differences between the two varieties, AAVE and SAE, a contrastive analysis is necessary to compare the grammatical structures of both varieties. The comedy of Kevin Hart was selected to be examined on this research because it illustrates the majority of the characteristics of AAVE in his speech. He has the accent, intonation, pronunciation, but most importantly, he uses the morpho-syntactic features of AAVE in the specific video used for this study presented later on chapter II and II. He was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, United States. He is known for his stand-up comedy where he talks about his life and "black people's problems". He emphasizes on the similarities found in black people's reality and environment.

As for the second part of the study, an interview with open-ended questions is used because it provides qualitative data based on African American people's opinions about the stigmatization of AAVE since they are the ones using and spreading it. White/Caucasian and Latino people are also taken into consideration for this interview since it is also important to know the opinion of the different kinds of communities in the country because they are also responsible for the existent stigmatization.

The sample for this study is taken from the movie 'What Now?' since it is from an African American comedian. In addition, the movie contains several features of AAVE described above, but only certain parts of the whole show were selected and used for the analysis. Concerning the qualitative data, certain people belonging to the African American, Latino, and White communities were chosen to participate in the interview created for this project. The participation of African American people was needed as well, due to the importance of their opinions regarding the discrimination they have had and still suffer

because of attitudes from people of other, and even their own community. Additionally, Latino and Caucasian people are also taken into account because they are part of the discrimination and stigmatization problem that was previously mentioned.

The current study consists of three chapters, the first one has to do with the Literature Review where the theoretical framework is described. The second chapter deals with the Methodology used with the participants in this study, which will lead to the third chapter that refers to the data obtained from the methods used and the analysis of that data.

ANTECEDENTS

There have been several studies conducted on AAVE from different perspectives. The following are some of the ones that are most related to the topic of this dissertation.

First, Saucier et al., (2016) in the article called *The bad, the good, the misunderstood: The social effects of racial humor* wrote about how this racial humor can affect the psychology of people. This is based on the “sword and shield metaphor” that can occur in three ways with a variation on the intention and the perception. In the first case, where racial humor is used as a sword, it reinforces misconceptions and stereotypes that were previously associated with certain social groups or communities (bad). In the second case, where racial humor is used as a shield, it protects and challenges those misconceptions and stereotypes, and links people that are associated with the same community that is being rejected by society (good). Finally, in the third case, certain prosocial ethnic humor can be misperceived as “bad” or “antisocial”; therefore, it creates the contrary effect and reinforces those stereotypes and misconceptions (misunderstood).

They talked about the bad effects of this kind of humor, which are antisocial. Those bad effects consist of reinforcing and highlighting the negative aspects associated with the social group that is being mentioned. They used a sketch from the TV show *Saturday Night Live* as an example. In this scene, there were two people, one white and one black, and they were playing a word association game. The game began with positive words: the white man said ‘cat’ and the response of the black man was ‘mouse’. Soon, the game started to intensify and get more personal; the white man said offensive words, resulting in a negative response from the black man that was no longer close to be an equivalent to the word and slur that the white man said. At the end of the game, the white man said the word ‘nigger’ which had no anti-White slur equivalent, the black guy chose to respond with the term ‘dead honkey’. The sketch finished with the white man asking and begging the black man not to hurt him and offering him a job with a remarkably high salary. All the people in the audience laughed. This is a clear example of how racial humor can be used as an attack to a specific community that has always been suppressed.

Then, they described the good effects of racial humor, which are prosocial. They used the same example described above to portrait these effects. They saw it from another perspective where the words and slurs used by the participants were intended to create

awareness of racism and for the audience to empathize with the black man and how African American people have certain social “disadvantages”. They stated that maybe the white man's intention was to portray how inappropriate it is to use racial slurs and pejorative terms in social interactions. They also state that maybe the black man's reaction, being enraged, was shown to provoke a response in the audience: they should not repeat the same acts that the white man is doing, and they should also empathize with people being harassed with racial slurs. They also talked about the re-appropriation of racist words to create a bond among the group that is being offended. An example of this could be the word ‘nigger’ which is being used by black people to talk about a friend or a family member: someone that belongs with them and that is respected by them.

Finally, they showed the misunderstood side of this type of humor, which indicates when people’s intentions are to portray ethnic or racial humor to create a positive response, but it is rather misunderstood and generates a negative response like rejection and reinforcement of the previously conceived stereotypes. To show this, the authors used the previous example that has a positive intention. They stated that although the sketch was thought to provoke a positive response, it could turn out to be the opposite. It could provoke rejection in the audience since there could exist misunderstandings between the intentions of the actors and the message that it actually sent.

To sum up, racial humor is a tool to depict a certain reality to an audience. This audience can understand the intention behind the humor or misunderstand it completely.

In addition, Maldonado (2018) in the thesis called *Analysis and Translation of the literary dialect found in the African American play The Piano Lesson* translated and analyzed this dialect to create an adaptation of this English play in Spanish. She related African American English with African variations of Spanish in Ecuador. She used both of the more remarkable varieties of Afro-Spanish in the country: Afro-Esmeraldeño and Afro-Choteño Spanish. For the methodology, Maldonado translated, adapted, and created a literary dialect that was equivalent to the one in English. She did research on the features of these two different Spanish variations and used them as a guide to adapt the play. She had seven excerpts where she used the tools previously mentioned to have the translation of the play.

Maldonado concluded by stating that this play was very popular internationally because it portrays the daily life of people who suffered from oppression by another social

group. This was the link that connected the majority of African dialects across the world. She also justified the use of the Afro-Choteño and the Afro-Esmeraldeño because of the features that they had in common with African American English. She highlighted the phonological aspects, such as rhythm and musicality for them to be the Ecuadorian Spanish equivalents.

Finally, Ruiz (2019) in the thesis called *African-American Vernacular English: A Descriptive Analysis of the comedy of Steve Harvey* he talked about humor and how it is used by African American people to represent the social rejection, racism, and injustices they suffer. He did a discourse analysis taking Steve Harvey as the speaker because he used their own dialect to create pride among their community and to affirm and empower his people. Ruiz described the different grammatical features that AAVE possesses and the rhetorical strategies that this specific speaker uses to create social identity and pride.

For the methodology, he used stand-up comedy as it was considered a semi-spontaneous speech, and therefore, a more reliable source for the dissertation. It is a descriptive analysis of discourse as well as case study since it uses just one person as its source, and therefore, cannot be generalized. Ruiz obtained the corpus from three different video excerpts on YouTube that were specifically chosen because of the topics they were about. He transcribed the videos in order to do the discourse analysis in an easier way. The analysis of the data was qualitative as well as quantitative since he counted and analyzed the morphological and syntactic variables.

Ruiz concluded by stating that stand-up comedy showed a high frequency of AAVE characteristics. He also highlighted the importance of taking rhetorical features into account since they gave a clear perception of their social reality. Finally, he talked about the use of the nouns 'us' and 'them' in order to show that there is actually a difference between African Americans and Caucasians.

CHAPTER I

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, some theories, concepts, and trends of thought will be addressed. These were specifically chosen for the dissertation project since they are fundamental and lay the foundations necessary to understand the current situation. Therefore, they are seen as the basis of the investigation.

1. Sociolinguistics

According to Wardhaugh (2006), to define sociolinguistics, it is necessary to know what **society** and **language** are. **Society** is seen as a group of people who are together for a specific purpose or reason, whereas **language** is conceived as what the members of this specific group of people speak.

He addresses as well the difference between **sociolinguistics** or **micro-sociolinguistics** and **sociology of language** or **macro-sociolinguistics**. The first one deals with investigating the relationships between language and society, having as its main goal a better understanding of the language structure and how languages function and are used in communication. Meanwhile, macro-sociolinguistics deals with discovering how social structures can be understood easily and in a better way by the study of a language and how certain features of the language are used for specific social arrangements.

Sociolinguistics is also defined by Hudson as “the study of language in relation to society”, and sociology of language is “the study of society in relation to language” (Hudson, 1996: 4).

Additionally, Coulmas expressed that “micro-sociolinguistics investigates how social structure influences the way people talk and how language varieties and patterns of use correlate with social attributes such as class, sex and age” (Coulmas, 1997: 2). On the other hand, macro-sociolinguistics studies “what societies do with their languages, that is, their attitude and attachments that account for the functional distribution of speech forms in society, language shift, maintenance, and replacement, the delimitation of interaction of speech communities” (p. 2).

2. Variety and dialect

Another important term that must be mentioned is the notion of **variety**, which is defined as “a set of linguistic items with similar distribution” (Hudson, 1996: 22). According to Hudson, using this definition of **variety** can allow us “to treat all the languages of some multilingual speaker, or community, as a single variety, since all the linguistic items concerned have similar social distribution”.

Variety is also described as any form of patterns of human speech that is homogeneous enough that has sufficient elements to be analyzed using synchronic techniques and their processes have a semantic scope broad enough to function in all formal communicational contexts (Ferguson, 1972).

The notion of **dialect** plays a crucial role in the investigation, too. There has been some trouble defining this word, but it was pointed out that **language** and **dialect** are ambiguous terms (Haugen, 1966). He added that ordinary people use these terms quite freely in speech. For most, a dialect is almost certainly no more than a local non-prestigious (therefore powerless) variety of a real language. Haugen also states that the terms “represent a simple dichotomy in a situation that is almost infinitely complex.”

In addition, Fromkin (2014) describes dialects as “mutually intelligible forms of a language that differ in systematic ways.” (p. 279). She also states, “when there are systematic differences in the way groups speak a language, we say that each group speaks a dialect of that language.” Fromkin agrees with Haugen when she says that a dialect is “not an inferior or degraded form of a language, and logically could not be so because a language is a collection of dialects” (p. 280).

She also agrees with Wardhaugh (2006) when she admits to having trouble deciding whether she is facing a language or a dialect. To do so, she suggests using a rule-of-thumb: “when dialects become mutually unintelligible—when the speakers of one dialect group can no longer understand the speakers of another dialect group—these dialects become different languages” (Fromkin, 2014: 280).

Finally, according to Wardhaugh (2006) the main difference between a language and a dialect is that a language “has more power than any of its dialects” (p. 30). “A dialect is a subordinate variety of a language, so that we can say that Texas English and Swiss German are, respectively, dialects of English and German” (p. 40). He agrees with Fromkin when he

states that a language then would be a complex system of communication that has many mutually intelligible varieties.

3. Standard American English vs. African American Vernacular English (AAVE)

3.1. Standard American English (SAE)

The following concept is considered crucial for the development of this study. Therefore, it is important to start with Bell's (1976) seven criteria for discussing different kinds of language, as they are considered relevant since he included the notion of standardization, which is defined as the process by which a language has been codified in some way. This usually involves the development of materials such as grammars, spelling books, and dictionaries, and possibly literature. Trudgill's (1995) defines Standard English as "that variety of English which is usually used in print, and which is normally taught in schools and to non-native speakers learning the language. It is also the variety which is normally spoken by educated people and used in news broadcasts and other similar situations" (p. 5–6). According to Wardhaugh (2006), the process of standardization is also an attempt either to reduce or to eliminate diversity and variety.

Furthermore, there is no such thing as "**Standard**", but the term is usually used to talk about the dominant or prestigious dialect (Fromkin, 2014: 289). She continues by stating that "Standard American English (SAE) is a dialect of English that many Americans nearly speak; SAE is an idealization. Nobody speaks this dialect; and if somebody did, we would not know it, because SAE is not defined precisely" (p. 289).

3.2. African American Vernacular English

The notion of a Standard English leads us to other varieties of English such as **African American English** or **African American Vernacular English**. It is called "vernacular" because it is the most common style used; it is the colloquial spoken speech in which little to no conscious attention is being paid to it (Bell, 1976).

Wardhaugh (2006) defines AAVE as "the uniform variety of speech that black people from the north and the south of the United States speak" (p. 342). As it is known, linguists have referred to this variety of speech as **Black English**, **Black Vernacular English**, and **Afro-American Vernacular English**. But nowadays, the most-used term is African

American Vernacular English (AAVE) even though **Ebonics** has also been commonly used (Wardhaugh, 2006).

