

A STUDY OF BLACK ENGLISH SYNTAX IN THE  
MIDWEST AND ITS RELATION TO BLACK STANDARD ENGLISH

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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

Baratz (1970) states that "Standard English is the lingua franca of the mainstream in America. If the Black child is to participate and compete in that mainstream he must be able to read, write, and speak standard English". This is the view also taken by most educational institutions. They agree that Black children need to learn to read, write, and speak Standard English. These same institutions, however, often fail to recognize the interfering properties that Black English may have on learning to read and write Standard English of the school system as the same phenomena affecting foreign language speakers. Contrary to the use of a foreign language being viewed as different, use of Black English is viewed as incorrect.

There is an ever increasing amount of literature (Baratz, 1969 a, b, 1970; Labov, 1969) discussing the relationship between the use of Black English and educational problems. This language interference (caused by the use of Black English) plays a significant part, according to Baratz (1969c), in the literary problems evident in Black youth. Labov (1969) specified what some of the language differences of Black English speakers are which interfere with reading: 1) The double negative is used as in 'I don't got none'; 2) Possessive markers are affected by phonological processes; that is, the possessive morpheme is omitted as illustrated in 'John\_ book'; 3) The verb forms of "be" are frequently not used ('You tired' or 'he in the way'); 4) In Black English, phonological processes reduce the frequency of the /t,d/ inflection of the past markers as in 'They laugh\_ at us' where the past tense marker is omitted. Standard English, however, required the use of these markers wherever past is indi-

cated; 5) The grammatical signal indicating plural ('-s') is rarely used by Black Children. If in Black English, as believed, the copula "be" has a different meaning from that of Standard English, and the possessive, plural, and past markers take a different form, reading problems may be common because these children more than likely are not hearing the difference and are trying to read the words of one system using the linguistic rules of another. If such a situation does exist, success in school is then hindered because reading is the foundation for all academic endeavors. Since employment is frequently dependent upon educational achievement, it follows that employment may be limited for those with poor mastery of Standard English language ability.

If the aforementioned educational problems are to be alleviated, the interfering properties of Black English on academic achievement must first be recognized. The solution to these problems would then largely depend on how the educators treat and view the language of the Black community. In this regard, there are basically three divergent views of the status of Black English. These three viewpoints are: 1) that Black English is a substandard variant of Standard English (that is, it does not conform to the somewhat arbitrarily prescribed standard imposed upon the language of the community); 2) Black English is a dialect variation of Standard English (a local form of a language differing from the standard form, and marked by peculiarities in vocabulary, pronunciation, and usage but which are rule bound and considered a part of the family of dialects making up Standard English); 3) Black English is a language (family of dialects which have common threads) with a highly structured and well developed linguistic system of its own. Regardless of the view taken, it remains that the reaction to the use of Black English is perhaps a serious problem which may affect the educational and social well being of the Black

community. Depending on the view taken, the possible solutions to these educational and social problems vary considerably.

If certain linguistic forms and/or rules of a language are designated as "standard" usage, then any deviations therefore can be designated as substandard usages. Viewed in this context, any dialect or idiolect variations could be considered substandard usage since they do not conform to the "standard" pattern. For example, the individuals who speak Cockney each have their own idiolect. Cockney, in turn, is considered to be a dialect of British English. British English is a part of the English language family (consisting of American English, Australian English, British English, etc.). The English language family then stems from the Germanic language. Cockney, to use the previous example, could then be considered to be substandard in relation to "proper" British English. "Proper" British English, however, could be considered substandard relative to the English Standard.

If one is to take the view that there is indeed a "correct" standard form of American English, then Black English could probably be considered to be substandard, and the educational institutions and social systems have been right in treating it as such. The schools will need to continue using remediation methods which emphasize the correctness of one set of speech patterns over another. To be consistent, however, educational institutions would have to treat all dialects of American English, not just Black English, as substandard.

These illustrations indicate that from a linguistic standpoint, the term "substandard" is uninformative and misleading in that it presumes that there is a particular "correct" standard for a given language. Examining Black English in this light is as revealing as speaking of American

English as a substandard form of British English.

A far more linguistically relevant approach to describing Black language patterns is to discuss them in terms of idiolects, dialects (Baratz, 1969a; Fasold, 1969) and language families. One speaks of an idiolect as a language pattern peculiar to a particular individual; language patterns peculiar to a sub-group bound together by cultural or geographic ties are called dialects. The common patterns relating these idiolects and dialects are classified as the basic elements of a particular language. Language in turn is further categorized in terms of language families.

Baratz (1968) says that "The speech pathologist must view these children differently from children with language pathologies that are the results of physical or emotional difficulties. These children have learned language; the language of the disadvantaged child is different, not pathological. He needs not to be remediated but rather to be taught standard English." Black English viewed in this respect would seem to indicate that teachers, speech pathologists, and other educators need to begin developing and using techniques to teach these children to more capably handle the problems associated with this difference. Baratz (1969c) suggested that we "teach them using vernacular texts that systematically move from the syntactic structures of the ghetto community to those of the Standard English speaking community".

Those (Taylor, 1969) who have advocated that "Black English" is a highly developed linguistic system in its own right (that is, a language rather than a dialect) have provided empirical data to indicate the systematic differences found between Standard Black English and Standard English stating that "It is characterized primarily by a Standard English

syntax plus a few black [sic] syntactic elements. The remainder of Black Standard English may include varying degrees of black [sic] vowel patterns, ethnically marked suprasegmental features, and black [sic] lexical items". If, then, there is such a phenomenon as Black Standard English, the implications are numerous. As Taylor states, "Black Standard English is spoken by a substantial portion of the black [sic] population", in which case, "Why can't Black Standard English be included in the rubric of Standard English described and left alone?" He further supplements this opinion by explaining that learning to speak Standard English would not increase social acceptability of Blacks among whites and specifically not among other Blacks nor would it increase the likelihood of employability. It would seem, then, that "It might be more appropriate for linguists, educators, speech teachers, etc. to encourage employers to accept a wider range of speech behavior instead of trying to change the speech of black [sic] people" (Taylor, p. 6). In view of these interpretations, further study is needed to determine whether Black English is a dialect variation of Standard English, or is a standard system of its own. In this regard, it might be well to first summarize the basic linguistic forms which have been variously described as being dialect variations or Standard Black English forms.

One of the primary linguistic differences attributed to Black Standard English, or Black Dialect, is a rule-governed absence of copulas while Standard English requires some form of "be" in all non-verbal predications. Fasold (1969) in his study of a southern population found the following usages: 1) "be" is frequently in evidence as part of the main verb phrase, and is not nearly as restricted as Standard English usage ('He be gone'); 2) "Be occurs before predicate nominals, adjectives, past

participles, locatives, and certain types of prepositional phrases and in the temporary aspect construction be + verb + ing. Examples: Sometimes we just be joking; 3) No conjugated forms of "be" can be substituted in the above sentence without changing the meaning; 4) The meaning of Black English "be" involves repeated occurrence ('He be walking home everyday'); 5) Usually "be" characterizes predicates which are distributed over points in time, as with repeated occurrences, but occasionally it is the subject and not the predicate which is so distributed as with holidays which recur at intervals also indicating repeated occurrence; 6) There are certain adverbs which tend to co-occur with "be" forms ('He be there'); 7) "Be" may occur in the "when" clause itself ('When she gonna be here') or in the main clause; 8) "Be" seems to indicate future ('They be there tomorrow'). Williamson (1964) in her report on a proposed study of the speech of Negro High School students, briefly stated that "be" was used as a finite verb as in 'I be', 'he be', or 'they be'.

In reporting on other linguistic forms peculiar to Black English, Baratz (1969b) found that with a numerical quantifier, no plural morpheme is needed for Black English speakers in Washington, D. C. Examples of this are found in the following: 'I have two foot' and 'Give me 50 cent'. The Standard English rule, however, states that a plural morpheme is required.

Baratz (1968, 1969c) further reported that the possessive marker used in Standard English was found to be omitted ('John\_cousin' for 'John's cousin') by populations in Washington, D. C. Labov's (1969) findings, however, indicated usage of possessive markers by populations in Harlem and North Carolina, but in a manner different from that of Standard English (i.e. 'They book'.) Results from Baratz's population were comparable in this regard as 'He' was found to be substituted for 'His'.

Reviewing many authors, double subjects were consistently found to be used among Black English speakers as in 'John he live in New York' (Baratz, 1969c). Pronoun forms were substituted ('Us go to do it' for 'We have to do it'; 'He book' for 'His book') and prepositions were omitted or different forms substituted ('He over to his friend's house' for 'He is over at his friend's house'). There does, then, seem to be an undercurrent of commonality across these different studies. These commonalities characterize a standard syntax which Taylor (1969) described as Black Standard English. Black Standard English may be considered analagous to British English in its relationship to American English. Though both are recognized as forms of English, there is a definite dichotomy which distinguishes them.

If one is to accept the thesis of a Black Standard English, the problem still remains as to which linguistic forms are attributable to geographic dialect differences; that is, what are the basic dialect variations of Black Standard English. This distinction is especially important since many of the differences found are also found among White and other dialects. Williams (1971) in his study of variations from Standard English pronunciation by Black children in Niagara Falls, New York and Mexican-American children in San Antonio, Texas found that a cluster of substitutions was found to be common to all three groups of speakers; another cluster was found to be unique to the Black and Mexican speakers. No substitution was characteristic of the Black speakers only.

