

**African American Vernacular English: A  
representation of a non-mainstream variety of English  
in Kathryn Stockett's *The Help***

TFG Estudis Anglesos

Supervisor: Dr Susagna Tubau Muntanà

Ivan Pérez Montalbán

June 2016



## **Acknowledgments**

First and foremost, I would like to express my appreciation to my supervisor, Dr Susagna Tubau, who patiently helped me from the beginning. I would not have been able to complete this piece of work without her good advice. She always received me in her office to answer my questions and solve my problems when I needed it. Thank you for your constant guidance and feedback throughout the process of this paper.

Special thanks to my classmates and friends, Jenifer González, Clàudia Mas and Sara Nogueras who were always there for me when I most needed it. Thanks for supporting me throughout the process and reading my paper.

My final words of gratitude are devoted to my parents who have always supported me and believed in me. Thanks for listening to me even though you never understood a single word.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments .....	ii
Abstract.....	v
1. Introduction .....	6
2. Basic description of African American features.....	7
2.1 Copula <i>be</i> .....	7
2.2 Aspectual <i>be</i> .....	9
2.3 Present tense forms .....	10
2.4 Past simple and Present Perfect morphology .....	11
2.5 Completive <i>done</i> and remote <i>been</i> .....	12
2.6 Preterite <i>had</i> + past tense verb form.....	13
2.7 Future tense .....	14
2.8 Negative concord and negative inversion.....	15
2.9 Existential <i>it</i> and <i>they</i> .....	17
2.10 Genitive case marking .....	17
2.11 Question formation .....	18
3. Methodology.....	19
4. Results .....	20
5. Discussion.....	30
6. Conclusion.....	35
References: .....	37
Appendix .....	39

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Aibileen's features.....	21
Table 2. Minny's features.....	21
Table 3. Features attested in Chapter 1.....	23
Table 4. Features attested in Chapter 2.....	24
Table 5. Features attested in Chapter 7.....	25
Table 6. Features attested in Chapter 29.....	25
Table 7. Features attested in Chapter 34.....	26
Table 8. Features attested in Chapter 3.....	27
Table 9. Features attested in Chapter 4.....	28
Table 10. Features attested in Chapter 10.....	28
Table 11. Features attested in Chapter 18.....	29
Table 12. Features attested in Chapter 24.....	29

## **Abstract**

Non-mainstream varieties (of English) are sometimes stereotyped when they are represented in a piece of fiction work. African American Vernacular English (AAVE) is presumably one of the varieties which is subject to this uncharacteristic portrayal. The purpose of the paper was to analyse the morphological and syntactic properties of African American Vernacular English in *The Help* and determine whether this non-standard variety could be faithfully portrayed in this novel. The two main characters that were studied were Aibileen and Minny who are African American speakers. Half of the chapters belonging to these characters were analysed. The results suggest that Aibileen and Minny exhibit some interesting differences in their speech, but the novel properly reflected African Americans' speech in a fair manner.

## 1. Introduction

African American Vernacular English (AAVE) is the adopted term to refer to those varieties of English used by African Americans. This variety may be “a development of a creole language similar to Gullah” (Rickford 1998: 154) or might be “derived directly from British-based dialects along with the conclusion that present-day African American speech is identical to that of comparable rural Southern white speech” (Wolfram and Thomas 2002: 12). Regardless of the origin of African American Vernacular English, morphological and syntactic features have independently arisen from the mainstream forms.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the morphological and syntactic properties of African American Vernacular English and observe these features and the representation of such speech in a novel. I have rigorously selected Kathryn Stockett’s *The Help* as my primary source since it is one of the most contemporary novels in which African American’s speech is represented. The main goal of this paper is to study whether the African American Vernacular English features presented in the novel correspond to reality, that is to say, whether they properly reflect African Americans’ speech as described in the linguistic literature. As the text is about maids who are African American speakers I expect to encounter a good portrayal of this non-mainstream variety of English.

This paper is organised as follows: Section 2 offers an accurate description of the main African American Vernacular English features and is followed by Section 3, which depicts the data collection procedure. Section 4 and 5 are devoted to the analysis, description and interpretation of the data obtained in the selected chapters of the book. Finally, Section 6 concludes the paper.

## 2. Basic description of African American features

In view of all the morphological and syntactic properties of African American Vernacular English (AAVE), the objective of this section is to provide a basic description of the most relevant features that may be representative in the novel afterwards. Variation across this non-standard variety has been taken into account, especially, South African American Vernacular English. Moreover, Southern American English has also been borne in mind as it shares some grammatical features with AAVE as well as Standard English in order to contrast the mainstream forms with the non-standard ones.

### 2.1 Copula *be*

The most interesting inherent feature in AAVE is copula *be* which “occurs in environments that precede an adjective, adverb, noun and preposition” (Green 2002: 38). Rickford (1999) argues that in most cases the conjugated *is* and *are* forms are not generally produced for present tense states and actions as a result of “a deletion rule which operated on the output of contraction [...] only when it takes place in Standard English”. (Wolfram 1974: 502). This is illustrated in (1) and (2).

(1) She nice.

“She is nice”.

(2) They acting silly.

“They are acting silly”.

(Wolfram 2004: 347)

Along similar lines, Wolfram (2004b) points out that copula absence in AAVE is also shared with some Southern white rural vernacular varieties of English. However, considering dialectal variation across this variety in some environments the copula *is*

form may be explicitly present as the examples in (3a) and (3b) but is only “overtly represented when it occurs with the first person singular pronoun and with the third person singular neuter one” (Green 2002: 38).

- (3) a. I’m driving to Amherst.  
b. It’s the one I like.

(Green 2002: 40)

Additionally, it has been discussed that African American speakers tend to omit the copula *be* contractions but as Kautzsch (2004) states, the absence of these verb forms is frequently related to the nature of the subject. The copula can only allow an overt form if the subject is explicitly expressed by a noun phrase. This is the case in (4).

- (4) The woman’s running.

(Wolfram 2004b: 347)

As far as negative auxiliary *be* is concerned, Wolfram (2004a) discusses that the most common way of expressing such meaning is by using *ain’t* as a preverbal negator which is also present in some Southern white vernacular varieties. Following Green (2002) the use of negative marker *ain’t* (*be* + *not*) in present tense occurs with first, second and third person plural but it is also encountered in third person singular environments, as shown in (5). Though, the *isn’t* form is not absent in African Americans’ speech.

- (5) It really ain’t no time for discussion.

“There is no time for discussion”.

(Howe 2005: 178)



Nevertheless, bearing in mind dialectal differences, Howe (2005) points out that in some environments the form *ain't* might be found in the whole verb paradigm since it is empirically the strongly preferred variant for negative *be* contexts in AAVE. This is illustrated in (6) and (7)<sup>1</sup>.

(6) Jesus, I ain't tryin' to be facetious.

“Jesus, I'm not trying to be facetious”.

(Jay Z, Lucifer, 0:35)

(7) You ain't nicer than the lunatic shyster.

“You are not nicer than the lunatic shyster”.

(MF Doom, Raedawn, 2:00)

## 2.2 Aspectual *be*

Aspectual *be*, which is different from the use of copula *be*, does not show inflected forms and may occur “before predicative nominals, adjectives, past participles, locatives and certain types of prepositional phrases, and in temporary aspect constructions *be+Verb+ing*” (Fasold 1969: 764). Specifically, Fasold (1972) states that when the aspectual marker *be* is followed by a verb in the *-ing* form or any of these previous structures is of a recurring activity, which is entirely different from the mainstream aspectual form. Moreover, aspectual *be* cannot be omitted unlike copula *be* as “some sentences may receive ambiguous interpretations or they may not receive the intended interpretation” (Green 2002: 47). This is the case in (8) and (9).

