Much research and writing has been carried out in recent years in an attempt to account for and eliminate, or at least minimize, the poor performance of many Black, lower-socioeconomic status, urban children in our schools. This annotated bibliography lists articles, books, and papers that explore the theoretical frameworks employed to describe the disadvantage or defect these children are suffering, the features of Black English, the effect of dialect interference on children's performance of language and reading tasks, the educational alternatives suggested for teaching reading to Black English-speaking children, and the value of currently available tests for use with Black English-speaking children. No single position is represented in the bibliography, and a deliberate effort was made to include works representative of a wide range of opinions and findings. Because of the point to which knowledge in the field has advanced, many entries may appear to be contradictory to other entries. There are still a great number of unresolved issues in the field of Black English and its relationship to reading. (Author/CLK)
Black English: Its Relationship to Reading

An Annotated bibliography compiled by
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1976

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
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Introduction

Much research and writing has been carried out in recent years in an attempt to account for and eliminate (or at least minimize) the poor performance of many Black, lower-socioeconomic status, urban children in our schools. This annotated bibliography lists articles, books, and papers that explore the theoretical frameworks employed to describe the disadvantage or defect these children are suffering, the features of Black English, the effect of dialect interference on children's performance of language and reading tasks, the educational alternatives suggested for teaching reading to Black English-speaking children, and the value of currently available tests for use with Black English-speaking children.

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Learning and the Disadvantaged Child

In order to account for the poor performance of many Black, lower-socioeconomic status children, researchers and educators have attempted to discover from what kind of disadvantage or defect these children are suffering. Several researchers have hypothesized that Black, lower-socioeconomic status children are linguistically inferior to children who speak standard English and have suggested that these children be taught to speak standard English at once and then to read standard English. In contrast, other researchers believe that many urban, Black children speak a structured dialect of English which is linguistically at variance with that which is used and taught in the schools. This difference is believed by some to create an "interference" in the ability of these children to learn to read the standard English taught in the schools.


   Reports on the language development of a group of Black Head Start children. Concludes that the language of these children is not delayed but is somewhat different than standard English.

2. Bereiter, C. Academic instruction and pre-school children.


   Discusses the deficit theory and proposes that children who come to school speaking a dialect other than standard English be taught standard English at once.

   Presents the deficit theory.


   Discusses restricted and elaborated codes.


   Discusses deficit theory.


   Reviews the deficit-deficiency controversy.


   Describes the difference theory.


   States that Black children are not inferior in language structures as compared with whites.


   Discusses the deficit theory.


    States that the variation observed in the standard English
proficiency of lower-socioeconomic Black children is primarily a
function of interference from their normal language patterns, rather
than a function of differences in academic ability.


States that the more divergence there is between the dialect
of the learner and the dialect of learning, the more difficult will
be the task of learning to read.

12. Goodman, K. S., & Buck, C. Dialect barriers to reading comprehension

States the opinion that Goodman's (1965) hypothesis (see #11) is untrue,
at least as it applies to the range of dialects spoken by white and
Black urban Americans. States that the solution to reading problems
of divergent speakers lies in changing the attitudes of teachers and
writers of instructional programs toward the language of the learners.

13. Hall, W. S., & Freedley, R. O. A developmental investigation of
standard and nonstandard English among black and white children.

Reports that the rate of improvement on language tasks was
the same for Blacks and whites.

14. Houston, S. H. A re-examination of some assumptions about the
language of the disadvantaged child. Child Development, 1970, 41,
947-963.

States that modern linguistic and psycholinguistic knowledge
casts serious doubts on the deficit theory.

   Reviews the deficit-difference controversy and describes approaches suggested for working with linguistically different children.


   Discusses the difference theory.