This finding would in fact seem to argue against Taylor's (1969) notions about the existence of a Black Standard English. Before the existence of a Black Standard English could, in fact, be established, it must be determined whether regional Black English forms would, by definition,

not be governed by the more general rule for Standard Black English. Since the copula, possessive, plural, and past tense rules seem to be the most consistent across all studies to date describing Black English, it would appear to be only logical to further test their consistency in this study. In this way, substantial comparisons of the rules and their usage can be made. To effectively describe and categorize those linguistic forms common to all Black English (Standard Black English) and not simply peculiar to a particular dialect thereof, it is necessary to study Black English in various dialectal and/or geographic regions. Most studies of Black English have focused on the Eastern and Southern United States geographic region while very little is known about the midwestern Black English usage such as can be found in the Kansas City metropolitan area.

In summary, the existing controversy concerning the status of Black English as either a standard language or a dialect can only be solved with the collection of more data from different dialect and geographic regions. It must be determined if Black English here in the midwest differs from Black English elsewhere. If Black English here is found to be much the same as Black English in other areas of the country, the belief that these commonalities are cultural (and, hence, part of a Black Standard language) is reinforced. Differences which are geographically bound, will vary from region to region depending on the dialect of the region. Culturally bound commonalities, however, will remain the same because the speakers share the same cultural background which in most instances supercedes the regional differences. In order to collect this data, the linguistic forms being studied are those which are most frequently discussed in the literature and the ones most likely to be present in Standard Black English.

This study, then, proposes to answer the following questions:

1. What are the differences and commonalities in usage of the variables-the copula "to be", possessive, plural, and past markers-between Black speakers in the midwest and those reported for other geographic locales.

2. Are the common usages, if any, of the above linguistic variables consistent enough to support the notion of a Black Standard Syntax?

## CHAPTER II

### PROCEDURES

#### Selection of Subjects

The subjects for this study consisted of 26 speakers from the Kansas and Missouri area. One speaker (over 40) was a participant in a group meeting held in Kansas City, Kansas. Seventeen were students in an elementary school in Kansas City, Missouri. (Five were third graders, five were fifth graders, and seven were seventh graders). Two other subjects were college students age 20 and 21. The last six subjects included four children age 7, 11, 12, and 13 along with two other children, age 8 and 12 who were visiting in their home.

The only criteria for selection of these individuals was that they be native born Kansans and Missouri<sup>ns</sup>ians. The subjects were kept anonymous and identified by only grade and age category.

The transcripts of the recordings of these subjects were then compared to those of two ten year old boys, Michael and Gregory (cousins) recorded in Washington, D.C. in an Urban Language Study (Loman, 1967).

#### Production of Black English Speech Samples

##### Elicitation Procedures

Several different elicitation procedures were initially used to determine if the subjects used Black English syntax and morphology. The first of these included a standard elicitation procedure in which the subjects were given sentences describing a particular situation. One sentence, within the descriptive paragraph, omitted the use of the copula "to be". This sentence was to be completed by the subject with either a Black English or Standard English usage of the verb form depending on the dialect of the

subject. For example, in the sentence, 'He turned to the clerk and said, I \_ right back', the Black English usage expected was "be" rather than the Standard English usage "will be". (Refer to Appendix A for complete form). All subjects tested with this elicitation procedure completed the test sentences with the Standard English form. The failure to elicit usage of Black English forms could have been due to either 1) the subjects did not know the rule or 2) the test simply was not tapping this knowledge, i.e. the test was not valid. Since it was felt that the elicitation procedure utilized may have biased the subjects to respond using the Standard English form (i.e. the test is a formal procedure, therefore, formal Standard English responses are called for), a less formal approach to eliciting Black English forms was attempted. Subjects were no longer asked to fill in the verb form but were given the particular situation and asked to state, in Black English, how they would respond. For example, 'You are in a jewelry store about to make a purchase. You realize you've forgotten your wallet, so you turn to the clerk and say \_\_\_\_\_'. This approach also proved not to be successful. Feedback from the subjects and observers indicated that the use of any type of testing devices generally evoke negative connotations and the feeling that one's best effort must be put forth (including the use of Standard English). This method of eliciting the desired information was then discontinued.

The morphology subtest of the Berko Test was administered concomitant to the aforementioned procedure. Results obtained from it were also Standard English usages with the same reasoning being applied by the subjects.

With the failure of these more formal procedures to elicit Black English linguistic forms, a study of the usage of the four linguistic

variables in spontaneous speech was undertaken. A Cassette tape recorder was used to record the six groups of subjects in various situations. At least a half-hour sample of speech was obtained for each group. The tape recorder was inconspicuously carried by the examiner to reduce awareness and the possibility of an attempt to revert to the use of Standard English.

The recording made of the older adult (over 40) was collected while the subject was conducting a group meeting. This subject was the major speaker of the evening and was the only person at the meeting whose speech was analyzed because she was the only single individual to accumulate a sufficient amount (over five minutes) of talking time to warrant analyzing. The recording of the two college students was collected during informal conversation in a university center. The examiner, while recording, interjected comments only where prompting was felt necessary to obtain adequate samples of speech. The speech of other individuals present at the time was disregarded. The seventeen elementary children were divided by grades (3rd, 5th, 7th) and recorded one grade at a time. Generally, no prompting was necessary. If a lag in conversation did develop, the examiner asked specific questions about school activities, favorite classes, etc. to help generate speech. The last six children were recorded in the home of four of the children as they talked to each other and their visitors. A visiting adult member of the family was utilized to stimulate conversation by talking with the children about their activities. Individuals present but not participants in the recording were all Black except for Whites present in the group meeting of the older adult and one White child in the fifth grade class.

These recordings of the groups studied were then transcribed verbatim for subsequent analysis to determine the frequency of occurrence of

the following linguistic forms for which Black English expression purportedly differs considerably from that of Standard English. These forms included: 1) Copula "To Be", 2) Plurals, 3) Past Markers, and 4) Possessive Markers.

#### Washington, D.C. Sample

For comparison of the occurrence of these variables in the midwest and east, an excerpt was used from a transcript obtained from recordings made in Washington, D.C. of the two boys, Michael and Gregory, as they engaged in free, spontaneous conversation. The excerpt, 444 words in length, was selected from "Conversations in a Negro American Dialect", transcribed and edited by Bengt Loman (1967). The same method of analysis was then applied to this transcript as with those obtained from the subjects from the midwest.

#### Description of Linguistic Forms Used in Analysis of Speech Samples

Copula "to be". As described by Williams (1972), "The verb to be appears in Standard English in one of the five variant forms, is, are, am, was, or were. When is and are forms are expected in Standard English, Black English may delete. Black English tends to eliminate contracted forms of to be, such as 's and 're of is and are ('He a man', 'He bad', and 'He running to school'). When the subject is I, the Standard English form am or its contraction 'm is always used." Williams also explains that in some Southern dialects, "is" may be absent before gonna. Black English speakers, however, do have the use of "is" and "are" in their grammar as evidenced by the exposed clause, 'I know he is' and in the tag question 'He is not home, is he?'

Black English speakers use "are" less often than "is". Since the "English contraction rule removes all but final consonants of certain auxiliaries (are to 're, will to 'll, and have to 've)", there's no need to use Black English rules. Thus, there are speakers who have are absences but no is absences".(Williams, 1972).

Of the copula "To Be", five different dominant usages were selected to be examined. They were:

1. Main Verb Phrase - "Be" is used as the main verb. Examples are 'He be gone' and 'I be here this evening'. The Standard English versions of 'He is gone' and 'I (am, was, or will be) here this evening' are comparable.

2. Before Adjectives and in the Temporary Aspect-The presence of "be" was noted before words denoting both description (adjectives) and instantaneous occurrence (temporary aspect construction). Examples include: 'Most of the problems always be wrong' and 'Sometimes we just be joking' respectively. This compares with the Standard English usage 'Most of the problems always are wrong' and 'Sometimes we just (are, were) joking'.

3. Repeated Occurrences - At any particular moment, the predication could be valid, but there are gaps between instances of the event described. There is no tense specification but a description of an object or an event distributed intermittently in time. Example: 'He be walking home everyday', 'I be good' or holidays which recur at intervals. Comparable Standard English usage would include 'He (is, was) walking home everyday' or 'I am good'.

4. Adverbs Co-occurring with "be" - This includes adverbs used with "be" to describe events or objects that are distributed intermittently over time. Examples: 'He be there' or Standard English 'He (is, was)

there'.

5. Future - "Be" forms involve the deletion of the present or past tense of the auxiliary will by a phonological process where will indicates that the time of speaking there is "adequate casual assurance of eventual occurrence. As Williams (1972) stated, "Be begins with a labial consonant making it likely that 'll before be will be absent. Application of this rule is fairly common in Black English and occurs sometimes in Standard English, giving sentences such as 'He be her [sic] pretty soon' and 'They be gone by evening'. The contracted form of would is 'd, which can merge with the b of be or be removed by the final elimination rule." Example: If you gave him a present, he be happy. [Standard English - 'He will be here pretty soon' and 'They (are, were, will be) gone by evening and 'He (would, 'd) be happy'.]