(8) Bruce be running.

---

<sup>1</sup> These examples have been taken from Howe (2005: 178).

“Bruce runs”.

(Green 2002: 47)

(9) Sometimes they be playing games.

“Sometimes they play games”.

(Wolfram 2004b: 326)

### **2.3 Present tense forms**

Following Green (2002) another exclusive feature in AAVE is the use of a single verb form in the present tense with both singular and plural subjects. That is, the inflectional morpheme used in third person singular is completely absent in African American verb system, as shown in (10).

(10) She walk.

“She walks”.

(Wolfram 2004b: 330)

However, according to Wolfram (2004b) in some Southern rural versions of AAVE the attachment of verbal *-s*, which is the standard morpheme, occurs habitually with third person singular, but it is also very common with third person plural, which is a distinguishing feature in Southern African American English dialects. This is illustrated in (11) and (12) respectively.

(11) She walks.

(12) The dogs barks a lot.

“The dogs bark a lot”.

(Wolfram 2004b: 330)

Concerning negative sentences, the negator used in present tense is “*don’t* rather than *doesn’t* in third person singular environments” (Howe 2005: 184). This is illustrated in (13). Likewise, as Wolfram (2004b) mentions, this property is not only found in rural areas but also in Urban African American English. Regardless of potential variation across this variety, in African American present tenses the most prevailing verb form is likely to be the uninflected one.

(13) She don’t know what’s wrong with herownself.

“She doesn’t know what’s wrong with herself”.

(Green 2002: 22)

#### **2.4 Past simple and Present Perfect morphology**

As regards past simple and present perfect tenses, it is clear that there is “no observable distinction between the past simple and the present perfect verb forms as [...] they are identical in shape” (Green 2002: 39). As Fasold and Wolfram (1970) point out, the use of past tense as a replacement of a past participle verb form as in (14) is usually the most common choice among African American speakers although “in some cases the chosen verb form might be a part participle” (Green 1998: 51). This is illustrated in (15).

(14) Bruce drunk the chocolate milk last night.

“Bruce drank the chocolate milk last night”.

(15) Bruce have drunk chocolate milk before.

“Bruce has drunk chocolate milk before”.

(Green 1998: 51)

Consequently, the only element that allows both contexts to be identified in affirmative sentences is the use of auxiliary *have* but this is only used “in emphatic affirmations and negative contexts in present perfect sequences” (Green 2002: 39). Moreover, the preverbal negator *ain’t* can be also used in both verb tenses as “it carries the meanings of *am not*, *isn’t*, *hasn’t*, *haven’t* and *didn’t*” (Johnson 1999: 139). This is the case in (16)<sup>2</sup> and (17).

(16) I ain’t never been to jail, [...] I ain’t never ran, never will, I ain’t never been smacked, [...] I ain’t never played myself.

“I have never been to jail, [...] I have never run, never will, I have never been smacked, [...] I have never played myself”.

(Jay Z, Justify My Thug, 0:31)

(17) I tell you it ain’t right, Miss, what I seen. It ain’t right at all.

“I tell you it was not right, Miss, what I have seen. It was not right at all”.

(Howe 2005: 179)

## 2.5 Completive *done* and remote *been*

AAVE possesses the perfect particle or completive *done* “which precedes the verb that makes reference to an action completed in the recent past” (Labov 1998: 124) and “it can also be used to highlight the change of state or to intensify an activity” (Wolfram 2004b: 327). As Labov (1998) argues, the perfect particle *done* is not only found in AAVE but also in white Southern state English. Sentence (18) and (19) exemplify how completive *done* is particularly used.

---

<sup>2</sup> Example taken from Howe (2005: 176).

(18) These children done ate all the candy.

“These children have eaten all the candy”.

(Labov 1998: 128)

(19) I done told you not to mess up.

“I have told you not to mess up”.

(Wolfram 2004b: 327)

As far as remote *been* is concerned, in this non-standard variety the use of *been* “always precedes a preterit form of the verb which carries the past tense information” (Labov 1998: 135) and its function marks an activity that “started at some point in the remote past and continues up to the moment of the utterance” (Green 2002: 54). Furthermore, Wolfram (2004) discusses that this sort of sentences might be interpreted as a deletion of the contraction of the auxiliary. This is the case in (20).

(20) They been called the cops, and they’re still not here.

“They have called the cops, and they are not still here”.

(Labov 1998: 135).

## 2.6 Preterite *had* + past tense verb form

As reported by Wolfram (2004b), the use of *had* + *past simple form* is a unique feature found in AAVE which is encountered in both rural and urban settings. Moreover, it is important to stand out that this type of auxiliary is “a new syntactic feature that is used mainly by preadolescents” (Rickford and Th  berge-Rafal cited in Wolfram 2004b: 329) but it is also found “in the speech of adolescents and young adults” (Green 2002: 91). Furthermore, the use of this feature is a distinctive way of indicating past tense which should not be confused with past perfect since preterite *had*

“is not used to indicate an action that took place in the past before the past” (Green 2002: 92). This grammatical feature is illustrated in (21).

(21) They had went outside and then they had messed up the yard.

“They went outside and then they messed up the yard”.

(Wolfram 2004b: 329)

## 2.7 Future tense

According to Kautzsch (2004), in AAVE the use of future tense marked by auxiliary *will* and its negative form *won't* is the same as in Standard English. Nevertheless, Rickford (1999) notes that the use of standard *will* followed by *be* can be replaced by invariant *be* as a consequence of the phonological rule which deletes the contracted *'ll* of *will*, as shown in (22).

(22) He *be* here tomorrow.

“He will be here tomorrow”.

(Rickford 1999: 6)

Furthermore, like Standard English, in AAVE “future tense is also frequently marked with *gonna* or *gon*” (Green 2002: 40) which is “a phonological contracted form of *going to*” (Johnson 1999: 142). This is illustrated in (23)<sup>3</sup>. However, Green (2002) states that *gonna* occasionally does not occur with first person singular and the use of *(I)'ma* is indeed the most common alternative as in (24)<sup>4</sup> but there is also variation and the choice of *gonna* with first person singular subject can also be used in some idiolects, as shown in (25).

---

<sup>3</sup> Example taken from Labov (1998: 145).

<sup>4</sup> Example taken from the song *I just wanna love U* by the American rapper Jay Z.

(23) I ain't seen they wardrobe: but if they *gon'* walk around the street with holes in their pants, they must don't have too much in they wardrobe, right?.

“I have not seen their wardrobe: but if they are going to walk around the street with holes in their pants, they do not have too much in their wardrobe, right?”.

(Member of the Oscar Brothers, 17, South Harlem, 1966)

(24) You wanna see how far I'ma go, how much I'ma spend but [...].

“You want to see how far I am going to go, how much I am going to spend but [...]”.

(25) I'm gonna save me some money.

“I am going to save some money”.

(Morgan 2002: 26)

## 2.8 Negative concord and negative inversion

Following Wolfram and Fasold (1974) negative concord or multiple negation is a phenomenon that occurs not only in AAVE but also in other varieties of English as well as other languages. Particularly, the main characteristic of negative concord is “the use of two or more negative morphemes to communicate a single negation” (Martin and Wolfram 1998: 17) and “there is no limit on the number of negators that can be used” (Green 2002: 77). What is more, bearing in mind the meaning expressed by this phenomenon the “AAVE rules of negative concord produce forms that are interpreted with exactly the opposite meaning by white listeners [...] and duplicate a negative in a following clause without changing the meaning of the sentence” (Labov 1972: 131). That is, AAVE is one of the varieties of English which certainly shows that the use of negative concord is “clearly preferred over the standard pattern” (Schneider cited in

Kautzsch 2004: 348). Sentences (26) and (27) exemplify how negative sentences are produced in AAVE with two and more than two negators.

