**Day 4: Lumbee English, African American English, and Language Change**

**Purpose:**
Students will learn about the history of a different group of Native Americans in North Carolina, the Lumbee. Next, students will examine the history and features of African American English — one of the most misunderstood and stereotyped dialects of English. Students will also learn about the natural processes that cause languages and dialects to change over time.

**Overview:**
African American English is often negatively characterized as lazy or slang. In fact, it has a history that is as long as any variety of American English and like all dialects has a set of systematic rules that govern usage. In this sense, it is equivalent to all dialects of English, despite the fact that many people view it unfavorably. In this unit, students will learn about how African American English originated and how it has changed over time. Students will also examine the process of language change in African American English and in the urban centers of North Carolina.

**Resources**
“From the Brickhouse to the Swamp (Lumbee Vernacular English),” by Walt Wolfram. From *American Voices: How Dialects Differ from Coast to Coast*
This article, written for non-linguists, explores the possible histories of the Lumbee Indians and how they came to speak a distinctive dialect of English. It also includes a Lumbee vocabulary Quiz. It can be found in Appendix H

Information on the research that NC State University faculty and students have done on the Lumbee Indians of North Carolina can be found here: [http://ncsu.edu/linguistics/code/Research%20Sites/robeson.htm](http://ncsu.edu/linguistics/code/Research%20Sites/robeson.htm)

“Bridging the Great Divide (African American English),” by John Baugh. From *American Voices: How Dialects Differ from Coast to Coast.*
This article, written for non-linguists, examines the history of African Americans in the U.S. beginning with the slave trade. It also examines the development of the dialect that many African Americans speak and the role it plays in society. Additionally, it includes a summary of African American English features with examples. It can be found in Appendix I

“When Linguistic Worlds Collide (African American English),” by Walt Wolfram and Ben Torbert. From *American Voices: How Dialects Differ from Coast to Coast.*
This article, written for non-linguists, examines some of the competing hypotheses over the history and development of African American English. It is found in Appendix J

An easily accessible pamphlet on Ebonics, put out by the Linguistics Society of America, can be found in Appendix K

“Dialect Dilemma,” by Kendra Hamilton describes the debate surrounding assigning value judgments to different dialects, and is included in Appendix L

Information on the research that NC State University faculty and students have done in different African American communities around North Carolina can be found here:


Beach Bottom (Western NC): [http://ncsu.edu/linguistics/code/Research%20Sites/beechbottom.htm](http://ncsu.edu/linguistics/code/Research%20Sites/beechbottom.htm)

**Key ideas:**
1. Different Native American groups have had vastly different experiences and interactions with Europeans, some of these differences can be illustrated through the language situations of the groups
2. African American English is not substandard English
3. African American English, like all dialects, is rule-governed and systematic
4. African American English has been shaped by historical and social factors, as are all dialects
5. All language varieties are constantly in a state of change
Worksheet 13: Dialects of North Carolina: Lumbee English

Notes:

1. The Lumbee are the largest Native American group east of the Mississippi River, with about ____________ members.

2. There are some people who believe that the Lumbee first encountered English at the site of the _________, where they may have lived prior to moving inland to what is now Robeson County, NC.

3. Do the Lumbee have a tribal language? Why or why not?

Video Exercise 8: Lumbee English

You will see a video about the Lumbee Indians who live in Southeastern North Carolina. As you watch this clip, think about responses to the following questions.

1. What vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar similarities are there between the Outer Banks Brogue, Appalachian English, and Lumbee English?

2. What vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar differences are there between the Outer Banks Brogue, Appalachian English, and Lumbee English?

3. In what ways is the Lumbee community similar to or different from the Ocracoke and/or Appalachian communities?

4. How is the Lumbee Community similar to or different from the Cherokee Community?

5. Why have the Cherokee been able to preserve their native language whereas the Lumbee have lost their native language?

6. How does the role of language differ between the Lumbee and the Cherokee communities?
Dialects of North Carolina: Lumbee English

Worksheet 13: Notes on Lumbee History, Culture, and Language

A note-taking outline on the information below, plus comprehension questions for students can be found on page 30 of the Student Workbook.

Introduction and History

Another dialect that has some similarities to the Outer Banks is the dialect spoken by members of the Lumbee Native American group. (1) The Lumbee are the largest Native American group east of the Mississippi River, with about 55,000 members on the tribal rolls. While we are not sure how the Lumbee Nation/Tribal developed originally, one theory is that they were the (2) Native Americans encountered by the very first British Settlers in America at the Lost Colony, on Roanoke Island, in 1584.

It is possible that the Lumbee tribe lived on the Outer Banks and along the North Carolina coast until they moved further inland to what is now Robeson County, NC. As more and more European settlers came to the North Carolina coast, it is possible that the (3) Lumbee abandoned their native language and learned the dialects of English spoken by these settlers, which continue to be spoken in areas like Ocracoke due to its history of isolation. The Lumbee may have taken these dialects inland with them, and preserved these speech patterns because they have been a close community and have been segregated from outsiders at various points in their history. It is also possible that early English speakers made their way inland to the region where the Lumbee live today in Robeson County, North Carolina. These factors along with group pride have led to the creation of a unique dialect that sets Lumbee English apart from other dialects. A comparison of some pronunciation and grammatical features found in Lumbee, Outer Banks English, and Appalachian English can be seen on page 24 of the Teacher’s Manual, and in Appendix P for use as overheads.

Language

Vocabulary

The vocabulary of the Lumbee has a number of words that have been preserved from older forms of English to combine with new items. Some of these new items were also heard along the Outer Banks. The word *mommuck* can be heard in both Lumbee and along the Outer Banks, but in Lumbee, it means ‘to mess up’ or ‘make untidy’ whereas on the Outer Banks, the terms means ‘to harass’. The word *roten or token* is found in both dialects, and means ‘an omen or a ghost’. Lumbee also shares some words with Appalachian English that are not heard on the Outer Banks, including the word *gaum*, which means ‘a mess’ or ‘clogged’. Other words are unique to Lumbee including *ellick*, which is ‘coffee with sugar’ and *juvember*, which is ‘a slingshot’. Like Ocracokers, who call “true” islanders *O’Cockers*, the Lumbee have a word to refer to those people who are a part of the community. The term *Lum* means ‘someone with Lumbee blood who participates in the tribal traditions’. Also, just as Ocracokers have terms for outsiders (*tourn or dingbatter*, which was taken from the sitcom *All in the Family*), Lumbees use the term *Lum* to refer to community members and to differentiate between *Brickhouse Indians* (those who are especially well off) and *Swamp Indians* (someone who is from a local neighborhood). Dialects that are associated strongly with a community typically have special terms to refer to insiders and outsiders as well as places in the immediate location. These terms are often a marker of identity for community members. More information about Lumbee English can be found in the article in Appendix H.
Worksheet 13: Dialects of North Carolina: Lumbee English

Notes:

1. The Lumbee are the largest Native American group east of the Mississippi River, with about __________ members.

2. There are some people who believe that the Lumbee first encountered English at the site of the __________, where they may have lived prior to moving inland to what is now Robeson County, NC.

3. Do the Lumbee have a tribal language? Why or why not?

Video Exercise 8: Lumbee English

You will see a video about the Lumbee Indians who live in Southeastern North Carolina. As you watch this clip, think about responses to the following questions.

1. What vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar similarities are there between the Outer Banks Brogue, Appalachian English, and Lumbee English?

2. What vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar differences are there between the Outer Banks Brogue, Appalachian English, and Lumbee English?