Plural and Possessive Markers. "The productive allomorphs of the plural and the possessive are phonologically conditioned and identical with one another (Berko, 1958)". They are described here together. These forms are /-s -z -əz/ with the following distribution:

/-əz/ after stems that end in /s, z, ṣ, ẓ, ç, j/ e.g. glasses,  
watches;

/-s/ after stems that end in /p, t, k, f, θ/ e.g. books, papers,

/-z/ after all other stems, vix. those ending in /b, d, g, v, ð, m,  
n, ŋ, r, l/; vowels, and semivowels, e.g. Chairs.

When compared to Black English, it was found that the markers were either omitted or altered in some respect such as in 'They house', '50 cent\_', and 'Mary\_ aunt'.

"Plural suffixes of SE [sic] (-s or -es) are occasionally absent in BE [sic] (Williams, 1972)... The absence of plural suffixes in Northern

Urban BE [sic] occurs less often than the absence of the possessive suffix. Most speakers of BE [sic] have the use of plural markers in their grammar". It has also been found that the grammar of Black English allows the optional use of plural markers with the nouns of measure as in cent and year.

Black English indicates possessives by the order of words as in 'The boy hat'. Black English speakers in the south use few 's forms while in northern urban areas, Black English speakers alternate between 's and its absence.

Past Markers. The productive allomorphs of the past (/ -t -d -əd/) are also phonologically conditioned, with the following distribution.

/-əd/ after stems that end in /t, d/, e.g. melted;

/-t/ after stems that end in /p, k, č, f, θ, s/ e.g. stopped;

/-d/ after stems ending in voiced sounds except /-d/, e.g. climbed, played.

In Black English, these forms were generally omitted as in 'They melt\_ the ice' or 'They stop\_ the car'.

The suffixes ('-ed') marking past tense, past participle, and derived adjectives are not pronounced in Black English because of the consonant reduction rule.

If -ed is added to a base ending in -t or -d, it is pronounced as -ed. "It is rarely absent in Black English" (Williams, 1972). The -ed can be reduced to -d in Standard and Black English.

### Analysis of Speech Samples

To analyze the tapes for collection of data, verbatim transcripts were first made of the recording of each group. Where portions of the speech sample were unclear due to high ambient noise interference, only

those portions in which two independent transcriptions were identical, were included for analysis. After the completion of the transcriptions, a tally of occurrences (Standard and Black English for comparison of use) of these linguistic forms in the speech samples from each groups was taken. These occurrences were also regrouped and classified according to total occurrences of Standard and Black English forms for the combined groups. Tallies were then obtained of the occurrence of each variable one at a time (past, plural, etc.). These were then divided by variables into Standard or Black English usages for comparison with their percentages of use being tabulated. The total utilization of Standard English forms and Black English forms was then obtained across all variables.

#### Reliability

In order to insure that the results obtained from the recording had been reliably collected, two measures were taken, first, verbatim transcripts of the recordings made by the experimenter, were compared to those of an independent listener for word by word agreement. Secondly, the transcripts were compared for agreement on the counts made of frequency of occurrence of each variable, i.e., Standard and Black English usage of copula "To Be", Plurals, Possessives, and Past Markers. An overall agreement of 94 percent was obtained for all linguistic forms studied.

#### Comprehension of Black English Forms

##### Elicitation Procedure

An additional approach was used to elicit more information pertaining to the actual understanding of speakers of the copula "To Be" in its dominant usages (excluding the main verb phrase).

This procedure was a questionnaire in which the subject was to select the description which best indicated the intended meaning of the underlined word "be" in each sentence. This questionnaire, designed to examine comprehension, was administered to a total of 60 persons (30 Black and 30 White) all born in Kansas. The 30 White subjects were students in an introductory speech class at the University of Kansas while the 30 Black subjects were a combination of university and high school age students.

Responses obtained from each item on the questionnaire were tabulated according to the following: 1) percent of correct (Black English) responses to the questionnaire; 2) the number of individuals making this score (frequency); 3) the percentage of the frequency score which illustrated what percent of individuals obtained a certain score. For example, two (frequency) Black subjects received a score of 12 percent (correct responses), however, when the frequency is converted to percentile, only six percent of the 30 Blacks achieved this score; 4) an item analysis which indicated how many subjects answered particular questions correctly and its percentage in relationship to the total. This provided information about the difficulty of the individual questions asked, the consistency of responses, and the actual understanding of the meaning conveyed by the use of "be" in the sentence.

CHAPTER III  
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to provide information regarding the following questions: 1) What are the differences and commonalities in usage of the variables - the copula "to be", possessive, plural, and past markers - between Black speakers in the midwest and those reported for other geographical locales? 2) Are the common usages, if any, of the above linguistic variables consistent enough to support the notion of a Black Standard Syntax? (Is the usage of these linguistic forms consistent with their usage in the Eastern and Southern regions of the United States as reported in previous studies?) The results of this study are presented and discussed relative to each of these questions.

Comparison of Standard and Black English Usages of the Variables Studied

Each of the variables tabulated occurred within the context of the half-hour taped samples of speech. For some groups (third, fifth graders), the results were not based on a full half-hour speech sample due to the presence of ambient noise in the recording which resulted in decreased intelligibility to the extent that the transcribers could not agree on all of the text.

Of the twenty-six subjects recorded, the results indicated that the use of Black English forms was infrequent. In many instances, the linguistic forms studied were not used at all either in Standard or Black English forms.

Copula "to be"

The total number of usages of the verb "to be" was tabulated from a combined text of 2,904 words and resulted in the following distribution. The Standard English form of copula usage occurred 102 times compared to the 22 times that the Black English forms occurred in the 124 instances in

which this verb form was used in the total corpus.

A comparison of the usage of the various forms of the copula for Standard and Black English, respectively is shown in Figure 1. From this figure, it can be seen that the major difference in usage occurred with the main verb phrase in which there were 70 instances of Standard English forms occurring as compared to only 11 Black English forms. Use of the Black English form of the copula in conjunction with an adverb occurred five times while the Standard English form occurred a total of thirteen times. Before adjectives and in temporary aspect construction, the Black English form was used three times as compared to eleven occurrences of the Standard English form. The Standard English form to indicate future was used three times. There were no instances in the entire corpus in which the subjects had an opportunity to use the forms for repeated occurrences, thus the zero scores for both the Black and Standard English scores in this category. Included in the total count obtained were different groups at a number of age levels. Table 1. is shown here to illustrate these differences in performance as a function of these different age groups. These results, in turn, are compared to the frequency of usage by the Washington, D. C. group.

The results of this analysis in Table 1. show that the subjects proportionately used more Standard English usage of the main verb phrase. The exception to this was the third graders who had no Standard or Black English usages. When compared to the Washington, D. C. children, no difference was noted in overall performance on this form of the copula "To Be".

"Be", when used before adjectives and in the temporary aspect, was not used as frequently as the main verb phrase since its usage was completely omitted by four of the seven recorded groups. The three groups that did