(26) He *ain't* got *no* car.

“He has not got any car”.

(27) *Nobody ain't* gonna spend *no* time going to *no* doctor.

“Nobody is going to spend any time going to any doctor”.

(Martin and Wolfram 1998: 17)

In addition, in connection with negative concord, another negative structure found in this variety is negative inversion. Following Martin and Wolfram (1998) in Standard English existential sentences are made by the use of the expletive *there* which occupies the position as a subject but without acquiring any referential meaning in the sentence as in the example in (28).

(28) There's a plate in the cupboard.

(Martin and Wolfram 1998: 25)

In the case of African American English, sentences are “clearly existential in intention but they do not have an overt dummy subject” (Martin and Wolfram 1998: 26). These types of negative constructions are made by “an initial negated auxiliary which is followed by a negative indefinite noun phrase” (Green 2002: 78). This is the case in (29) and (30).

(29) Didn't nobody laugh.

“Nobody laughed”.

(30) Can't no man round here get enough money to buy their own farm.



“No man round here can get enough money to buy their own farm”.

(Martin and Wolfram 1998: 25-26)

## 2.9 Existential *it* and *they*

In respect to the topic of the previous subsection, bearing in mind standard existential constructions, Green (2002) points out that in both affirmative and negative African American existential constructions the use of *it* and *they* pronouns tend to be used instead of this mainstream expletive *there*. Likewise, she also emphasises that in some environments the use of the form *dey* is much more habitual than *they*. This is illustrated in (31) and (32).

(31) Dey have some coffee in the kitchen.

“There is some coffee in the kitchen”.

(32) Sometimes it didn’t have no chalk, no book, no teacher.

“Sometimes there was not any chalk, any book or any teacher”.

(Green 2002: 80-81)

## 2.10 Genitive case marking

The case marking system of African American English undergoes an absence of genitive case. According to Green (2002), in possessive or genitive contexts the marker genitive *-s* is not compulsory since word order enables speakers to perceive the meaning of the phrase, as shown in (33).

(33) That’s the church responsibility.

“That’s the church’s responsibility”.

(Green 2002: 102)

Nevertheless, keeping in mind variation, the use of possessive *-s* is “definitely variable in that speakers may or may not use it” (Green 2002: 102). Consequently, this lack of possessive *-s* is frequent in AAVE but “it is also found in the US” (Wolfram 2004b: 333) and “it may be subject to age-grading since it is more frequent among younger speakers” (Rickford cited in Wolfram 2004: 333). Furthermore, aside from genitive *-s*, in AAVE it is also frequent to find “pronouns such as *they*, *hers* and *his* in genitive contexts” (Green 2002: 103). In the case of third person plural pronoun, a nominative case is used rather than a genitive one whereas the pronouns in genitive case are followed by a noun. This pronominal system usage is shown in (34) and (35) respectively.

(34) They want to do they own thing, and you steady talking to them<sup>5</sup>.

“They want to do their own thing, and you are talking to them”.

(35) I give the Lord his money, but it don’t be from here.

“I give the Lord his money, but it is not usually from here”

(Green 2002: 103)

## 2.11 Question formation

As regards interrogative constructions, Rickford (1999) depicts that in AAVE direct questions are constructed without inversion of the subject and the auxiliary verb. This absence of inversion always “occurs with *wh*- questions and syntactically simple sentences” (Wolfram 2004b: 334). This is illustrated in (36). Moreover, in other contexts, where questions are not formed with a *wh*- element, it is also frequent to find “questions which are formed without overt auxiliaries in sentence initial position” (Green 2002: 84). This is the case in (37) and (38).

---

<sup>5</sup> “Steady is a verbal marker that precedes a V-(ing) and is used to describe the manner in which something is done” (Green 2002: 24).

(36) Why I can't go?

"Why can't I go?"

(Wolfram 2004b: 334)

(37) You know her name?

"Do you know her name?"

(38) He sleeping in the car?

"Is he sleeping in the car?"

(Green 2002: 84)

### **3. Methodology**

The data of this study were taken from the novel mentioned in Section 1. The book was 444 pages long and for this reason, it was impossible to study it entirely. The analysis was concentrated on speakers who were African Americans, that is to say, on Aibileen and Minny. Therefore, this fact excluded Miss Skeeter who did not belong to this ethnic community despite having a Southern accent. As far as the chapters were concerned, Aibileen's voice appeared in a total of 11 chapters and Minny's voice in 9 chapters. Thus, bearing in mind the extension of the book, I selected half of the specified chapters and I examined chapters 1 and 2, which immediately reflected Aibileen's speech, and chapters 7, 29 and 34, which were chosen randomly. As for Minny's chapters, I explored chapters 3 and 4 for the same reason as Aibileen's first two chapters and then chapters 10, 18 and 24, which were selected randomly as well.

After analyzing the chapters, the collected features were initially classified into two charts in which I indicated the presence or absence of the features, that is to say, the features that were attested. The corresponding chapters were subdivided into Aibileen and Minny's parts of narrative and dialogue, which made it possible to behold the

different features that were used in the registers of these two African American speakers.

This considerable contrast led to count the relative frequency of the occurrence of the features that were used in each chapter (see Appendix). After carrying out this process, ten tables were created so as to observe the differences across speeches and speakers. The extreme boundaries of the features were systematically established in relation to the highest number of instances and the absence of a feature. That is to say, the boundaries of the features were labelled as “Not Attested (0)” and “Very Widely Used (100-158)” since 158 instances of a feature were found in a chapter and then systematically, the labels “Widely Used (50-99)”, “Moderately Used (25-49)” and “Rarely Used” (1-24) were provided in order to examine the features that were attested. The method that was used to develop the previous ten tables made it possible to examine and confirm how well this variety of English was represented in the novel.

After carrying out this classification, I contrasted all the charts with the features described in the specialized literature and provided some instances from the novel so as to compare them. However, an explanation was provided for those features which did not correspond to what was said in the literature.

#### **4. Results**

As described above, the features were organised into two charts where I indicated the presence or absence of the features described in the linguistic literature. Eventually, the corresponding features were classified into two subdivided columns which display the parts of narrative voice and dialogue in Aibileen’s speech (see Table 1) and Minny’s speech (see Table 2).

AIBILEEN										
FEATURES	CHAPTER 1		CHAPTER 2		CHAPTER 7		CHAPTER 29		CHAPTER 34	
	D	N	D	N	D	N	D	N	D	N
Copula absence	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Copula presence	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
<i>Ain't</i> for Copula		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Plural <i>is</i>		X		X		X	X	X		X
Invariant <i>be</i>		X	X	X		X	X	X		X
3rd p. <i>-s</i> absence		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
3rd p. <i>-s</i> presence		X		X		X		X		X
Invariant <i>don't</i>		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
<i>Ain't</i> as auxiliary		X	X	X		X		X	X	X
Aux. <i>Have</i> absence		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Remote <i>been</i>		X		X		X		X	X	X
Completive <i>done</i>		X		X		X		X		X
Preterite <i>had</i>										
Invariant <i>be</i> (future)			X	X					X	
Use of <i>gonna/gon</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Negative concord		X	X	X		X		X	X	X
Negative inversion			X	X				X		
Existential <i>it/they</i>		X		X		X		X	X	X
Genitive <i>-s</i> absence										
Nom. case for gen. contexts		X	X	X		X	X	X		X
No subject-aux. inversion	X									
No overt auxiliary	X		X		X		X	X	X	X

