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African American Vernacular English in African American Literature

by
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Zásady pro vypracování:

Student nejprve prostuduje literaturu týkající se afroamerického dialektu, stručně tuto variantu angličtiny charakterizuje především z pohledu lexikálního a identifikuje rysy, ve kterých se tento jazyk liší od standardní americké angličtiny. V praktické části potom autor analyzuje použití dialektu v literárních textech z různých období afroamerické literatury na základě principů definovaných v praktické části.

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Abstract

This bachelor paper deals with the representation of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) in African American Literature. Information about the origin, structure and speakers of the variety is presented. The paper provides with a list of phonetic and grammatical features of AAVE. The role of language in literature and American society is presented. Brief information about African American Literature is introduced. The representation of AAVE in selected works is analysed. The works analysed in this paper are *My Southern Home* by William Wells Brown, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston, *Go Tell It on the Mountain* by James Baldwin and *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker. Data provided by the analysis are compared in order to identify the differences and similarities in the use of the variety.

Key words

African American Vernacular English, African American Literature, lexicon, grammar, phonetics

Souhrn

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá užitím afro-americké angličtiny v afro-americké literatuře. Práce obsahuje soupis fonetických a gramatických prvků, informace tykající se původu, struktury a mluvčích zmíněné varianty. Význam jazyka v literatuře a v americké společnosti je objasněn. Po krátkém úvodu k afro-americké literatuře následuje rozbor afro-americké angličtiny ve čtyřech vybraných dílech, jimiž jsou *Jih a jeho lidé* od Williama Wellse Browna, *Jejich oči sledovaly boha* od Zory Neale Hurston, *Jít žalovat tomu na horu* od Jamese Baldwina a *Barva nachu* od Alice Walker. Výsledky rozboru jednotlivých děl jsou porovnány mezi sebou s cílem identifikovat rozdíly v zobrazení dané varianty anglického jazyka.

Klíčová slova

afro-americká angličtina, afro-americká literatura, lexikon, gramatika, fonetika

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1. Introduction

Although there are several theories on the origin of African American Vernacular English (later AAVE), it is claimed that the seeds of the speech of black folk were sown in the early 17th century (Andrews, 1997, p.687) when the first slaves were brought to America, separated from members of their language families, and faced the necessity to communicate both with white masters and traders, and with other slaves. Since then, the living conditions and attitudes towards African Americans have undergone innumerable changes, so has done the language they speak.

As an alternative to collecting data directly, several sources of data such as the *Slave Narrative Collection*, a part of the *Federal Writers' Project*[1)] consisting of interviews with former slaves, the media, and works of art are used in the studies of this variety. African American literature was chosen as a source of data for this thesis.

The aim of this paper is to trace the evolution of the representation of AAVE in African American literature. Four works by four different authors, each one a dominant figure of his/her era, were selected, analysed against a list of the features of the variety, and compared both one with another and with the results of similar researches.

The first chapter of the paper introduces general facts about AAVE. The question whether AAVE is a dialect or a language is addressed. Different theories on the origin of the variety, background information about its speakers are introduced and motives behind the labels attributed to the variety are explained.

The following subchapters focus on distinctive features of AAVE. Starting with the lexicon, it is pointed to its role and different ways it has been sorted and presented. The rest of this chapter presents a description of characteristic phonetic and grammatical features of the variety.

[1)] Federal Writers' Project: a programme established in the United States in 1935 … as part of the New Deal struggle against the Great Depression. (Encyclopedia Britannica)

The next chapter provides a brief introduction to African American Literature and explains the relation between the African Americans and English. Importance and function of language both in American society and in literature is pointed out.

The following chapter explains the motives behind the selection of the works that are analysed in this paper and presents data of the analysis. The selected works are *My Southern Home: Or, The South and Its People* by William Wells Brown, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neal Hurston, *Go Tell It on the Mountain* by James Baldwin, and *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker.

Data from the analysis is compared in the last chapter. The work is placed within its field, the attribution of the work to the study of representation of AAVE in African American Literature is identified and suggestions for further studies are made.

2. African American Vernacular English

African American Vernacular English is a variation of English spoken mostly by people of African origin living in the United States of America. Most of the linguists involved in studies of this variety see AAVE as a "systematic and rule governed" variety. Green (2002, foreword p.9) is more specific as she defines AAVE as a "sociolinguistic" variety, since both linguistic and social factors like class, age, and style are directly related to the variety. The question whether AAVE is a dialect or a language arises rather among the public than among the linguists who are aware of the fact that both of the concepts are rule-governed, therefore that such a question lacks importance.