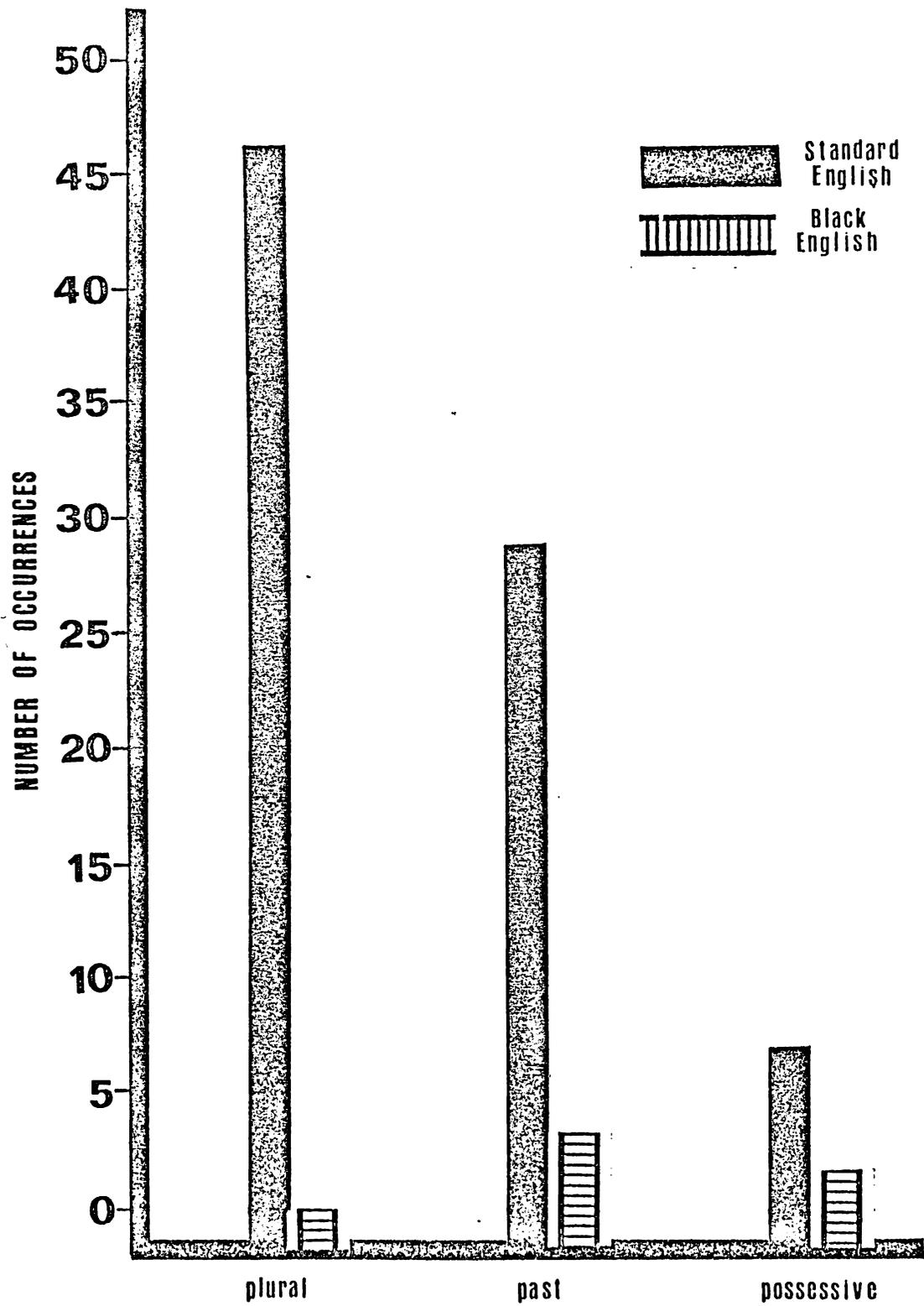


Figure 1. Comparison of Standard and Black English Usages of Five Dominant Forms of "be"

Table 1. Comparison of the five dominant forms of "be":

	Main Verb Phrase		Before Adj. & in Temp. Aspect		Repeated Occurr.		Adverbs Co-occurr. with "be"		Future		Total		Grand Total
	SE	BE	SE	BE	SE	BE	SE	BE	SE	BE	SE	BE	
Third Grade	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fifth Grade	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	7
Seventh Grade	24	5	0	0	0	0	5	1	0	0	29	6	35
College	8	2	10	2	0	0	4	3	4	3	26	10	36
Adult	5	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	6	2	8
Other Children	26	2	1	1	0	0	4	1	3	0	34	4	38
Washington, D. C.	11	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	2	14
TOTAL	81	13	12	3	0	0	13	5	8	3	114	24	138

use the form had more Standard English usages except in the one group where the occurrences were the same. The Washington, D. C. population revealed no different results.

When the tapes were analyzed for "be" when used to indicate repeated occurrences, no occurrences were found at any age level. These results were inclusive of the Washington, D. C. population indicating that the utilization of "be" in this form is limited regardless of the geographical locale.

The fourth dominant form (adverbs co-occurring with "be" of the copula "to be") did not vary considerably from the other forms. There was no use by four of the groups, including the D.C. population. Likewise, as with the other, Standard English was more prevalent.

The last form, "Be" used in the future, also showed four groups (including D.C.) not using the form at all. With the others, Standard English was more prevalent.

The overall analysis of these forms seemed to point to limited use of many of them either in Standard or Black English. Though use was limited, these findings remained relevant to the initial questions asked in this study. "If one simply speaks of the presence of these forms when comparing them to other locales, the answer is yes. However, a discussion of the proportion of these occurrences becomes more complicated since the data shown indicated that when these forms are used, Standard English is more frequent both in the midwestern and eastern (Washington, D. C.) geographical locales. Since other literature has not reported quantitatively the proportion of usage of the forms analyzed by them, one must be careful in attaching great significance to these results. The frequency span between Standard and Black English usage might be said to be indicative

of decreasing usage of Black English "Be" by Black speakers and a growing use of Standard English forms. This would not, however, minimize "Be" being or having been an important rule of Black Standard English, but would only point to a decreasing usage of such in response to question two of this study.

#### Plurals, Possessive, Past Markers

Three other variables were considered for this study. They were analyzed in the same manner as the ones previously discussed and resulted in the findings depicted in Figure 2.

These findings were found to be consistent with prior results reported. Standard English use was here again noted more frequently. There were 46 instances of the Standard English form of marking plurals in the entire corpus while not a single usage of the Black English form was noted. There were 32 instances of past tense usage in the corpus; 29 of which have Standard English forms and three which were Black English forms. Only nine occurrences of possessive were recorded and again the Standard English form predominated by a margin of seven to two.

When examined according to age level, no noticeable differences in usage of the three forms resulted as a function of age. One obvious distinction was made, however, when comparing Standard and Black English usages of the plural marker (Refer to table 2). The midwestern population revealed no use of the Black English form of the possessives. This was in contrast to the Washington, D. C. population which used both Standard and Black English forms with the Standard being more prevalent.

The Black English form of the possessives, in the samples taken, was used proportionately more than either the plural or past tense forms.

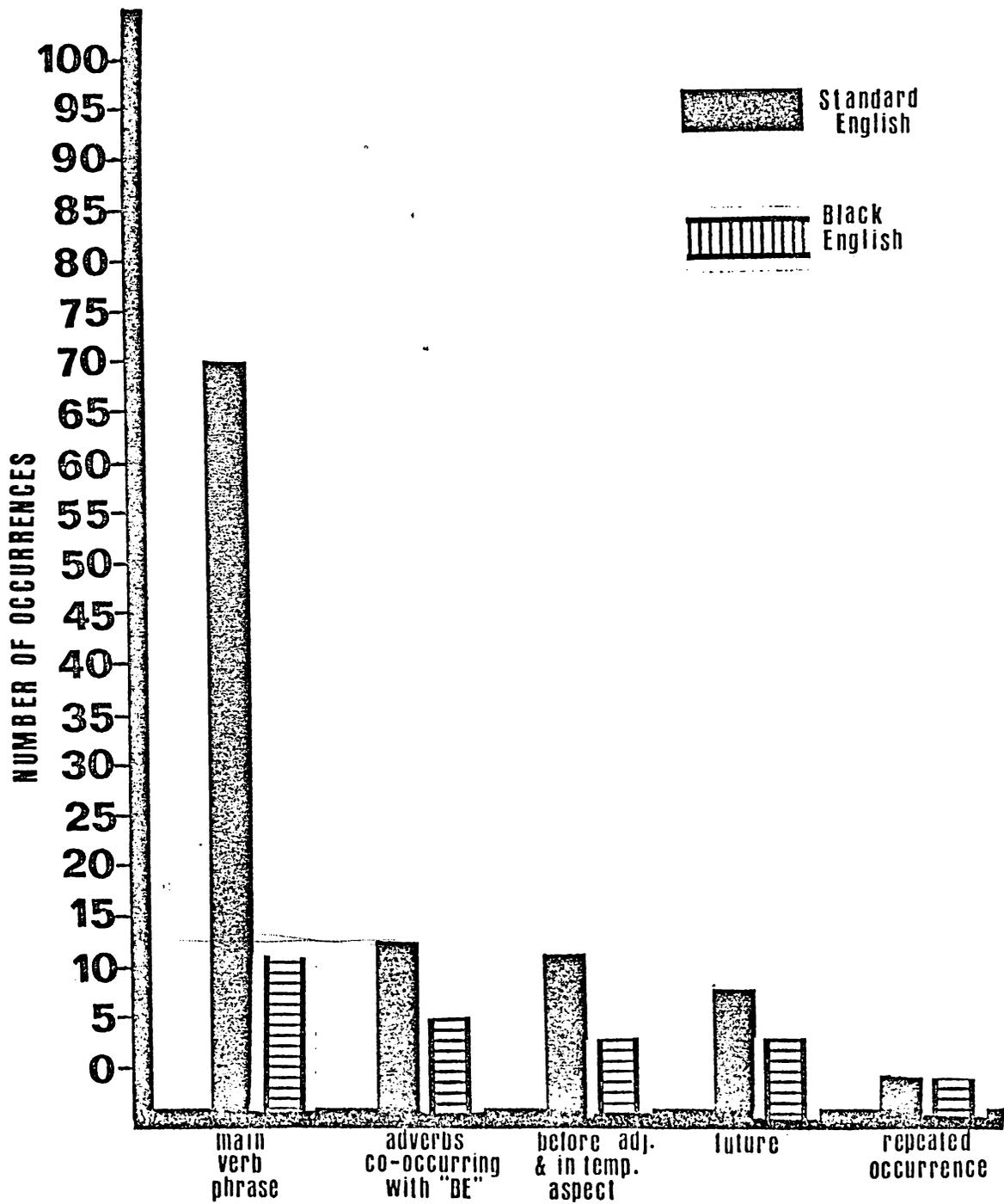


Figure 2. Comparison of Standard and Black English Usages of the Variables-Flurals, Possessives, and Past Markers

Table 2. Comparison of the Variables-Plurals, Possessives, and Past Markers.