3. In what ways is the Lumbee community similar to or different from the Ocracoke and/or Appalachian communities?

4. How is the Lumbee Community similar to or different from the Cherokee Community?

5. Why have the Cherokee been able to preserve their native language whereas the Lumbee have lost their native language?

6. How does the role of language differ between the Lumbee and the Cherokee communities?
Video Exercise 8: Lumbee English
(Approximate time: 25 minutes)

You will see a video about the Lumbee Indians who live in southeastern North Carolina (Chapter 26 of the Resource DVD, time = 11:42). As students watch this vignette, have them think about responses to the following questions. Have students either write answers to the questions on page 30 of their Student Workbooks and/or discuss them as a class.

1. What vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar similarities are there between the Outer Banks Brogue, Appalachian English, and Lumbee English?

   Mommuck and toten/token are shared between Lumbee and the Outer Banks, as is the pronunciation of high tide as “hoi toid.” Both dialects have weren’t regularization as well. Appalachian English has some weren’t regularization as well. All three dialects have a-prefixing, double negatives, and the pronunciation of word-final, unstressed -ow as “er” as in “yeller” for yellow. This is the same pattern that causes tobacco to be pronounced in the video as “baccer.” Though it isn’t mentioned in the movie, Lumbee and Appalachian English share the term gaum. All three dialects have the pin/pen merger to some extent.

2. What vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar differences there between the Outer Banks Brogue, Appalachian English, and Lumbee English?

   Lumbee words not found in these other dialects include juvember, ellick, and Lum (meaning, a slingshot, coffee with sugar, and a real member of the Lumbee tribe). They also use bes where other dialects would use is, am, or are. One other grammatical difference between Lumbee and these other dialects is that Lumbees sometimes use a conjugated form of be instead of have in perfective sentences (when have is an auxiliary or helping verb) as in the sentences, “I’m forgot” and “I’m been to the store.” There are few unique pronunciations in Lumbee though the vowels in Lumbee English tend to be generally Southern with some influence from the Outer Banks Region (e.g., hoi toid).

3. In what ways is the Lumbee community similar to or different from the Ocracoke and/or Appalachian communities?

   Similar: Speakers in all three communities have their identities closely tied to local places and groups. All have words for community insiders and outsiders and view language as important to the history of culture of the group and area.

   Different: The Lumbee are not geographically isolated the ways speakers in the mountains and Outer Banks are. In fact, this lack of isolation may be tied to the loss of their indigenous language. This has also led to more marriages between Lumbees and non-Lumbees whereas marriages between, for example, an Ococker and a non-Ococker, were much rarer until the past fifty years.

4. How is the Lumbee Community similar to or different from the Cherokee Community?

   Similar: Both groups have strong senses of Native American identity and promote the teaching of that culture to children.

   Different: The Lumbee have a distinctive dialect as opposed to a native language. Further, they are not geographically isolated as the Cherokee were in the mountains. They also have no reservation lands.

5. Why have the Cherokee been able to preserve their native language whereas the Lumbee have lost their native language?

   The Lumbee encountered Europeans as early as the 16th century whereas the Cherokee didn’t encounter Europeans until the late 17th century. Further, the mountains made it easier for the Cherokee to avoid intense language contact.

6. How does the role of language differ between the Lumbee and the Cherokee communities?

   While language serves as an identifier of both groups, the Cherokee’s native language has helped the tribe gain recognition. Now, that language is also becoming an economic commodity for some Cherokee.
Worksheet 14: Lumbee Vocabulary Quiz

To complete this quiz, you will have to remember the words you heard in the video clip and use logic and the contextual clues to match up the sentences and the words. As an example, you can assume that a “brickhouse Indian” refers to a person, and then look for the sentence that requires a person in the blank to make sense.

Word Bank

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>brickhouse Indian</th>
<th>ellick</th>
<th>gaum</th>
<th>jubious</th>
<th>juvember</th>
<th>Lum</th>
<th>mommuck</th>
<th>on the swamp</th>
<th>sorry in the world</th>
<th>toten</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1. I have a hard time waking up in the morning without a cup of _____________.
2. I just washed those towels, don't _______________ them!
3. We got in trouble for shooting rocks at cars with a _________________.
4. I was feeling _________________ I was so sick.
5. I was _________________ so I thought I'd stop by.
6. You have to be a part of this community to be a _________________.
7. He was so scared all day after seeing a _________________ in the morning.
8. That _________________ just went on another vacation to Hawaii!
9. The faucet was so _________________ up that hardly any water came out.
10. I was really _________________ last night when we lost power for a few hours.
Worksheet 14: Lumbee Vocabulary Quiz

To complete this quiz, found on page 31 of the Student Workbook, students will have to remember the words they heard in the video vignette and use their reasoning and context clues to match up the sentences and the words. As an example, students can assume that a “brickhouse Indian” refers to a person, and then look for the sentence that requires a person in the blank to make sense, in this case, sentence number eight.

Word Bank

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>brickhouse Indian</th>
<th>ellick</th>
<th>gaum</th>
<th>jubious</th>
<th>juvember</th>
<th>toten</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lum</td>
<td>mommuck</td>
<td>on the swamp</td>
<td>sorry in the world</td>
<td>toten</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. I have a hard time waking up in the morning without a cup of **ellick**.
2. I just washed those towels, don’t **mommuck** them!
3. We got in trouble for shooting rocks at cars with a **juvember**.
4. I was feeling **sorry in the world** I was so sick.
5. I was **on the swamp** so I thought I’d stop by.
6. You have to be a part of this community to be a **Lum**.
7. He was so scared all day after seeing a **toten** in the morning.
8. That **brickhouse Indian** just went on another vacation to Hawaii!
9. The faucet was so **gaumed** up that hardly any water came out.
10. I was really **jubious** last night when we lost power for a few hours.

Definitions of the vocabulary words:

- **brickhouse Indian** - a well-off Lumbee
- **ellick** - coffee with sugar
- **gaum** - clogged or a mess
- **jubious** - weary or afraid, eerie or strange
- **juvember** - a slingshot
- **Lum** - a person of Lumbee ancestry who participates in the community
- **mommuck** - to make a mess of
- **on the swamp** - in the neighborhood, nearby
- **sorry in the world** - not feeling well
- **toten** - a foreboding omen or sign of a ghost or spirit

Teaching tip:

It is interesting to point out that some of these terms are shared with other dialects we’ve examined. For example, toten and mommuck are both found in Outer Banks English, and the term guam is found in Appalachian English. Also, many dialects have terms for community insiders, including Lum in Lumbee and Ococker on Ocracoke.
Worksheet 15: North Carolina Vocabulary Quiz

A lot can be learned by listening to the special words that a particular group uses. Oftentimes, these words describe the history, life, and land of a group. Examining the special words of communities throughout the state paints a picture of the diversity of North Carolina. The following exercise asks you to remember vocabulary items from Outer Banks English, Appalachian English, and Lumbee English. Following are some dialect words from several different North Carolina dialects that have been featured in this unit. Fill in the blanks in the following sentences with the appropriate dialect word.

**Word Bank**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>airish</th>
<th>boomer</th>
<th>buck</th>
<th>ellick</th>
<th>gaum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>juvember</td>
<td>meehonky</td>
<td>mommuck</td>
<td>Lum</td>
<td>on the swamp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poke</td>
<td>slick cam</td>
<td>siggoglin</td>
<td>dingbatter</td>
<td>token</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. They used a ________________ for target practice.
2. That ________________ is from New Jersey.
3. Put those groceries in a ________________ and I’ll take them home.
4. When I got up this morning it was right ________________ outside.
5. They’re always together because he’s his ________________.
6. At night we used to play ________________.
7. I saw a ________________ in the field last night and it scared me.
8. She stops by to see me whenever she’s ________________.
9. Last night a ________________ got in the attic and made quite a racket.
10. He ain’t no ________________; he doesn’t know anything about our history.
11. If I don’t have some ________________ I’m going to fall asleep.
12. The road going up there sure is ________________.
13. She used to ________________ him when he was a child.
14. It sure was ________________ on the sound without any wind.
15. Don’t ________________ up the radiator with that stuff.
North Carolina Dialects Vocabulary

A lot can be learned by listening to the special words that a particular group uses. Oftentimes, these words describe the history, life, and land of a group. Examining the special words of communities throughout the state paints a picture of the diversity of North Carolina. The following exercise has students recall vocabulary items from Outer Banks English, Appalachian English, and Lumbee English. As with the previous exercise, students will need to use deduction to get a few words correct.