AAVE shares features, especially phonological ones, with other varieties of English, such as colloquial English spoken by other ethnic groups that belong mainly to the working class. The features AAVE shares with other varieties occur more frequently in AAVE than in the varieties the features are shared with.

Despite the fact that the majority of African Americans knows the lexicon and some features of AAVE (Green, 2002, p.13), not all African Americans use the variety. In fact, even speakers of AAVE do not use the variety all the time. According to Labov (1972, p. 189), speakers switch codes between AAVE and SE many times within even a brief conversation. AAVE speakers use features of the variety more when they speak with other African Americans or people who they are familiar with. Use of AAVE is determined by age, gender, educational, socioeconomic and regional background.

Rickford claims that "phonological and grammatical features are used most often by younger lower- and working-class speakers in urban areas and in informal styles" (1999, p.9). The results of his studies also show that males use the variety more frequently than females and that there are regional differences in use and frequency of occurrence of some features. (1999, p.11).

The importance of AAVE should not be underestimated. Since the 1960s, no other variety of English has received as much academic and public attention as AAVE (Green, 2002, p.5). See below Rickford's list of AAVE speakers. Note that AAVE is not spoken only by African Americans as there are also white people who use the variety.

> preachers, novelists, storytellers, poets, playwrights, actors, actresses, street corner hustlers, church-going grandparents, working mothers and fathers and schoolyard children, rappers, singers, barber-shop and beauty-salon clients
>
> (Rickford, 1999, p. 12)

2.1 Labels

Beside pejorative names like *bad, broken,* or *incorrect* English that have been used to refer to the speech of black people in the USA, more than a dozen of labels have been attributed to the variety on academic level. See a list of labels in the appendices (ap. 1).

Attitudes towards African American people in American society have been reflected in the labels, since the variety has always been named according the way its speakers were referred to at a particular historical moment. For instance, when African descendants were called *Negros* or *Niggers*, their speech was called *Negro dialect.* When the word *black* was used to refer to its speakers, the variety was analogously called *Black folk speech.* Dark-skinned people living in the USA have been called African Americans for nearly 25 years, since then the variety has been referred to as *African American Language, or African American (Vernacular) English.*

Second part of the labels reflects opinions about the speech itself. On one hand, the use of the word *English* serves the purpose of emphasizing the connection between the variety and SE. On the other hand, the omission of the word *English* has been applied to distinguish the black speech from SE and to emphasize its African roots or its relation to creoles.

The term *Ebonics* has also been used to refer to AAVE. When the *Oakland Ebonics controversy*[1)] broke out, the word *Ebonics* was incorrectly used, since *Ebonics* is a label of speech of African descendants residing outside the USA.

2.2 Origins of African American English

When the New World became the new home of the first slaves brought from Africa, a need for new means of communication arose. There are several points of view on the origin of AAVE, e.g. the *dialectical,* or *anglicist* and *creolist* theories.

Defenders of the *dialect hypothesis* claim that what nowadays is known as AAVE comes from incorrect English learnt and passed on by slaves. On the contrary, according to the *creole hypothesis*, a pidgin[2)], a common trade language in West Africa, was creolized[3)] , as it became the first language of the next generations, and it was decreolized later, as more features similar to SE were incorporated (McLucas). According to the creolists, AAVE has only superficial similarities with some other American dialects. In the mid-1970s, the so-called Ebonics theory was developed. The term Ebonics comes from *ebony* (black) and *phonics* (sounds). The hypothesis of this theory claims that AAVE did not originate from a creole or a pidgin, but from African Hamito-Bantu language families, therefore comparison with SE is not valid (Brasch, 1981. p. XXVI).

[1)] Oakland Ebonics controversy: The controversy erupted from the Oakland School Board's December 18 resolution to recognize Ebonics as the "primary language of African American children" and take it into account in their Language Arts lessons. (Rickford, 2002)

[2)] Pidgin: a grammatically simplified form of a language, typically English, Dutch, or Portuguese, some elements of which are taken from local languages, used for communication between people not sharing a common language. (Oxford dictionaries)

[3)] Creole: a mother tongue formed from the contact of a European language (especially English, French, Spanish, or Portuguese) with local languages (especially African languages spoken by slaves in the West Indies). (Oxford dictionaries)

2.3 Distinctive features of AAVE

AAVE has more in common with other varieties of English than with Standard English (Green, 2002, p.i). Studies of AAVE are based on comparison with both SE and other English varieties, such as Southern or Hiberno English. Some of lexical, phonological, and grammatical features will be presented in this section.