**Table 1.** Aibileen's features.

MINNY										
FEATURES	CHAPTER 3		CHAPTER 4		CHAPTER 10		CHAPTER 18		CHAPTER 24	
	D	N	D	N	D	N	D	N	D	N
Copula absence	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Copula presence	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Ain't</i> for Copula	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Plural <i>is</i>					X		X		X	
Invariant <i>be</i>		X							X	
3rd p. <i>-s</i> absence	X	X	X		X				X	
3rd p. <i>-s</i> presence		X		X		X	X	X	X	X
Invariant <i>don't</i>	X	X			X		X		X	
<i>Ain't</i> as auxiliary		X			X		X		X	
Aux. <i>Have</i> absence	X	X					X		X	X
Remote <i>been</i>	X				X					
Completive <i>done</i>	X				X		X			
Preterite <i>had</i>										
Invariant <i>be</i> (future)	X						X			
Use of <i>gonna/gon</i>	X				X	X	X	X	X	
Negative concord	X	X	X		X		X		X	X
Negative inversion									X	
Existential <i>it/they</i>	X									
Genitive <i>-s</i> absence										
Nom. case for gen. contexts	X								X	
No subject-aux. inversion									X	
No overt auxiliary	X	X	X		X		X		X	

**Table 2.** Minny's features.

Table 1 and 2 above show that a total of 22 features were examined in the ten studied chapters. The different crosses on the chart – represented by the symbol (X) –

exhibited that the feature was representative and that there were examples of it in that chapter. The corresponding blank spaces displayed that the feature was absent in that particular chapter or it did not appear in any of them and consequently, it was not possible to provide any instance of it. Hence, it is worth mentioning that this symbol did not reveal that the feature was not representative for this variety of English as this criterion was applied according to what was described in the literature and correspondingly found in the novel.

As observed in Table 1, Aibileen used a total of 20 features, of which 18 appeared in the narrative parts whereas 17 features were found in the dialogue passages. In addition, genitive *-s* absence and the use of preterite *had* with a past simple form were the only described features which were not present in Aibileen's speech. With the exception of subject-auxiliary inversion absence in interrogative sentences, 18 features were repeated in all the chapters. Thus, only negative inversion and invariant *be* for future tense were encountered in two chapters.

As observed in Table 2, Minny used a total of 20 features, of which only 11 appeared in the narrative parts whereas 17 features were present in the dialogue passages. The only features that did not appear in any of the analysed chapters were genitive *-s* absence and the use of preterite *had* with a past simple form, which were the same missing features in Aibileen's speech. Furthermore, in the case of Minny's speech only 6 features were encountered in all the chapters. However, although the number of features used in dialogue parts was the same as in Aibileen's dialogue passages the recurrence in which they appeared in each chapter was lower than in Aibileen's speech.

As discussed in the previous section, this contrast among the features used by these characters and the frequency of the occurrence of the features in each chapter led

to the conclusion that a more detailed analysis of each chapter was fundamental to explore these differences. Therefore, the following ten tables were designed so as to provide a deeper analysis of the frequency of the features used by the characters. The different crosses on the chart exhibited the frequency in which a particular feature was present in a chapter and the number between brackets next to each cross displayed the number of instances in which a feature was found.

Table 3 below shows a detailed analysis of Chapter 1, which certainly reflected that there were more features used in narrative parts than in dialogue passages.

CHAPTER 1										
Aibileen	Not attested (0)		Rarely used (1 – 24)		Moderately used (25 – 49)		Widely used (50 – 99)		Very widely used (100 – 158)	
FEATURES	D	N	D	N	D	N	D	N	D	N
Copula absence			X(1)					X(61)		
Copula presence			X(4)					X(52)		
<i>Ain't</i> for copula	X			X(6)						
Plural <i>is</i>	X			X(3)						
Invariant <i>be</i>	X			X(14)						
3rd p. -s absence	X									X(105)
3rd p. -s presence	X			X(4)						
Invariant <i>don't</i>	X			X(14)						
<i>Ain't</i> as auxiliary	X			X(3)						
Aux. <i>Have</i> absence	X			X(6)						
Remote <i>been</i>	X			X(1)						
Completive <i>done</i>	X			X(6)						
Use of <i>gonna/gon</i>	X			X(6)						
Negative concord	X			X(8)						
Existential <i>it/they</i>	X			X(1)						
Nom. Case for gen. contexts	X			X(9)						
No subject-aux. inversion		X	X(1)							
No overt auxiliary		X	X(2)							

**Table 3.** Features attested in Chapter 1.

As can be seen, almost all the features that belonged to the dialogue parts were not attested excepting 4. In the case of the narrative parts, all the features were also considered “Rarely Used” with the exception of 3<sup>rd</sup> person -s absence and copula absence and presence which were the only features that corroborated the labels “Widely used” and “Very Widely Used”.

Table 4, which represents Aibileen’s speech in Chapter 2, certainly exhibited the same representation as in the previous table.

CHAPTER 2										
Aibileen	Not attested (0)		Rarely used (1 – 24)		Moderately used (25 – 49)		Widely used (50 – 99)		Very widely used (100 – 158)	
FEATURES	D	N	D	N	D	N	D	N	D	N
Copula absence			X(8)					X(77)		
Copula presence			X(3)					X(56)		
<i>Ain't</i> for copula			X(2)	X(14)						
Plural <i>is</i>	X			X(6)						
Invariant <i>be</i>			X(1)	X(11)						
3rd p. -s absence			X(8)							X(149)
3rd p. -s presence	X			X(6)						
Invariant <i>don't</i>			X(1)	X(15)						
<i>Ain't</i> as auxiliary			X(2)	X(6)						
Aux. <i>Have</i> absence			X(1)	X(10)						
Remote <i>been</i>	X			X(2)						
Completive <i>done</i>	X			X(8)						
Invariant <i>be</i> (future)			X(1)	X(1)						
Use of <i>gonna/gon</i>			X(1)	X(7)						
Negative concord			X(1)	X(17)						
Negative inversion			X(1)	X(1)						
Existential <i>it/they</i>	X			X(5)						
Nom. Case for gen. contexts			X(1)	X(5)						
No overt auxiliary		X	X(11)							

**Table 4.** Features attested in Chapter 2.

As observed in Table 4, only 5 features were not attested in the dialogue parts. However, the frequency of the occurrence of the features in the dialogue passages was lower in comparison to the frequency of the features in the narrative parts. Furthermore, all the features were distributed as “Rarely used” excluding copula absence and copula presence and 3<sup>rd</sup> person -s absence, which were the only features that were labelled again as “Widely used” and “Very Widely Used”, respectively.

Table 5 and 6, which correspond to Chapter 7 and Chapter 29, displayed similar results as in the previous two tables.



CHAPTER 7										
Aibileen	Not attested (0)		Rarely used (1 – 24)		Moderately used (25 – 49)		Widely used (50 – 99)		Very widely used (100 – 158)	
FEATURES	D	N	D	N	D	N	D	N	D	N
Copula absence			X(5)			X(47)				
Copula presence			X(7)			X(41)				
<i>Ain't</i> for copula	X			X(12)						
Plural <i>is</i>	X			X(5)						
Invariant <i>be</i>	X			X(3)						
3rd p. -s absence			X(3)							X(126)
3rd p. -s presence			X(2)	X(9)						
Invariant <i>don't</i>	X			X(14)						
<i>Ain't</i> as auxiliary	X			X(4)						
Aux. <i>Have</i> absence			X(1)	X(4)						
Remote <i>been</i>	X			X(3)						
Completive <i>done</i>	X			X(6)						
Use of <i>gonna/gon</i>			X(1)	X(14)						
Negative concord	X			X(10)						
Existential <i>it/they</i>	X			X(3)						
Nom. Case for gen. contexts	X			X(1)						
No overt auxiliary		X	X(13)							

**Table 5.** Features attested in Chapter 7.

As shown in Table 5, 10 features were not attested in the dialogue passages whereas in the narrative parts 1 feature was not recorded. Moreover, the most recorded feature in both narrative and dialogue parts was not higher than 14 and 13 instances respectively. That is, only 3<sup>rd</sup> person -s absence and copula absence and copula presence seemed to be the most widely used features.