   Discusses the difference theory.
Features of Black English

Much research has focused on the features of Black English. It is generally accepted that Black English is a well-ordered, highly structured language system which is different from, but not inferior than, standard English in numerous ways. A speaker of Black English is a person who uses Black English predominantly in his speech. It is known that most, by no means all, Black, lower-class children speak Black English. Furthermore, there is evidence for inter- and intra-speaker variability. Blacks who do speak Black English do not all produce the same number of Black English forms in their speech. One person may produce more standard English forms in his speech than another Black of approximately the same socioeconomic and residential status. Such variation is due, in part, to the age and the sex of the individuals. There is also much reported intra-speaker variability in the forms produced by Black English speakers. Intra-speaker variability is dependent on the social situation the speaker perceives himself to be in.


Points out it would be asking a great deal to expect lower class blacks to give up their adaptable expressive system that has served them so well.


States that the very fact that the differences between standard English and Black English are relatively discrete and subtle may make it very difficult
for the nonstandard speaker to tell which patterns go with which dialect.


Lists features of Black English.


States that Black English has complex grammatical rules which do not always conform to the rules of standard English.


States the need to recognize Black English as a dialect of English.


Concludes that their kindergarten and first grade subjects are aurally bidialectal.


Reports a survey administered to white and Black teachers of elementary school children in Alabama. Results indicate that dialect speaking children were viewed as less intelligent by 50% of white and 25% of Black teachers.


Summarizes the major facts known about nonstandard English.

States that regardless of the origin of Black English features, the fact remains that there are two linguistic systems in conflict, not a right one and a wrong one.


Points out seven fallacies they see in studies of Black children's language.


Discusses inter- and intra-speaker variation.


Reports that the more formal the situation the Black English speaker perceives he is in, the more standard English forms he will be likely to produce.


Describes the history and usage of Black English in detail.

States that there is a great deal of unity in Black speech in New York, Detroit, and Washington, D. C.


States that Negro dialect is a cohesive linguistic system which is substantially different from standard English. It is spoken by some, though not all Blacks, particularly those of the lower socioeconomic classes.


States that the criterion for selecting one language or dialect for use in a given situation is appropriateness.


Reports that Black lower-class subjects produced significantly more nonstandard English syntactical forms when tested by a Black examiner than when tested by a white examiner or Black peers. The Black examiner and Black peers elicited significantly more words from these subjects than the white examiner.

States that Black, lower-socioeconomic children acquire receptive control over dialects they hear spoken in the community. This gives them a linguistic advantage over their standard English-speaking peers who may never understand any dialect other than their own.


Reports that young Black children command many more standard forms than has usually been acknowledged.


States that the approach to the study of Black English usage is inadequate because it ignores the socioeconomic status aspects of dialects. Teachers must seek understanding of the various backgrounds and value systems that form the contexts of individual communication situations.


States that the frequency of standard English features increases when children are in the school setting and when they are being interviewed by an authority figure.

States that Black English is a variant of standard English and should not be discouraged in the classroom.


Reports that Black third grade children in controlled conditions comprehended and produced many standard structures not produced in spontaneous expression.


States that nonstandard dialect represents an economically, not a racially, based problem.


States that the frequency of standard English features increases when the child is role-playing doctor or teacher.


States that most deletions of plural markers occurred following consonants.


Describes New York City speech.

States that non-standard English is a highly structured system. There is no reason to believe that any nonstandard vernacular is in itself an obstacle to learning. The chief problem is ignorance of language on the part of all concerned.


Discusses the features of Black English.


States there aren't any bidialectal speakers. Suggests that once a speaker gains good control of a standard language, he loses control of the non-standard vernacular.


States that the more formal the situation the Black English speaker feels he is in, the more standard English forms he will be likely to produce.


Suggests that we need separate spelling-to-sound mappings of regional and nonstandard dialects.

Suggests that Black lower-class children may be aurally bidialectal.


Suggests that there is an inverse relationship between age and percentage of nonstandard features used.


States that Negro nonstandard English is rule-governed.


States that Negro nonstandard English and standard English differ in their deep structures.


States that teachers must know enough about Black English to make illuminating contrasts with standard English.


States that racial differences in language functioning are greater when subjects are tested by a Black examiner than when tested by a white examiner.

States that vocabulary and phonology are not matters of skin pigmentation, but of the social contacts and economic opportunities of the individual.