2.3.1 Lexicon

As a linguistic variation, besides phonological, morphological, syntactic, and semantic features, AAVE is also defined by its proper lexicon. The role of a lexicon is to unite a community and to distinguish it from other groups. The AAVE lexicon can be divided either according to the origin of the words or age of speakers who use particular lexical items.

The AAVE lexicon has been presented in several ways. Publications differ in both the categorization and organization of lexical entries, and the period of time they cover. For example, Major (1994), in his *Juba to Jive*: *A Dictionary of African-American Slang* provides information about the part of speech, time and period of time during which the lexical items were recorded, definitions and geographical information explaining where the words were most popular. Lexical items are added via productive process. Grammatical classes and parts of speech are also inserted in individual lexical entries. Due to spoken origin of the variety, the spelling may vary in different publications.

The AAVE lexicon consists of two elemental categories. On one hand, there are words associated exclusively with AAVE. On the other hand, words which are commonly used in SE also form part of the AAVE lexicon. Lexical items belonging to the latter category have different meaning and occur in different contexts when used in AAVE (Green, 2002, p.13).

Age of speakers is another factor, which defines the division of lexical entries. The first category consists of words that are uttered primarily by a certain age group like teenagers, young adults, or elder people. The second category is formed by words that are used without regards to speakers' age.

As far as the knowledge of the lexicon is concerned, according to Green (2002, p.13), social class has less importance, as she claims that "most of African Americans probably know most of the lexicon…, but they may not be aware of syntactic, semantic and phonological

properties of AAVE." This fact does not imply that all of those who know the lexicon necessarily use it.

As mentioned above, there are regional differences in the use of grammatical and phonological features. The same applies for the use of lexical items, especially for expressions used by younger speakers.

2.3.2 Phonological features

The following subchapters (2.3.2 and 2.3.3) are extracted from Rickford, (1999, p.4 – 9).

Table 1.1 Distinctive phonological features of AAVE

1 Word-final consonant clusters (two or more consonants together/following each other) are reduced. This feature most likely occurs in words that end in *t* or *d.*

(* examples of AAVE stated/listed in *italics*, their equivalents in SE in "quotation marks, inverted commas") – change it, since it's not exactly this way

han' – "hand" *des'* – "desk"
pos' – "post" *pass'* – "passed"

2 Word-final single consonants, especially nasals, are deleted. Use of this feature is not as frequent as of (1).

ma' [mæ] – "man" *ca'* [kæ] – "cat"
ba' [bæ] – "bad"

3 Word-final voiced stops are devoiced after a vowel, thus [b] is pronounced as [p], [d] as [t], and [g] as [k].

[bæ*t*] – "bad" [pi*k*] – "pig"

Glottal stop may follow or replace the devoiced consonant, as in [bæt?] or [bæ?].

4 *G* is omitted in final *ng.*

walkin' – "walking"

5 5a Voiceless *th* [θ] is realized ad *t* or *f.*

tin – "thin" *baf* – "bath."

5b Voiced *th* [ð] is realized as *d* or *v.*

den – "then" *bruvver* – "brother"

6 *Thr* is realized as *th.* This feature mostly occurs before [u] or [o].

thodown [θoudaun] – "throwdown"

7 *L* after a vowel is deleted or vocalized (pronounced as a weak neutral vowel) "LL" may be deleted too, especially when preceding words with initial labial *b, m* or *w* sounds.

he'p – "help" *toah* – "toll"
"He be here tomorrow" – "He'll be here tomorrow"

8 *R* after a vowel is deleted or vocalized (8a). This feature occurs the most often with the *r* at the end of a word and preceding a word that begins with a consonant (8b). Another occurrence is when a vowel follows within the same word (8c). This may cause a grammatical effect as in (8d).

8a *sistuh* – "sister" 8c *Ca'ol* – "Carol"

8b *fouh posts* – "four posts" *sto'y* – "story"

8d *they* – "their"

9 Initial *d* and *g* is deleted in certain tense-aspect auxiliaries (9a). Roots of a*in't* (for SE *didn't*) may be found in this rule

9a "ah *'on* know" – "I *don't* know"

"ah'm '*a* do it" – "I'm *gonna* do it"

10 Unstressed initial and medial syllables are deleted (10a). According to Vaughn-Coke's (1987:22) Mississippi sample, use of this feature is more frequent among elder speakers.