CHAPTER 29										
Aibileen	Not attested (0)		Rarely used (1 – 24)		Moderately used (25 – 49)		Widely used (50 – 99)		Very widely used (100 – 158)	
FEATURES	D	N	D	N	D	N	D	N	D	N
Copula absence			X(5)					X(55)		
Copula presence	X							X(51)		
<i>Ain't</i> for copula			X(2)	X(10)						
Plural <i>is</i>			X(2)	X(7)						
Invariant <i>be</i>			X(2)	X(12)						
3rd p. -s absence			X(2)					X(90)		
3rd p. -s presence	X			X(2)						
Invariant <i>don't</i>	X			X(5)						
<i>Ain't</i> as auxiliary	X			X(6)						
Aux. <i>Have</i> absence	X			X(7)						
Remote <i>been</i>	X			X(3)						
Completive <i>done</i>	X			X(9)						
Use of <i>gonna/gon</i>			X(3)	X(16)						
Negative concord	X			X(8)						
Negative inversion	X			X(2)						
Existential <i>it/they</i>	X			X(1)						
Nom. Case for gen. contexts			X(1)	X(4)						
No overt auxiliary			X(8)	X(1)						

**Table 6.** Features attested in Chapter 29.

As shown in Table 6, 10 features were also not attested in the dialogue parts and the instances of the most recorded feature in both narrative and dialogue parts were not higher than 16 and 8 respectively. Only 3<sup>rd</sup> person -s absence and copula absence and copula presence were labelled as “Widely Used”.

Table 7, which corresponds to Chapter 34, exhibited that more features were used in the dialogue parts with respect to other chapters.

CHAPTER 34										
Aibileen	Not attested (0)		Rarely used (1 – 24)		Moderately used (25 – 49)		Widely used (50 – 99)		Very widely used (100 – 158)	
FEATURES	D	N	D	N	D	N	D	N	D	N
Copula absence			X(9)					X(58)		
Copula presence			X(15)					X(95)		
<i>Ain't</i> for copula			X(2)	X(18)						
Plural <i>is</i>	X			X(5)						
Invariant <i>be</i>	X			X(3)						
3rd p. -s absence			X(2)							X(136)
3rd p. -s presence	X					X(34)				
Invariant <i>don't</i>			X(1)	X(16)						
<i>Ain't</i> as auxiliary			X(2)	X(7)						
Aux. <i>Have</i> absence			X(2)	X(8)						
Remote <i>been</i>			X(3)	X(3)						
Completive <i>done</i>	X			X(4)						
Invariant <i>be</i> (future)		X	X(2)							
Use of <i>gonna/gon</i>			X(7)	X(14)						
Negative concord			X(2)	X(9)						
Existential <i>it/they</i>			X(1)	X(2)						
Nom. Case for gen. contexts	X			X(3)						
No overt auxiliary			X(2)	X(7)						

**Table 7.** Features attested in Chapter 34.

As can be seen, only 5 features representing the dialogue parts were not attested. In the case of the narrative parts, excluding invariant *be* for future tense, all the features were considered “Rarely Used” with the exception of 3<sup>rd</sup> person -s absence and copula absence and copula presence, which were the only features labelled as “Widely used” and “Very Widely Used”. In this chapter, only 3<sup>rd</sup> person -s presence was classified as “Moderately Used”, which could be understood as an inconsistency since this feature did not appear in other chapters frequently.

On the contrary, Table 8 to 12, which contain the data of Minny’s chapters, exhibited contrasting results. That is, this character used a more extensive number of features in the dialogue passages than in the narrative parts. Moreover, a difference in the number of AAVE features used by this character can be also beheld throughout her chapters.

Table 8, which corresponds to Chapter 3, showed that AAVE features were more representative in the dialogue parts.

CHAPTER 3										
Minny	Not attested (0)		Rarely used (1 – 24)		Moderately used (25 – 49)		Widely used (50 – 99)		Very widely used (100 – 158)	
	D	N	D	N	D	N	D	N	D	N
<b>FEATURES</b>										
Copula absence			X(12)	X(2)						
Copula presence			X(14)					X(80)		
<i>Ain't</i> for copula			X(9)	X(4)						
Plural <i>is</i>		X	X(1)							
3rd p. -s absence			X(5)	X(1)						
3rd p. -s presence			X(1)					X(97)		
Invariant <i>don't</i>			X(2)	X(2)						
<i>Ain't</i> as auxiliary	X			X(4)						
Aux. <i>Have</i> absence			X(1)	X(1)						
Remote <i>been</i>		X	X(1)							
Completive <i>done</i>		X	X(2)							
Invariant <i>be</i> (future)		X	X(1)							
Negative concord			X(4)	X(3)						
Existential <i>it/they</i>		X	X(1)							
Nom. Case for gen. contexts		X	X(2)							
No overt auxiliary			X(21)	X(1)						

**Table 8.** Features attested in Chapter 3.

As can be observed, from all the analysed features, 6 features were not attested in the narrative parts whereas in the dialogue passage only 1 was not recorded. Moreover, although more features were found in the dialogue parts, the frequency in which they appeared was still low. Only copula presence and 3<sup>rd</sup> person -s absence were labelled as “Widely Used”.

Table 9, which corresponds to Chapter 4, showed similar results as in Table 8 but the frequency of occurrence of the features was relatively low.

CHAPTER 4										
Minny	Not attested (0)		Rarely used (1 – 24)		Moderately used (25 – 49)		Widely used (50 – 99)		Very widely used (100 – 158)	
	D	N	D	N	D	N	D	N	D	N
<b>FEATURES</b>										
Copula absence		X	X(2)							
Copula presence			X(2)					X(51)		
<i>Ain't</i> for copula			X(1)	X(2)						
3rd p. -s absence		X	X(2)							
3rd p. -s presence	X					X(41)				
Negative concord		X	X(1)							
No overt auxiliary		X	X(2)							

**Table 9.** Features attested in Chapter 4.

As observed in Table 9, only 7 features were found in total in Chapter 4 of which 4 were not attested in the narrative parts and only 1 was not found in the dialogue passages. Copula presence and 3<sup>rd</sup> person -s presence seemed to be the only representative features.

Table 10, which represent the data obtained from Chapter 10, exhibited comparable results. Excluding copula presence and 3<sup>rd</sup> person -s presence, all the features were classified as “Rarely Used”. However, the dialogue parts reflected a considerable number of features whereas in the narrative parts the result was scarce, as 8 features were not attested.