	Plurals		Possessives		Past		Total Occurrences		Grand Total
	SE	BE	SE	BE	SE	BE	SE	BE	
Third Grade	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Fifth Grade	3	0	0	0	1	0	4	0	4
Seventh Grade	5	0	3	0	11	0	19	0	19
College	12	0	3	0	4	2	19	2	21
Adult	11	0	0	2	0	1	11	3	14
Other Children	14	0	1	0	13	0	28	0	28
Washington, D. C.	8	5	1	1	0	0	9	6	15
TOTAL	54	5	8	3	29	3	9.	11	102

However, the third and fifth grade groups had no use of possessives of either form in their entire speech sample. Notably in this portion of the data is the fact that in the adult speech sample, Black English forms of the possessive were used in both instances in which the possessive was called for. The Washington, D. C. population did not vary much from these findings but utilized both Black and Standard English forms. The remaining groups utilized the Standard English form of the possessive exclusively.

Finally, in line with the other results, were those obtained from the past tense usage. As with the possessives, the adult population used a Black English form in the only occurrence of which called for the past tense marker. No occasions for past tense markers were noted in the entire samples for the third grade or Washington, D. C. groups, hence the zero scores for those groups.

For all other groups, Standard English was more frequently used than Black English as the data of table 2 clearly illustrates.

Essentially, the data gathered on each variable studied were much the same. Standard English was more frequent regardless of the age level. Little difference was noted among the midwestern groups and the D. C. population. In the entire corpus only one form, "Be" used to indicate repeated occurrences failed to occur in at least one of the groups in either the Standard or Black English form.

Results obtained from the variables studied point to the presence of Black English forms in the midwestern region as in other regions. However, Black English usage was by far less frequent than that of Standard English usage. The literature reviewed in this study notably pointed out the occurrence of these four variables in the southern and eastern regions of the United States. Added to this, now, is their presence in the midwest.

This data might readily be viewed as a substantiation of a Black Standard English since these variables are present in several regions. Before such a conclusion is made, careful consideration must be given to the diversity in frequency of Black English and Standard English usage. This diversity was large enough to illustrate that the more frequently used Standard English usage could be viewed 1) as either lessening the substantiation for a Black Standard English, or 2) as a language in the process of being replaced by another (i.e. linguistic acculturation).

#### Comprehension of the Copula "To Be"

In addition to the recordings made, a questionnaire was administered to 30 Black and 30 White subjects. This questionnaire was designed to examine the comprehension of both Black and White subjects of the Black English forms of the copula "to be".

For White subjects, percentage scores ranged from 25 percent to 87 percent with no one obtaining scores of 0 or 100 percent. The Black subjects' scores ranged from 12 percent to 100 percent with none obtaining a score of zero.

As mentioned earlier, neither Black nor White subjects got all of the items incorrect (score of zero). However, more Black subjects obtained scores over 50 percent. Sixteen of the Blacks obtained better than 50 percent scores with only 14 of the Whites obtaining scores over 50 percent. On the other hand, more Blacks (11) received scores below 50 percent (11 Blacks compared to 5 Whites). The noticeable difference here was that no white subjects obtained scores of 100 percent while four of the 30 Blacks (13 percent) received comprehension scores of 100 percent (Table 3).

Table 3. Comparison of the Scores Obtained by Black and White Subjects, Their Frequency of Occurrence and Percent of Individuals Obtaining the Score.

Score (percent)	Frequency of Occurrence		Percent Obtaining	
	Black	White	Black	White
1. 0	0	0	0	0
2. 12	2	0	6	0
3. 25	3	1	10	3
4. 37	6	4	20	13
5. 50	3	11	10	36
6. 62	5	5	16	16
7. 75	3	8	10	26
8. 87	4	1	13	3
9. 100	4	0	13	0

Item Analysis

An item analysis of individual test questions showed which questions were most difficult for Black and White subjects. To determine this, each question was individually assessed. The number of individuals answering correctly was tabulated. This was then converted to percentile for comparisons (Refer to Table 4).

The difficulty of the items overall seemed to be equally distributed as Whites performed better on half while Blacks were better on the other half. The difficulty of individual items, however, varied from group to group as they did not perform the same on the same items.

The Black subjects were consistent in their comprehension of "Be" when describing an action taking place in the future. On these items, number four and five, 73 percent and 83 percent of the subjects were respectively correct. Performance on items three and six (describing an action distributed periodically over time), was consistent with 56 percent obtaining number three correct and 53 percent obtaining number six correct. These scores were only a little over the level of chance, however. Questions 2 and 7 obtained 56 and 40 percent respectively, indicating a lack of comprehension of "Be" when describing an event taking place immediately because of the decrease in percentage of question 7. And last, though comprehension was limited at 53 percent for both questions one and eight, performance was consistent.

For White subjects, questions 4 and 5 (future) attained percentages of 96 and 90 respectively. This seemed to indicate a high level of comprehension giving credence to it with the consistency in the scores. Question 3 and 6 (action distributed over time), however, were quite to the contrary with comprehension scores of 36 and 93 percent respectively. This

Table 4. Item Analysis of Comprehension of the Copula "to be" for Black and White Subjects.

Question	<u>Number Correct</u>		<u>Percent</u>	
	Black	White	Black	White
1. Described an action or occurrence.	16	13	53	43
2. Described an event taking place immediately.	17	2	56	.06
3. Described an action distributed periodically over time.	17	11	56	36
4. Described an action taking place in the future.	22	29	73	96
5. Described an action taking place in the future.	25	27	83	90
6. Described an action distributed periodically over time.	16	28	53	93
7. Described an event taking place immediately.	12	14	40	46
8. Described an action or occurrence.	16	9	53	30

seems to suggest that more guessing was involved. Questions 2 and 7 (taking place immediately), with percentages of .06 and 46 percent not only suggested a lack of comprehension but also the possibility of guessing. And last, questions 1 and 3 (an action or occurrence), also reveal a lack of understanding but not as much inconsistency with scores of 43 and 36 percent respectively.

When related to the original questions, this data show that limited comprehension of this variable might be a reason for its limited use. If comprehension is poor, as these data indicate, production in speech would probably be minimal. If these forms were more an integral part of the language system of the speakers than these data portray, comprehension scores would be expected to be in the upper percentile range. As this was not the case and comprehension for both Black and White subjects was limited, it could be viewed as an indication that Black English is infrequently used in the midwest.

The limited comprehension along with limited use placed the literature reported in the other areas in a different perspective. If use in other areas was as limited as that found here and in the D. C. transcript, one might view Black English as a language on the decline. If use was higher in other areas, dialect differences may have been responsible. Thus, with respect to question two, one might lean more toward a dialect variation as opposed to a Black Standard English. It has been shown that these forms do exist in the midwest but use is infrequent. To be a part of a Black Standard English, the forms would be expected to occur across all populations at a greater frequency. This, however, does not rule out the possibility that the differences existing between Black English and Standard English may be in other areas such as phonology.

CHAPTER IV  
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to find the differences and commonalities between the speech of Black English speakers in the midwest and in other geographical locales as reported in the literature, and if there were commonalities to determine if they substantiated the possibility of a Black Standard English.

Four variables were being studied. They included: 1) the copula "to be" with five dominant usages; 2) the possessive; 3) plural; and 4) past markers. These variables were examined for total usage or occurrence. Secondly, they were analyzed in terms of age level differences.

In order to obtain more information, a questionnaire was distributed to 30 Black and 30 White subjects for comparison of comprehension of four dominant Black English usages of the copula "to be".

The procedure employed for collecting the samples of speech consisted of obtaining a half-hour recording of spontaneous conversation among six different age groups. Because of a high degree of ambient noise in some of the recordings, it was not possible to obtain 100 percent agreement on the transcription of the entire half-hour sample for all groups. Over all groups, 100 percent agreement in transcription was reached in a corpus totaling 2,904 words. These transcribed samples were then analyzed for frequency of occurrence of the aforementioned linguistic forms. As a comparative measure a random sample of speech was taken from a printed text of conversation in the Washington, D. C. area. The same analysis was applied to it as with those recordings from the midwest.

### Copula "To Be"

The results obtained from this study revealed that usage of the Black English forms of the verb "to be" was present in at least one of the groups studied except for the form to indicate repeated occurrence. In this instance, an occasion to use either the Black or Standard English form simply did not arise. The usage of these linguistic forms was similar to the sample obtained from the Washington, D. C. population as well. In all cases, the use of Standard English forms was proportionately higher. This then, compares with Fasold's (1969) study of a southern population where he found that "be" was used as part of the main verb phrase; occurred before predicate nominals, adjectives, past participles, locatives, and certain types of prepositional phrases and in the temporary aspect construction; co-occurred with certain adverbs; seemed to indicate future.

Fasold's (1969) data cannot, however, be realistically compared to the data from the present study except to note that in both studies occurrences of the linguistic forms in question were noted. Since previous literature has failed to yield any data on the actual percentage of occurrence found within a text, it is difficult to make more meaningful comparisons of the present data with that reported in the literature. Despite the fact that Black English forms of the copula did occur in the present study, the relatively low proportion of occurrence in comparison to use of Standard English forms certainly sheds a different light on the data on Black English usage as previously reported.