10a *'fraid* – "afraid" *sec't'ry* – "secretary"

11 Adjacent consonants are transported (11a).

11a *aks* – "ask" *waps* – "wasp"

12 Voiced fricatives *v* and *z* are realized as voiced stops *b* and *z*. This feature occurs especially in word-medial position before a nasal.

seben – "seven" *idn* – "isn't"

13 Syllable-initial *str* is realized as *skr*. This feature occurs most frequently before high front vowels like [i].

skreet – "srteet" *deskroy*– "destroy"

14 Diphthongs *ay* and *oy* are pronounced as monophthongs.

ah – "I" *boah* – "boy"

15 [X] and [ɛ] are neutralized or merge before nasals.

[pɪn] – "pin" and "pen"

16 In some words, "Ing" is realized as "ang" and "ink" as "ank."

thang – "thing" *sang* – "sing"

drank – "drink"

17 Stress often shifts on first syllable.

pólice – police *hotel – hotél*

18 Intonation (pitch and rising level final contours) varies more in AAVE than in other variations.

2.3.3 Grammatical (morphological and syntactic) features of AAVE

2.3.3.1 Pre-verbal markers of tense, mood, and aspect

1 Copula/auxiliary *is* and *are* is absent when referring to present tense states and actions.

"He Ø tall" – "He's tall"

"They Ø running" – "They are running"

2 Invariant *be* (sometimes *bees*) is used for habitual aspect (2a). This feature is used with auxiliary *do* in questions, negatives, and tag questions (2b).

2a "He *be* walkin" (usually, regularly) – "He is usually walking/usually walks."

versus "He Ø walking" (right now)

2b "*Do* he *be* walking every day?" - "Does he walk every day?"

"She *don't be* sick, *do* she?" - "She isn't sick, is she?"

3 Invariant *be* is used for future "will be."

"He *be* here tomorrow" – "He'll be here tomorrow"

4 *Steady* is used as an intensified continuative marker. This feature is used to refer to actions that occur consistently or persistently. Its most usual position in a sentence is after habitual *be* and before a progressive verb.

"Ricky Bell be *steady* steppin in them number nines."

5 Unstressed *been* or *bin* is used for present perfect "has7have been." It can occur in the same sentence as time adverbials. This feature does not imply remoteness.
"He *been* sick" – "He has been sick"

6 Stressed BIN indicates distant past.
"She *BIN* married" – "She has been married for a long time (and still is)"
"He *BIN* ate it" – "He ate it a long time ago"

7 *Done* is used to emphasize that an action is/has been completed (7a). *Done* can be used with *been* (7b).
7a "He *done* did it" – "He's already done it"
7b "By the time I got there, he *been done gone*"
"They done been sitting *there an hour*."

8 *Done* is used for relatives or the future/conditional perfect.
"She *be done had* her baby" – "She *will have had* her baby"

9 *Finna* (or *fitna*) indicates immediate future.
"He *finna* go" – "He's about to go"

10 *Come* expresses the speaker's indignation about an action or event.
"He *come* walkin in here like he owned the damn place"

11 *Had* marks the simple past. This feature occurs rather among children before their teens.
"Then we *had* went outside" – "Then we went outside"

12 Double modals are used.
may can, and *might could* – "might be able to"
must don't – must not

13 Quassi modals *liketa* and *poseta* are used.
"I *liketa* drowned" – "I nearly drowned"
"you don't *poseta* do it that way" – "You're not supposed to do it this way"

-- 20 Other Aspects of verbal tense marking -- in Rickford

14 *–S* is left out in third person singular present tense (14a). *Don't* is used instead of "doesn't" (14b). "Has" is substituted by *have* (14c).
14a "He walk *Ø*" – "He walks"
14b "He *don't* sing" – "He doesn't sing"
14c "She *have* it" – "She has it"

15 *Is* and *was* is used with plural and second person subjects instead of *are* and *were*.
"They *is* some crazy folk" – "They are crazy folk"
"We *was* there" – "We were there"

16 Past tense preterit form (V-ed) is used as part participle (V-en).
"He had *bit"* – "He had bitten,"
"She has *ran*" – "She has run"

17 Past participle form (V-en) is used as past tense or preterit from (V-ed).
"She *seen* him yesterday" – "She saw him yesterday"
Verb stem (V) is used as past tense or preterite form (V-ed).
"He *come* down here yesterday" – "He came down here yesterday"

18 Past tense or past participle suffix is reduplicated. This feature is also called "double tense marking." This rule applies only with verbs including *liked, looked, skinned*. It is rather used by adolescents.
likeded [laɪktɪd] – "liked"

light-skinded – "light skinned"

2.3.3.2 Nouns and pronouns

1 Possessive – *s* is omitted.
"John Ø house" – "John's house"

2 Plural – *s* is absent.
"two boyØ" – "two boys"

3 *And (th)em* or *nem*, usualy after a proper name, marks associative plurals.
Felicia an' (th)em – "Felician and her friends or family or associates"
or *Felician nem*

4 Appositive or pleonastic pronouns are used.
"That teacher, *she* yell at the kids" – "That teacher Ø yells at the kids"

5 *Y'all* and *they* mark second person plural and third plural possessive.
"It's *y'all* ball" – "It's your ball"
"It's *they* house" – "It's their house."