CHAPTER 10										
Minny	Not attested (0)		Rarely used (1 – 24)		Moderately used (25 – 49)		Widely used (50 – 99)		Very widely used (100 – 158)	
	D	N	D	N	D	N	D	N	D	N
<b>FEATURES</b>										
Copula absence			X(12)	X(1)						
Copula presence			X(9)							X(128)
<i>Ain't</i> for copula			X(5)	X(1)						
Plural <i>is</i>		X	X(1)							
3rd p. -s absence		X	X(5)							
3rd p. -s presence	X									X(158)
Invariant <i>don't</i>		X	X(1)							
<i>Ain't</i> as auxiliary		X	X(3)							
Remote <i>been</i>		X	X(1)							
Completive <i>done</i>		X	X(1)							
Use of <i>gonna/gon</i>			X(1)	X(2)						
Negative concord		X	X(7)							
No overt auxiliary		X	X(10)							

**Table 10.** Features attested in Chapter 10.

In Table 11, the results were more contrastive as of 14 features recorded in this Chapter 9 features were not attested in the narrative parts.

CHAPTER 18										
Minny	Not attested (0)		Rarely used (1 – 24)		Moderately used (25 – 49)		Widely used (50 – 99)		Very widely used (100 – 158)	
	D	N	D	N	D	N	D	N	D	N
FEATURES										
Copula absence			X(14)	X(1)						
Copula presence			X(12)			X(46)				
<i>Ain't</i> for copula			X(3)	X(2)						
Plural <i>is</i>		X	X(2)							
3rd p. -s absence		X	X(1)							
3rd p. -s presence			X(2)					X(74)		
Invariant <i>don't</i>		X	X(1)							
<i>Ain't</i> as auxiliary		X	X(1)							
Aux. <i>Have</i> absence		X	X(2)							
Completive <i>done</i>		X	X(1)							
Invariant <i>be</i> (future)		X	X(2)							
Use of <i>gonna/gon</i>		X	X(8)							
Negative concord		X	X(3)							
No overt auxiliary		X	X(6)							

Table 11. Features attested in Chapter 18.

As can be seen, all the features were attested in the dialogue passages but they were labelled as “Rarely Used”. Only copula presence and 3<sup>rd</sup> person -s presence stood out.

In Table 12, the results certainly exhibited that the pattern was the same as in Table 11. All the features were recorded in the dialogue passages but 10 features were not attested in the narrative parts.

CHAPTER 24										
Minny	Not attested (0)		Rarely used (1 – 24)		Moderately used (25 – 49)		Widely used (50 – 99)		Very widely used (100 – 158)	
	D	N	D	N	D	N	D	N	D	N
FEATURES										
Copula absence			X(10)	X(2)						
Copula presence			X(7)							X(145)
<i>Ain't</i> for copula			X(12)	X(3)						
Plural <i>is</i>		X	X(2)							
Invariant <i>be</i>		X	X(1)							
3rd p. -s absence		X	X(1)							
3rd p. -s presence			X(1)					X(56)		
Invariant <i>don't</i>		X	X(1)							
<i>Ain't</i> as auxiliary		X	X(1)							
Aux. <i>Have</i> absence			X(1)	X(1)						
Use of <i>gonna/gon</i>		X	X(4)							
Negative concord			X(9)	X(2)						
Negative inversion		X	X(1)							

Nom. case for gen. contexts		X	X(1)							
No subject-aux. inversion		X	X(1)							
No overt auxiliary		X	X(3)							

**Table 12.** Features attested in Chapter 24.

## 5. Discussion

This study aimed to find out how well African American Vernacular English is portrayed in what tries to be a naturalistic piece of work of language. The results showed above suggest that 20 of the 22 features proposed in the linguistic literature are found in the selected chapters, which makes this non-mainstream variety of English representative. The 2 features that did not appear in any chapter are preterite *had* and genitive *-s*, which are subject to age-grading and they are not common in adults' speech as described in Section 2. Moreover, the different narrative and dialogue parts also allow us to notice that the two characters do different things in relation to the use of language and interestingly, some of the features do not appear consistently as there is language variation.

Bearing in mind this language variation, it is crucial to consider that the dialogue passages may reflect language in a more colloquial way than the narrative parts when addressing any speaker. That is, African American features are expected to be more representative in the dialogues in a way, which is exactly the case of Minny, as the results obtained in the previous section perfectly showed.

Taking this point of view into account, in the case of Aibileen the use of language in the narrative parts and dialogue passages seems to correspond to what was described in the linguistic literature, regardless of the number of features throughout the chapters. The example in (39) exemplifies how language is represented in Aibileen's narration whereas sentence (40) exhibits the language used in the dialogues.

(39) Mister Raleigh Leefolt walk out the door where he don't have to give nobody no explanation about nothing.

“Mister Raleigh Leefolt walks out the door where he does not have to give anybody any explanation about anything”

(Stockett 2009: 432)

(40) I ain't stole no silver service, Miss Leefolt

“I have not stolen any silver service, Miss Leefolt”.

(Stockett 2009: 440)

These examples certainly demonstrate that Aibileen uses consistently AAVE features in both narration and dialogues. 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular *-s* absence, invariant *don't*, *ain't* as auxiliary and negative concord are common features in AAVE.

Let us consider now Minny's use of features. Sentences (41) and (42) exemplify how language is portrayed when Minny is a narrator, whereas sentences (43) and (44) display the way language is used in Minny's dialogue passages.

(41) She stops crying and I don't have any good things left to say.

(Stockett 2009: 235)

(42) Every day, Miss Celia looks like she just can't believe I've come back to work.

(Stockett 2009: 47)

(43) He even call me up at home a few weeks later to make sure I didn't have no plans to quit.

“He even called me up at home a few weeks later to make sure I did not have any plans to quit”.

(Stockett 2009: 235)

(44) You ain't having nothing till supper.

“You are not having anything until supper.”

(Stockett 2009: 51)

As can be observed in (41) and (42), the language used in this case seems to follow the grammar of the standard language whereas the examples in (43) and (44) contain some features which belong to AAVE. This is an interesting point, as Minny does not exhibit the same behaviour as Aibileen, and different ways of speaking are found throughout her chapters. Minny sounds more African American when she speaks in the dialogues. Thus, we can assert that there are differences in Minny's speech depending on whether the text she produces belongs to dialogue or to narration.

Let us assume that these differences between Aibileen and Minny may represent idiolectal differences. In a novel like *The Help*, idiolectal differences are crucial and central to language: in order to represent AAVE in a natural way, individual variation must be taken into account.

In the case of Minny, her particular way of speaking seems not to follow Standard English, as some of AAVE features are encountered in her narration. As shown in Section 4, 3<sup>rd</sup> *person singular present* is one of the most widely used features. Bearing in mind the description of this feature in the linguistic literature, the use of this morpheme *-s* is a grammatical property of AAVE spoken in the Southern United States and the fact that Minny uses it most of the time and Aibileen makes use of it only in some environments in the narrative parts can be attributed to, presumably, an idiolectal difference.



Along similar lines, Aibileen's particular use of language is also characterized by the dropping of the subject. Although this syntactic property is not an inherent grammatical feature in AAVE, it can be only observed in Aibileen's narrative parts. Sentence (45) and (46) illustrate how Aibileen omits the subject whereas sentence (47) exhibits Minny's use of this feature.

(45)  $\emptyset$  Saved up special for her.

“(She) saved up special for her”.

(Stockett 2009: 390)

(46)  $\emptyset$  Say it's not like one a my cakes.

“(She) says it's not like one of my cakes”.

(Stockett 2009: 430)

(47) Miss Celia never does any entertaining.

(Stockett 2009: 47)

After considering these individual differences, Minny's narration is still of interest due to its language appropriateness. Bearing in mind the comparison of some features that was established between AAVE spoken in the Southern United States and Southern United States English in the linguistic review, Minny's speech seems to be more related to the latter.

Let us compare the AAVE features that were found in Minny's narrative with the speech of Miss Celia, the white lady who Minny works for. This particular use of language is only observed in the dialogues but it is relevant so as to explain the contrast between Minny's registers and narration.

