



The English History of African American English

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Much scholarly work assumes that the structure of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) derives from an earlier plantation creole. This volume explores an alternative hypothesis: that the characteristic features were acquired from the varieties of English to which early speakers were exposed.

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Editorial Review

Review

"These studies of the African American diaspora apply the most refined quantitative techniques to illuminate the history of African American English. The brilliant work of Poplack and her colleagues has sharply narrowed the limits of controversy on the origins of AAVE, with findings that every responsible scholar must take into account in future research." *William Labov, University of Pennsylvania*

"This scholarly work is revolutionary and extremely well researched. It vindicates one's cultural identity and the tremendous endurance of African resistance. Well done!" *Henry Bishop, Chief Curator, Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia*

"Poplack and her colleagues have raised the art and science of AAVE research to the highest level ever attained by variationist sociolinguistics, and this book is essential reading for any linguistic scholar who wants to know about the history and structure of AAE throughout North America. It is not too soon to declare [this book] a classic." *Language in Society*

"[The English History of African American English] constitutes both a treasure of information and an indispensable tool for linguistic investigation." *Canadian Journal of Linguistics*

"*The English History of African American English* represents the type of detailed study that should be conducted in the investigation of the origin and other issues in AAE. The book challenges the long-standing creole hypothesis but raises enough questions about the structure of Early AAE to keep the origin debate alive." *Journal of Sociolinguistics, 2003*

From the Back Cover

Much scholarly work assumes that the structure of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) derives from an earlier plantation creole. This reader explores an alternative hypothesis: that the characteristic features were acquired from the varieties of English to which early speakers were exposed.

Marshalling historical, dialectal and theoretical linguistic evidence, this work focuses on descendants of former slaves whose ancestors left the US in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to settle in enclave communities where their language developed under conditions of social or geographical isolation.

Six variable linguistic features, most previously considered evidence of creole origins, are traced across varieties of English brought to the US by British colonists. These features, and their linguistic patterning in discourse, are demonstrably part of the English of early African Americans, transmitted to and retained by their descendants long after their disappearance from mainstream varieties of English. Contributors include Shana Poplack, Sali Tagliamonte, Gunnel Tottie, and Salikoko S. Mufwene amongst others.

About the Author

Shana Poplack is Professor and Canada Research Chair in Linguistics and Director of the Sociolinguistics Laboratory at the University of Ottawa. An expert in linguistic variation theory and its application to diverse areas of language contact, she has published widely on code-switching, Hispanic linguistics, Canadian French and numerous aspects of African American English.

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Christopher Patterson:

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James Wendler:

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