Worksheet 15: North Carolina Dialects Vocabulary Quiz
(Approximate time 25 minutes)

As we have seen, dialect vocabulary is often very important to dialect speakers. It is also the level of language that is most likely to differ between dialects, even dialects that are historically linked. Following are some dialect words from several different North Carolina dialects that have been featured in this unit. On pages 32-33 of their Student Workbooks, have students fill in the blanks in the following sentences with the appropriate dialect word.

**Word Bank**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>airish</th>
<th>boomer</th>
<th>buck</th>
<th>ellick</th>
<th>gaum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>juvember</td>
<td>meehonky</td>
<td>mommuck</td>
<td>Lum</td>
<td>on the swamp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poke</td>
<td>slick cam</td>
<td>siggoglin</td>
<td>dingbatter</td>
<td>token</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. They used a **juvember** for target practice.
2. That **dingbatter** is from New Jersey.
3. Put those groceries in a **poke** and I’ll take them home.
4. When I got up this morning it was right **airish** outside.
5. They’re always together because he’s his **buck**.
6. At night we used to play **meehonky**.
7. I saw a **token** in the field last night and it scared me.
8. She stops by to see me whenever she’s **on the swamp**.
9. Last night a **boomer** got in the attic and made quite a racket.
10. He ain’t no **Lum**; he doesn’t know anything about our history.
11. If I don’t have some **ellick** I’m going to fall asleep.
12. The road going up there sure is **siggoglin**.
13. She used to **mommuck** him when he was a child.
14. It sure was **slick cam** on the sound without any wind.
15. Don’t **gaum** up the radiator with that stuff.

**Definitions of the vocabulary words:**

- airish - breezy
- boomer - red squirrel
- buck - a friend (usually a male)
- ellick - coffee with sugar
- gaum - clogged or a mess
- juvember - a slingshot
- meehonky - hide-and-seek
- mommuck - to harass or make a mess of
- Lum - a Lumbee
- on the swamp - in the neighborhood
- poke - a bag
- slick cam - water with no waves
- siggoglin - crooked
- dingbatter - a tourist
- token - a foreboding omen
Some of the dialect words are used on the Outer Banks, some are used in the Appalachian Mountains, and some used mostly by the Lumbee Indians in Robeson County. There are also some words that are shared by the different groups. In the following table, list the words that are used by each group as well as those that are shared by groups. What conclusions can you draw about the words dialects use? For example, which dialect would you expect might have a unique term for a shark?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outer Banks</th>
<th>Lumbee</th>
<th>Appalachian</th>
<th>Shared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Notes on Dialect Vocabulary:
BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Some of the dialect words are used on the Outer Banks, some are used in the Appalachian Mountains, and some used mostly by the Lumbee Indians in Robeson County. There are also some words that are shared by the different groups. In the following table, list the words that are used by each group as well as those that are shared by groups. Then, discuss with students what can be concluded about the culture and life of each group of speakers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outer Banks</th>
<th>Lumbee</th>
<th>Appalachian</th>
<th>Shared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>buck</td>
<td>ellick</td>
<td>airish</td>
<td>guam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meehonkey</td>
<td>juvement</td>
<td>boomer</td>
<td>mommuck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dingbatter</td>
<td>Lum</td>
<td>poke</td>
<td>token</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slick cam</td>
<td>on the swamp</td>
<td>sigogglin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What can be learned:

- Groups/communities have labels for insiders and outsiders.
  
  **Insiders:** *Lum, Ococker*, etc.
  
  **Outsiders:** *Dingbatter, touron, halfback*, etc.

- Terms reflect the local geography, ecology, and way of life.
  
  There are no red squirrels on the Outer Banks and therefore they have no words for them. However, the Outer Banks dialect has lots of words to describe the water, crabs, and other activities related to fishing.

- Dialects tend to have more words that are unique than grammar or pronunciation differences. Vocabulary is the level of language that changes most rapidly. This is why slang, which by definition is vocabulary, changes so quickly among groups.
Worksheet 16: Dialects of North Carolina: African American English

1. What is a pidgin language?

2. What is a creole language?

3. One theory of the history of African American English is that Africans learned an English Creole. Some linguists believe that this creole was similar to ________________, which continues to be spoken ______________________.

4. A second theory is that slaves in the South worked alongside ________________, who spoke non-mainstream varieties of English. Under what condition did these people come to the United States?

5. How were they treated differently than the African Slaves?

6. Most of the slaves brought to North Carolina came from what neighboring state?

Other notes on African American English:
Dialects of North Carolina: African American English

Worksheet 16: Notes on African American History, Culture, and Language

A note-taking outline on the information below, plus comprehension questions for students can be found on page 32 of the Student Workbook.

Introduction and History

Even after decades of research on African American English (AAE), there is still no consensus as to exactly how it originally developed. One theory suggests that when slaves of different language backgrounds were transported from Africa to America, they developed a (1) pidgin—a simplified version of a language used for communication between groups of people who do not have a common language. This language subsequently developed into a full-fledged (2) creole language that children acquired in their homes. (Some creole languages—languages that have developed out of pidgins and have acquired native speakers—have the word creole in their names—for example, Hawaiian Creole—while others do not—for example, Gullah and Geechee). It is believed that the (3) Gullah spoken to this day on the sea islands of South Carolina and Georgia closely resembles the language used by slaves on large plantations. Because plantation slaves were not taught English and had limited contact with English speakers, some features of this creole were passed from generation to generation. These features have survived post-slavery because as AAE developed, it became more than just a means of communicating between groups: it has now become a token of solidarity among people who use it.

(4) A second theory is that slaves in the South worked alongside indentured servants who spoke non-mainstream varieties of English. African American slaves learned English from these indentured servants (often of Scots-Irish descent). (5) Indentured servants were generally treated less harshly than the slave populations (for example, they were allowed to marry and taught to read and write whereas slaves were not) though they often lived and ate together. Indentured servants would also be free after a set period of time (often seven years). People who believe this explanation for the beginning of AAE say that it explains similarities between AAE and other non-mainstream varieties of English (such as Southern inland dialects, which share some linguistic features with AAE). This second theory may better fit early AAE in North Carolina because (6) the vast majority of slaves were brought here from Virginia and not Charleston, SC (where there is stronger evidence of a creole) and because North Carolina’s plantations tended to be smaller than those in South Carolina and had more indentured servants. Thus, slaves in North Carolina (and the rest of the mid-South) probably had more exposure to English than slaves in the Deep South. North Carolina also had fewer slave-owning families than many other states: only about one in four families owned slaves in North Carolina and these families tended to be concentrated in the Cape Fear River valley in the Coastal Plain and the Virginia Piedmont. There were very few slaves west of what is now Raleigh. North Carolina was also one of the first Southern states to recognize “free people of color,” such as the well-known furniture maker Thomas Day or the school teacher John Chavis. (This discussion is not meant to diminish in any way the cruelty of slavery in North Carolina or the devastation of the institution on Africans).