(48) I can't look at it no more.

“I can’t look at it anymore”.

(Stockett 2009: 232)

(49) Well, no wonder she can’t stand me!

“Well, no wonder she can stand me!

(Stockett 2009: 316)

(50) He’s coming?

“Is he coming?”

(Stockett 2009: 232)

As observed in (48) and (49), Miss Celia, a Southern white American speaker, constructs sentences by using negative concord, which is a feature that is found in both varieties of English. The lack of subject-auxiliary inversion shown in (50) exhibits how a white Southern American speaker makes a question in the same way as an African American speaker.

Another difference with respect to this correlation between these varieties is the use of *ain’t*. Miss Celia never uses *ain’t* as an auxiliary verb but she uses it for copula *be*. Let us now examine the examples in (51) and (52).

(51) Ain’t it just the prettiest thing you’ve ever seen?

“Isn’t it just the prettiest thing you have ever seen?”

(Stockett 2009: 317)

(52) He ain’t dead (308)

“He is not dead”

(Stockett 2009: 308)

As observed in (51) and (52), only *ain't* for copula appears in Miss Celia's speech but *ain't* is used as a "preverbal negative for present tense forms of *be* as well as for the auxiliary haven't/hasn't [...] in some Southern vernacular varieties" (Wolfram 2004a: 295).

In this section, the idea of idiolect has been proposed to give an explanation to the differences between Aibileen and Minny's narrative and dialogue parts. However, the contribution to the interpretation of the divergence between Minny's registers and narration has been speculative.

## **6. Conclusion**

In this paper, a deep analysis of how well African American Vernacular English is represented in Kathryn Stockett's *The Help* has been carried out. The main goal of this piece of work was to study the morphological and syntactic properties of this non-mainstream variety of English and consider whether AAVE features were present in the novel under study with the purpose of evaluating the faithfulness of the representation of such a variety in a piece of literary fiction. The results obtained in Section 4 have confirmed our hypothesis that most of the features described in the relevant linguistic literature would be attested in the speech of the African American English characters, However, upon close inspection of the frequency of use of such features, I also concluded that a higher number of features as well as a higher writer's consistency in their use could have constructed a better picture of AAVE in the novel.

An imbalance between speech and the dialogue and narrative parts has also been uncovered. Actually, the fact that differences between speakers' speech have been observed leads to the conclusion that there seems to be individual differences in the speech of the two African American characters whose language has been studied.

Therefore, the notion of idiolect has been introduced so as to prove that this may be the reason why we have found African American speakers who do not use all the AAVE features all the time, with these features seemingly varying depending on the speaker and the context.

There has also been an attempt to clearly establish that African American speakers use features that have actually been reported in the literature review as being characteristic of African American English speakers. Nevertheless, some of these features have also been attested in the speech of Southern white speakers, which led us to consider the existence of certain symmetry between Minny's and Miss Celia's speech.

Finally, the whole picture is that the novel is far from containing a collection of AAVE features that are systematically found in all the characters' linguistic production. However, this fact might have been designed on purpose, as the writer needs to seek the way to make the characters sound natural and faithful to their variety of English, and an overuse of AAVE features would precisely have the contrary effect. As is well known, language contains individual variation that affects grammatical features that are geographically, ethnically and socially determined. Incorporating this kind of variation alongside AAVE features is a necessary step towards making the African American English characters' speech natural and credible.

## References:

### Primary sources:

Stockett Kathryn, *The Help*. Penguin books. 2009.

### Secondary sources:

Fasold, Ralph W. (1969). Tense and the form be in black English. *Language*. 45(4): 763-776.

Fasold, Ralph W. (1972). *Tense Marking in Black English*. Arlington, VA.: Center for Applied Linguistics.

Fasold, Ralph W. and Walt Wolfram (1970). "Some linguistic features of Negro dialect". In R.W Fasold and R.W. Shuy. (Ed.), *Teaching Standard English in the inner city*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics. Pp.41–86.

Green, Lisa (1998). "Aspect and predicate phrases in African-American Vernacular English". In G. Bailey, J. Baugh, S.S. Mufwene, J.R. Rickford (Ed.), *African-American English: Structure, History and Use*. Routledge. Pp. 37-68.

Green, Lisa (2002). *African American English: a linguistic introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Howe, Darin (2005). "Negation in African American Vernacular English". In Y. Iyeiri (Ed.), *Aspects of English negation*. John Benjamins Publishing Company. Pp. 173-204.

Johnson, Fern. L. (1999). *Speaking Culturally: Language diversity in the United States*. Thousand Oakes, CA: Sage Publications.

Kautzsch, Alexander (2004). "Earlier African American English: morphology and syntax". In B. Kortmann, K. Burrige, R. Mesthrie, E. W. Schneider and C. Upton (Ed.), *A handbook of varieties of English: A multimedia reference tool*. Mouton: de Gruyter. Pp. 341-355.

Labov, William (1972). *Language in the Inner City: Studies in the Black English Vernacular*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Labov, William (1998). "Co-existent systems in African American Vernacular English". In G. Bailey, J. Baugh, S.S. Mufwene, J.R. Rickford (Ed.), *African-American English: Structure, History and Use*. Routledge. Pp. 110-153.

Martin, Stefan and Walt Wolfram (1998). "The sentence in African American Vernacular English". In G. Bailey, J. Baugh, S.S. Mufwene, J.R. Rickford (Ed.), *African-American English: Structure, History and Use*. Routledge. Pp. 11-36.

Morgan, Marcyliena (2002). *Language, Discourse and Power in African American Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Rickford, John (1998). "The creole origins of African-American Vernacular English: Evidence from copula absence". In G. Bailey, J. Baugh, S.S. Mufwene, J.R. Rickford (Ed.), *African-American English: Structure, History and Use*. Routledge. Pp. 154-200.
- Rickford, John (1999). *African American Vernacular English: Features and Use, Evolution and Educational implications*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Wolfram, Walt (1974). "The Relationship of White Southern Speech to Vernacular Black English". *Language*. 50.3: 498-527.
- Wolfram, Walt (2004a). "Rural and ethnic varieties in the Southeast: morphology and syntax". In B. Kortmann, K. Burridge, R. Mesthrie, E. W. Schneider and C. Upton (Ed.), *A handbook of varieties of English: A multimedia reference tool*. Mouton: de Gruyter. Pp. 281-302.
- Wolfram, Walt (2004b). "Urban African American Vernacular English: morphology and syntax". In B. Kortmann, K. Burridge, R. Mesthrie, E. W. Schneider and C. Upton (Ed.), *A handbook of varieties of English: A multimedia reference tool*. Mouton: de Gruyter. Pp. 319-340.
- Wolfram, Walt and Ralph W. Fasold. (1974). *The study of social dialects in American English*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Wolfram, Walt and Thomas, E. R. (2002). *The development of African American English*. Oxford: Blackwell.