Reports that lower-class children are capable of comprehending two dialects.


Presents a detailed description of the features of Black English.


Suggests that the school experience tends to reduce the amount of nonstandard dialect interference.


The difference in performance on auditory discrimination tasks between disadvantaged and nondisadvantaged groups tends to disappear as children progress through school. With increased contact with standard English the child learns just what categorizations he is
supposed to be making.


Provides evidence that features of nonstandard dialect are negatively evaluated by standard speakers.


Reports that the frequency at which Black English forms are used decreases as age increases.


Reports that Blacks attending an integrated school did better on standard English sentences and poorer on nonstandard English sentences than Blacks attending a segregated school.


States that urban children who speak low-status dialects develop an ability to understand dialects of others in their community. This
means that what they find in print is not as hard to deal with for them as was once thought.


States that a person's linguistic competence is largely determined by his region of origin, socioeconomic status, ethnic identity, sex, age, and education. A person's performance within his competence will vary with his role as speaker, his relationship to the person spoken to, the topic, and the situation in which the discourse takes place.


States that the attitudes of teachers toward Black English and of dialect speakers toward their teachers' language have affected the social relationships in such a way as to make the education of many children almost impossible.


States that because a child fails to use a certain set of standard English constructions, he does not necessarily fail to understand them.


States that the child who is regularly exposed to two dialects may develop bidialectal competence but produce (speak) only one of
the two dialects.


   States that there are variations in the individual use of non-standard verb usage among Black children.


   Reports that the frequency of standard English features increases when the interviewer uses only standard English rather than variable speech.


   Reports no evidence to support the notion that Black lower-class children are aurally bidialectal.


   States that the inventory of similarities between standard English and Black English is far greater than the inventory of differences.


   States that most of the differences between Black speech and white
speech are on a surface rather than an underlying level of language orientation. The inventory of differences is far smaller than the inventory of similarities.


Reports that teachers graded Black students' reports lower than white students' reports.
Language and reading tasks and dialect interference

A vast number of studies have been conducted to determine whether there is evidence of dialect interference when Black children perform a variety of language and reading tasks -- imitation, listening comprehension, oral reading, oral reading comprehension, silent reading comprehension. In general, results have been contradictory, probably due, in part, to differences in subjects tested (age, socioeconomic status, race), and differences in testing procedures (whether subjects were screened to determine their primary dialect, the dialect(s) the tasks are presented in, and the specific features of Black English studied). Black English-speaking children often translate parts of what they read aloud into their own dialect. The important question is does dialect interference, which appears to operate when Black English-speaking children orally read standard English, negatively affect these children's comprehension of the materials they read in standard English.


Reports that in trying to repeat a sentence that is longer than his attention span, the child will reconstruct the auditory message in his own language, as he remembers it, and respond accordingly.


Reports evidence of dialect interference when Black children read standard English sentences aloud.

Examines the extent to which inner city children were able to accurately repeat sentences presented to them in standard English. Results indicate that children transformed portions of the sentences into Black English.


Reports results of a study with Black adolescents in which no evidence of dialect interference was found on listening comprehension tasks.


Examines the performance of Black and white children in sentence repetition tasks in standard English and nonstandard English. The results indicate that Black children did better on the nonstandard sentences and white children did better on the standard sentences.


Suggests that the difficulty which can arise in communication might be most crucial when what is said by a dialect speaker can be confused with another word by a speaker of standard English or vice versa.


Reports a significant relationship between the number of non-standard features in students' spoken language and their level of reading ability.


Reports that already established language patterns could interfere with visual attention to the act of oral reading.


States that we can't allow political problems and matters of race prejudice to stand in the way of serious research.

States that Black English-speaking children learn to comprehend standard English because of wide exposure via radio, television, and school instruction.


States that Black English-speaking children gain considerable competence in understanding standard English before beginning school through television and radio. Speakers who start out speaking nonstandard English will learn it, and those who do not, will not, almost independently of what their teachers do.