### Plurals

Baratz's (1969b) findings reported that for Black English Dialect in the Washington, D. C. area, no plural morpheme was needed with a

numerical quantifier. This was verified by the transcript of the Washington, D. C. population where five Black English uses were found, all involving the use of a numerical quantifier. Such was not the case, however, with the midwestern population which used only Standard English forms of the plural markers, regardless of whether or not a numerical quantifier was present. In this one area, it might be said that the linguistic forms are not consistent with those in other locales at least in the eastern region, suggesting that the plural rule discussed by Baratz may well be considered to be a dialectal variation peculiar to the Washington, D. C. and/or eastern coast area. The lack of usages of this rule in the present midwest sample would certainly discount the notion of the universality of this rule in Black speakers in general and hence would argue against the inclusion of such a rule in a Black Standard.

#### Possessives

Possessives, which were reported to be either omitted or substituted in the east and south, were also omitted or substituted in the midwest. However, again it should be pointed out that both Standard and Black English usage was noted in this midwest sample with Standard English usage being more prevalent. These uses might be said to be consistent with the findings reported in the literature. The question regarding the proportion of usage, however, still remains.

#### Past

Results obtained here were very much consistent with the other findings attained throughout the study. Standard English forms were used more often but Black English was noted also. The Washington, D. C. population used here, noticeably had no Standard or Black English forms of the past

marker. The literature reported earlier, however, explained that phonological processes reduce the frequency to the /t, d/ inflection of the past markers. This was present in this study, but to a lesser degree than is apparently the case from previous reports in the literature.

#### Comprehension of the Copula "To Be"

The questionnaire which was distributed to examine comprehension of the verb "to be" of both Black and White subjects resulted in findings which seemed to indicate that overall comprehension of the items by Blacks was better than that of the Whites. The comprehension scores obtained, however, either indicate that the use and understanding of the copula "to be" is limited in this midwestern area or that the test did not fully assess what it was intended to measure.

#### Conclusion

Black English, to some degree, appears to be present in the midwestern geographical locale. Because other literature does not report concrete data from which to compare, the frequencies of occurrence can only be surmised. However, in this area, infrequent use is noted.

1. Examples of the various linguistic forms studied were found to occur in the midwest except for the following two: a) Copula usage to indicate repeated occurrence did not occur in either the Black English or Standard English form of "to be"; b) Black English plurals were not used.

2. Answers to question two (Do such commonalities warrant the possibility of a Black Standard English) are not quite that simple. With regard to plural rules, it could be concluded that the midwest usage differs from that of the east coast usage. All other forms reported in the literature as frequently occurring in the eastern and southern regions

also occurred in the speech of the midwest Black speakers. Taken by itself this could be interpreted as supporting the inclusion of these rules as a part of the Black Standard English. However, since frequency of occurrence was proportionately much lower than the corresponding Standard English form, such an interpretation should be viewed cautiously, especially in view of the fact that the comprehension of the Black English forms of the copula was likewise considerably lower than one would expect if these rules were an integral part of the basic language system. A more realistic interpretation of the data might be to talk of these linguistic forms as being infrequently used dialect forms in free variation with the more common Standard English forms. The more frequent use of some of these linguistic forms may have been more prevalent at one time but now are in a state of flux in which the Standard English form appears to be replacing the Black English forms in popular usage.

Regarding the linguistic forms studied in this investigation, it might further be concluded that, in view of the relatively low proportion of usage of Black English forms in both production and comprehension, the interfering properties of Black English syntax on the educational training of the Black youth in the midwest may not be as great as the literature would lead one to infer.

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## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Initial Testing Procedure Used to Elicit  
Black English Syntax and Morphology

Initial Testing Procedure Used to Elicit Black English  
Syntax and Morphology of Copula "To Be"

Directions: The sentences I am going to read describe different situations. In each set of sentences, a verb has been omitted. When I get to the blank in the sentence, tell me what verb you would use if in that setting.

A. Main Verb Phrase

1. A man went into a jewelry store to buy a gift for his wife. As he started to pay for it, he realized he'd left his wallet in his car. He turned to the clerk and said, I \_\_\_\_\_ right back.
2. Charles saw three of his friends walking by his house. He yelled to them to wait for him but they said no, we \_\_\_\_\_ down on the corner.
3. My sister, Jean, always does the dishes because I \_\_\_\_\_ too lazy.

B. Before Adjectives and in the Temporary Aspect Construction.

1. Some friends of mine were joking around one day but happened to pick the wrong person for a target. As they tried to explain, they said, we didn't mean anything. You know, sometimes we just \_\_\_\_\_ joking.
2. Mike decided to have a party at his house Saturday night, He started to tell his friends about it. A few of them asked what would be going on? And he said, oh, we \_\_\_\_\_ dancing, that's all.
3. Linda bought a new dress to wear to an upcoming dance. As she described the dress to her best friend, she said, my new dress \_\_\_\_\_ blue with green trimmings. It really \_\_\_\_\_ something.

C. Repeated Occurrence

1. On Monday and Tuesday, I saw Mr. Willis walking down the street toward home. In fact, I think he \_\_\_\_\_ walking home every day because he doesn't have a car.
2. John decided to try out for the track team. In order to get in shape, John \_\_\_\_\_ running every day.
3. Whenever I drive down sixth street on my way to work, I see Vicki. She \_\_\_\_\_ going to school.

D. Adverbs Co-Occurring with "be"

1. I asked where Sheila was and they said she \_\_\_\_\_ here.

2. My sister and I decided to go and visit our cousin, Jan. We didn't know if she'd be home, though, so we asked mother who had been by earlier. She told us that Jan \_\_\_\_\_ back there soon.
3. Some of the girls had just been to see a new movie and they were all talking at once trying to tell their other friends about it. But Jean insisted that she \_\_\_\_\_ the one to tell it to the others..

#### E. Future

1. We didn't know when to expect them, so we called to check. She said, They \_\_\_\_\_ there tomorrow.
2. Craig was the star basketball player that everybody went to see. Then suddenly he announced, Next Tuesday \_\_\_\_\_ my last game. I \_\_\_\_\_ quitting the team.
3. Clara was a senior in high school. She had just visited her sister at the state university and had had an enjoyable time. As she sat in her usually dull English class, she thought to herself. Soon I \_\_\_\_\_ going there, too.

APPENDIX B

Instructions to Independent Listeners

These instructions were given to a graduate student in linguistics who served as an independent listener.

LISTENER:

As you listen to these four groups of recordings, you should listen for the use of four variables. They include: 1) The use of "Be", 2) The use of Possessives, 3) The use of Plurals, and 4) The use of Past Tense. The aforementioned usages should be classified as Standard English or Black English.

The following definitions are to help provide a basis to aid in your decision as to classification.

"Be"

1. Main Verb Phrases - "Be" is used as the verb. Example - He be gone.
2. Before Adjectives and in the Temporary Aspect - The presence of "be" is noted before words denoting both description (adjectives) and instantaneous occurrence (temporary aspect construction). Examples include: Most of the problems always be wrong and Sometimes we just be joking respectively.
3. Repeated Occurrences - At any particular moment the predication could be valid, but there are gaps between instances of the event described. Example: Holidays which recur at intervals or He be walking home everyday.
4. Adverbs Co-Occurring with "be" - This includes adverbs used with "be" to describe events or objects that are distributed intermittently over time. Example: He be there.
5. Future - "Be" forms involve the deletion of the present or past tense of the auxiliary will by a phonological process where will indicates that at the time of speaking, there is adequate casual assurance of eventual occurrence.

Plurals, Possessives, Past Tense

These forms are either omitted, altered, etc., from the standard English usage such as in:

1. I have 50 cent\_ (plural)
2. John\_ Cousin (possessives) They book
3. They stop\_ the car (past tense)

APPENDIX C

Transcript of the Third Grade

## Third Grade

I had to \_\_\_\_\_. Charla. My favorite subject is math.

My sister play a \_\_\_\_\_ and my brother play a \_\_\_\_\_.

My \_\_\_\_\_ plays drums. We do. She gon' come at three o'clock.

APPENDIX D

Transcript of the Fifth Grade

## Fifth Grade

Are you married? Ok, then I'll call you miss. I do. His name is Greg. He's my uncle. Where'd you get all our names? Why are we in here? Oh, you want us to tell you about our school. Our junior mayor is \_\_\_\_\_. Our assistant secretary is \_\_\_\_\_. Our secretary is \_\_\_\_\_. We help the March of Dimes and we put on picnics and go on trips. And she showed us.