6 Object pronouns (i.e. *me, him*) are used after a verb as personal datives (i.e. *(for) myself, (for) himself*).
"Ahma git *me* a gig" – "I'm going to get myself some support"

7 Relative pronoun (*who, which, what* or *that*) is omitted. Object relative pronouns (7b) are omitted in other varieties of English, but omission of a subject relative pronoun (7a) is a feature associated with AAVE.
7a "That's the man Ø come here" – "That's the man who came here."
7b Ø "That's the man (whom) I saw"

2.3.3.3 Negation

1 *Ain't(t)* is used as a general preverbal negator. This feature can be found in environments where "am not," "isn't," "aren't," "hasn't," "haven't" and "didn't" occur in SE.
"He *ain't* here" – "He isn't here"
"He *ain't* do it" – "He didn't do it"

2 Multiple negation or negative concord (negating the auxiliary verb and all indefinite pronouns in the sentence) are used.
"He *don't* do *nothin*" – "He doesn't do anything"

3 Negative inversion (inversion of the auxiliary and indefinite pronoun subject) is applied in AAVE.
"*Can't nobody* say nothin" – "Nobody can't say anything"
(from "Nobody can't say nothin")
"*Ain't nobody* home" – "Nobody is home."
(from Nobody ain't home)

4 *Ain't but* and *don't but* substitute "only."
"He *ain't but* fourteen years old" – "He's only fourteen years old"
"They *didn't* take *but* three dollars" – "They only took three dollars"

2.3.3.4 Questions

1 Direct questions are formed without inversion of the subject and auxiliary verb. Such questions are usually uttered with rising intonation.
"Why *I can't* play?" – "Why can't I play?"
"*They didn't* take it?" – "Didn't they take it?"

2 Auxiliary verbs are inverted in embedded questions (without *if* or *whether*).
"I asked him *could* he go with me" – "I asked him if he could go with me"

2.3.3.5 Existential and locative constructions

1 Existential *it* (*is, 's, was, ain't*) is uttered where *there (is, 's, was, isn't)* can be found in SE.
"*It's* a school up there" – "There's a school up there"
2 Existential *they got* as a plural equivalent of singular *it is* substitutes *there are.*
"*They got* some hungry women here" – "There are some hungry women here"
3 *Here go* is used as a static locative or presentational form.
"*Here go* my own" – "Here is my own"

2.3.3.6 Complementizer/quotative say

Say is used to introduce a quotation or a verb complement.
"They told me *say* they couldn't go"

3. African American Literature

African American literature is an integral part of American literature. As well as the entire black culture, African American literature has reached international popularity both among scholars and among reading public. Many African American authors like Pulitzer-Prize-winning Toni Morrison gained prominent status and joined circles of the most important American literary figures.

Within African American literature, questions of gender, class, identity, race, manhood, soul, freedom, and slavery have been explored in whole range of literary forms. See the list below.

> autobiography, biography, folklore, slave narratives, poems, fiction, novels, short stories, essays, criticism, oratory, sermons, preaching, biblical plantation, humour tradition, protest, gay and lesbian literature, speculative fiction, film, plays, musicals and travel writing.
>
> (Andrews, 1997, p. x, xii)

In his 1981 study of AAVE in the media, Brasch divides African American literature into five cycles: the Colonial and Early National era (1760s - 1800), the Antebellum era (1800s - 1860), the Reconstruction era (1870s - 1890), the Negro Renaissance era (1920s – 1940s), and the Civil Rights period (1945 – 1970s).

Many literary works of early African American literature served to abolitionist purposes. Mostly poetry and slave narratives were written during the Colonial and Early National Eras.

A large number of authors was influenced by the poet Phillis Wheatly, one of the most dominant literary figures of the last decades of the 18th and the first half of the 19th century.

One of the most important genres of early African American literature was slave narrative. The majority of works of this genre was written in SE, as one of the tasks of early authors was to demonstrate the ability of black people to master SE. The general opinion about the capacity of African Americans to master English was sceptical to the point that the authenticity of many works was doubted.