It is important to note that these theories are not mutually exclusive. The true history of AAE may lie somewhere in between or in both of these theories. It is possible that language developed differently depending on factors such as the number of slaves and indentured servants on a plantation, the economic focus (e.g., rice), and the role that overseers played. Whatever the origin of AAE, we do know that it has changed considerably over time, as can be seen by comparing modern day Gullah and AAE, which are quite different despite sharing some characteristics.
Worksheet 16: Dialects of North Carolina: African American English

1. What is a pidgin language?

2. What is a creole language?

3. One theory of the history of African American English is that Africans learned an English Creole. Some linguists believe that this creole was similar to __________________, which continues to be spoken ____________________.

4. A second theory is that slaves in the South worked alongside __________________ who spoke non-mainstream varieties of English. Under what condition did these people come to the United States?

5. How were they treated differently than the African Slaves?

6. Most of the slaves brought to North Carolina came from what neighboring state?

Other notes on African American English:
Although AAE is clearly stigmatized socially in modern American culture, it continues to be spoken by millions of people. There are many reasons for this. Within the context of the some communities, AAE can be a valuable marker of group identity. Not speaking some form of AAE can lead to exclusion as an outsider. A person with in-group status will often have access to local resources and networks that outsiders will not have. In this sense, using AAE in the community can be as valuable and important as using Standard English in mainstream professional situations. Because of the covert prestige that AAE carries, it continues to be an important resource and symbol of solidarity for African Americans.

More information about African American English, including a number of ideas for classroom discussion, can be found at the Do You Speak American? homepage (www.pbs.org/speak). A unit on African American English can be found here (http://www.pbs.org/speak/education/curriculum/high/aae/).

The Features of African American English: A Brief Overview

Although it is not possible to give a complete list of AAE features here, a few features will illustrate the systematic structure of this dialect. This overview simplifies the patterns and structures to make them easier to understand. (Many of the features that typify AAE are also found in older Southern white English including the speech of older North Carolinians). It is important to keep in mind that speakers of AAE do not always use AAE features when they could do so. Like all speakers, they shift between less formal and more formal varieties of English.

Grammatical Features

- **Be copula absence (also called “linking verb absence”)**
  
  “They hungry.”

  AAE speakers will occasionally omit the form of the verb *to be* in sentences that require a form of *to be* in Standard English. Wherever standard English can contract *is* and *are*, African American English can delete them. Example sentences would include *She going* or *They hungry*. But *am* and past tense *was* and were are never left out; thus you would never hear sentences like *I going* or *They hungry last night* (The asterisk that precedes these sentences is a convention that linguists use to mark forms that would not be characteristic of a particular speech variety). Older white Southern speech occasionally omits *are* from sentences such as *they hungry* but would not omit *is* in sentences.

- **Habitual be**
  
  “We be playing basketball after school.”

  Perhaps the most stereotypical feature of AAE is what linguists refer to as “habitual be”: using the unconjugated form of the verb *to be* to signal a habitual or regularly occurring action, as in sentences like *We be playing basketball* and *She be working late*, which mean “We play basketball from time to time” and “She works late a lot” (but which do not mean “We are playing basketball right now” and “She is working late right now”). Despite the stereotypes, people who use this feature do not use it in all sentences with the *be* verb, and they do not suffer from a lack of ability to conjugate *be*. Rather, uninflected *be* is used only to refer to habitual or regularly occurring actions. In other types of sentences, speakers of AAE will use inflected *be* or no *be* verb at all, as in *We’re playing basketball right now* or *We playing basketball right now*. Note that Standard English does not have a special form of the *be* verb to indicate habituality. It uses an adverb or adverbial phrase with the verb to indicate this meaning (*We usually play basketball; She often works late*). Lumbees sometimes use this feature as well, though it is not always restricted to habitual or recurring contexts.
Worksheet 16: Dialects of North Carolina: African American English

1. What is a pidgin language?

2. What is a creole language?

3. One theory of the history of African American English is that Africans learned an English Creole. Some linguists believe that this creole was similar to ____________________, which continues to be spoken ____________________.

4. A second theory is that slaves in the South worked alongside ____________________ who spoke non-mainstream varieties of English. Under what condition did these people come to the United States?

5. How were they treated differently than the African Slaves?

6. Most of the slaves brought to North Carolina came from what neighboring state?

Other notes on African American English:
• 3rd person singular -s deletion

“He jump__ high.”

Another common feature of AAE is omitting the –s with verbs following a third person singular subject (compare Mainstream English I jump, you jump, we jump, they jump--but she jumps).

• Double negatives

“Ain’t nobody can beat me.”

Also common in AAE is what is called double negatives, as in We don’t know nothing bout nobody. Lumbee, white Appalachian, and Outer Banks dialect speakers also use this construction—and it can also be found in Chaucer and Shakespeare!

Pronunciation Features

• Varying pronunciations of “th”

AAE also has distinctive pronunciation features. Perhaps most stereotypical is pronouncing these, with, and birthday with a “d”, “t”, or “f” replacing the “th” sounds of Mainstream English (“dese,” “wit,” and “birfday”).

• “g-dropping”

Another pronunciation pattern of AAE is “g-dropping” at the end of –ing words, as in fishin’ and fightin’. (It is important to note that this pronunciation is not unique to AAE speakers but is used by speakers of Standard English, as well, in casual speech). This feature is common in virtually all dialects of English. The term, “g-dropping” is problematic because there is no actual “g” to drop at the end of regular –ing words. You can hear a “g” in the word “finger” but not “singer.” –ing words typically have the same final sound as the word “sing” and in AAE and other dialects this sound is instead pronounced with the last sound in “sin.” It is called “g-dropping” only because these words are spelled in Standard English with a “g” and without the “g” in written representations of the dialect, as in, fishin’ and fightin’. Even in Standard English, these words are never actually pronounced with a “g” sound.

• Consonant cluster reduction

AAE speakers often drop the second (or third) consonant sound in a string of consonants occurring at the end of words. For example, the word mist may be pronounced as “mis.” Interestingly, mist and missed are pronounced exactly the same in English, and this same process can make the word missed come out as “mis”—thus giving the illusion that it is a present tense verb instead of a past tense verb. All English speakers eliminate final consonants occasionally, but speakers of vernacular dialects often delete consonants at a higher rate than speakers of more mainstream dialects. Speakers who learn English as a second language whose native language lacks consonant clusters (e.g., Chinese, Vietnamese, Hindi, etc.) often delete virtually all consonants that occur in clusters.
Worksheet 17: Learning About African American English by Examining Dialect in Literature

The passage below comes from "Sweat," a short story by Zora Neale Hurston, an early-twentieth century African American author from Florida. It contains a number of the grammatical and pronunciation features that are typical of African American English.

Define *Eye-dialect*:

Original text:

"Sykes, what you throw dat whip on me like dat? You know it would skeer me—looks just like a snake an’ you knows how skeered Ah is of snakes."

"Course Ah knowed it! That’s how come Ah done it." He slapped his leg with his hand and almost rolled on the ground in his mirth. "If you such a big fool dat you got to have a fit over a earth worm or a string, Ah don’t keer how bad Ah skeer you."

"You ain’t got no business doing it. Gawd knows it’s a sin. Some day Ah’m gointuh drop dead from some of yo’ foolishness. ‘Nother thing, where you been wid mah rig? Ah feeds dat pony. He ain’t fuh you to be drivin’ wid no whip."

1. What would the passage sound like if it were written in Standard English?

2. Why do you think the author wrote this passage like she did?
Worksheet 17: Learning About African American English by Examining Dialect in Literature

The passage below, found on page 35 of the Student Workbook, comes from “Sweat,” a short story by Zora Neale Hurston, an early-twentieth-century African American author from Florida. It contains a number of the grammatical and pronunciation features described above. Work with students through the text, identifying the features and their Standard English equivalents. A good journal entry/short writing assignment would be to ask students to evaluate the importance that dialect plays in the passage. In other words, what would be lost if the passage was written in Standard English? Students can contrast the voice of the narrator with the voice of the characters. This passage describes a scene in which the husband scares his wife by tossing a whip at her and making her think it’s a snake.