Moreover, Labov (2012) states that AAVE is a dialect of English that has a complex set of systematic rules and that has all the structures needed for a good and logical comprehension, expression, and learning. He agrees with Bell (1976) on the definition of vernacular. Labov claims that AAVE is the form of language commonly used in everyday-life situations among family and close friends.

According to Labov (1982), “AAVE shows strong substrate influences from the West African languages originally spoken by the slave populations” (p. 165-202). Some basic characteristics of the dialect are associated with the history of African American in the United States and the history of slavery.

4. Linguistic Prestige

A similarly important term to define is linguistic prestige which refers to the social judgments and ideas that speakers link to a particular language or dialect rather than to the characteristics or attributes of the language system itself. This prestige is closely related to its speakers' prestige; for that reason, a variety is considered prestigious if its speakers have prestige; similarly, the variety that low-prestige people use is also considered a low prestige variety (Hernández-Compy; Conde-Silvestre, 2012).

There are two types of linguistic prestige: *overt*, and *covert*. **Overt prestige** deals with the acceptance and dominance of the prestigious language variety and the continuing existence of the non-prestigious variety. This context favors the social ascension of the prestigious language, therefore, the prestigious people, in the power or status hierarchy. **Covert prestige** represents a totally different context where the non-standard varieties are the prestigious ones. This context allows people and civilizations to maintain group union and linguistic identity which has to do with the feeling of belonging and group membership (Hernández-Compy et. al, 2012).

As a result of the dominant type of linguistic prestige, status or hierarchy in a particular country, the information and the control of the country and the educational system relies on the hands of the prestigious linguistic group and the people who belong to the non-prestigious dialect have to adapt and learn the dominant language or dialect in order to be

able to communicate with other members of the same community (Hernández-Compoy et al, 2012).

5. Linguistic Attitude

Linguistic attitude is other crucial term concerning the status of nonstandard varieties of English. Hernández (2006) affirms that “las actitudes son manifestaciones ‘valorativas’ hacia las cosas que la gente hace y dice y se construyen durante la experiencia social”¹.

There are two theoretical approaches regarding the classification of linguistic attitudes: behaviorist and mentalist. The mentalist approach has to do with what is more relevant for sociolinguistics. Therefore, sociolinguists adapted this model in order to study linguistic attitudes taking into account three different components 1) cognitive, 2) affective and 3) behavioral, resulting on the following classification (Hernández, 2006):

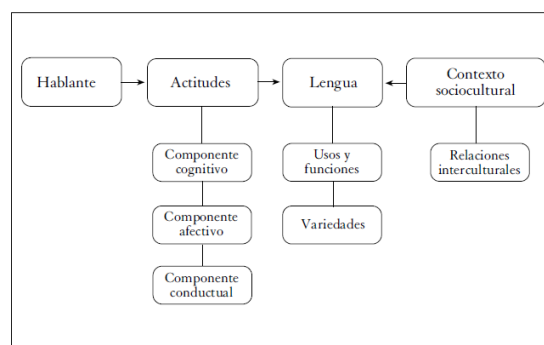


Figura 1. Modelo de las actitudes lingüísticas.

6. Features of AAVE

The most researched features of this English variety are the morphological, phonological, and syntactic characteristics of it (Wardhaugh and Fuller, 2015).

6.1. Subject-Verb Agreement

One of the most frequently researched features of AAVE is related to the verbal **-s** marking. This involves the presence or absence of the suffix **-s** on finite verbs. As it is established, in Standard English dialects, **-s** marking occurs only on third-person present

¹ Attitudes are “valuative” manifestations of the things people do and say and they are built upon social experiences.

singular verbs; whereas in AAVE, this marking is sometimes absent. Therefore, this characteristic is conceived as one of the base features of AAVE.

Additionally, this verbal feature can be also used in grammatical contexts other than third person singular. AAVE speakers tend to overgeneralize the third-person singular rule and use it with other persons as in: *Those women has beautiful eyes* (Wardhaugh and Fuller, 2015).

Moreover, the most common occurrence concerning agreement of subject and verb occurs in the verb to-be (I am, you are, he/she/it is). Even though, this subject-verb agreement is also absent in the conjugation of irregular verbs (does/do, have/has, was/were) (Labov, 2012).

6.2. The Verb To-Be

6.2.1. Deletion of the copula

Another pattern present in the verbal system of AAVE is the deletion of the copula. The rule for its use is quite simple. If you can contract “**be**” in Standard English, you can delete it in AAVE (Labov, 1969). For example, *She is cute* can be contracted as: *She’s cute* and therefore, it would be: *She cute* in AAVE. Nevertheless, *I don’t know where she is* cannot be contracted to: **I don’t know where she’s* in Standard English. For that matter, it cannot become: **I don’t know where he* in AAVE (Wardhaugh; Fuller, 2015).

In addition, the frequency of the deletion of this verb varies. It is less present when it is followed by nouns as in: *She my friend*, but it occurs often when it is followed by verbs as in: *He comin’ to the party* (Labov, 2012).

Moreover, the total omission of the verb to-be does not occur in the past tense, where **was** is rarely deleted. However, **was** commonly appears in the plural as often as the singular forms, creating conjugations like: *We was*, as well as: *He was* (Labov, 2012).

6.2.2. Habitual ‘be’

Another main feature of AAVE is the habitual be. It is called ‘habitual’ because it marks an action that occurs frequently, that is, habitually. This feature is also called **invariant be** because the copula is not conjugated, but used in the form of be for all subjects (i.e., I be, you be, he/she/it be, etc.). Thus, the utterance: *They be late* means that they are

usually late. In contrast, *They late* means that they are currently late (Wardhaugh; Fuller, 2015).

6.3. The Past Tense

6.3.1. Deletion of the suffix –ed

In addition, another important characteristic of AAVE is the deletion of the suffix **-ed** that is used in regular verbs to form the past tense. AAVE speakers understand the notion of past tense of **-ed**, whether or no they produce it in written and oral form (Labov, 2012).

6.3.2. Had as indicator of simple past tense

Furthermore, AAVE can also mark the simple past tense using the auxiliary **had** which in SAE indicates the past perfect tense. This past with had is most of the time used to express the simple past, so: *Mary had talked about it*, it's the same as: *Mary talked about it* (Labov, 2012).

6.3.3. Been as the Remote Present Perfect

Similarly, another important feature of AAVE is the use of **been** as the remote present perfect. For AAVE speakers: *She been married* means that the statement is true, it has been true for a long time and it is still true. In contrast, in SAE it is understood as if the statement is no longer true but it was true for a long time (Labov, 2012).

6.3.4. Other representation of the simple past and past participle

Additionally, AAVE has several nonstandard forms of irregular verbs to express the simple past and the past participle as exemplified on: *She seen that* and *She had sang that song* (Labov, 2012).

6.4. The Possessive System

Additionally, another important feature of AAVE concerns the possessive system. In SAE, 's is added to a noun to express possession as in: *Sarah's dog* and *This is Sara's*. Whereas, in AAVE, this suffix is commonly omitted when another noun follows it as in: *Sarah dog*. Even though, the 's is present when there is no noun as shown in: *This is Sarah's*. In addition, this possessive 's is regularly attached to “mine” as in: *This is mines* (Labov, 2012).

On the other hand, the possessive pronoun **whose** is not usually common in AAVE, but when it is present, it is replaced by **who** as in: *I don't know who pen it is* (Labov, 2012).

6.5. Existential Constructions

Furthermore, another important feature of AAVE are the existential constructions inside it. AAVE can express 'existence' in numerous ways but the focus here is on the use of **it**. AAVE uses **it** in existential sentences such as: *It's a guy at the door*, whereas, SAE uses **there** as in: *There is a guy at the door* (Labov, 2012).

6.6. The Plural Marking System

Besides, AAVE uses the plural **-s** normally except when there are numbers occurring together with "nouns of measure" as in: *It cost ten dollar* or *He owe me fifty cent*. Likewise, when the plural **-s** follows a stem ending in /st/, this /t/ can disappear, be omitted or replaced by an unstressed vowel resulting on words like *test = tess* or *tesses* (Labov, 2012).

6.7. The Negative System

Apart from that, AAVE, as well as other nonstandard dialects of English, tends to use several negatives within a single sentence where just one negative meaning is intended such as in: *Nobody never give nothing*. Although, AAVE has additional negatives concerning **no**, **never**, **neither** that appear where SAE uses **any**, **ever** and **either**. This pattern is almost always present and it follows the logic that is common in several other languages in the world like French and Spanish where these negatives are used to emphasize and reinforce instead of cancelling each other as occurs in SAE (Labov, 2012).

6.8. BE DONE: Future Perfect and Resultative

Additionally, AAVE speakers tend to create different uses and add different meaning to tenses and aspects already created. An example of this can be found in utterances like: *They BE DONE eat up all the food by the time we get there* (Labov, 2012). This sentence has the characteristic of the future perfect in SAE and it is interpreted as: *They will have eaten up all the food before we get there*. As it can be observed through the example, these types of utterances expressed that one event is first and it is followed by the second one.

Another feature added to **BE DONE** by AAVE speakers is the resultative meaning which leads to utterances like: *Get outta my way or I'll BE DONE slid you in the face!* where

the meaning goes beyond ordering events but it's a representation of an inevitable consequence of the first event (Labov, 2012).

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter deals with the methodology, the tools and techniques used for gathering the data, and the sample chosen for the thesis.

As it was previously mentioned, this research project is descriptive-analytical and synchronic since it only deals with the description of the uses of this specific variety in one stand-up comedy by Kevin Hart and some interviews to AAVE speakers and English speakers in the US. It provides qualitative as well as quantitative data since it deals with a grammatical analysis of this variety and a description of the humor, and also with people's opinions through the usage of an interview with open-ended questions.

1. Methodology

For the methodology, the first part of the study consists of selecting a video that contains AAVE. In order to show the differences between the two varieties, AAVE and SAE, a contrastive analysis is necessary to compare the grammatical structures of both varieties.

The comedy of the actor/comedian Kevin Hart was chosen to be examined in this research as it is the best illustration of the majority of the characteristics of AAVE previously mentioned. He has the accent, intonation, pronunciation, but most importantly, he uses the morpho-syntactic features of AAVE in this specific video. He was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, United States. He is known for his stand-up comedy where he talks about his life and “black people’s problems”. He emphasizes on the similarities found in black people’s reality and environment.

The video selected to be studied in this research is a film titled "What Now?" part of Hart's stand-up comedy content, where he talks about his own private life and how it is relatable to the whole black community since it is full of common “black people’s problems, routines”, awkward and funny situations, and everyday life moments. The majority of the movie is set on a stage in which Kevin is presenting his speech to people from different communities of the US: black, Latino, white people, etc. Even though the show is created for and based on African American people, Kevin emphasizes that his show can be enjoyed,

watched and related to all kinds of people since we, as humans, have been through the same situations or have had the same problems.

A transcription of specific parts of the video will be used to illustrate the characteristics of AAVE and to contrast it with SAE. The video was chosen in order to portrait the humor in Kevin Hart's stand-up comedy and the attitude of English speakers towards this variety. The video was specifically selected in order to analyze if English speakers in the US from different social and speech communities believe that AAVE is a stigmatized dialect, as some Standard American English speakers do.

As for the second part of the study, an interview with open-ended questions is used because it provides qualitative data based on black people's opinions about the stigmatization of AAVE since they are the ones using and spreading it. Caucasian and Latino people are also taken into consideration for this interview since it is also important to know the opinion of the different kinds of communities in the country because they are the ones responsible for this stigmatization.

2. Tools and Techniques

2.1. Synchronic descriptive analysis

The analysis that was chosen for this project is synchronic and it is based on the project done by Pico Montoya in 2007. Her study was developed using a synchronic-analytical methodology. She selected Eugenio Derbez's comedic TV show *XH-DRBZ*. Pico analyzed the selected data in five language levels, using a table to organize and describe each level. The table and type of organization on her project were used as a basis for the syntactic analysis that was done on this present research.