Some ex-slaves' accounts were written with the assistance of white abolitionists. In order to put emphasis on authors' origin, titles of the works of this genre often carried a phrase like

"Written by Himself," as in the case of *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African. Written by Himself. Vol. I.*

Everything that could serve the abolitionists was sought and used during the Antislavery and Reconstruction Eras. Autobiographies became the model form of prose. Slave narratives were still written. Some black authors wrote dialect poetry in this period. Other literary genres like journalistic essays, homiletic addresses, and odes were written too.

African American culture underwent a radical change in the first half of the 20th century. The Great Migration led to the growth of culture in the northern areas. Many authors wrote in a dialect in order to satisfy public demand and be published in big periodicals.

The Harlem Renaissance (mid-1910s – mid-1930s), also known as The New Negro Movement, was the first cultural movement recognized both by black and white audience. African American cultural history was used as a source. Most of the works initially carried political messages. By the end of the 1940s, many young writers disagreed with the role of politics as the central subject of literature.

In the late twentieth century, global and national changes took place on economic, political, intellectual, and cultural scenes. Literary canons were challenged, popularity of literature rose, and traditions were reformulated. The early 1950s witnessed The Civil Rights Movement fighting for the end of racial segregation. Authors experimented with literary forms, explored demographic and political changes, expressed disagreement between art and ideology, and dealt with homosexuality in their works. During the Civil Rights Movement, some authors started using AAVE also for narrators' voices.

3.1 Language: role and use

Questions of intelligence, literacy, creativity, culture, politics, representation, race, and right to freedom are directly tied to the issues concerning African Americans and language, its acquisition and their capability to use it on an advanced or artistic level.

Language marks race, culture, education, and civilization. In American culture, SE, language of white Americans, has been used as a tool to separate the blacks and the whites. While SE stood for breeding, education, and culture, dialect was substandard language of the blacks.

As mentioned above, African Americans were first seen as unable to acquire an advanced level of SE. Defenders of the so-called Deficit Theory claimed that African Americans had linguistic and cognitive deficiencies. As Thomas Jefferson, the third President of the United States and one of the authors of the Declaration of Independence, stated, the blacks "lacked analytic intelligence and literary imagination, two qualities basic to any race's claim to civilization" (Jefferson, 1787).

Even after African Americans had mastered the language, took seats in legislative bodies, demonstrated themselves as great orators and skilful writers, and had their works published, the authenticity of their works was still questioned. This issue went so far that some authors found themselves defending their work in front of a jury. One of the goals of literature of that period was to prove such opinions false.

In literature, the choice of language transmits information about the character, place, class, substance, and value. Literature served African Americans as a tool to prove themselves equal to the Whites.

As well as not all African Americans speak AAVE, not all African American authors write in the dialect. The way black authors represent black speech in their works depends on several factors, such as their personal preferences, their attitude towards the dialect, or their intention to advocate their African roots or their status as equal American citizens.

The quality and accuracy of the representation of the black speech in literature have been varying. One of the reasons may be a simple inability of authors to express the speech of black characters properly. Some authors simply did not worry about the accuracy of representation of the black speech, as they comforted themselves with stereotypical representation of the variety. In some works, the question whether the authors switched codes consciously or inadvertently remains.

Writers had to balance on the edge between truthful representation of black characters and stereotypical views of their literacy and intelligence (Andrews, 1997, p.686). SE could not be used in the speech of black characters, if one of the authors' goals was to achieve a realistic portrayal.

The more realistic is language, the more developed are the characters. Some AAVE speaking characters do not use exclusively the dialect. Their conversation companions' ethnic

background or level of education are some of the determining factors for characters' choice of code.

The level of representation of AAVE in literature has not always been only writers' choice. Though aware of limitations of the use of AAVE in literature, some authors like Paul Laurence Dunbar were forced by publishers to write in dialect, due to their categorization as AAVE dialect writers and public demand for dialect literature.

As there are white people who speak AAVE, there have also been white authors who used the black dialect in their writings. On one hand, some authors with abolitionist tendencies, like Charles W. Chesnutt used dialect in order to present the white audience with African American culture in order to help African Americans in their struggle for social recognition.

On the other hand, a black character often served as a source of humour. In fact, minstrelsy, a form of drama performed by white actors in which black culture is presented by means of stereotypes, was ridiculed and laughed at, served both as entertainment for white audience and a medium showing the blacks as a degraded race and danger for the society.

There have also been white authors such as James Fennimore Cooper, Mark Twain, Joel Chandler Harris, or William Faulkner who used the dialect to provide the most realistic language in their works.

4. AAVE in selected works

The following chapters introduce the selected works and present the results of the analysis. If a feature is not mentioned in the results, it means that it is not used in the work.