Background Information:

Eye-dialect is a technique used by many authors to make a speaker appear more dialectal than he or she might otherwise appear. This is accomplished through using non-standard spellings of words that do not actually reflect any dialect difference. That is, standard pronunciations are transcribed using non-standard spellings. Common examples include: <wuz> for was, <becuz> for because, and <dawg> for dog. The crucial point is that these misspellings would be pronounced in the same way as a standard English speaker would pronounce them. Try it, when you say “was,” the pronunciation ends with a z-sound, not an s-sound, and therefore this is an example of eye-dialect since it is a non-standard spelling used for a standard pronunciation.

Original text:

“Sykes, what you throw dat whip on me like dat? You know it would skeer me—looks just like a snake an’ you knows how skeered Ah is of snakes.”

“Course Ah knowed it! That’s how come Ah done it.” He slapped his leg with his hand and almost rolled on the ground in his mirth. “If you such a big fool dat you got to have a fit over a earth worm or a string, Ah don’t keer how bad Ah skeer you.”

“You ain’t got no business doing it. Gawd knows it’s a sin. Some day Ah’m gointuh drop dead from some of yo’ foolishness. ’Nother thing, where you been wid mah rig? Ah feeds dat pony. He ain’t fuh you to be drivin’ wid no whip.”

Standard English translation:

“Sykes, why did you throw that whip on me like that? You knew it would scare me—looks just like a snake and you know how scared I am of snakes.”

“[Of] Course I knew it! That’s why I did it.” He slapped his leg with his hand and almost rolled on the ground in his mirth. “If you’re such a big fool that you have a fit over an earth worm or a string, then I don’t care how bad I scare you.”

“You don’t have any business doing it. God knows it’s a sin. Some day I’m going to drop dead from some of your foolishness. Another thing, where have you been with my rig [horse]? I feed that pony. He isn’t for you to be driving with any whip.”

Point out to your students how this version of the text loses the passion or feeling that is captured in the original version. Authors use dialect in order to capture emotion as well as to provide more insight into characters and setting. While the author could write about how things were said, not using dialect would completely change the tone of the passage. The linguistic features in this passage are labeled in the reproduction below.
Worksheet 17: Learning About African American English by Examining Dialect in Literature

The passage below comes from “Sweat,” a short story by Zora Neale Hurston, an early-twentieth century African American author from Florida. It contains a number of the grammatical and pronunciation features that are typical of African American English.

Define *Eye-dialect*:

Original text:

“Sykes, what you throw dat whip on me like dat? You know it would skeer me—looks just like a snake an’ you knows how skeered Ah is of snakes.”

"Course Ah knowed it! That’s how come Ah done it." He slapped his leg with his hand and almost rolled on the ground in his mirth. "If you such a big fool dat you got to have a fit over a earth worm or a string, Ah don’t keer how bad Ah skeer you."

“You ain’t got no business doing it. Gawd knows it’s a sin. Some day Ah’m gointuh drop dead from some of yo’ foolishness. ‘Nother thing, where you been wid mah rig? Ah feeds dat pony. He ain’t fuh you to be drivin’ wid no whip.”

1. What would the passage sound like if it were written in Standard English?

2. Why do you think the author wrote this passage like she did?
“Sykes, what you throw dat [th → d] whip on me like dat [th → d]? You know [present tense for past tense] it would skeer [vowel shift] me—looks just like a snake an’ [consonant cluster reduction] you knows [-s attachment] how skeered [eye-dialect] Ah [eye-dialect] is [is leveling, just like was leveling but present tense instead of past tense] of snakes.”

“Course Ah [eye-dialect] knowed [verb regularization, just like was leveling] it! That’s how come Ah [eye-dialect] done [done for did is a grammatical difference] it.” He slapped his leg with his hand and almost rolled on the ground in his mirth. “If you such [copula absence] a big fool dat [th → d] you got to have [colloquial English] a fit over a earth worm or a string, Ah [eye-dialect] don’t keer [eye-dialect] how bad Ah [eye-dialect] skeer [eye-dialect or a slight pronunciation difference] you.”


BACKGROUND INFORMATION: Some of the features in this passage have not been discussed in this unit. The use of the present tense form of a verb for a past tense construction (as in “know” for “knew”) reflects the process of regularization or leveling, which is the same process that gives rise to the past tense be (was and weren’t regularization) that was examined in the section on Outer Banks English. The use of “done” to mark an action as completed is also common in varieties of English around the world; especially in situations where English has been in contact with other languages. th → d, copula absence, double negatives, and g-dropping have all been discussed previously.
Worksheet 18: Understanding Linguistic Patterns: Uninflected be in African American English

We’re going to examine a dialect pattern of African American English. It is important to remember that not all African Americans use this pattern. It is most common in the speech of young African American speakers in large cities. In this construction, the unconjugated form of be is used where other dialects use am, is, or are. But be is used only in certain contexts! Your job will be to decide what contexts can take be and what contexts cannot.

Unlike the a-prefixing exercise, not all English speakers have intuitions about when be can and cannot be used. Instead, only speakers familiar with African American English seem to have strong linguistic intuitions with respect to this feature. Before examining the data, you will test to see if you have intuitions about this feature. Read the sentences in LIST A and write a sentence that tells how you would interpret the sentence given. Be sure and mention when you think the event is happening. We will return to these sentences later.

LIST A:
1. My mom be working
2. He be absent
3. The students be talking in class

Next, examine the data in LIST B. This list contains the results from a forced choice test similar to the a-prefixing test, where speakers were asked to use their linguistic intuitions to determine which sentence sounded better. The data are from 35 fifth graders in Baltimore, Maryland. All these students were speakers of African American English. Notice that the students had a definite preference for one sentence over the other. This indicated that there is a linguistic pattern guiding their choices. Examine the data to determine what determines when a AAE speaker can use be and when they cannot.

LIST B: Number of Baltimore 5th graders who chose each answer
1. a. 32 They usually be tired when they come home
   b. 3 They be tired right now
2. a. 31 When we play basketball, she be on my team
   b. 4 The girl in the picture be my sister
3. a. 4 James be coming to school right now
   b. 31 James always be coming to school
4. a. 3 My ankle be broken from the fall
   b. 32 Sometimes my ears be itching

Write a rule that describes this pattern:
Worksheet 18:
Understanding Linguistic patterns: Uninflected be in African American English
(Approximate Time: 30 minutes)

In this exercise, found on pages 36-37 of the Student Workbook, we’re going to examine a dialect feature of African American English. It is important to remember that not all African Americans use this pattern; it is most common in the speech of young African American speakers in large cities. In this construction, the inflected or unconjugated form of be is used where other dialects use am, is, or are. But, contrary to many people’s beliefs, be is used only in specific contexts: those that happen habitually or are recurring.

Unlike the a-prefixing exercise, not all native English speakers have intuitions about when be can and cannot be used. Instead, only speakers familiar with African American English seem to have strong linguistic intuitions with respect to this feature. Before students examine data from AAE speakers, ask them to write how they would interpret, in terms of when the action described took place, the sentences in LIST A. Have them write their interpretations in their workbooks but do not discuss their answers until later.

LIST A:
1. My mom be working
2. He be absent
3. The students be talking in class

Next, ask students to examine the data in LIST B, which come from a forced choice test similar to the a-prefixing test, where speakers were asked to use their linguistic intuitions to determine which sentence sounded better. The data are from 35 AAE speakers in the fifth grade students in Baltimore, Maryland. If they are having trouble identifying the pattern, ask them to examine the type of action involved: is it something that happens once or more than once? It is important to note that if there was no pattern (that is, if it was random), we would expect that the same number of students would select each sentence as the one that sounds better. These students had a definite preference for one sentence over the other; therefore, there is a linguistic pattern guiding their choices.