The table was sectioned in four different parts: **extract**, **feature of AAVE**, **social context**, and **Standard American English**. On the first one, an extract of the sample is transcribed with its African American features. On the second one, the feature/s that were exhibited on the extract are named and described. On the third one, the social context of the extract is described in order to be better understood. Lastly, the fourth one depicts how the extract would be said or written if it would follow the grammatical rules of Standard American English.

2.2. Interview

Regarding the interview, it is intended for African American, Caucasian, Latino and First-generation Latino people. It is made upon 12 people from different speech communities and social realities: 3 African Americans, 3 white/Caucasian English native speakers, 3 Latinos who have immigrated to the United States, and 3 Latino first generation, who have been born in the US. Concerning the qualitative data, certain people belonging to the African American, Latino, and White communities were chosen to participate in the interview created for this project. The participation of African American people was needed as well, due to the importance of their opinions regarding the discrimination they have had and still suffer because of attitudes from people of other, and even their own community. Additionally, Latino and Caucasian people are also taken into account because they are part of the discrimination and stigmatization problem that was previously mentioned. The purpose of these interviews is to provide qualitative as well as quantitative data and to serve as a more open way of explanation and development of the different speech communities of English native speakers' opinions regarding both dialects, Standard American English, and African American Vernacular English. The questions are the following:

- 1) **What kind of English do you speak? How do you describe it?** This question is about self-perception. The interviewees' points of view are the core of this question since they are the ones in charge of describing their own way of speaking or their own English. It is important and relevant for the study because it is easier to observe, analyze and therefore, describe this stigmatization.
- 2) **Do you think that your English is the “correct” one? Why?** This question has to do with how the interviewees perceive their own speech. It is intended to see if they think that there is indeed a “correct” English, and also to explain why their English is in fact the correct one, if they affirm that belief.
- 3) **What do you think of the different kinds of “Englishes” in the US?** This question deals with the awareness of the different types of English that exist in the US. There are several speech communities that speak in different ways. The intention of this question is to portray the interviewees' opinions about these “Englishes”, for example the Chicano English, the Latino English, etc., and to observe if there is any kind of stigmatization or negativity against other kinds of English such as the mentioned above.

- 4) **What do you think about Black English?** The main purpose of this question is to observe the interviewees' opinion about this specific variety and to see how each one of the participants describes this variety.
- 5) **Do you prefer to call it Black English or African American English? Why?** This question is entirely related to the whole stigmatization problem since some African Americans feel triggered if you call this variety Black English. That triggering reaction comes from slavery times and how black people were mistreated and denigrated. It was developed to see the preference of the interviewees in terms of naming the dialect.
- 6) **What is American English for you? Do you think that there is a "standard"?** The objective of this question is to obtain information about the interviewees' perception of their own language and language use. It is also intended to comprehend if speakers, who are the ones using and changing the language, consider the existence of a standardization of any type in the English language.
- 7) **Do you find white people's humor funny or do you prefer black people's humor?** This question is asked only to African American and White people because it was developed in order to see if the humor was indeed perceived as funny due to the skin tone and the accent (SAE vs. AAVE). It also has the intention to perceive if there is any kind of preference concerning the dialect used to create humor, dealing with linguistic prestige and attitude.
- 8) **What do you think of black and white people's humor?** This question is asked only to Latino people. It has the same intention as the question above, but it is also to see if there is any kind of discrimination coming from another "stigmatized" speech community.

The data was later organized by communities: African American, Latino, First-generation Latino and White/Caucasian, where each question with its respective answers is synthesized on a table with its respective analysis and interpretation.

3. Universe and sample

The universe for this project is Kevin Hart and his work as a comedian. This is important because he shows and uses the same format and pattern throughout all his repertoire. The

majority of his comedic work is based on his and most or even all African American people's social reality and the problems that come with it. He shows his truth in his humoristic speech and tries to depict it as faithfully as possible. This depiction makes his humor relatable to different kinds of communities because as humans we all have similar problems.

The sample for this study is taken from the movie 'What Now?' since it is from an African American comedian. In addition, the movie contains several features of AAVE described above, but only certain parts of the whole show were selected and used for the analysis. A total of thirty extracts or excerpts were selected from this movie because they had the most common and repetitive AAVE features that were present on the comedy show. Another one of his stand-up comedy movies was selected for this project in order to show his comedic coherence and pattern. The movie is called "Let Me Explain"; though, only five extracts were selected from it.

CHAPTER III

DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter deals with the analysis of the data that was collected through the videos and the interviews done to the different participants of this investigation. The data will be classified and analyzed in different categories regarding the nature of it: qualitative or quantitative.

1. Sample taken from the movie “What Now?” and the movie “Let Me Explain”

“What Now?”

Extract 1:	<i>Chickens ain't cluckin'? Cows ain't mooin'.</i>
Feature of AAVE:	The AAVE features that are present in this extract concern first, the negative system, and second, the verb to-be, specifically the deletion of the copula. In this extract, the first AAVE feature has to do with expressing a negation using the word <i>ain't</i> which also is not associated to any tense in particular. This normally is accompanied by the deletion of the copula because of the nature of the word <i>ain't</i> , which lacks tense and person.
Social context:	This is part of the beginning of the movie, the introductory part where Kevin acts as a secret agent, a parody of James Bond. It all happened 3 hours before the show. His agent name is Kevin Hart, and he is known as agent 0054 because of his height, which is a constant joke that Kevin makes in all his shows. This extract is part of a dialogue among Kevin and other people that are playing poker with “the villain”. Kevin is in the process of making a bet when his rival, the other

	agent, starts a discussion with him because he is taking too long to make up his mind.
Standard American English:	The SAE version of the extract would be <i>Chickens aren't clucking? Cows aren't mooing</i> because Kevin is trying to make his competitor angry by making fun of him, therefore, it has to be expressed with the plural present form of the verb.

Extract 2:	<i>Ain't nobody bookin' them suites?</i>
Feature of AAVE:	The features that are present in this extract are: the one that has to do with the negative system, and the one that has to do with the deletion of the copula be. Here, a double negative is being used in order to reinforce the intention of the speaker. It can be noticed by the use of the words <i>ain't</i> and <i>nobody</i> , which are next to each other. Additionally, the deletion of the copula is present whenever the word <i>ain't</i> appears.
Social context:	This is part of the discussion between Kevin and the rival agent. Kevin is making references to the movies and TV shows where his rival has acted on. His rival agent is Don Cheadle who is best known for his role as James Rhodes/ War Machine in the Avengers movies.
Standard American English:	The SAE version of the sentence above would be <i>Isn't anybody booking them suites?</i> Since it is part of Kevin's teasing discourse with his competitor and it has the same mocking tone.

Extract 3:	<i>What you doin'?</i>
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Feature of AAVE:	<p>The feature that is portrayed in this extract has to do with the verb to-be, specifically it is the deletion of the copula.</p> <p>Normally, the verb to be can be deleted in AAVE if it can be contracted in SAE. In this case, the second person singular form of the verb to-be in present tense was omitted. Even though, in this case, the second person singular form of the verb in past tense might have been used.</p>
Social context:	<p>This extract is part of a conversation between Halle Berry and Kevin Hart. Halle is the “Bond girl” in Kevin’s secret agent parody. This occurs right after Kevin kills the villain.</p>
Standard American English:	<p>The SAE version of this sentence would be <i>What are you doing?</i> or <i>What were you doing?</i> since it is not clear which one of the structures he is using.</p>

Extract 4:	<p><i>What the fuck was you doin’? Ain’t shit on you, your dress ain’t messed up.</i></p>
Feature of AAVE:	<p>The features present on this extract are: the one that has to do with subject-verb agreement, the one that has to do with the negative system, and the one that has to do with existential constructions.</p> <p>As it is explained above, on the features of AAVE, the verb to-be is so common, concerning this subject-verb agreement characteristic that it has even turned into an overgeneralization, where the singular form of the verb is also used with the plural persons.</p> <p>In addition, the negative system feature is shown by the use of the word <i>ain’t</i> that does not have any</p>

	<p>tense attached to it, therefore, it can be used to express every tense.</p> <p>Finally, the existential construction feature can be observed in the last sentence where it is being completely omitted and it replaced by the word <i>ain't</i> where, according to the features of AAVE explained above, the word <i>it</i> should have been placed in the first occurrence of <i>ain't</i>.</p>
Social context:	<p>This extract follows the one above. Kevin is yelling at Halle because he thinks that she did not do anything to help him kill the villain's allies. He is angry and disgusted because his entire suit is covered in the villain's blood while Halle is all clean.</p>
Standard American English:	<p>The SAE version of these sentences would be <i>What the fuck were you doing? There isn't shit on you, your dress isn't messed up.</i></p>

Extract 5:	<i>You on your period?</i>
Feature of AAVE:	<p>The feature that was shown in this extract has to do with the verb to-be, specifically with the deletion of the copula. But, because the extract is a question, the omission of the verb does not affect its meaning, and the question is comprehensible.</p>
Social context:	<p>This is part of Kevin's arrival at the stadium. He is walking in the backstage area when a random man asks him the question above because Kevin is covered in blood.</p>
Standard American English:	<p>The SAE form of the extract would be <i>Are you on your period?</i> Because the speaker is asking a question directly to Kevin, which requires the use</p>

	of the second person singular form of the verb in present tense.
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Extract 6:	<i>Ain't every man?</i>
Feature of AAVE:	The features that are represented in this extract have to do with the negative system, and the deletion of the copula. Usually, they tend to occur with each other.
Social context:	This extract follows the one above. This is Kevin's answer to the question that the random man asked him backstage.
Standard American English:	The SAE version of this extract would be <i>Isn't every man?</i> Since Kevin's answer is a generalization and not a direct response to the random man's question.

Extract 7:	<i>I thought you was gonna be long.</i>
Feature of AAVE:	The feature that can be seen in this extract is the one regarding subject-verb agreement. Moreover, this extract also has to do with the deletion of the copula because it states that whenever the verb occurs in the past tense, speakers tend to use the singular form of the verb instead of omitting it completely, opposite to what occurs in present tense.
Social context:	This is part of another conversation between Halle and Kevin. Kevin is changing his clothes in his dressing room. He gets out and Halle asks him what took him so long. He answers that his clothes were entirely covered in blood and that he had to take it off from his body.

Standard American English:	The SAE version of this extract would be <i>I thought you were gonna be long.</i>
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Extract 8:	<i>We 'bout to have a good time tonight.</i>
Feature of AAVE:	The feature that can be distinguished in this extract is the one about the deletion of the copula. In this case, it comes hand-in-hand with the omission of the following verb, the verb go in its present participle form, and their replacement with the word <i>'bout</i> or <i>about</i> .
Social context:	This is part of the beginning of the stand-up comedy show. Kevin thanks the city for welcoming him and for selling out the stadium. He is cheering up the crowd and telling them what is going to happen in his show.
Standard American English:	The SAE version of this extract would be <i>We are going to have a good time</i> , because the copula be and the going to were omitted and replaced with the word in the extract.

Extract 9:	<i>I see him, he see me.</i>
Feature of AAVE:	The feature that is present in this extract has to do with subject-verb agreement. As it can be observed in the sentence, the -s suffix that occurs on third person present singular forms of the verb is missing. This third person singular form of the verb tends to be overgeneralized when it happens in the past tense, where was is overused with singular and plural persons.
Social context:	This extract is part of the first life experience that Kevin shares with the audience. He is talking about some changes happening in his life. He

	<p>gives an example about these changes when he talks about his recent engagement and his request to his fiancé: he told her that before getting married they need to move out and go closer to the city because he was currently living in the suburbs. He wanted to move because he had animals coming closer to his house. Then, he says to the audience that he has a raccoon problem. He explains that this raccoon acts like a human being, it walks on two feet, it uses its hands as a human would do, etc. In this extract, he describes how he saw this raccoon looking into his house from the backyard glass doors.</p>
<p>Standard American English:</p>	<p>The SAE version of this extract would be <i>I see him, he sees me</i> as Kevin is directly describing what happened when he encountered the raccoon, since it is an animal, the third person singular suffix -s to show the present tense is needed in this case.</p>

<p>Extract 10:</p>	<p><i>You know how I know you're lyin'? 'Cause a raccoon can't go bang, bang. You know why? 'Cause a raccoon don't have no thumbs.</i></p>
<p>Feature of AAVE:</p>	<p>The features that are represented in this extract are: the one concerning subject-verb agreement, and the one concerning the negative system.</p> <p>The auxiliary verb <i>do</i> has to agree with the subject in the sentence.</p> <p>For the negative system feature, the use of double negative expressions is seen by the presence of the negative form <i>no</i>.</p>

	Another thing that can be observed in this extract is the lack of the auxiliary verb in both questions, nonetheless, this is a common characteristic of oral communication.
Social context:	This is part of a conversation between Kevin and his fiancé. He is retelling what happened when he told her what he saw the raccoon doing. This is what she answered when he told her about the “criminal” raccoon.
Standard American English:	The SAE version of this extract would be <i>Do you know how I know you’re lying? Because a raccoon can’t go bang, bang. Do you know why? Because a raccoon doesn’t have any thumbs,</i> because in SAE, the use of several negatives expressions within the same sentence results on cancelling the negative meaning that it has. Whereas in AAVE, as in some romance languages, the presence of several negative forms reinforces and emphasizes this negative intention.