Questions whether the demonstrated ability of Black children to correctly translate standard English into Black English shows that the Black children are not bidialectal (as suggested by Baratz (1969) (see #79).


Reports that his tenth grade, Black disadvantaged subjects
scored significantly higher on verbal recall, fluency and flexibly items on a listening comprehension task when the task was presented in Black English than when the task was presented in standard English. There were no significant differences on factual comprehension.


Reports no significant relationship between dialect of user and dialect of sentence. Only considers the third person, present tense verb marker.


Reports that groups of Black and white children, matched for social class and nonverbal intelligence, performed equally well on standard English free-recall situation task, but that the white children performed significantly more poorly than the Black children on the Black English task.


Criticizes Rystrom's (1970) (see #118) research.

91. Hall, V. C., & Turner, R. R. Comparison of imitation and comprehension scores between two lower-class groups and the effects of
two warm-up conditions on imitation of the same groups. Child Development, 1971, 42, 1735-1750.

Compares the imitation and comprehension performance of lower-class white and lower-class Black kindergarten children. Results indicate no significant differences between the two groups on either task.


Reports evidence of interference when Black English-speaking child perform standard English reading comprehension tasks.


Reports no support for interference of Black dialect on standard English listening comprehension tasks.

Reports that subjects scored higher on reading tasks presented in Black English standard orthography than on equivalent tasks presented in standard English. Subjects did most poorly on reading tasks presented in Black English nonstandard orthography.


Reviews the current state of knowledge and concludes that the relationship between the language characteristics of Black children and reading performance remains unclear.


Examines the effect of dialect of presentation on silent reading comprehension of Black and white students. Results indicate that dialect of presentation had no significant effect on test scores.


Reports that subjects had difficulty translating from standard English to nonstandard English and vice versa.


States that speakers of nonstandard dialects often translate
a reading passage into their own dialect during oral reading. This dialect shift does not affect comprehension.


Reports that dialect barriers to comprehension do exist. The type and dialect of dialect interference depend upon the structural similarities of the dialects in contact and the individual's adeptness in bidialectal comprehension.


Suggests that reading comprehension of standard English materials could be more difficult for speakers of nonstandard English than for speakers of standard English.

Reports evidence that Black English-speaking individuals translate portions of standard English sentences they are asked to imitate into Black English.


Analyzes the vocabulary and structure of three preprimers and compares it to the language of Black, inner-city children. Finds that the two do not match.


Reports no support for the assumption that failure in reading of many Black children is primarily due to the structural differences between standard English and Black English.


Reports that Black inner-city children scored more poorly than white middle-class children on standard English tests of morphological and syntactic reflections.

Reports a significant relationship between students' ability to distinguish problem phonemic-graphemic correspondences in silent reading and their ability to do so in oral reading.


Reports that performance on pronunciation tasks of standard English forms presented in isolation appears to have little relationship to the comprehension of these forms.


Reports no evidence of dialect interference among Black children on silent reading comprehension tasks presented in both standard English and Black English.

Reports on a study which compared the comprehension and imitation abilities of lower-income Black and middle-income white children. Results indicate that the lower-income Black children repeated sentences with a significantly greater number of errors than the middle-income white children even when results were adjusted to account for dialect differences. Similar results are reported for comprehension.


Reports that teachers' speech is equally comprehensible to Black and white young children.


Reports differences in performance on listening and reading comprehension tasks presented in standard English between dialect speakers and standard English speakers.

Reports that the ability to discriminate between standard and nonstandard Black English correlates significantly with reading achievement.


Reports an imbalance in favor of nonstandard English and correlates negatively with reading achievement.


Reports that dialect of presentation made no difference in responses to literal questions and little difference in responses to inferential questions.


Reports no significant difference between Black English-speaking and standard English-speaking third graders on a standard English oral and silent reading comprehension task.

115. Rosen, C. L., & Ames, W. S. Influence of nonstandard dialect on the oral reading behavior of fourth grade Black children under

Reports evidence of dialect interference when Black children perform oral reading task.