LIST B: Number of Baltimore 5th graders who chose each answer
1. a. 32  They usually be tired when they come home
   b. 3  They be tired right now
2. a. 31  When we play basketball, she be on my team
   b. 4  The girl in the picture be my sister
3. a. 4  James be coming to school right now
   b. 31  James always be coming to school
4. a. 3  My ankle be broken from the fall
   b. 32  Sometimes my ears be itching

A good rule might read: An AAE speaker can use uninflected BE when talking about an action that occurs habitually (and not an action that occurs once or a permanent state as in sentence 2b). In standard English, these sentences require the use of an adverb such as usually, always, sometimes.
Examine your translations of the sentences in LIST A. Do you have linguistic intuitions about this feature?

Now that you understand when African American English speakers use *be*, use your rule to predict whether or not a speaker of African American English would use the sentences in LIST C. Write Y for Yes if the sentence follows the dialect pattern, and N for No if it does not.

**LIST C: Applying the rule**
1. _____ The students always *be* talking in class
2. _____ The students don't *be* talking right now
3. _____ Sometimes the teacher *be* early for class
4. _____ At the moment the teacher *be* in the lounge
5. _____ My name *be* Bill

**Video Exercise 9: African American English**

Despite the fact that African American English is rule-governed and patterned like all dialects, it is often viewed negatively by people. In the following video clip, you will see some African Americans from North Carolina who are proud of their dialect but also switch their speech to Standard English when they feel it is necessary. As you watch this video, think about responses to the following questions.

1. Could you hear differences in the speech of individuals in different situations?

2. Could you tell which African Americans lived in cities and which lived in rural areas?

3. Are these African Americans aware of the fact that they change their speech or not?

4. Why do you think that they feel that they must change their speech in different situations?
Finally, have the students reexamine their interpretations of the sentences in LIST A. These sentences did not have the adverbs (usually, always, sometimes, etc.) to indicate whether the action was habitual or not. A person with intuitions about this feature will interpret these as habitual constructions even if there is no adverb to indicate the habitualness. If a student interpreted the sentence as habitual, then he or she likely has linguistic intuitions about the pattern. Students who interpret the sentences as punctual, or happening one time, likely lack intuitions about this feature. See the chart below for a summary of this.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
<th>Intuitions?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. My mom be working</td>
<td>My mom is working right now</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>My mom works all the time</em></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. He be absent</td>
<td>He is absent today</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>He is absent from class a lot</em></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The students be talking in class</td>
<td>The students are talking in class now</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>The students often talk in class</em></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The point of this exercise is to demonstrate how seemingly simple sentences can be interpreted differently by people depending on which intuitions they have. Incidentally, the non-italicized interpretations above would not be allowed by the uninflated be pattern in African American English. These interpretations do not fit within the grammatical pattern of uninflated be in African American English.

The final part of this exercise asks students to use the rule that they have learned to predict whether or not a speaker of African American English would use the sentences in LIST C. Have students write Y for “Yes” if the sentence follows the dialect pattern, and N for “No” if it does not.

LIST C: Applying the rule

1. **Y** The students always be talking in class
2. **N** The students don't be talking right now
3. **Y** Sometimes the teacher be early for class
4. **N** At the moment the teacher be in the lounge
5. **N** My name be Bill

Reinforce the point that African American English has rules that determine when you can say be and when you cannot say be, just like the a-prefixing rules (*he went a-fishing*) or any of the other dialect patterns that we've examined.
Examine your translations of the sentences in LIST A. Do you have linguistic intuitions about this feature?

Now that you understand when African American English speakers use *be*, use your rule to predict whether or not a speaker of African American English would use the sentences in LIST C. Write **Y** for *Yes* if the sentence follows the dialect pattern, and **N** for *No* if it does not.

**LIST C: Applying the rule**

1. _____ The students always *be* talking in class
2. _____ The students don't *be* talking right now
3. _____ Sometimes the teacher *be* early for class
4. _____ At the moment the teacher *be* in the lounge
5. _____ My name *be* Bill

**Video Exercise 9: African American English**

Despite the fact that African American English is rule-governed and patterned like all dialects, it is often viewed negatively by people. In the following video clip, you will see some African Americans from North Carolina who are proud of their dialect but also switch their speech to Standard English when they feel it is necessary. As you watch this video, think about responses to the following questions.

1. Could you hear differences in the speech of individuals in different situations?

2. Could you tell which African Americans lived in cities and which lived in rural areas?

3. Are these African Americans aware of the fact that they change their speech or not?

4. Why do you think that they feel that they must change their speech in different situations?
Despite the fact that African American English is rule-governed and patterned like all dialects, it is often viewed negatively by people. Notwithstanding the negative views that many people have of African American English, it is a dialect that many young African Americans embrace as representative of their identity. In the following video clip, you will see some African Americans who are proud of their dialect but also switch their speech to Standard English when they feel it is necessary. You will see a video about the African Americans in North Carolina (Chapter 27 of the Resource DVD, time = 8:48). As students watch this vignette, have them think about responses to the following questions. Have students either write answers to the questions in their Student Workbooks on page 37, and/or discuss them as a class.

1. Could you hear differences in the speech of individuals in different situations?

Most of the African Americans in the video do shift their speech even in the short time they’re on screen. A few notable examples include the hip-hop artists who talk about the different styles of speech they use with people they know versus those they don’t know. Also, the African Americans in the video who are filmed in professional settings talk about or switch into a less standard sounding dialect. It is interesting to note, however, that the biggest change is in their tone or pitch as opposed to their grammatical structures or vocabulary.

2. Could you tell which African Americans lived in cities and which lived in rural areas?

Just like white speech, it is sometimes relatively easy to tell the difference between African Americans who were raised in urban as opposed to rural areas. That is not to say that no rural African Americans do not sound as though they are from cities. In fact, more and more rural African Americans are beginning to adopt speech patterns similar to those used by urban African Americans.

3. Are these African Americans aware of the fact that they change their speech or not?

This is an opinion question. In some cases (such as the professional African American who talks about “talking like your mamma taught you to talk”), it is clear that they are aware they switch even if they may not be consciously trying to switch in any given situation. We all switch our speech and often times we do not need to think about what style is appropriate.

4. Why do you think that they feel that they must change their speech in different situations?

This is an opinion question. We all switch our speech because different situations call for different styles of language use. However, the difference is that African Americans are expected to shift more radically in many situations in order to avoid using highly stigmatized forms of the language. The discrimination inherent in how many people view language, and AAE in particular, mean that there are more serious repercussions for African Americans who do not shift their speech than for most whites.
Worksheet 19: Language Change in African American English

Notes:

How long has African American English been spoken?

What are some of the reasons that it has changed over time?

Answer either true or false for the following questions. Then write a reason for your choice or provide an example that proves your choice.

1. ___ True or False: African American is patterned, just like all dialects of English.

2. ___ True or False: All African Americans speak African American English.

3. ___ True or False: There are no Whites or Hispanics who speak African American English.

4. ___ True or False: African American English speakers all sound the same.

5. ___ True or False: African American English speakers cannot also use Standard English.
Language Change in African American English

Worksheet 19: Language Change in African American English

A note-taking outline on the information below, plus comprehension questions for students can be found on page 38 of the Student Workbook.

How did African American English develop? While we are not certain of all the details of the history of African American English (AAE), we know that African American English began developing during the institution of slavery over 300 years ago. Since the slaves came from many different areas of Africa, they did not share a common language and therefore had to use their limited English to communicate with each other.