Extract 11:	<i>I don’t need no fuckin’ lights. What the fuck I need lights for?</i>
Feature of AAVE:	The feature that is represented in this extract is the one that has to do with the negative system. Furthermore, the extract also portrays the omission of the auxiliary verb in the question.
Social context:	This is part of the story of the raccoon and other encounters that he had with wild animals on his property. He is telling the audience why he does not have lights on the sides of his driveway. He thought that the contractors who built his house were taking advantage of him because he is

	famous; so, he decided that he did not need lights on his driveway.
Standard American English:	The SAE version of this extract would be <i>I don't need any fucking lights. What the fuck do I need lights for?</i>

Extract 12:	<i>Bitch, where the fuck was you at all that time I was outside?</i>
Feature of AAVE:	The feature of AAVE that is portrait here is the one regarding subject-verb agreement. In this extract, the overuse of the third person singular form of the verb in past tense is observed by the presence of the verb form <i>was</i> .
Social context:	This extract is a continuation of the driveway story. He admits to the audience that he was wrong when he said that he did not need the lights. He said that it was that dark that he was even afraid of taking out the trash. He makes fun of the reaction that people have whenever they are scared and that the first thing that they do is blame the first person they see when they get inside of the house. He blamed his fiancé.
Standard American English:	The SAE version of this extract would be <i>Bitch, where the fuck were you at all that time I was outside?</i>

Extract 13:	<i>Imma make my son do it. He don't do shit.</i>
Feature of AAVE:	The feature that can be distinguished in this extract has to do with subject-verb agreement where the third person singular form of the auxiliary verb <i>do</i> is required.

	Another peculiarity to be highlighted on this extract is the contraction <i>Imma</i> that means I'm going to. This expression can also be contracted as <i>I'm gonna</i> .
Social context:	In this extract, Kevin is talking with his fiancé about taking out the trash. She says that she can help with the trash, but Kevin disagrees by saying that it is a man's job to do it. So, he is going to make his son do it.
Standard American English:	The SAE version of this extract would be <i>I'm gonna make my son do it. He doesn't do shit.</i>

Extract 14:	<i>That's a Tasmanian devil, you ain't never seen no shit like that.</i>
Feature of AAVE:	The feature that is predominant on this extract is the one about the negative system, but in this particular case, it comes together with the presence of <i>ain't</i> ; therefore, it occurs along with the omission of the auxiliary verb <i>have</i> . Regarding the negative system feature, the presence of three different negative expressions is observed in this example: <i>ain't</i> , <i>never</i> and <i>no</i> . As it was previously mentioned, <i>ain't</i> can be used to express any tense; therefore, it comes along with the omission of any auxiliary in order not to mark any tense.
Social context:	In this part, Kevin is talking about his biggest fear, which is seeing somebody that he loves being attacked by an animal that he cannot beat. He narrates a conversation that he had with his fiancé where she asked him what he would do if she got attacked by a Tasmanian devil.

Standard American English:	The SAE version of this sentence would be <i>That's a Tasmanian devil, you have never seen any shit like that</i> . The presence of the auxiliary verb <i>have</i> is necessary here, since the grammatical rules stipulate that this is the auxiliary to use in this type of construction.
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Extract 15:	<i>You ain't got no shoulder no more?</i>
Feature of AAVE:	<p>The main feature that is present in this extract has to do with the negative system; even though, there is another particularity here concerning the omission and substitution of the words <i>don't</i> and <i>have</i>, which are replaced by <i>aint'</i> and <i>got</i> respectively.</p> <p>About the negative system feature, it can be said that there are three negative expressions in this sentence: <i>ain't</i>, <i>no</i> and <i>no</i>, where the first <i>no</i> is replacing the indefinite article <i>a</i>, and the second one is replacing <i>any</i>.</p>
Social context:	<p>In this part, Kevin is talking about interfering or helping a loved person if it is being attacked by an animal. He said that it depends on the animal. If it is a cat, he would help the person out, but if it is a mountain lion, he would not. He said that he would not interfere because he is not sure if he wants to stay or be together with a person who survived a mountain lion attack. He says that he does not know what the consequences of that attack are and that he is not sure if he wants to be with a person with no shoulder, as written in the example above.</p>

Standard American English:	The SAE version of this extract would be <i>You don't have a shoulder anymore?</i>
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Extract 16:	<i>I can't be with no girl that don't have no shoulder.</i>
Feature of AAVE:	<p>The features that can be observed in this extract have to do with the negative system, and subject-verb agreement.</p> <p>In this case, the negative system is marked by the presence of four negative expressions: <i>can't, no, don't</i> and <i>no</i>.</p> <p>Regarding the subject-verb agreement feature, the presence of the third person singular form in present tense of the auxiliary verb <i>do</i> is missing.</p>
Social context:	This is a continuation of the last situation where he talked about being with a person that survived a mountain lion attack.
Standard American English:	The SAE version of this extract would be <i>I can't be with a girl that doesn't have a shoulder</i> , since the sentence has a clause that can have the presence of a negative expression because they are not cancelling each other's negative nature.

Extract 17:	<i>Here come Michelle. Here come Miss America.</i>
Feature of AAVE:	The feature that takes place in this extract has to do with subject-verb agreement, since the third person singular marking, -s suffix, in present tense is missing.
Social context:	This is part of Kevin's speech regarding the loss of a shoulder. He says that he cannot be in a relationship with a girl who has only one shoulder because she would not be able to 'shoulder-shrug'

	and also because she would look like she is always wearing a toga. He states that a girl ‘with no shoulder’ would look like a pageant contestant, and there he mentioned the extract above.
Standard American English:	The SAE version of this extract would be <i>Here comes Michelle. Here comes Miss America</i> , as the subject of the sentence requires the third person singular inflection of the verb because it is in present tense.

Extract 18:	<i>Ain’t nobody gon’ believe you.</i>
Feature of AAVE:	The feature that is present here is the one about the negative system. Nevertheless, the deletion of the copula is also present in the extract. In this case, <i>ain’t</i> is being added to reinforce the negative meaning of the sentence; therefore, the copula is deleted.
Social context:	This is also part of Kevin’s display of the disadvantages of surviving a mountain lion attack and losing one shoulder in it. He states that it is a fact that when you only have one shoulder, people are not going to believe it when you are cold or when you shiver.
Standard American English:	The SAE version of the sentence would be <i>Nobody is gonna believe you</i> , since the copula was missing in the extract and the <i>ain’t</i> was added instead.

Extract 19:	<i>It look like he be skiin’ on your ass.</i>
Feature of AAVE:	The features that can be seen in this extract have to do with subject-verb agreement, and the habitual be, respectively.

	Concerning the habitual be feature, it represents an action that occurs frequently; therefore, it is called habitual. Since Kevin is talking about how sexual intercourse would happen with a person that has a permanent condition, the use of the habitual be is justified because of the nature that this expression has.
Social context:	This part is from Kevin's question to the female audience in his show. He asked them if they would still be with their partners if they were attacked by an orangutan and had lost their kneecaps in the accident. They answered positively, with which Kevin disagreed. He made up a hypothetical situation where they were going to have sexual intercourse with their male partner who lost their kneecaps in the accident. He stated the extract written above about that specific situation.
Standard American English:	The SAE version of this sentence would be <i>It looks like he is skiing on your ass.</i>

Extract 20:	<i>Babe, hypothetically speakin', but not really, but if it did, what could might be?</i>
Feature of AAVE:	The feature that is present in this extract has to do with the verb to-be, specifically with the deletion of the copula.
Social context:	In this part of the comedy show, Kevin talks about how women love to talk about hypothetical situations and ask hypothetical questions to their partners. He said that the extract above is a common question that his fiancé asks him all the time.

Standard American English:	The SAE version of this would be <i>Babe, hypothetically speakin', but not really, but if it was, what could might be?</i> Since she is stating a hypothetical situation with a hypothetical reaction or solution.
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Extract 21:	<i>Me and my lady be on a boat. We on a boat. We hit a wave and she go, "Oh, my God, babe, what if we would've hit that wave and I would've fell out the boat in the middle of the ocean, and then a shark would've started swimmin' around me, what would you do?"</i>
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Feature of AAVE:	<p>The features that can be seen in this extract have to do with the habitual be, the deletion of the copula, and subject-verb agreement, respectively. Regarding the habitual be feature, it can be said that it is replacing the second person plural form of the verb in present tense.</p> <p>As it can be observed, the deletion of the copula in this case is intimately related to the intention of the speaker, since it describes a situation that is currently happening.</p> <p>Finally, concerning the subject-verb agreement, the third person singular marking in present tense is missing.</p>
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Social context:	This is part of Kevin's life. This is a true event that happened to him and his fiancé. He said that this is one of the hypothetical situations that she states and from them come the hypothetical questions that she loves to ask him.
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Standard American English:	The SAE version of this extract would be <i>Me and my lady are on a boat. We are on a boat. We hit</i>
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	<i>a wave and she goes: “Oh, my God, babe, what if we would’ve hit that wave and I would’ve fell out the boat in the middle of the ocean, and then a shark would’ve started swimming around me, what would you do?”.</i>
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Extract 22:	<i>Where the babies at?</i>
Feature of AAVE:	The feature of AAVE that is present in this extract is the one about the deletion of the copula, which in this case occurs along with the substitution of the verb with the preposition at. This tends to occur in oral texts because they are faster and shorter than written texts.
Social context:	This part has to do with another of Kevin’s stories. He says that his children love to spend time with their grandfather, but they do not like to be around him for so long because their grandfather is a very loud person. Kevin stated that he thinks that when you get older, you get louder. This occurred when the grandfather came to Kevin’s house looking for his grandchildren.
Standard American English:	The SAE version of this extract would be <i>Where are the babies?</i>

Extract 23:	<i>If they strapped, we strapped.</i>
Feature of AAVE:	The feature that is portrait here is the one about the deletion of the copula. The third person plural and the second person plural form of the verb be in the past tense is omitted.
Social context:	This is another of Kevin’s stories. This is about him and his childhood friends, with whom he grew up on his old neighborhood. They were at

	Kevin’s house, when his son went downstairs to ask Kevin if he knew what had happened to the Wi-Fi. His son said that the Wi-Fi was down and that he was going to reboot it. The extract above is the answer that one of Kevin’s friends gave.
Standard American English:	The SAE version of this sentence would be <i>If they are strapped, we are strapped.</i>

Extract 24:	<i>You was gonna kill my son?</i>
Feature of AAVE:	The feature that is represented in this extract concerns subject-verb agreement. And, once again, it comes together with the overgeneralization of the third person singular form of the verb in past tense. Additionally, the inversion of the subject and the auxiliary verb was omitted, therefore, the question has the grammatical structure of a statement.
Social context:	This is part of the conversation above. The friend who talked about “being strapped” did not know that Wi-Fi means wireless internet, so, he thought that Kevin’s son was talking about a real person. He said to Kevin that his son must be more careful when he talks because they almost lost a life. Kevin’s friend was actually thinking about killing Kevin’s son if he was on “the wrong side” if a fight happened.
Standard American English:	The SAE version of this extract would be <i>Were you gonna kill my son?</i> Since it is an oral the text, the use of gonna instead of going to is allowed.