APPENDIX E

Transcript of the Seventh Grade

## Seventh Grade

My name is Marcia. Diane Ross, she use to sing with the Supremes. Derrick. Reggie, Cause I was cold. You can call him Harry. Oh, he doesn't mind. We call his that, cause on one side he's kind of bald. Yes, he's alright. Sometime. He's better than he was last year. He tricked us this year, but he ain't going to trick us next year. We didn't know he was suppose to teach seventh grade this year and we walked up to the room and thought we was going to get Miss Stofferson, and the first thing we saw was Harry. We thought everybody flunked. You know next year if he be one of our teachers, I ain't going to Lincoln. I have. Where do you live? I have a brother. He went to college. He's taking his money and putting it in his pocket. Last night, my sister and me was laying in bed and all of a sudden, I was jumping out of the bed cause our mattress was on fire. I thought I was dead or something. We took the mattress outside. He was operating on it. He said man cut in the middle, then he said it's in the side. People was saying, \_\_\_\_\_ kid's mattress is on fire. We was going outside to get some dirt cause we be making mold things. There was this girl name Addie she set a trash can on fire in the restroom. She was playing. She seen a match on the floor and thought it was out. She threw it in the trash can, it came up. She started stomping her feet. She just had to go home for a little while. I picked him up by the tail and threw him away. One time my daddy cooked a rat. He thought it was a piece of chicken. He didn't eat it, did he. That white girl said all you niggers get out of here. We the only \_\_\_\_\_ you. I'm good in math. He talked too much. The doctor took it and put the thermometer. \_\_\_\_\_. His momma smacked him up side the head. This is on the fourth of July. See this is my own

cousin. They had some cigarettes. He put a fire cracker in his mouth and took two puffs \_\_\_\_\_ blew up in his mouth. Girls what you doing. We had a radio show. It was about how we act \_\_\_\_\_ employment. A disc jockey and everything. We used that stuff right there. She played the records. We had a dedication line. This was for the seventh grade. He gon' tell us anyway. Who drew those things? The one up there with the nose is Reggie and the one with the flat head is Billy. I guess she can't help it. She be sittin in the room and everybody be sittin' around and she start singing. She wrote a beautiful song about him. My sister's church. I went to my sister's church. I sit down and then this preacher said, he said, has anybody seen the Lord and then he started singing this song. I think it was something about Jesus. He said young man please. He come back with \_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_\_ is just. We had a substitute. She'd cuss up a storm. She said I know you didn't expect me to come in here. She said if you won't \_\_\_\_\_, I won't \_\_\_\_\_. She gon' be scared. Then all of a sudden it was night time. Then it started pouring down raining. It'd be a tornado warning. We couldn't get a whole lot. We'd be \_\_\_\_\_.

APPENDIX F

Transcript of the Other Children

## Other Children

She got chest pains. Yeah. We had fights today at school. Huh. White girl. Lori Acres. You see. See she started it when she first came to our school she got beat up. So did this White boy. And she started calling Denise and 'nem bad names. And so somebody beat 'em up. So then this Brian Phillips White boy got beat up cause he called people names and then \_\_\_\_\_ White boy got beat up. She can't fight. I can. No. no. no. yeah. She don't know. Yeah. yep. yep. I do too. Who me? She don't know cause can't nobody whip me. I beat up \_\_\_\_\_ at school. This White girl \_\_\_\_\_. It slipped. huh \_\_\_\_\_ Can't beat me up. huh. See, when she said that \_\_\_\_ beat me up \_\_\_\_\_. I didn't want to say it. Uh hum. At school I do. At school I do. Cause people make me mad. Uh hum. yeah. She does. I don't. Oh Derrick does too. Derrick. Uh hum. I don't know. Oh math. Thursday. Who me? Not me. Not me. \_\_\_\_\_. No. I don't start 'em. I do not. Somebody bump into you, you push em. I don't push em. Girl watch where you going. huh. No I don't start 'em. Well you know when kids be running in the hall and they come running into you. So I sock em. And then I go you better watch where you're going girl. Oh. Oh. I'm sorry. \_\_\_\_\_ No. I push 'em. I didn't. I don't start 'em. They bump into me first. She does it more. yeah. We not allowed. No. fight back. They say go tell. Momma say not to \_\_\_\_\_. She said if they bother you first, then you can hit them. \_\_\_\_\_. First momma say if they hit you or something, tell the teacher, but then momma say, if the teacher don't do nothing, talk to the principal. If he don't do nothing, go hit 'em. I ain't gonna go tell nobody. yeah. Here's one of the trouble makers right here. I'm no trouble maker. There's the trouble maker. Both of them. Yes you have Eric. uh. hum. This big dude. The

playground supervisor. Nobody. yeah. Him and Brian did. We was just  
 playing. \_\_\_\_\_. a walk. uh hum. Ok. I won a good luck chain.  
 Two good luck chains. I don't started. good. I had first but I slipped  
 and came in third. Twenty yard dash. Whose bubble gum? Last week I came  
 in first. 100 and 200 and high jump I came in second. five feet and three  
 inches. Sixth. Nothing. Playing baseball. He ain't no good. Don't even  
 know how to take his bat. Oh boy. He came walking today \_\_\_\_\_. Who?  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Mike goes to Cordley. \_\_\_\_\_ yeah. Eric. That's Delbert. 12. 13.  
 8. He looks like he's nine. 11. 11. 10. How old are you? I ain't  
 gon' tell you. How old I am. I didn't tell you. How old am I? I'm 14.  
 Nothing. \_\_\_\_\_. 12. I'm forty. \_\_\_\_\_ He gon' get lost. yeah. How  
 they got started \_\_\_\_\_. About how they started. And how they did. Who  
 their father was and who \_\_\_\_\_. And how many kids they have in the family.  
 \_\_\_\_\_. 11. 9. 4. 6. Mike, me, Kim, Derrick, momma and daddy  
 \_\_\_\_\_. That's Derrick. Riding the bike. Lisa \_\_\_\_\_. First. \_\_\_\_\_.  
 I saw it. Sometimes I win. Sometimes I lose. I don't know. No. This  
 one boy \_\_\_\_\_. He's a bad boy. He calls people names and everything. So  
 one day he did something to Derrick. He got hit in the eye and he got  
 beat up. So this boy takes up for him. Rod \_\_\_ and one time \_\_\_\_\_. So I  
 can throw it away and what happened. Sheila taught him how to read. She  
 wrote this same thing. It was \_\_\_\_\_. And so she had Derrick read over  
 it and over and over it til he got it right. So then \_\_\_\_\_. So then  
 she said that's how it goes so read it to me. Sheila wants to be a teacher.  
 7. You not as old as Delbert. \_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_\_ He liked this little  
 White girl. not no more. He goes with \_\_\_\_\_. What you talking about?  
 uh huh. Not no more. He goes with Wilmer. That big old fat ugly one.  
 Nobody. Ooh, you liar. Mike goes with Lisa \_\_\_\_\_. Lisa \_\_\_\_\_. Indian

girl. I don't got a girl. He likes Wilma \_\_\_\_\_, too. I do not. You hit  
 him in the eye. He likes Avis right now. I do not. I don't like that  
 bony thing. He gave her a ring. What ring did I give her? \_\_\_\_\_ I did  
 not. Avis \_\_\_\_\_. I do not. I guess nobody at the moment. A girl in my  
 class. Mikey stop. No. I don't like no one now. Nobody. Kim goes with  
 \_\_\_\_\_. The dude who gave her the necklace. He gave her a ring too. Mike  
 quit boy. I wouldn't eat that Pam. Did he touch it? Man he's been  
 messin' around with everything. My bike. I'll give you another piece.  
 I had 4 pieces of gum right here. Well, I'll give you two other ones.  
 Take it or leave it. What is this? a half of a one. I got another \_\_\_\_\_.  
 Baseball. You mean the \_\_\_\_\_ went in his mouth. \_\_\_\_\_ Home run. Mine  
 said I can't read it. Mine had home run on it \_\_\_\_\_. That's my personal  
 stuff. Get out Mike. \_\_\_\_\_ Play. Momma hasn't taken me down to that  
 place. She's such a lazy \_\_\_\_\_. They still open? \_\_\_\_\_. I'm not gon  
 do that next year. Everytime I \_\_\_\_\_. She's sick. A doctor. about  
 two months later. It'll go away. So Kim was sick for two months and then  
 finally she took her to a doctor. \_\_\_\_\_. I'm gon try to work at the swim-  
 ming pool. Are you over the swimming pool? Can you give me a job? Well  
 take me down there today. Well come get me up tomorrow. What time you  
 get off work? I don't want to work out to Hope Plaza then. Well, I did't  
 say tonight. Tomorrow. Oh she ain \_\_\_\_\_. Yes you are. \_\_\_\_\_ Well  
 how did you get your tooth out. \_\_\_\_\_ A dude beat me up. \_\_\_\_\_ You gon't  
 pay me some money for it. So you paid. You got the watch didn't you. I  
 got the money. So I found it. You can't whip me yet. uh. hum. Baseball.  
 He don't play nothing. Who? \_\_\_\_\_. The other team. The other team. I  
 hit one home run. She's fast. Yeah. You can't out run me \_\_\_\_\_. Brian  
 Gimble. Kevin \_\_\_\_\_. I beat Kevin \_\_\_\_\_. by two inches. He can beat

me and I can beat him sometime. See Mike lies when Brian was over to Linda's house, Mike said he could smoke Brian. When he came over there, Mike said I didn't say that. I said I could beat him. I didn't say I could smoke him. I can't smoke Brian but I can beat him. You can't beat Brian. I can beat him, but ain't no way I can smoke him. He can keep up with me. I can't smoke him. \_\_\_\_\_. Yeah that was one night. You wanna see my ribbons. I have some from last year. I didn't feel like running this year. Those two are from a 220 and a 300 and a 100 yard dash. And a second. See they cheated. Right there. I was suppose to get three blue ribbons and see I won in track but I got second. And in long jump I got second. 300 yard dash. \_yard run. high jump. Standing long jump. Soft ball. I got third place in everything. 300, that's the hardest. They got that mixed up. At school. They just talk about people like Angela Davis, Martin Luther King. She gave a report on him. We suppose to \_\_\_\_\_. Nothing. I wrote all of it down. I wrote that. He fought for freedom. He didn't like how they were treating the Black people.