After the practice of slavery ended, African Americans were segregated and maintained the dialect of English that they had learned on the plantations. By the time segregation came to an end and the Civil Rights Movement began, the African American dialect was something that African Americans began to take pride in. As roads and television have made it possible for rural African Americans to interact with popular African American culture, many have learned about their heritage and adopted AAE features into their dialects. Many people mistakenly believe that all African Americans sound the same. The truth is much more complex. Like other dialects, there is regional variation in AAE. Also, there are subtle but important differences between the speech of urban African Americans and their rural counterparts. Further, like all dialects, AAE continues to develop so that the AAE of an older speaker may be quite different from the speech of a younger speaker. Of course there will still be stylistic variation. In this manner, the way AAE varies from community to community, individual to individual, and within a single speaker, mirrors exactly the ways in which other dialect speakers vary. Finally, it is important to mention that being black does not lead a person to speak AAE nor is it a requirement for speaking AAE. The speech variety termed "AAE" refers to the speech associated with many African Americans and should not be viewed as a race-based dialect. It is a sociocultural dialect like other culturally and ethnically associated dialects. Some African Americans speak mainstream English and some non-African Americans (Whites, Hispanics, Asians, etc.) may adopt some or many elements of AAE into their speech and therefore, could have their speech described as AAE. Genetics do not cause people to speak a specific variety of language or dialect. Instead, people initially acquire the variety of speech that is most available to them, typically from their primary care-givers. More information about the history and features of AAE can be found in Appendices I and J, and at http://www.pbs.org/speak/education/curriculum/high/aae/.

1. True: African American is patterned, just like all dialects of English.

All dialects are patterned. There are rules that govern the features of African American English such as the Habitual be feature just as there are rules for features like a-prefixing.


Many African Americans do not speak AAE. It is culturally-based language variety, not genetic and therefore, it is possible to be African American but not speak AAE.

3. False: There are no Whites or Hispanics who speak African American English.

Since all dialects are culturally based, people will acquire the language variety that they identify with. Many whites and Hispanics identify with African American culture and therefore acquire AAE. The white hip-hop artist in the video is one such person.

4. False: African American English speakers all sound the same.

As we saw in the video, rural and urban African Americans sound different - but speakers within these groups also do not all sound the same.

5. False: African American English speakers cannot also use Standard English.

Many AAE speakers (and authors) can use both AAE and Standard English in the same way that bilinguals can use two languages.

Day 4
Listening Exercise 3: Language Change in Hyde County

You will hear four different generations of speakers who lived all of their lives in mainland Hyde County. All of the speakers are members of the same family, a longstanding African American family of Hyde County. In this region of Eastern North Carolina, European Americans and African Americans have been living in close proximity since the early 1700s. Because the county is 80% marshland, residents have been more isolated here than in many other areas of North Carolina. The first paved roads into the county arrived in the mid-1900s, and dramatically changed life for the younger generations of Hyde County residents. Listen closely to the speakers and follow along with the transcripts on the screen. Think about the following questions as you listen to the passages.

1. How does the oldest speaker sound compared with the younger speaker? What changes do you see across the generations?

2. What differences in speech take place from generation to generation? What do you think is happening to the Outer Banks Brogue over time in this family?

3. Why do you think that some of these changes are taking place?

Now listen to two European American residents of Hyde County: A middle-aged male and a teenager. Do these two speakers sound similar? Compare the speech of the young European American male to the speech of the youngest speaker in the African American samples that you just listened to. Answer the following questions.

1. What differences do you hear between the younger European American male and the youngest African American speaker you just listened to?

2. Were the two European American speakers more or less similar to each other compared with the older and younger African American Speakers?

3. What does this comparison tell you about the way language is changing in mainland Hyde County for European Americans and for African Americans?

4. Why do you think these differences in language change are taking place?
Listening Exercise 3: Language Change in Hyde County
(Approximate time: 20 minutes)

Listen to some speech from four different generations of speakers who lived all of their lives in mainland Hyde County (Chapters 28-31 of the Resource DVD). All of the speakers are members of the same family, a longstanding African American family of Hyde County. In this region of eastern North Carolina, European Americans and African Americans have been living in close proximity since the early 1700s. Because the county is 80% marshland, residents have been more isolated here than in many other areas of North Carolina. The first paved roads into the county arrived in the mid-1900s, and dramatically changed life for the younger generations of Hyde County residents. European Americans and African Americans continue to make a living fishing and farming, though they tend to live in separate communities. Note some of the dialect features in the excerpts, particularly the ones that are in bold and italicized. Think about the following questions, also found on page 36 of the Student Workbook, as you listen to the passages. Transcripts of the speech samples are found below and are included on the Resource DVD (Chapters 28-31).

1. How does the oldest speaker sound compared with the younger speaker? What changes do you see across the generations?

   The oldest speaker is identified as “white” more than 90% of the time by listeners who don’t know his ethnicity. His great granddaughter is identified as an African American more than 90% of the time. (The two middle generations are in between in how they’re identified). This suggests that over the course of about 65 years (the difference in age between the oldest and youngest speaker), the dialect has shifted from sounding very much like “rural white speech” to sounding very African American. This is a remarkably rapid shift in speech. It is important to note that the oldest speaker sounds very similar to the Outer Banks English speakers we examined earlier. This is because Hyde County is in the same dialect region (see the Chapter 37 of the resource DVD). Older African Americans from Appalachia sound similar to older whites from the same region.

2. What changes in speech take place from generation to generation? What do you think is happening to the Outer Banks Brogue over time in this family?

   The shifts are away from local white dialect patterns (such as the pronunciation of side as “soid”) to AAE patterns (such as the use of habitual BE by the youngest speaker). In the transcripts below, all the italicized words in the older male reflect features of the local white variety. In the transcript of the great granddaughter, the italicized features are exclusively those common to AAE.

3. Why do you think that some of these changes are taking place?

   Improved roads and the ability to travel easily out of the region are the biggest influences on the language. Television and radio are secondary influences. Another important influence stems from the Civil Rights Movement and the newfound importance of being familiar with African American history and culture, which includes the ability to use AAE.

**Transcripts**

**Hyde County African American Male, born 1910 (Chapter 28)**

_We was_ young _fellers_ and got to fighting, I hit him a lick or two and he run to the shelter to get a axe, and _I knowed, I knowed_ what was in there when he—when he went there and a notion struck me, you better get _behind_ the shelter. And he, when he come _out_ he was looking for me where he left me out there, he had that axe just right, but I was _behind_ him. I was stunting that _time_, and _I run up behind_ him, you see, I was a better man ‘n he was. I _run up_ behind him and grabbed him and _threwed_ him on the ground and struck him with that _fis’_ a time or two and took that axe. And I threw it way out there and I beat him good. When I turned him _a-loose_, he didn’t go look for that axe, he went to the _house_. Aah, but if I’d stayed out there where he left me, he _might woulda_ chopped me in the head or something, can’t never tell. So, that made his daddy mad cause I beat him. He was taking up for the boy but _he weren’t_ taking up for me.

Day 4
Listening Exercise 3: Language Change in Hyde County

You will hear four different generations of speakers who lived all of their lives in mainland Hyde County. All of the speakers are members of the same family, a longstanding African American family of Hyde County. In this region of Eastern North Carolina, European Americans and African Americans have been living in close proximity since the early 1700s. Because the county is 80% marshland, residents have been more isolated here than in many other areas of North Carolina. The first paved roads into the county arrived in the mid-1900s, and dramatically changed life for the younger generations of Hyde County residents. Listen closely to the speakers and follow along with the transcripts on the screen. Think about the following questions as you listen to the passages.

1. How does the oldest speaker sound compared with the younger speaker? What changes do you see across the generations?

2. What differences in speech take place from generation to generation? What do you think is happening to the Outer Banks Brogue over time in this family?