Extract 25:	<i>Scared-walkin' is when you walkin' but you leanin' backwards just in case some shit go down, you can get the fuck up out of there real quick.</i>
Feature of AAVE:	<p>The features of AAVE in this extract are the one about the deletion of the copula, and the one about subject-verb agreement.</p> <p>In this example, the deletion of the copula occurs two times. In both cases, the second person singular form of the verb in present tense was omitted.</p> <p>Subsequently, the subject-verb agreement is represented by the lack of the third person singular marking in the present tense.</p>
Social context:	<p>In this part of the comedy show, Kevin is talking about one of his father's visits to his home. Kevin's father has a partner, and she went with him to Kevin's house. She chose a scary movie to watch as a family and here is Kevin's explanation of being scared and how he, and all the men as he said, react when they are scared.</p>
Standard American English:	<p>The SAE version of this extract would be <i>Scared-walking is when you are walking but you are leaning backwards just in case some shit goes down, you can get the fuck up out of there quickly</i>. The expression <i>real quick</i> is replaced by the adverb <i>quickly</i> because it conveys the same meaning.</p>

Extract 26:	<i>If you was that scared then why didn't you leave already?</i>
Feature of AAVE:	The feature that stands out in this extract is related to the subject-verb agreement one. Once again,

	<p>this feature comes hand-in-hand with the deletion of the copula, specifically with the substitution of the plural form of the verb with the singular one, following this tendency of overgeneralization.</p>
Social context:	<p>In this extract, Kevin is telling the audience what happened right after they saw the scary movie. He heard a noise and tried to get his fiancé up. She told him to go and check what the noise was. He got up, went into the hallway and his daughter jumped and scared him. He screamed and ran downstairs as quickly as possible, grabbed the keys of his car, and went out onto the driveway. He got into the car and his father was already inside the car. His father asked him if he had heard something inside the house, and that they had to get out of the property. Then, Kevin asked his father why he was still on the property and that is where the extract came from.</p>
Standard American English:	<p>The SAE version of this sentence would be <i>If you were that scared then why didn't you leave already?</i></p>

Extract 27:	<p><i>When they give you that pitch-black pervert plastic bag, you... Hey, you be tryin' to look normal.</i></p>
Feature of AAVE:	<p>The habitual be feature is present in this extract. In this sentence, the presence of this habitual be indicates that the subject is currently doing something; therefore, the verb <i>be</i> is present instead of omitted. This habitual be tends to convey the meaning of something that frequently</p>

	occurs, therefore, it portrays the meaning of “always”.
Social context:	Here, Kevin is talking about the differences between sex toys for women and men. He said that the toys for women were cute, little, and discrete. Whereas the ones for men were disgusting and a lot more explicit. He explained that the reason why he knew the difference was because he went to the sex shop to buy some toys. Even though they were disgusting, he bought all of them. The extract is the description of the feeling that he had when he got out of the sex shop with the toys in a plastic bag.
Standard American English:	The SAE version of this extract would be <i>When they give you that pitch-black pervert plastic bag, you... Hey, you are always trying to look normal.</i>

Extract 28:	<i>It dawned on me she done sucked all the numbing cream off.</i>
Feature of AAVE:	The feature that stands-out in this extract is the one about other representation of the simple past and past participle. In this case, the past participle form of the verb <i>do, done</i> , is used to express the simple past tense.
Social context:	In this extract, Kevin is retelling the only time that he had used something to help him with a sexual encounter. He said that he was not on a good week, and that he was not satisfying his fiancé whenever they had sex. He talked to one of his friends about the problem that he was having, and his friend gave him a piece of advice. His friend talked to him about a numbing cream that he had

	used and that was effective and useful in that situation. Kevin accepted his advice and put on the cream immediately. Then, he called her fiancé and told her that they were going to have a good night, and that they were going to do it as soon as he came home. He did not tell her fiancé that he had put the cream on, and she surprised him with oral sex. After a moment. She told him that she could not feel her mouth, that her mouth was numb. The extract is Kevin realization of what happened.
Standard American English:	The SAE version of this sentence would be <i>It dawned on me [that] she sucked all the numbing cream off.</i>

Extract 29:	<i>One of the most uncomfortable moments of my life was the day that I had to walk by 13 people that have just been told that they was about to die when I got chose to live.</i>
Feature of AAVE:	The feature that is seen in this extract has to do with subject-verb agreement and the overgeneralization of the third person singular form of the verb <i>be</i> in the past tense.
Social context:	This extract is part of the craziest situation that Kevin had been in, as he said. Kevin tells the audience that one night that he was drunk and hungry, he went into a store at a gas station because it was late and everything else was closed. He entered the store, and it was crowded. There were around 13 to 15 people waiting in line to pay. Kevin grabbed chips and snacks, and he said that he was so hungry that he was willing to wait in line in order to have his snacks, and he started to

	<p>eat them while he was waiting to pay. Kevin says that the man that was before him in the waiting line was so angry that he started to scream, saying that he was going to start a shooting if the cashier did not tend people faster. Kevin looked eyes with this man, got scared and said to the man that he agrees with everything that he just said. The man said that they thought the same because they were brothers, and that Kevin could go to another store because he was going to take care of this one. The extract is Kevin's conclusion about that story.</p>
<p>Standard American English:</p>	<p>The SAE version of the extract would be <i>One of the most uncomfortable moments of my life was the day that I had to walk by 13 people that have just been told that they were about to die when I was chosen to live.</i> The expression <i>got chose</i> was replaced by <i>was chosen</i> because it is more formal.</p>

<p>Extract 30:</p>	<p><i>Don't nobody know what's goin' on except me and my ass.</i></p>
<p>Feature of AAVE:</p>	<p>The features that are represented in this extract are the ones about the negative system, and subject-verb agreement, respectively.</p> <p>In the first case, this negative system is marked with the presence of the negative expressions <i>don't</i> and <i>nobody</i>. Here, the use of the negative expression <i>don't</i> is added in order to reinforce the negative intention, though it is not necessary to understand the whole sentence.</p> <p>In the second case, the subject-verb agreement is shown on the lack of the third person singular form of the verb <i>know</i> in the present tense.</p>

Social context:	Here, Kevin is talking about the most uncomfortable situation that has ever happened to him. He says that he was at the airport, his plane had just landed, and he was going to pick up his baggage when he felt a stomachache that urged him into the bathroom. He said that he did not want to go to the restroom at the airport because he did not want anybody to recognize him and take pictures of him while he was using the bathroom. He told the audience that his stomach was hurting so badly that he decided to go to the bathroom at the airport. He was sitting in the toilet when a random person asked him if he was going to come out quickly because he wanted a picture with him. That was the most uncomfortable moment of Kevin's life.
Standard American English:	The SAE version of this sentence would be <i>Nobody know what's goin' on except me and my ass.</i>

“Let me explain”

Extract 1:	<i>The day that we signed up and said we best friends, that means that my bullshit is your bullshit.</i>
Feature of AAVE:	The feature that can be seen here is the deletion of the copula. In this example, the first person plural form of the verb to be in past tense was omitted.
Social context:	This is part of another stand-up comedy show done by Kevin. In this part, he is talking about friendship and what comes with being a friend. He emphasizes the fact that if you have a best friend, you do not have to ask for each other's permission

	to add your friend to a lie that you are telling anybody.
Standard American English:	The SAE version of the extract above would be <i>The day that we signed up and said [that] we were best friends, that means that my bullshit is your bullshit.</i>

Extract 2:	<i>I know you was probably out with some bitch. You was probably messin' with some bitch.</i>
Feature of AAVE:	The feature that is present in this extract is the one concerning subject-verb agreement. As it was previously said, this feature tends to lead to the placing of the third person singular form of the verb to be, reinforcing the generalization of this feature.
Social context:	In this part, Kevin is talking about the reason why his marriage ended, and it was because he lied about cheating on his wife. Here, Kevin is telling the audience how he brought his best friend into a lie that he was telling his wife. The extract is his wife's answer.
Standard American English:	The SAE version of this example would be <i>I know you were probably out with some bitch. You were probably messing with some bitch.</i>

Extract 3:	<i>Let me tell you somethin'. Listen to me. Wasn't nobody with no bitch.</i>
Feature of AAVE:	The feature that occurred in this extract is the one regarding the negative system. This can be noticed by the presence of <i>wasn't</i> , <i>nobody</i> and <i>no</i> which are negative expressions.

Social context:	This is part of Kevin’s cheating story. This was Kevin’s response to the accusation that his wife made.
Standard American English:	The SAE version of this extract would be <i>Let me tell you something. Listen to me. Nobody was with any bitch.</i> In this case, the inversion of the verb and the subject was necessary in order to follow the grammatical structure of a statement, instead of the one of a question.

Extract 4:	<i>Harry not expectin’ me to call right now, so Harry don’t have no reason to lie.</i>
Feature of AAVE:	<p>In this extract, the deletion of the copula, the subject-verb agreement, and the negative system features are present.</p> <p>The first one can be seen by the omission of the verb to be at the beginning of the sentence, where the third person singular form of the verb in present tense should be placed.</p> <p>The second one can be observed by the use of the second person singular form of the auxiliary verb <i>do</i>, instead of its third person singular form in present tense.</p> <p>Finally, the third one can be noticed by the presence of the negative expressions <i>not</i>, <i>don’t</i>, and <i>no</i>.</p>
Social context:	This is the continuation of the conversation that Kevin had with his wife about the cheating incident. He suggested calling his best friend in order for his wife to know that he was not lying about seeing someone else.

Standard American English:	The SAE version of this sentence would be <i>Harry is not expecting me to call right now, so Harry doesn't have any reason to lie.</i>
Extract 5:	<i>Don't say nothing dumb. The phone might be loud enough so my girl can hear whatever it is you sayin'.</i>
Feature of AAVE:	The features that are illustrated in this extract belong to the negative system, and the deletion of the copula. The first is represented using the negative expressions <i>don't</i> and <i>nothing</i> . Meanwhile, the second is observed in the lack of the verb to be in its second person singular form in the present tense
Social context:	In this part, Kevin is talking about how he and his friends invented a code to know if their partners were near them, in order for them not to say anything inappropriate. The extract is Kevin's description of what the code means.
Standard American English:	The SAE version of this extract would be <i>Don't say anything dumb. The phone might be loud enough so my girl can hear whatever [it is] you are saying.</i>

As it can be observed, the most common traits of African American English illustrated in these extracts are *the negative system, the deletion of the copula be, and the subject-verb agreement*. The explanation of this occurrence is that the excerpts are part of a stand-up comedy show, which is a form of oral language. Oral texts are commonly known for being the fastest way of communication, therefore, a shortening and easiness of language takes place in almost every label of language.

Contraction of expressions to convey the same meaning as long statements is the most common feature in oral language. There is where this *negative system* trait occurs. The

use of **ain't** is the most common example of this feature, along with presence of the double or even triple negatives. This oral environment also allows the occurrence of the other two most common features mentioned above: *deletion of the copula be*, and *subject-verb agreement*.

Concerning the deletion of the copula be, its occurrence increases when a question is being asked. As native speakers of any language, people are able to understand the meaning behind an expression even if a crucial verb is eluded. An example of this can be the expression “**how you doin'?**” where the verb to-be is omitted but the intention is present. Taking the extracts into account, the co-occurrence of the *negative system* and the *deletion of the copula be* is the most common because of the word **ain't** and its lack of person and tense which leads to the deletion of the copula. An example of this can be found in extract n°18 “**ain't nobody gon' believe you.**”

Additionally, the subject-verb agreement feature leads to an overuse and overgeneralization of the third person singular forms of the verb both in present and past tenses, being the past the most common one, leading to sentences like “**I thought you was gonna be long**”, and, “**I see him, he see me**”, both taken from the stand-up comedy show.

To summarize, oral language simplifies communication by letting the speaker have more freedom in the construction of sentences and expressions since oral texts are not as restrictive as written texts in terms of morphology and syntax, allowing these features to shine in everyday conversations and stand-up comedy shows where the speaker and the listening have this feeling of comfort, familiarity, naturalness and rawness.