APPENDIX G

Transcript of the College Students

## College Students

Brenda ain't going no where yet, til we get squared away here. I don't have to ask Brenda. Brenda has a little say so. What are you doing with Mark's hat? I remember when I use to wear them kicks. My momma had me wearing 'em when I was in about the sixth grade. You know what I mean. She'd put taps on them suckers so we couldn't wear them damn things out. Me and my brother we was cutt'n 'em taking razor blades. Come here Kira. Kira, are you going to the \_\_\_\_\_? Here she is Miss Kappa of 1972-73. You with me John. You shoulda known that or else you be sitting out on the street. Go to Z, she's getting ready to go. You can, they can be some assistance. Right, Kira. Uh Hmm. Okay, baby. What time shall I be expecting you? Where you going Brenda? I'm sure it's a good movie on tonight? She'll watch that. You going to K.C. for what, when, how. To a class. Where, K.U. Med Center. You \_\_\_\_\_, how long you gon' be there. I oughta just drop you off. I got a little shopping to do. Really though, you oughta gone and let me drop you off there. Oh, we'll have plenty time to do it all this evening, right Duane. India. Gumby, you have another class today. Which one, with Duane. Well no. They let me back in Spanish. When it was time for midterms, they let me back in. George, give me a cigarette. Why do you follow me when you don't want me to touch you. Don't you follow. Shut up, I don't want to hear this. Mr. Universe. How'd you know my name honey? Hi Kira, Hi Kira. Well honey, what my name? Duane you wasn't at the meeting last night but it was a sharp committee. You're the chairman of the board. So whichever \_\_\_\_\_. You and Ron and DB are on the committee. Well, Ron and DB raised their hands to be on it so I just figured, he'd want to be on it. Me and

my little \_\_\_\_\_. This afternoon. You be back at five or you leaving K.C. at 5? Well, we start at 11:30. I don't give no favors now. That's right, you be leaving here with me. Come here darling. Yeah, I'm waiting on you now, you got a couple of checks. Injun, where's Kira? Hi Kira. She's not your sister. She's mine. Don't take Kira's donuts. What are you doing Duane? Brenda's going. All y'all can go. Duane I sure was looking for a Valentine Card but you hurt my feeling. I don't feel bad. You coulda got stuck between that table and that door and then ther would be no more India. You not tired are you? Uh, I been up here since about \_\_\_\_\_. I think she went but I think she'll be back sometime soon. What you got to eat? I have been looking for you girls all weekend. I figured y'all did go home. I called last night about 12:30 or 1:00 then I thought about the yell-in. Cause I don't know what John would eat if I \_\_\_\_\_. I guess if I get money. I got tore up off some Boones' Farm one day too. I know. What am I gonna talk to you about? We gonna wait til this weekend. I'm reading the paper.

APPENDIX H

Transcript of the Adult

## Kansas City Adult

We still don't \_\_\_\_\_ our dues. Ok, uh, the next thing that I think we can go on to is the building. Some of you doesn't have community centers. But you suppose to have one and you have to fill out forms and have to always send that form in at least a week a head of time. That way, if you gon' use the building, the housing association will know what hours. You also have some kind of form so I asked the people from the housing association to come and explain them. Ok, we go on with the other business. And uh, \_\_\_\_\_ . I want \_\_\_\_\_. We gon' to go together. I'll ask the secretary to do this. If you don't understand, please stop her as she goes through. All those in favor \_\_\_\_\_ usual sign of aye. I hope each president will take these bylaws and please give them to your members. First, of all elections of officers will be the third Wednesday of the month. This June. So we can start thinking about electing new officers to the council. I'll ask the president \_\_\_\_\_. You have your list of officers with you? Also I'd like to ask each president to bring a representative with you. They're suppose to be at this council meeting with you. At least three people from each area. I think we need these people. I think we really need to meet more than once a month to get ourselves together and take actions \_\_\_\_\_. But until we get ourselves together, we gon' have to. Some of you have asked me. So if you can't make it, send someone to the meeting. Ok. Does everyone have their recommendations \_\_\_\_\_ and what they want done with the dogs \_\_\_\_\_. I don't think so. I heard one copy going out to \_\_\_\_\_. Ok, where we gon' meet? Think about the recommendations that you gon' bring back along with that. Cause you gon' have to show them that the owner of the dog is gon' take care of them.

APPENDIX I

Transcript of the Washington, D.C. Group

Washington, D. C. Group <sup>1</sup>

I bet you a nickel. What. gotta see some'm. Bet you a nickel da' I'm lookin' sharper dan you. No you wasn'. No you had your play clothes on. See da'. I ain ha my play clothes on. You ha(d) Batman socks on too. I did no. You did so. You did so. Got some'm else to say. Wait a min' le' me tell you some'm. Greg Barber look better dan you. You come in dere wit your clothes hangin down all le way down to here. What. You come here with your shir' going a way down here an your shir' stickin on'. Who? You. I on' wear no shir's like da'. Do you see dis one? Way. Way. Way. I thought you say you don' wear no shir's that go a way down to here. I didn' say tha' Gregory. You di' so say a'. Dis ones s'pose to go dere (...). Don't do da' Shut up. I bet you I go more money than you. I got cash money in my pocket now. You ain't got no cash money (...). You wanna bet. You ain got nof'n' bu fifty cen' an' you gotta buy a note-book an' paper. So be quiet big mouf. One, two, tree, four, fi, six, seven eigh, nine, ten, eleven. Four. You got six cen'. You six cen'. Ain't dis cash money. No tha's not cash money. Tha's not'n even over a dollar. I bet you it is. This cash money. When you got fifty cen' dat's cash money. Da' ain' no cash money. Da's a half-a-dollar. It is boy. You on know what you talkin' abou'. What's cash money? It ain' not. A's why you so dumb in schoo' because you a'ways callin' fifty cent cash money. So why you ha' to borr' borrow my pencil because I let you use it now. I know ain' i' wasn' your pencil. I' was de teacher's pencil. So. I know an' you ha' jus' let somebody else use it. So you got teacher pencil in

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1. Loman, Bengt (1967), excerpts from Conversations in a Negro American Dialect, Washington, D.C., Center for Applied Linguistics.

your pocket. A' home. I ha not. I got it in my des. You do. Why don't you want to talk calmly about things you like to do. O man. I don' like Gregory to talk to me like da'. Why. He don't like me talkin' to him. Michael like to play wi do' girl frien's down nere wi his girl frien's down nere. Jo Ann Hayes. He like to play wi dem. He w' play King Kong wi' dem. Jo Ann Hayes an' nem not my girl frien'.

APPENDIX J

Comprehension Questionnaire of "To Be"

## QUESTIONNAIRE

## Usage of the Verb "To Be"

- In the sentence following, select the description (a, b, c, or d) which best indicates the intended meaning of the underlined word.
1. Most of the problems always be wrong. This sentence is:
    - a) describing an action or occurrence
    - b) describing an event taking place immediately
    - c) describing an action that is distributed periodically over time
    - d) describing an action that will take place sometime in the future
  2. Sometimes we just be joking. This sentence is:
    - a) describing an action that is distributed periodically over time
    - b) describing an event taking place immediately
    - c) describing an action that happens continually with no intermittence
    - d) describing an action or occurrence
  3. He be walking home everyday. This sentence is:
    - a) describing an action that will take place some time in the future
    - b) describing an action that happens continually with no intermittence
    - c) describing an action that is distributed periodically over time
    - d) describing an event taking place immediately
  4. She be at school tomorrow. This sentence is:
    - a) describing an event taking place immediately
    - b) describing an action or occurrence
    - c) describing an action that is distributed periodically over time
    - d) describing an action that will take place some time in the future
  5. They be here in a little while. This sentence is:
    - a) describing an action that will take place some time in the future
    - b) describing an action or occurrence
    - c) describing an event taking place immediately
    - d) describing an action that is distributed periodically over time
  6. We be going to town every Saturday. This sentence is:
    - a) describing an action or occurrence
    - b) describing an action that is distributed periodically over time
    - c) describing an event taking place immediately
    - d) describing an action that happens continually with no intermittence

7. They just be playing. This sentence is:
- a) describing an action that happens continually with no intermittence
  - b) describing an action that is distributed periodically over time
  - c) describing an event taking place immediately.
  - d) describing an action or occurrence
8. Sometimes she be angry at us. This sentence is:
- a) describing an event taking place immediately
  - b) describing an action that happens continually with no intermittence
  - c) describing an action that is distributed periodically over time
  - d) describing an action or occurrence

Note: Please indicate on this line your place of birth \_\_\_\_\_.

This thesis was prepared under the direction of the chairman of the candidate's supervisory committee and has been approved by all members of that committee. It was submitted to the Dean of the Graduate School and was approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

July, 1972

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Dean, Graduate School

Supervisory Committee: 

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Chairman 

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