Reports on a study which attempted to train first graders in standard English forms. Those children who received the training did not score higher in reading achievement than those children who did not receive standard English training.


Presents the Rystrom Dialect Test which is a sentence repetition task with standard English and nonstandard English forms.


Reports no support for the view that direct training of nonstandard speakers in standard English would increase the reading achievement scores of children who speak nonstandard English.

Discusses the effect of dialect on beginning reading experience - how phonology, grammar, and orthography might cause serious interference to the acquisition of reading skills.


States that problems in studying Negro/white speech differences stem from inadequacies in research design and from our own political and social insensitivities.


Reports that Black second, third, and fourth grade children did not perform better on word recognition of words which are closer to Black dialect pronunciation (e.g., deaf) than words that are further away from Black dialect pronunciation (e.g., death).


Reports that Black English-speaking second and third graders read standard English talking animal stories as well as they read the Black English versions of these stories.

123. Stern, C., & Gupta, W. Echoic responding of disadvantaged preschool children as a function of type of speech modeled. *Journal*
Reports that white lower-SES children performed better than Black lower-SES children on both forms of the task (standard and nonstandard English).


Reports that Black second graders could comprehend morphemes which did not seem to occur in their spontaneous speech.
Educational alternatives for teaching reading to Black English-speaking children

Many linguists and educators have suggested a variety of educational alternatives for minimizing the interference of Black English on beginning reading instruction. These alternatives include: dialect-based readers and transition materials to introduce gradually standard English, neutralization of dialect differences, dialect rendering of extant materials, language experience activities, foreign language teaching techniques or some adaptation thereof, teaching standard English before reading instruction is begun, teaching standard English at an age when there is an increasing awareness of the social consequences of nonstandard speech features, and not teaching standard English at all.

   Discusses the similarities and differences between teaching a second language and teaching a second dialect. States that the differences are greater than the similarities.

   States that teachers must understand child's behavior and be willing to help the child.

127. Bailey, B. L. Some arguments against the use of dialect readers in initial reading. The Florida FL Reporter, 1970, 8, 8, 47.
Discusses the advantages of teaching children to read in the vernacular, and the use of transitional readers once the children are confident in reading.


Suggests the use of dialect-based readers and transition texts in teaching beginning reading to Black inner-city children.


States that standard English should be taught to Black children by someone who is competent to teach it (regardless of the race of the teacher).


Contends that beginning reading materials should be presented in the child's language system.


Suggests initial reading instruction in child's dialect and later, with the aid of transition texts which teach the child the differences between this dialect and standard English, shift to
standard English texts.


States that when the educational problem becomes desperate enough, dialect readers will become acceptable.


States that our educational system must build on the education that has gone on before the child enters the formal school setting.


Texts written in approximation of Black speech and parallel versions in standard English.


Answers the question negatively.

Suggests that early vocabulary words should be drawn from the word stock common to all dialects of English (or from the child's dialect).


States that difficulties faced by a nonstandard speaker in becoming literate lie less in the peculiar nature of his native dialect than in the attitude of his teachers toward that dialect.


States that second-language teaching methods are applicable to second-dialect teaching, but some adaptation is necessary.


States that nonstandard speech has a system and discovering that system is the key to effectiveness in teaching minority learners. Junior high school age may be soon enough to teach formal standard English.


States that Black parents are often opposed to any use of
nonstandard speech patterns in schools.


Suggests the use of the language experience approach in initial reading instruction.


States that to successfully teach a second dialect, the teacher must (1) establish rapport with the students, (2) respect of richness of the language and culture of the students, and (3) take the attitude that there is no dichotomy "right or wrong" to parallel that of "standard-nonstandard."


States that dialect readers must be made if Black children are to be given a maximum opportunity to learn to read.

Reports that language experience activities at kindergarten level improves Black children's linguistic competence, and, in turn, their productive control over standard English.


States that Black English-speaking children should not be taught to read in their own dialect.


States that aural understanding must precede oral practice and oral practice must precede reading and writing practice.