2. Data obtained from interviews

African American people

1) What kind of English do you speak? How do you describe it?

Interviewee	Opinion
1	My English is pretty basic. I don't use big fancy words. I just use Basic English. I don't use hip-hop language.
2	I use grammatically correct English but it also depends on the setting. If I am with friends, we may use street terminology. And I guess it should be considered broken English or Ebonics.
3	I would describe my English as American English vs. United Kingdom English. It is common American English.

As it can be seen in the table, two out of the three participants mentioned AAVE in different ways: the first called it “hip-hop language”, and the second called it “broken English or Ebonics”. These answers indicate that there is a denigrating perception of AAVE in African American people. Opposite, the third participant described her English as American English because she made a comparison with British English. Consequently, it can be said that there is a tendency to underestimate this type of English because it is considered improper.

2) Do you think that your English is the “correct” one? Why?

Interviewee	Opinion
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1	Well, yeah. I think my English is the correct one because I use regular English words, I don't use slang.
2	No, it's not the correct one, definitely not. My English... There are pronunciation barriers and derivatives of words that we use that are not correct, I guess.
3	No, I don't think my English is the correct one. I think that because there are so many different words and spellings, different uses of different words that there is not just one correct way. I think everybody has their own dialect.

As it is shown in the table, two of the participants agree on the fact that they do not consider themselves to speak correct English. In contrast, the first participant stated that he considers his English the “correct” one because of the lack of slang in it. The third participant mentioned the word dialect which reveals her language knowledge because the term was never mentioned earlier.

3) What do you think about the different kinds of “Englishes” in the US?

Interviewee	Opinion
1	I think it's good. I think everyone is different and they gotta communicate in different ways. I don't have a problem with that. If they are Latino and they use Spanglish that is their way of

	communication. They use proper, correct English their way, how they understand it.
2	I think it is a cultural-based type of perception, like community-based, where you grew up, how you were raised, and how you communicate with others. It's not something a lot of people use on a daily basis but when you are in familiar surroundings, and when you are with friends and family. The improper concept of English, like second class English, is more culturally friendly. Like a way of connecting with others.
3	I think they are all cool and unique. I use some Latino phrases and I know many of my Spanish friends that use some African American terms. I think they make us all different.

As it is portrayed on the table, the three participants emphasized the fact that these different varieties of English come from the different cultural views and realities; and that these differences make each person unique. The second participant related the improperness of non-standard varieties to familiarity and comfort.

4) What do you think about Black English or African American English?

Interviewee	Opinion
	I don't use Black English. I don't think that

1	I speak that way. I don't use that kind of English, I mean, I'm 40. But it don't bother me. I don't have a problem with it.
2	I think African American English is fine. I don't think there is a wrong or right, I think there is a time and a place. You can't be in a professional setting and speaking to someone of a certain standard as you would speak to family or friends. I do believe that.
3	Do you mean Ebonics? Well, Ebonics is a part of my culture. We have our terms of endearment and things like that. It's ingrained to me but I know when to use it and when not to use it.

As stated on the table above, two of three participants mentioned that they use African American English but its uses has a very marked time and place; it is used with friends and family but it is avoided in professional settings. The first participant stated that he does not use AAVE because of his age insinuating that African American English is only used by young/er people.

5) Do you prefer to call it Black English or African American English?

Interviewee	Opinion
1	I think that African American English is better for me because it just sounds better in my opinion.
	I don't think there's a right or wrong title for it. It depends on how you were brought

2	out to speak and address people. I think I prefer Black English, I'm more comfortable with that name.
3	I'm more comfortable with African American English because we have different ethnicities that are considered Black but they're not African American.

As it is depicted above, African American English was preferred by two of three participants. The first one simply stated that African American sounded better, whereas, the third one explained that African American is the name of the community, emphasizing on the fact that there are other ethnicities that are considered Black in the United States.

6) What is American English for you? Do you think that there is a “standard”?

Interviewee	Opinion
1	It is standard because it is regular. It is basic words, with no lingo. The best way I can describe Standard English is the use of regular words.
2	I do think there is a standard. American English is more so corporate, classroom and business.
3	I think that there is a standard when it comes to being in a corporate setting. I would certainly not use my Ebonics in that type of setting.

As it can be seen in the table, two out of the three participants mentioned that there is in fact a standard. They stated that this standard is present only on corporate or professional, classroom, and business settings. Whereas the first participant stated the best way to describe American English is highlighting the use of regular words, and the lack of lingo and slang.

7) Do you find white people’s humor funny or do you prefer black people's humor?

Interviewee	Opinion
1	In humor I don’t see black or white. Humor is humor. If it makes me laugh, it don’t matter if it’s black or white. There is no difference regarding the skin color.
2	I don’t have a preference. I think humor is humor. If it’s something that I find funny, it’s funny. I guess it depends on the undertone and the setting.
3	No, I don’t have a preference when it comes to humor. I prefer a mixture because I have all kind of friends. Now, culturally speaking, when it comes to being relatable to certain topics about race, I would prefer a Black person’s point of view as far as comedy.

As it is portrayed on the table, the three participants agree on the fact that their humoristic preference is not influenced by the race or the community, but by the type of humor that people use when creating humor.

Latino people

1) What kind of English do you speak? How do you describe it?

Interviewee	Opinion
1	I can say I speak like eighty percent. My English is not well but it's not bad. It's just past the middle, going up. But it's not perfect either, I mean, I did not learn it at school. I just moved here and had to learn it.
2	I think I can describe my English as maybe fluent. Most people have told me that I don't have much of an accent but I still have a lot of words to learn.
3	I think that my English is good but I don't speak it very well, just a little bit.

As it can be seen in the table, three participants alluded to their fluency or proficiency where two of them considered their English bad or poor. Consequently, it can be said that there is a tendency to underestimate their own capacities due to the fact of being speakers of English as a second language.

2) Do you think that your English is the “correct” one? Why?

Interviewee	Opinion
1	I don't think that my English is the “correct” one but people are able to understand me and I'm able to communicate with people because I didn't

	went to school to improve my English. Everything that I know is from jobs, friends and family.
2	I don't know if my English is the correct one but I try to speak it as proper as I can because I don't use a lot of slang.
3	No, because I didn't learn it at school. We just learned as we got jobs and interacting with customers too.

As it is shown in the table, two of the participants agree on the fact that they do not consider themselves to speak correct English because they did not learn it in an academic environment. In contrast, the second participant stated that even though she did not consider her English as the “correct” one, she tried to speak it as proper as possible, alluding to grammatical rules

3) What do you think about the different kinds of “Englishes” in the US?

Interviewee	Opinion
1	The English is the same, the accents are different. I think that African American people contract a lot when they speak.
2	I think as long as everybody can understand each other, I don't really have a problem with it. I don't dislike the different varieties of English that exist here. I guess as long as I can understand whoever is talking to me, I don't have a problem of any kind.

3	Yes, we have several English here. Chicano, for example, and maybe from other cultures like Honduras. I mean it's a mixture from different countries but I don't like these varieties. I mean, they're fine, but I don't like them.
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As it is portrayed on the table, the three participants differ. The first stated that the language is the same but the accents are different; he mentioned African American speakers and their speed when talking. The second reinforced on the fact of understanding one and other no matter on the variety of English each other is using.

4) What do you think about Black English or African American English?

Interviewee	Opinion
1	Black people, not every African American, but they talk very fast and sometimes you cannot understand what they say. They contract the words and sometimes you don't know what they're talking about. The same thing happens with people from the south because both of them don't use proper pronunciation or proper English.
2	African American English to me it's a little hard to understand sometimes. Mostly because they speak too fast, but that's it.
3	Black English it's very difficult to understand sometimes because Black people shorten the sentences or they may talk different too.

As stated on the table above, two of three participants mentioned that they have problems understanding African American people because they talk faster than other communities. Additionally, two of three participants stated that African American people tend to contract words and sentences making the understanding process harder.

5) Do you prefer to call it Black English or African American English?

Interviewee	Opinion
1	I don't use any term because of the color of the skin. I don't think it is appropriate to call it Black English or African American English. I'm trying to say that we don't have to give it some kind of name, we don't have to make a distinction.
2	I guess I would call it African American English. I never really had to call it anything but I guess African American because it sounds less offensive.
3	I would call it both ways but I think African American sounds better.

As it is depicted above, African American English was preferred by two of three participants. The second one simply stated that African American sounded less offensive, whereas, the third one explained that African American sounded better. On the other hand, the first participant showed disagreement with labeling this English variety because he considered it was just English.

6) What is American English for you? Do you think that there is a “standard”?

Interviewee	Opinion
1	I think that when you come from a different country, you call it American English. We are the ones that call it that way. Here, in the US they just say that they speak English, that's it. I don't think there is a standard in the United States because you can go to different parts of the country and they use different words that have different meanings. There is no standard, everywhere you go it is different.
2	I don't think so, no. I don't think there is a standard. I live in the south and there is a lot of country people, and a lot of black people too and everybody has different accent, a different way of speaking. I don't think there should be a standard either.
3	Yes, there is a standard English because everybody speaks like that.

As it can be seen in the table, two out of the three participants mentioned that there is not a standard. They stated that because of the diversity of cultures, races and ethnicities present in the United States. Whereas the first participant stated there is a standard because everybody follows a pattern when speaking.

7) What do you think about black and white people’s humor?

Interviewee	Opinion
1	I don’t make any distinction between black or white humor. If you’re in a conversation with either of them and they make a joke that is funny, I laugh. But Latino people are more inclined to make jokes, to be funny than Black or White people. Latino comedians and jokes are funnier than the rest. The thing is that in general, Spanish, Black and White people here are so different. First in the jokes, the kind of jokes and second in the language they use. More American people use swear words to make a joke. Latino people do too but not that frequently.
2	I think it’s just about how humoristic it is. There are some Latin people that do get to the offensive side, and there are some Black people that do the same. So, I just go for the humor, I don’t really care about who is doing it.
3	I prefer Latino humor and humorists because they have more funny things, and, you know, it’s better. The sense of humor is better and it is more relatable and familiar to me.

As it is portrayed on the table, the three participants agree on the fact that their humoristic preference is not influenced by the race or the community, but by the type of humor that people use when creating humor.

First-generation Latino people

1) What kind of English do you speak? How do you describe it?

Interviewee	Opinion
1	I think I'll describe my English as really good. I describe it as just normal English, like, with no accent.
2	I think I speak it properly. Not as properly as somebody from England or the UK, for example. I don't speak it as good as they do but English was my first language. I learn Spanish when I moved to Ecuador, when I was 15. So, I think I speak it better than I speak Spanish.
3	I describe it like regular American English, like improper English.

As it can be seen in the table, two out of the three participants mentioned that they speak English properly and in a good manner. Moreover, the second participant compared her English to the one in the UK. Opposite, the third participant described his English as regular American English, and even as improper English.

2) Do you think that your English is the “correct” one? Why?

Interviewee	Opinion
1	Yes, because people understand me, and I don't have issues speaking it.
	No, I don't I think that the proper English is the one from the UK. I think that's how you

2	properly pronounce some words. I feel like here in the US, a lot of people either mispronounce or they use a lot of slang words. So, I feel like the proper English is not here in the US.
3	No, because Europeans speak it properly.

As it is shown in the table, two of the participants agree on the fact that they do not consider themselves to speak correct English, and on the fact that the correct English is spoken in Europe. In contrast, the first participant stated that she considers her English correct because people are able to understand her, and she does not have issues speaking it.

3) What do you think about the different kinds of “Englishes” in the US?

Interviewee	Opinion
1	I think that it is not an issue, like, people come from different places and sometimes their accents are stronger. And at the end of the day, it's just English. If you can understand each other, it's fine.
2	I think that every culture and every state even has their own way of speaking. And I also feel like every culture and every community have their own words. For example, Spanish speakers tend to combine words and make Spanglish. I feel like now, in the time that we're living, in 2020 coming 2021, there are so many changes. I don't think they're right or wrong, I just think time is changing and language is evolving.