3. Why do you think that some of these changes are taking place?

Now listen to two European American residents of Hyde County: A middle-aged male and a teenager. Do these two speakers sound similar? Compare the speech of the young European American male to the speech of the youngest speaker in the African American samples that you just listened to. Answer the following questions.

1. What differences do you hear between the younger European American male and the youngest African American speaker you just listened to?

2. Were the two European American speakers more or less similar to each other compared with the older and younger African American Speakers?

3. What does this comparison tell you about the way language is changing in mainland Hyde County for European Americans and for African Americans?

4. Why do you think these differences in language change are taking place?
Daughter, born 1935 (Chapter 29)

But I was just always scared of the cotton worm that was in--be in the cotton, *them great big old worms. Some of ’em about that long. Some of ’em ’bout that long* with big black and *striped* with horns on ’em. *And some bright green,* now I was scared of them. And the last year my daddy planted cotton, it was full of them. *And he didn’t plant no more cotton,* ’cause he had a time getting that cotton picked. They called *’em old long black furry* ones sweet gum worms. And they *had got* all in the cotton. And honey, *they didn’t plant no more cotton.*

Granddaughter, born 1958 (Chapter 30)

Well see, I was just in the, like, fourth and fifth grade. Well, honey, I wadn’t nervous, not in there a bit ‘cause *I always been a bully.* I was--I was in the fourth grade and I went up there to the white school, *I’ma* put it to you that way, but that it wadn’t ‘cause they scared us ‘cause they didn’t scare me nothin’ cause as long as they fuss I fuss back with them and if they wanted me to fight me I’ll fight them back. So I really wadn’t scared ‘cause I just always *grewed up* to be a bully all my day. It was just my sister probably was nervous because she just, I don’t know…

Great granddaughter, born 1975 (Chapter 31)

*It’s* a ghost story that they tell about, like, over Slocum about, when you see these two stars in the sky fighting, there’re these two *mens* that killed *theirself,* you know, about fighting, and they was, what, Chet and Tom. Now that’s a light *be following* you ‘cause there’s so ma-that, so many *peoples* got killed that a light *be following you.* And then they have, they have told this story about, like, if this woman *be on the road thumbing* and you stop and you give her a ride and then you think *she honestly in the car with* you and then when you turn over she’s not in the car with you. *Somebody have* honestly seen—that honestly happened to somebody, and somebody honestly *seen* that light, but as far as me, I’ve never seen it cause *I don’t be trying to worry about seeing nothing like that.* But we have been, cause Slocum would be, like seen a—two lights in the sky, *them two lights* in the sky, but, you know, never *known what they was* until somebody told us that, it was two, uh what? A slave *owner and slave was* fighting and they ki—they, you know, somebody said they killed each other right over there.

Now listen to two European American residents of Hyde County: a middle-aged male and a teenager (Chapters 32 and 33 of the Resource DVD). Answer the following questions.

1. What differences do you hear between the younger European American males and the youngest African American speaker you just listened to?

   The younger European American should be clearly identifiable as “white” whereas the youngest African American is clearly identifiable as “black.” Also, the younger European American maintains many of the Outer Banks English features in his speech.

2. Were the two European American speakers more or less similar to each other than the older and younger African American Speakers?

   The older speakers were more similar than the younger speakers.

3. What does this comparison tell you about the way language is changing in mainland Hyde County for European Americans and for African Americans?

   African Americans are changing in the direction of urban AAE norms whereas whites tend to maintain the local regional dialect.

4. Why do you think these differences in language change are taking place?

   Again, roads and increased transportation are the biggest factors along with the importance of emerging ethnic identification following the Civil Rights Movement. Television and radio are less important though do have some influence.
Listening Exercise 3: Language Change in Hyde County

You will hear four different generations of speakers who lived all of their lives in mainland Hyde County. All of the speakers are members of the same family, a longstanding African American family of Hyde County. In this region of Eastern North Carolina, European Americans and African Americans have been living in close proximity since the early 1700s. Because the county is 80% marshland, residents have been more isolated here than in many other areas of North Carolina. The first paved roads into the county arrived in the mid-1900s, and dramatically changed life for the younger generations of Hyde County residents. Listen closely to the speakers and follow along with the transcripts on the screen. Think about the following questions as you listen to the passages.

1. How does the oldest speaker sound compared with the younger speaker? What changes do you see across the generations?

2. What differences in speech take place from generation to generation? What do you think is happening to the Outer Banks Brogue over time in this family?

3. Why do you think that some of these changes are taking place?

Now listen to two European American residents of Hyde County: A middle-aged male and a teenager. Do these two speakers sound similar? Compare the speech of the young European American male to the speech of the youngest speaker in the African American samples that you just listened to. Answer the following questions.

1. What differences do you hear between the younger European American male and the youngest African American speaker you just listened to?

2. Were the two European American speakers more or less similar to each other compared with the older and younger African American Speakers?

3. What does this comparison tell you about the way language is changing in mainland Hyde County for European Americans and for African Americans?

4. Why do you think these differences in language change are taking place?
Transcripts

**HYDE COUNTY EUROPEAN AMERICAN MALE, 49 (BORN 1944) (CHAPTER 32)**

Track 1: Well, like we say, we started on that end, and started running them back this way and then they used to come up, you know, *it weren't*, all this, this was *swamp* where we used to hunt. Every one of these *houses*. All these *houses* from where we turned at the *fire* station, up this way, been built since the 60s. There was only one *house* that was up here in the 60s. All this, subdivision, Jackson Dunes, Oyster Creek. And then the ponies would come up, you know, you'd pen them up, and they come right along the shore. You know, and we had beaches you know, before everybody started building you had a little beach all the way *around on the Sound side* just like you do on the ocean. But now you don't, everybody break-watered and filled in and built. And then in June we had a cattle penning.

**HYDE COUNTY EUROPEAN AMERICAN MALE, 18 (BORN 1979) (CHAPTER 33)**

He was sittin’ in the middle, we had him in between ‘cause he was talkin’ junk to these, about 15 big guys and stuff. And they didn’t like it so, and uh, when we were ridin’ he was just sittin’ ‘ere hittin’ stuff, and he was bleedin’ and everything, and, uh (so that’s how you ended up jumpin’ a curb), well, there’s—it’s like a U thing, the waterfront in Washington where everybody goes to hang out. *It’s* a U and we were coming out around this way, and he was talkin’ junk. And they were over here in this parking lot, and when we *come* back around here the traffic was stopped. If we’da stopped, we’da been *right there beside of* ’em. And they started comin’ over toward the truck—all of ’em, so—I *weren’t* about to get my tail whupped just for him talkin’ junk, so. If I’da had rear view mirrors I’da never jumped it ‘cause the cop was *right* behind me when I did it. I had no idea he was behind me, because if he had of, I’da never jumped the *curve*. But uh, I just jumped over the *curve* dere and went out the other driveway and I said, “We’re going home.” And by that time Little Jimmy *had done passed out*.

Summary of information in exercise:

As can be heard in these speech samples, the oldest African American had relatively few features that would be associated with AAE. In fact, in listening tests, about 90% of people thought he was a white speaker. Most of the noticeable features that the great grandfather has are associated with regional Outer Banks English (in fact, he sounds similar to the older European American). This suggests that at one time, the African Americans in this part of the country spoke very much like the other people who lived there. However, there are subtle features that are more associated with AAE than with white varieties. Thus, while older AAE may have been similar in many ways to local white varieties, there have been at least some distinct features. The great granddaughter, on the other hand, has a number of features that are associated with AAE and she is identified as an African American by over 90% of listeners. This shift away from local (white) norms in favor of more mainstream AAE is a common pattern throughout the rural South and provides a good illustration of language change in action. Meanwhile, there has been considerably less change in the speech of the European American community, as can be heard in the similarities between the speakers in Chapters 32 and 33 of the Resource DVD.