4.1 *My Southern Home: Or, The South and Its* People by William Wells Brown

My Southern Home: Or, The South and Its People, written by William Wells Brown (1814 - 1884) in 1880, is the oldest work analysed in this paper. W. W. Brown spent first 20 years of his life in slavery before he became an abolitionist, historian, lecturer, and writer. Brown is the author of *Clotel; or The President's Daughter: A Narrative of Slave Life in the United States,* the first novel published by an African American in the United States.

The work selected for the analysis is Brown's last book titled *My Southern Home: Or; the South and its People.* In his final book, Brown describes relations between southern blacks and whites and provides background information to his previous works. *My Southern Home* was written in autobiographical tone, though some names were changed. Some events are narrated as if they had happened to Brown himself while the participants were other people, and vice versa.

The reason why *My Southern Home* was preferred to Brown's 1849 *Narrative* is that the *Narrative*, as most of slave narratives, *was* written in SE, while the black folk's speech is represented in *My Southern Home*. The narrator's voice is written in SE. AAVE appears only in dialogues.

4.1.1 Phonological features in *My Southern Home*

Out of the phonological features described by Rickford (1999), the following can be found in the speech of African Americans in Brown's *My Southern Home.*

Word-final consonant clusters are reduced, as in "*an'* dat's enuff", "I is *almos'* dead", or "to *stan'* here foolin" for SE "and that's enough," "I am almost dead" and "to stand here fooling" (1.1). Word-final single consonants are deleted, as in "I know I is *mo'* dan dat", or "kind *o'* ashy niggers" for SE "I know I am more than that" and "kind of ashy niggers"(1.2). *O'* occurs with

higher frequency than *mo'*. Final *ng* is realized as *n,* as in "when he is done *whippin'* you" for SE "when he finishes whipping you" (1.4).

Voiceless *th* is realized as *f*, as in *teef* or *fourf* for SE "teeth" and "fouth" (1.5a) on several occasions. Voiced *th* is realized as *d*, as in "*den* what" for SE "then what" (1.5b). Unlike (5b), (5a) occurs across the whole text in speech of black people. *R* after a vowel is sporadically deleted in the text, as in "once *moe*" for SE "once more" (1.8). Feature which appears with higher frequency is deletion of initial unstressed syllables, as in *'clare* for SE "declare." (1.10). SE *v in word*-medial position is realized as *bb* on two occasions, as in *sebben* and *hebben* for SE "seven" and "heven." (1.12).

The features presented above are not used by all black speakers cited in the text, for example SE "mouth" or "seven" are uttered by some African Americans in the text.

4.1.2 Grammatical features in *My Southern Home*

Unstressed *been* or *bin* is used in several occasions in the text, as in "*jess bin digged*" for SE "have just been digged" (1.19e). *Done* emphasizing completion of an action is used, as in "I'se *done* gone busted" for SE "I've already been busted" (1.19g). Frequency of occurrence of grammatical features mentioned here is very low.

4.1.2.1 Negation in *My Southern Home*

Negator *ain't* is used in the text, as in "dis *ain't* de most stravagant nigger" for SE "this is not the most extravagant nigger" (1.22a). Double negation also appears in the text, as in "yer can't get no better."

4.2 *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston

Zora Neale Hurston (1891 - 1960), a Pulitzer-Prize-winning novelist, anthropologist, essayist, lecturer and theatrical producer was an important figure of the Harlem Renaissance. Many has often seen her as the first of great American women writers.

Though published later, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (later TEWWG) is often associated with the Harlem Renaissance due to Hurston's connection to the movement. The novel went out of print for nearly three decades soon after its first publication, because it was not

written in the protest tradition as all black literature of that time. After its rediscovery by Alice Walker, another great female Afro American novelist, in the late 1960s, the novel became canon of African American literature.

A whole range of mainly black characters appears in the book. Janie, the protagonist, an attractive, confident, middle-aged woman of mixed origin who disdains categorization is on her quest for independence. A reader sees her return after a long time to Eatonville, an entirely black town where she recounts the story of her past to her friend Pheoby. While the speech of black characters is captured in AAVE, the omniscient narrator speaks in SE.