3	I think that it's different. I think it's like a different language, a different type of English. For example, like, if we were to talk to Europeans, they wouldn't understand some things we say here.
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As it is portrayed on the table, two of three participants emphasized the fact that these different varieties of English come from the different cultural views and realities. The second remarked that language change and evolves, and these varieties are a result of that evolution. Whereas, the third participant stated that these non-standard varieties can be considered even a different language.

4) What do you think about Black English or African American English?

Interviewee	Opinion
1	Sometimes it's hard to understand because they make-up their own words and they have a lot of slang so you can't really understand them.
2	I don't feel like it's right or wrong, like I said earlier. I don't think that it is only present in the Black community. I feel like it has come across to the Latino and the White community because here in the US, the way that people speak is primarily influenced by the music they listen to and also by the artists that they see on TV.
3	I think that they speak in a different way, like a weird different. It's funny because they mumble a lot. I can understand them and I do like the way they talk but it's a weird type of English.

	Like, they speak low and mumble but not so that you cannot understand them.
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As stated on the table above, the three participants have divergent opinions. The first reinforces the fact that she cannot understand African American people because of this tendency to contract words and even sentences. The second explained that African American English mainly its lexicon and grammar have transcend to other communities because of the influence of famous artists: actors, musicians, etc. Lastly, the third talked about the presence of voice tone and mumbles.

5) Do you prefer to call it Black English or African American English?

Interviewee	Opinion
1	Black English. I just feel like African American kind of sounds rude and I just don't think it would sound good if you say it like that.
2	I feel like Black English is a little bit like demeaning. I feel like you wouldn't call it that because it's really not just Black English. African American English I think is a little bit better because it does come from that community. I mean, the community is not Black, it's African American. It's like, you wouldn't call our community the Hispanics, you know? It's the Latin American community. So, I feel like, just for respect purposes I prefer to call it African American English.
3	African American English because I feel like Black is racist. It's rude.

As it is depicted above, African American English was preferred by two of three participants. The second one simply stated that African American suits better because that is the name of the community of people that use this English variety; whereas, the third one simply stated that Black English sounded racist and rude.

6) What is American English for you? Do you think that there is a “standard”?

Interviewee	Opinion
1	<p>I think there is a standard, like there is certain amount that you need to know and understand. So, yeah, like a kind of specific English that you need to comprehend.</p> <p>American English is like, when you can understand what they're saying, and their grammar is good. When they don't have to repeat themselves because you understood it the first time, and they just like describe everything good.</p>
2	<p>I feel like in American English there's no standard. There are so many different types of ways that people talk within the US. It's such a diverse place, there is White, Black, Asian, Hispanic; there is so many people. So, there is no specific American English, like I said, there's no proper way. It depends on who you ask.</p>
3	<p>I think that what makes American English is the differences in the way we speak. The differences and how they speak it different in every state because over here there are different</p>

	accents. I think the accents makes it be what it is. I think the standard is the European English because I think it's proper.
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As it can be seen in the table, two out of the three participants mentioned that there is not a Standard American English; the second connected it with the diversity of communities in The United States; however, the third alluded it to a lack of properness and said that the standard was the British English. In contrast, the first participant implied that a standardization supposes certain amount of knowledge. Concerning the definition of American English, two participants agreed on defining it as a convergence of different cultures; whereas the other participant describe as being clear and describing things good.

7) What do you think about black and white people's humor?

Interviewee	Opinion
1	I mean, I've always, like, grown up with people that have all different types of taste in humor. So, I don't have a preference with it but sometimes when you have like a background of something it's just like funnier, when it comes to humor.
	I feel like "white" people... There's so many different types of people, so I feel like, white people's humor it's based on what their parents have taught them, and then what their great-grandparents have taught them, you know what I mean? I feel like African American or Black people's humor is also the same way but I feel like it's more limited. Like, only they can say certain things that white people cannot say

2	because it would be very disrespectful. My preference, to be honest with you, I think it comes from what I've grown up with, like watching Kevin Hart who is an African American comedian and I find that funny. Like, I don't know any white comedian. I'm sure they have a different sort of style but my preference is the African American community when it comes to that.
3	I prefer Black people's humor. They are funny. They just think things quickly to make someone laugh, it's just funny.

As it is portrayed on the table, the three participants agree on the fact that their humoristic preference is not influenced by the race or the community, but by the type of humor that people use when creating humor. Although, two of three participants preferred African American humor because they considered it funnier.

White/Caucasian people

1) What kind of English do you speak? How do you describe it?

Interviewee	Opinion
1	I don't really describe it as anything other than Standard English, you know. If I would've put an area on it I would say north-eastern or mid-western English. I think that is because my father is from New York and my mother's from mid-west Ohio. So, there are certain, I'm sure you know the word idioms, there are some idioms that are mid-western that I use and there

	<p>are certain idioms that are northern that I use. I have evolved a little bit and now I actually speak a little southern English because I live in North Carolina, like the word "y'all", which is very southern. If you say the word "y'all" up north it's like "uh, no, it's 'you guys'". So it's the same words (meaning) but it's a different way of saying them depending on where you're from.</p>
2	<p>Well, I have a decidedly north-west accent, and that would mean that [there's] an addition of /r/. For example, the state of Washington in the north-west is pronounced Warsh-ing-ton. Don't ask me why but that is one of the peculiarities of the north-west dialect. My English is a convergence of various types of English because I've been to all different parts of the US.</p>
3	<p>I don't really know how to describe it. It's just kind of like normal, I guess. I don't know, it's not really something I have thought about. It's just, I didn't know there were more than just one kind of English.</p>

As it can be seen in the table, two out of the three participants considered their English as northern; the first called it north-eastern, whereas the second one called it north-western. Opposite, the third participant described his English as normal American English because he did not know that there were other types of English.

2) Do you think that your English is the “correct” one? Why?

Interviewee	Opinion
1	Yes, my English is correct and that may be me being snobbish but I’m from a very educated family, so I speak properly. I use proper grammar. I know how to read it and write it properly, so that’s why.
2	No, not necessarily. The “correct” one would be [from] the people from Ames, Iowa. It’s a funny story I know because a lot of the tech companies focus on Iowa when they hire people to work in call centers because their accent is so neutral that [...] it can be understood by, and it’s pleasing to the ears for everyone that speaks English not only in the United States but around the world. My English is not the correct one simply because of the addition of the /r/ from the north-west, and the influence of southern English that could be often rather strange to unfamiliar ears not only because of the pronunciation but the word usage itself.
3	Yeah, because it’s just the way I’ve always been taught to speak and everything. So, I don’t really feel like there’s anything wrong with it. I think my English is proper.

As it is shown in the table, two of the participants agree on the fact that they consider themselves to speak correct English; the first said that he considered it correct because of his high educational level; whereas, the third mentioned that he does not see anything wrong with his English, and that he speak it properly. In contrast, the second participant stated that

he did not consider his English correct because of some traits found on the north-western dialect, such as the addition of /r/.

3) What do you think about the different kinds of “Englishes” in the US?

Interviewee	Opinion
1	I think they’re variations of the language that are based on some of their own experiences and I think they represent an evolution of the language. I don’t think any language is static. I think all languages evolve over time. There are certain words that were in the English language a hundred years ago, for example, that you don’t here today because they don’t have any relevance any longer. If I would ask you what a pullman was, you probably wouldn’t know what it was because we don’t travel by steam machines any longer. The pullman was one of the jobs on a steam train, we don’t have them anymore. So, there are evolutions of language that come with evolutions of society, and technology, and everything else.
2	Quite frankly, I find them to be wonderful, you know. I love the creative and often colorful interpretation of language that is specific to various regions and nationalities. But my romantic concern it’s like [if] the United States become more intertwined in terms of communication then a lot of that would go away and that’s too bad. I rather enjoy that.

3	<p>You mean like accents and stuff? I mean, well, I get that sometimes coming into another country or something, like you can have kind of trouble learning a new language and stuff. I mean, I don't think there's really anything wrong with the way anyone speaks. I mean, we all just kind of have our own way of like wording things, you know.</p>
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As it is portrayed on the table, the three participants emphasized the fact that these different varieties of English come from the different cultural views and realities. The first participant related these non-standard varieties to language evolution.

4) What do you think about Black English or African American English?

Interviewee	Opinion
1	<p>It's a language within the language. I don't have any negative feelings towards it or any positive feelings towards it. I think it's just, again, a variation based on their experience.</p>
2	<p>Well, I think it's a combination of a couple things: poor education, marginal acceptance, and the broader community certainly encourage all of that to happen. And, you know, "me going down now" I think it's more of a result of communication inside a specific group. I think that's how a lot of it developed because it had little contact with the general community due to prejudice and all of those things. So they created their own, you know. That is a common trait</p>

	<p>that's gone throughout history and not only in terms of English but in terms of dress preferences, foods, and everything else. The more you're isolated from the broader community, the more you focus on your own. And those kind of changes or mutations are a natural development of that.</p> <p>I like it, I think it's fine. I think it represents the community itself and the individual, and that they're means of communication. If it becomes a bit more creative or that it is not conformed in like Merriam-Webster dictionary, it's more the fault of the Merriam-Webster dictionary than it is the individual's.</p>
3	<p>It's not that big of a deal to me how people speak and stuff like that. I don't really have a problem with anything like that.</p>

As stated on the table above, the three participants have different opinions regarding this question. The first one described African American English as a language within the language that is based upon life-experiences. The second one said that it comes from segregation and lack of contact with a broader community but that this non-standard label was the academics fault rather than the individual's. Lastly, the third one explained that the way people speak is not a big problem for him.

5) Do you prefer to call it Black English or African American English?

Interviewee	Opinion
1	<p>I don't prefer to call it either of them. I just call it English. [...] I would consider Black English</p>

	<p>or Ebonics or anything like that its own language within the context of language. [...]</p> <p>So, I think that no matter what the language is, whether it's white English, northern English, southern English, Latin English, Black English, they all have idioms that mean the same thing, they just come from the experience of the people that they come from.</p>
2	<p>I prefer to call it English. Period. It's English, yes.</p>
3	<p>I mean, I never really used any of those terms. I've never called it anything, I just call it English. It's not a big of a deal that they speak a little bit differently. I don't really like specified it too much.</p>

As it is depicted above, the three participants opted for calling it just English because they did not see a difference with Standard English.

6) What is American English for you? Do you think that there is a “standard”?

Interviewee	Opinion
1	<p>I think Standard English is whatever the educational system has decided that it is, unfortunately. And I think that's because they teach to a standard test. So, I think kids [...] have to learn the language based on what they have to learn for school, not necessarily on what is going to allow them to succeed later on in life. I think the more education you get, the more</p>

	<p>your vocabulary grows; and with a great vocabulary comes greater communication skills.</p>
2	<p>I think that if I have to define American English I would say it is the willful use of a limited vocabulary. I think the United States have a well-deserved reputation. Even the news of records for the country, the New York Times, now writes at a 6th grade level. And I know this may come as a surprise to you, and I'm glad you're sitting down but I'm older than you are. And nowadays there's no respect for certain grammatical rules even for the commas and periods. It's shameful. [...] Sometimes, I don't understand what they're saying and it's simply a lack of clarity. That is American English. [...] No, there's no standard. You see it every day with a lot of expressions. Where is the standard of understanding? Where is the rationale for the uses of these words? So, no, there is a shocking lack of standard.</p>
3	<p>Well, I don't really know how to say that. I mean, American English is the way people talk and stuff. [...] I don't really think there's a standard. I mean, we have such a diverse community of like different races and stuff like that, I guess some races kind of talk differently but it's just English.</p>

As it can be seen in the table, two out of the three participants mentioned that there is not a standard in American English; the second stated that there is no rationale behind the

understanding and use of language; whereas, the third one said that it was because of the different races that are in the United States. In contrast, the first participant stated that Standard English is defined by the educational system because it is taught at school.

7) What do you think about black, white and Latino people’s humor?