Dialect-based texts.

149. Dillard, J. L. How to tell the bandits from the good guys or, what dialect to teach? The *Florida FL Reporter*, 1969, 7, 84-85; 162.

States we need to determine which dialects are most useful for educational and other purposes.


States that teachers must accept and understand their children's dialect.

States that special materials are not called for in the case of the Black English-speaking child. Where emphasis is upon meaning rather than upon the ability to identify individual words, the Black English-speaking child makes his own substitutions or omissions when there is a conflict between his dialect and that of the printed page.


States that children can learn to read very easily in their dominant language and should.


States that we should teach standard English because it is the language of educated English speakers, not because it is the language of the rich and powerful.

Concludes that conventional English orthography is as adequate for Black English speakers as it is for standard English speakers.


Discusses the need to critically examine foreign language methodology before accepting it as an appropriate means of teaching standard English to dialect speakers.


Suggests beginning reading instruction using the dialectal patterns of Black English-speaking children through use of language experience activities.


Questions the advisability of beginning readers written in Black English.

158. Foster, H. L. Ribbin', jivin', and playin' the dozens: The

States three reasons why we have not been able to educate more urban Black children: (1) institutionalized white racism, (2) fear people have of exhibiting unfamiliar and different life styles, and (3) rigid adherence to wrong set of rules in teaching inner-city children.


Describes a program which attempted to teach primary school children the difference between everyday talk and school talk.


Discusses the relative effectiveness of two major approaches to teaching reading to disadvantaged urban youth.


States that it is the responsibility of the schools to recognize and accept a variety of English dialects.

States that bi-dialectism is normal and accepted in many countries.


Suggests teachers should learn Black English, the Black family and community structure, the effects of poverty, and peer group relations and learning styles of ghetto children.


Suggests using the language experience approach in teaching beginning reading to Black English-speaking children.


States that learning another dialect of English is, in some ways, more difficult than learning another language. States that second language techniques are effective in teaching a second dialect.

Suggests that standard English should not be taught to Black English-speaking children until adolescence because motivation is much greater then.


Argues for the use of dialect-based beginning reading materials.


Answers the question in the affirmative.


States little support for the notion that young children will suffer less of a handicap in their early school years if they are initially taught in a familiar dialect.


States that an oral language program in any school population should have as its goal the growth and development of the speech ability of the child in his native dialect.

States that oral language programs which attempt to replace nonstandard forms with socially preferred forms do not develop the child's ability to use language beyond what he is already capable of doing. The efficiency quotient of such programs is extremely low.


States that the ability to perceive the social significance of dialect differences precedes the acquisition of consistent prestige styles of standard English.


States that teachers must make the fundamental distinction between a mistake in reading and a difference in pronunciation.


Suggests that the major causes of reading failure of Black, inner-city children are political and cultural conflicts in the
classroom. Dialect differences are important because they are symbols of these conflicts.


Suggests that the conflict between Black adolescents' street culture and school culture is the major factor in the reading failure of these adolescents.


Supports the notion that beginning reading materials should be adapted to the linguistic patterns of nonstandard dialect. Transition materials should be used to gradually introduce standard English.


Points out the problems of doing research on dialect readers because of hostile attitudes encountered among teachers, administrators, and parents.

178. Lefevre, C. A. The nature and history of Black English with special
attention to the teaching of reading. Unpublished manuscript, Temple University, 1974.

States that we need to critically examine the methods of teaching reading used in the schools.


Suggests that teachers and administrators are ill prepared for the tasks they face.


Suggests that pattern practice for dialect speakers must take a form quite different from that customarily used in teaching English to speakers of other languages.


States that it is unjust and irrational to ask a child to learn to read in any language or dialect but his native one.

182. Malmstrom, J. "Love me or leave me but don't waste the time": Dialects in today's schools. The English Record, 1971, 21, 102-108.

Discusses the use of foreign language teaching methods.


Reports that parents universally express the desire that their children speak "good" (=standard) English. The benefits of mastery of "good" English are frequently expressed in terms of employment possibilities and upward mobility.