## Appendix

FEATURES	AIBILEEN					
	CHAPTER 1			CHAPTER 2		
	DIALOGUE	NARRATIVE	TOTAL	DIALOGUE	NARRATIVE	TOTAL
Copula absence	1	61	62	8	77	85
Copula presence	4	52	56	3	56	59
<i>Ain't</i> for Copula	0	6	6	2	14	16
Plural <i>is</i>	0	3	3	0	6	6
Invariant <i>be</i>	0	14	14	1	11	12
3rd p. -s absence	0	105	105	8	149	157
3rd p. -s presence	0	4	4	0	6	6
Invariant don't	0	14	14	1	15	16
<i>Ain't</i> as auxiliary	0	3	3	2	6	8
Aux. <i>Have</i> absence	0	6	6	1	10	11
Remote <i>been</i>	0	1	1	0	2	2
Completive <i>done</i>	0	6	6	0	8	8
Preterite <i>had</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0
Invariant <i>be</i> (future)	0	0	0	1	1	2
Use of <i>gonna/gon</i>	0	6	6	1	7	8
Negative concord	0	8	8	1	17	18
Negative inversion	0	0	0	1	1	2
Existential <i>it/they</i>	0	1	1	0	5	5
Genitive -s absence	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nom. case for gen. contexts	0	9	9	1	5	6
No subject-aux. inversion	1	0	1	0	0	0
No overt auxiliary	2	0	2	11	0	11
<b>TOTAL IN CHAPTER</b>	307			438		

FEATURES	AIBILEEN					
	CHAPTER 7			CHAPTER 29		
	DIALOGUE	NARRATIVE	TOTAL	DIALOGUE	NARRATIVE	TOTAL
Copula absence	5	47	52	5	55	60
Copula presence	7	41	48	0	51	51
<i>Ain't</i> for Copula	0	12	12	2	10	12
Plural <i>is</i>	0	5	5	2	7	9
Invariant <i>be</i>	0	3	3	2	12	14
3rd p. -s absence	3	126	129	2	90	92
3rd p. -s presence	0	8	8	0	2	2
Invariant don't	2	9	11	0	5	5
<i>Ain't</i> as auxiliary	0	4	4	0	6	6
Aux. <i>Have</i> absence	1	4	5	0	7	7

Remote <i>been</i>	0	3	3	0	3	3
Completive <i>done</i>	0	6	6	0	9	9
Preterite <i>had</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0
Invariant <i>be</i> (future)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Use of <i>gonna/gon</i>	1	14	15	3	16	19
Negative concord	0	10	10	0	8	8
Negative inversion	0	0	0	0	2	2
Existential <i>it/they</i>	0	3	3	0	1	1
Genitive <i>-s</i> absence	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nom. case for gen. contexts	0	1	1	1	4	5
No subject-aux. inversion	0	0	0	0	0	0
No overt auxiliary	13	0	13	8	1	9
<b>TOTAL IN CHAPTER</b>	328			314		

	<b>AIBILEEN</b>		
	<b>CHAPTER 34</b>		
<b>FEATURES</b>	<b>DIALOGUE</b>	<b>NARRATIVE</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Copula absence	9	58	67
Copula presence	15	95	110
<i>Ain't</i> for Copula	2	18	20
Plural <i>is</i>	0	5	5
Invariant <i>be</i>	0	3	3
3rd p. <i>-s</i> absence	2	136	138
3rd p. <i>-s</i> presence	0	34	34
Invariant don't	1	16	17
<i>Ain't</i> as auxiliary	2	7	9
Aux. <i>Have</i> absence	2	8	10
Remote <i>been</i>	3	3	6
Completive <i>done</i>	0	4	4
Preterite <i>had</i>	0	0	0
Invariant <i>be</i> (future)	2	0	2
Use of <i>gonna/gon</i>	7	14	21
Negative concord	2	9	11
Negative inversion	0	0	0
Existential <i>it/they</i>	1	2	3
Genitive <i>-s</i> absence	0	0	0
Nom. case for gen. contexts	0	3	3
No subject-aux. inversion	0	0	0
No overt auxiliary	2	7	9
<b>TOTAL IN CHAPTER</b>	472		<b>AIBILEEN'S GRAND TOTAL</b> <b>1859</b>



FEATURES	MINNY					
	CHAPTER 3			CHAPTER 4		
	DIALOGUE	NARRATIVE	TOTAL	DIALOGUE	NARRATIVE	TOTAL
Copula absence	12	2	14	2	0	2
Copula presence	14	80	94	2	51	53
<i>Ain't</i> for Copula	9	4	13	1	2	3
Plural <i>is</i>	1	0	1	0	0	0
Invariant <i>be</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0
3rd p. <i>-s</i> absence	5	1	6	2	0	2
3rd p. <i>-s</i> presence	1	97	98	0	41	41
Invariant don't	2	2	4	0	0	0
<i>Ain't</i> as auxiliary	0	4	4	0	0	0
Aux. <i>Have</i> absence	1	1	2	0	0	0
Remote <i>been</i>	1	0	1	0	0	0
Completive <i>done</i>	2	0	2	0	0	0
Preterite <i>had</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0
Invariant <i>be</i> (future)	1	0	1	0	0	0
Use of <i>gonna/gon</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0
Negative concord	4	3	7	1	0	1
Negative inversion	0	0	0	0	0	0
Existential <i>it/they</i>	1	0	1	0	0	0
Genitive <i>-s</i> absence	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nom. case for gen. contexts	2	0	2	0	0	0
No subject-aux. inversion	0	0	0	0	0	0
No overt auxiliary	21	1	22	2	0	2
<b>TOTAL IN CHAPTER</b>	272			104		

FEATURES	MINNY					
	CHAPTER 10			CHAPTER 18		
	DIALOGUE	NARRATIVE	TOTAL	DIALOGUE	NARRATIVE	TOTAL
Copula absence	12	1	13	14	1	15
Copula presence	9	128	137	12	46	58
<i>Ain't</i> for Copula	5	1	6	3	2	5
Plural <i>is</i>	1	0	1	2	0	2
Invariant <i>be</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0
3rd p. <i>-s</i> absence	5	0	5	1	0	1
3rd p. <i>-s</i> presence	0	158	158	2	74	76
Invariant don't	1	0	1	1	0	1
<i>Ain't</i> as auxiliary	3	0	3	1	0	1
Aux. <i>Have</i> absence	0	0	0	2	0	2
Remote <i>been</i>	1	0	1	0	0	0
Completive <i>done</i>	1	0	1	1	0	1
Preterite <i>had</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0

Invariant <i>be</i> (future)	0	0	0	2	0	2
Use of <i>gonna/gon</i>	1	2	3	8	1	9
Negative concord	7	0	7	3	0	3
Negative inversion	0	0	0	0	0	0
Existential <i>it/they</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0
Genitive <i>-s</i> absence	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nom. case for gen. contexts	0	0	0	0	0	0
No subject-aux. inversion	0	0	0	0	0	0
No overt auxiliary	10	0	10	6	0	6
<b>TOTAL IN CHAPTER</b>			346			182

FEATURES	MINNY		
	CHAPTER 24		
	DIALOGUE	NARRATIVE	TOTAL
Copula absence	10	2	12
Copula presence	7	145	152
<i>Ain't</i> for Copula	12	3	15
Plural <i>is</i>	2	0	2
Invariant <i>be</i>	1	0	1
3rd p. <i>-s</i> absence	1	0	1
3rd p. <i>-s</i> presence	1	56	57
Invariant <i>don't</i>	1	0	1
<i>Ain't</i> as auxiliary	1	0	1
Aux. <i>Have</i> absence	1	1	2
Remote <i>been</i>	0	0	0
Completive <i>done</i>	0	0	0
Preterite <i>had</i>	0	0	0
Invariant <i>be</i> (future)	0	0	0
Use of <i>gonna/gon</i>	4	0	4
Negative concord	9	2	11
Negative inversion	1	0	1
Existential <i>it/they</i>	0	0	0
Genitive <i>-s</i> absence	0	0	0
Nom. case for gen. contexts	1	0	1
No subject-aux. inversion	1	0	1
No overt auxiliary	3	0	3
<b>TOTAL IN CHAPTER</b>		265	
		<b>MINNY'S GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>1169</b>
		<b>GRAND TOTAL (AIBILEEN AND MINNY)</b>	<b>3028</b>