Interviewee	Opinion
1	<p>I think humor is humor. Again, I think it depends on the setting. I mean, I used to watch Dave Chappelle and loved some things Dave Chappelle did. I used to watch Carlos Mencia and loved some of the things Carlos Mencia did. And I’ve also watched guys like Ron White and Jeff Foxworthy and I thought some of that was hysterical as well. There’s one Black comedian, one Latin comedian, and some White comedians. I don’t think that comedy has to do with the color of your skin. The essence of comedy is truth. And so, it doesn’t matter what color you are, if you’re speaking your truth it will be funny, and if it comes from your life-experience.</p>
2	<p>Well, I think that Black humor is often self-effacing. White humor is usually pratfalls or somebody slipping on a banana peel, someone’s misfortune is reason for laughter. The obvious rationale is supposing a superiority or an immunity from the troubles of others.</p> <p>In Black culture, humor is a little more self-effacing where they understand more closely</p>

	<p>the frailty of their own existence and the humor derives from that.</p> <p>And Spanish humor is a little bit more romantic. There is an appreciation of culture that it's exhibited in the humor of Spanish people. A little more respect for others as well, I may add that.</p> <p>I prefer Spanish humor, I prefer a more romantic, even quality humor that is here in the Spanish language.</p>
3	<p>I mean, I really didn't know you can take humor down to race. I just think that some people have like different preferences over what kind of humor they like.</p>

As it is portrayed on the table, the three participants agree on the fact that their humoristic preference is not influenced by the race or the community, but by the type of humor that people use when creating humor. The third participant even added that he did not know that you could take humor down to races.

As it can be observed, the majority of participants concurred with the idea that Standard American English and African American English are both equally valid in terms of communication but that SAE is more used in academic and scholar situations. They pointed out the fact that the use of one or the other has to do with your social environment and what you are more comfortable with. They stated that none is more valuable than the other.

Finally, based on the data obtained from the interviews, it can be said that English speakers in the United States do not consider AAVE as an uneducated form of English but a dialect that is used by members of a community, therefore, it is part of American culture and is not underestimated or undervalued, and it is not stigmatized by the participants of

these interviews. The presence of the interviews in this project is key because it is a way to show how English speakers perceive these stigmatized dialects, specifically AAVE and it illustrated that this assumption of stigmatization is being removed from these language varieties.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research project displayed a descriptive analysis of the grammatical features of African American Vernacular English highlighted on Kevin Hart's speech, as well as the opinion of several members of different communities on the United States regarding this dialect. In correspondence to the objectives, the following can be concluded:

Conclusions:

- The main grammatical differences between Standard American English and African American English can be easily identified when contrasting both varieties since African American English is considered to have its own grammar.
- The most common grammatical features of AAVE found on Kevin Hart's monologues involved the negative system, subject-verb agreement, and deletion of the copula be. Nowadays, these features that were related only to non-standard varieties of English are present in Standard American English too because of the world-spreading influence of social media, and the facilitation of interaction that users have through it.
- Regarding the participants' opinions obtained from the interviews, it can be stated that the majority of them agreed on the perception of humor and how it is not race related. They concurred on the fact that if the joke is funny, it does not matter which person is telling it. Racist comments were minimal or even non-existent, thus the tendency was to accept humor in every way it was presented but to prefer the one that is related to their life-experience.
- Kevin Hart uses AAVE to reaffirm his cultural identity as African American because it is part of his culture and his own self-assurance. Hart sometimes even positions him and African American in general above White/Caucasian people. It is shown on his speech because he tends to denigrate White people's behavior, body movements, and even language use.
- Finally, it is vital to take the current social situation of the United States into account. African American people, alongside other social minorities, have been rising up against police brutality all over the country which create awareness of the discrimination that these minorities suffer resulting on a change of perspective that might have influenced the participants' opinions.

Recommendations:

- To replicate this project in coming years to see if the current social and political situation influenced the data obtained from the interviews.
- The creation of a study contrasting African American culture and its reality with the Afro-Ecuadorian one because there are not any projects or articles relating these African descendant cultures. It will be important to include humor and how it is represented, understood and used among their speakers.
- Doing studies on other African American dialects based on English that have not been researched at PUCE such as the Cajun English in New Orleans and the Bay Islands English in Honduras.
- To conduct a project based on Spanglish taking into account its status as a stigmatized dialect to observe if this status has changed.

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Annexes

ANNEX 1

Extract from the movie 'What now?'²

<< The name of this show is called What Now?, people. The reason why I decided to call it What Now?, is because that's the question that I get the most. "Kevin, what the fuck are you gonna do now?" I love that question because I always have an answer for it. I'm alive. I'm still experiencing shit, which still means I have stuff to talk about. For example, people, I'm engaged. I'm about to get married again soon. Okay?

Yes. I told my lady, I said, before we get married, we gotta move. I did tell her that. It's not that I don't like where we live. I just don't like the area. It's not the house, it's the area.

See, I don't wanna be in Hollywood, staring at all the Hollywood shit. So I moved out to the suburbs. Fucked around, moved around a bunch of wildlife. I don't like the animals around my house. This is real shit right now. Right now, I have a raccoon problem, people. Not raccoons. A raccoon. One raccoon. This raccoon's a bitch. I can't stand this raccoon. I got glass doors in the back of my house, right? I'm sitting in the living room, I can see into my backyard through the glass doors.

Outta nowhere, a raccoon walks up to the glass doors. But not like a raccoon should, not on all fours. Raccoon's on two feet. Motherfucker walked up to the doors like this, swear to God. This is real shit. Scared the shit outta me. It looked like a nigga was walking in my backyard. That's what it looked like. I saw him, I said, "Oh, shit! "Look at that goddamn raccoon right there!" He saw me, I see him, we're looking at each other.

This is what scared the shit outta me. To get a better look in my house, he put his hand on the glass, and started looking in the window. I see him, he see me. He starts fucking with the locks. [GRUNTING] When he couldn't get in, he got mad. He fake shot at

² [Kevin Hart: What Now? | Netflix www.netflix.com › title \(google.com\)](https://www.netflix.com/title/80014748)

me twice. Bang, bang! Then he grabbed his dick, disappeared into the dark.

This is a true story. You gotta understand, people, I don't like raccoons. I can't stand raccoons because I don't like the way they look. They look like criminals. They got a black mask, gloves. Everything about a raccoon says crime.

My lady gets home, I said, "Babe, we gotta get the fuck out this house. "A raccoon came up to the glass doors, put his hand on the glass, saw me, shot at me twice bang, bang! Then he grabs his dick, disappeared into the dark."

My lady goes, "What do you get out of lying so much? Like what does that do for you?" I said, "Who the fuck is lying? Who makes up a lie about a raccoon come up to the window, going bang, bang, grabbing his dick, disappearing into the dark? Like, whose life is that bad that they gotta sit at home all day, and make some shit like that up?" She said, "Obviously you, because you're lying, Kevin. You know how I know you lying? 'Cause a raccoon can't go, 'bang, bang.' You know why? 'Cause a raccoon don't have no thumbs. So how can a raccoon go, 'Bang, bang'?"

"Bitch, maybe he did this [moves his hand]. Maybe he just did this right here [moves his hand again]. What difference does it make? The point is that he grabbed his dick, disappeared into the dark. We got a dick-grabbing raccoon on the loose, you worried about his fucking thumbs. You need to get your priorities straight, that's what needs to happen." >>

ANNEX 2

Extract from the movie 'Let me explain'³

<<Cheating was not the problem. Lying about cheating was the problem. If I'd had been honest about it, might have worked it out. But I wasn't. I lied. And I didn't just lie on myself, I put my best friend in my lie. Now I don't think that's a bad thing to do. Let me explain why.

If you're my best friend, I shouldn't have to ask you to lie for me. I shouldn't have to ask your permission for me to put you in my lie. You know why? 'Cause you're my best fucking friend, bitch. That's your job. The day that we signed up and said that we best friends, that means that my bullshit is your bullshit. And your bullshit is my bullshit. If you're my real best friend, you should know that I need you to lie for me by the look on my face.

If I'm looking at you and I'm not blinking, if I'm like this [stares]... that's a goddamn sign. That means, "The bitch got the drop on us. My back is against the wall. This is not a test. It's the real deal, help me! Help me! Nigga! Help me!"

My friend Harry ignored all signs, okay? Let me tell you how shit hit the fan. I come in the house, right? Come in the house, like, 4:00 in the morning. I'm drunk, people. Drunk as shit. I have no balance. I'm all over the place. I'm rocking back and forth. Soon as I walk in the house, she wakes up, she goes off. "You know what? I'm sick of this. I know you's probably out with some bitch. You was probably messing with some bitch."

Now, I'm drunk, I don't wanna respond, because I don't have any balance. I'm rocking back and forth. You don't look believable when you're rocking back and forth. So I had to choose a stance in which I looked believable. So I chose this [stands awkwardly].

³ [Kevin Hart: Let Me Explain | Netflix](#)

I said, "Let me tell you something, listen to me. Wasn't nobody with no bitch, okay? You're wrong. Matter of fact, to prove you wrong, I'm gonna call Harry. Harry not expecting me to call right now, so Harry don't have no reason to lie. >>

ANNEX 3

Interview example⁴

Sami: "What kind of English do you speak? How do you describe it?"

Interviewee: "I don't really describe it as anything other than Standard English, you know. If I would've put an area on it I would say north-eastern or mid-western English. I think that is because my father is from New York and my mother's from mid-west Ohio. So, there are certain, I'm sure you know the word idioms, there are some idioms that are mid-western that I use and there are certain idioms that are northern that I use. I have evolved a little bit and now I actually speak a little southern English because I live in North Carolina, like the word "y'all", which is very southern. If you say the word "y'all" up north it's like "uh, no, it's 'you guys'". So it's the same words [meaning] but it's a different way of saying them depending on where you're from."

S: "Do you think that your English is the "correct" one? Why?"

I: "Yes, my English is correct and that may be me being snobbish but I'm from a very educated family, so I speak properly. I use proper grammar. I know how to read it and write it properly, so that's why."

S: "What do you think about the different kinds of "Englishes" in the US?"

⁴https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1rAJMg9vE-3nlv3pJKUx_-34eJxX1P4oj?usp=sharing

All interviews:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1RfmOOMRUFGqqGHTKglHPPEjMNGsHdGq9?usp=sharing>

I: "I think they're variations of the language that are based on some of their own experiences and I think they represent an evolution of the language. I don't think any language is static. I think all languages evolve over time. There are certain words that were in the English language a hundred years ago, for example, that you don't here today because they don't have any relevance any longer. If I would ask you what a pullman was, you probably wouldn't know what it was because we don't travel by steam machines any longer. The pullman was one of the jobs on a steam train, we don't have them anymore. So, there are evolutions of language that come with evolutions of society, and technology, and everything else."

S: "What do you think about Black English or African American English?"

I: "It's a language within the language. I don't have any negative feelings towards it or any positive feelings towards it. I think it's just, again, a variation based on their experience."

S: "Do you prefer to call it Black English or African American English?"

I: "I don't prefer to call it either of them. I just call it English. [...] I would consider Black English or Ebonics or anything like that its own language within the context of language. [...] So, I think that no matter what the language is, whether it's white English, northern English, southern English, Latin English, Black English, they all have idioms that mean the same thing, they just come from the experience of the people that they come from."

S: "What is American English for you? Do you think that there is a "standard"?"

I: "I think Standard English is whatever the educational system has decided that it is, unfortunately. And I think that's because they teach to a standard test. So, I think kids [...] have to learn the language based on what they have to learn for school, not necessarily on what is going to allow them to succeed later on in life. I think the more education you get, the more your vocabulary grows; and with a great vocabulary comes greater communication skills."

S: "What do you think about black, white and Latino people's humor? Do you have a preference?"

I: "I think humor is humor. Again, I think it depends on the setting. I mean, I used to watch Dave Chappelle and loved some things Dave Chappelle did. I used to watch Carlos Mencia and loved some of the things Carlos Mencia did. And I've also watched guys like Ron White and Jeff Foxworthy and I thought some of that was hysterical as well. There's one Black comedian, one Latin comedian, and some White comedians. I don't think that comedy has to do with the color of your skin. The essence of comedy is truth. And so, it doesn't matter what color you are, if you're speaking your truth it will be funny, and if it comes from your life-experience."