Discusses a technique to train teachers to recognize and effectively deal with dialect/language differences in minority group children.


Suggests teaching standard English before reading and writing are introduced.

Reviews methods for teaching reading to linguistically different learners.

187. Schneider, M. Use dialect readers? The middle class Black establishment will damn you if you do. The Black children will damn you if you don't. *The Florida FL Reporter*, 1971, 9, 45-46; 56.

Describes a remedial reading program for Black inner-city children. Feedback from teachers and principals was overwhelmingly positive. However, pressure from some community organizations and individuals led to the discontinuation of the program in the schools where it had been implemented.


Suggests the use of dialect-based readers for beginning reading instruction.


Urges a closer relationship of written materials to the various kinds of oral language used by children, on the assumption that a mismatch will prolong or perhaps even prevent the acquisition of reading.

Reviews the suggested alternatives to teaching reading to Black inner-city children.


States that interference problem could be dealt with most satisfactorily by use of foreign-language teaching methods.


Suggests the use of the teaching English as a second language approach to teach standard English to nonstandard speakers.


Discusses the need to select a suitable orthography for writing nonstandard English.

Presents argument in favor of the empirical testing of dialect-based beginning reading materials.


States that the language habits of young children can be altered without the need to denigrate the native dialect by attempting to replace it (consequently lessening the degree of interference).


States that although there is not complete agreement on when standard English should be introduced in the educational system, there is agreement that it should be taught.


States that if written materials differ to any great extent from children's language, as in the case of Black English-speaking children, problems can occur in decoding and comprehension.

Suggests the use of dialect rendering of extant reading materials until dialect-based readers are available for beginning reading instruction.


Urges educators to develop and use dialect-based readers for use in beginning reading instruction of Black English-speaking children.
Tests and Black English-speaking children

Numerous researchers have questioned whether many of our commonly used tests and testing procedures are appropriate for use with Black English-speaking children. The finding that numerous tests are culturally and/or linguistically biased has caused researchers and educators to question whether these tests should be used at all with Black English-speaking children. These tests, which have been normed on standard English, seem to overidentify speakers of Black English. In addition, deficits of Black English-speaking children are likely to go undetected because there are only a few assessment devices available that serve as valid measures of Black English-speaking children's functioning.


States that some tests are culturally and linguistically biased.


States that the use of available tests with dialect speaking children may result in gross errors in educational placement of these children.


States the need to modify standardized instruments with consideration of word usage in various culturally different groups.


Discusses the inadequacy of language tests for minority groups.


Reports that Black, white, and Puerto Rican children did best on the form of the discrimination task written in their primary language.


Reports that economically disadvantaged children performed significantly more poorly on the Wepman Test of Auditory Discrimination than the economically nondisadvantaged group.


Reports no significant difference between Black and white children in auditory discrimination on word pairs which could be
commonly differentiated in the speech of all subjects.


   Presents a test developed to assess auditory comprehension and verbal production of syntactic and morphological features of standard and Black English.


   Questions the reliability of verbal intelligence tests as true measures of intelligence of Black children.


   Reports that subjects scored significantly better on a standard English oral reading test when errors attributable to dialect were not counted as errors.


   Suggests that certain tests contain dialect-prejudiced items.
211. Jorgensen, C. C. IQ tests and their educational supporters. 
   Questions the reliability and validity for IQ measures for the culturally different.

   Questions the use of the PPVT for testing Black children's receptive vocabulary.

   Cites examples of how ignorance on the part of examiners can lead to depressed test performance.

   Reports a study which compared the performance of lower-class, Black, pre-school children on the Stanford-Binet administered in standard English and Black English and finds no significant differences in IQ scores.

Reports comparable results to 1971 study (see #214).


Reports that many tests currently in use are linguistically and culturally biased.

217. Williams, R. L. The silent mugging of the Black community. Psychology Today, 1974, 7 (12), 32; 34; 37; 38; 41; 101.

Questions the reliability and validity of IQ measures for culturally different groups.