4.2.1 Phonological features in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Reduction of word-final consonant clusters, as in *"ol'* nigger*"* or *jus'* for SE "old nigger" and "just" hardly occurs in the text (2.1). Word-final single consonant, as in *gimme* and *lemme* is used (2.2). Final *ng* is realized as *n*, as in *huntin'* or *mornin'* for SE "hunting" and "morning" (2.4). Voiceless *th* is produced as *f*, as in *mouf* for SE "mouth" (2.5a). Realization of voiced *th* as *d* is more frequent than as *vv,* though both appear in the text, as in "*den de* big bell rings" and *kivver* for SE "then the big bell rings" and "cover" (2.5b). Deletion of *r* after a vowel is used, as in *fuh*, *sho,* and *goven'ment* for SE "for," "sure" and "government" (2.8). Initial unstressed syllables are deleted as in *'cause, 'clare* for SE "because" and "declare" (2.10). Voiced fricative *v* is pronounced *b,* as in *seben* and *heben* for SE "seven" and "heven" (2.12). Monopthongal pronunciation of SE "I" as *ah* is used throughout the text, on two occasions SE "like" is produced as *lak* (2.14).

4.2.2 Grammatical features in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Auxiliary *is* and *are* are absent for present tense, as in "Whut you waitin' on?" or "all dat you talkin' 'bout" for SE "what are you waiting on?" and "all that you are talking about" (2.19a). Unstressed *been* is used, as in "dat mule *been* wid me twenty three years" for SE "that mule has been with me for twenty three years" (2.19e). Stressed *been* is used, as in "Ah *been* waitin'" for SE "I had been waiting" (2.19f). *Done* emphasizing completion is used, as in "he had *done* found out" for SE "he had already found out" (2.19g). *Be done* is used for relatives, as in "you'd *be done* woke me up" for SE "you would have finished waking me up" (2.19h). *Come* is

sporadically used to express indignation, as in "dey can't *come* runnin' over nice people and loud-talk" (2.19j).

4.2.2.1 Other aspects of verbal tense marking in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Third person singular *–s* is absent in present tense, as in "he *have* to" for SE "he has to" (2.20a). *Was* and *is* are used in plural, as in "they *was* never to fight" and "brute beast lak they *is*" for SE "they were never to fight" and "brute beast like they are" (2.20b).

4.2.2.2 Nouns and pronouns in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Plural *–s* is sporadically absent, as in "it's two month" for SE "it's two months" (2.21b). *Y'all* is used for second person plural, as in "*y'all* ain't got enough here" for SE "you don't have enough here" (2.21e). Object pronouns after a verb as personal dative appear in the text, as in "trying to ketch *me* uh fish" for SE "trying to catch myself a fish" (2.21f).

4.2.2.3 Negation in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Ain't is used as negator, as in "you *ain't* paid for dem" for SE "you haven't paid for them" (2.22a). Multiple negation appear in the text, as in "we an't *do nothin"*" or "Ah *ain't never* heard *nobody* say he stole *nothin"*" for SE "we can't do anything" and "I have never heard anybody saying that he stole anything." On couple of occasion, negative inversion appears, as in "can't no ole man stop me" for SE "No old man can stop me" (2.22c). *Ain't but* for only "only" is used twice in the text, as in "'tain't but one place round" for SE ""it is not the only place around (2.22d).

4.2.2.4 Questions in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Auxiliary *do* is omitted in some questions, as in "You and Janie wanta go?" for SE "Do you and Janie want to go?"

4.2.2.5 Existential and locative constructions in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Existential *it is* instead of *there is* appear sporadically in the text, as in "*'tain't* no cars" for SE "there are no cars" (2.24a).

4.3 *Go Tell It on the* Mountain by James Baldwin

James Baldwin (1924 - 1987), a Harlem born activist, journalist, lecturer, essayist and novelist was one of the most important figures of the Civil Rights movement. His most famous nonfiction work is *Notes of a Native Son*, a collection of essays analysing one of the most important African American novel, *Native Son*, written by Richard Wright, another important figure of African American literature.

Go Tell It on the Mountain, published in 1953, is Baldwin's first novel. The book contains of autobiographical features. Hostile relations between a father and son, age, and religion are the main motifs of the book. Baldwin does not deal directly with race and racism in this work. The narrator's voice is in SE.

4.3.1 Phonetic features in *Go Tell It on the* Mountain

The only phonetic feature used in this text is deletion of *l* after a vowel, which results in omitting *'ll* in future, as in "I be as quick as I can" for SE "I'll be as quick as I can" (3.7). Nonstandard pronunciation is indicated, as in *to-day*.

4.3.2 Grammatical features in *Go Tell It on the* Mountain

Invariant *be* for future "will be" is used, as in "I *be* mighty delighted" for SE "I'll be mighty delighted" (3.19c). Unstressed *been* is used for present perfect, as in "I *been* telling you so much about" for SE "I've been telling you so much about" (3.19e). *Done* emphasizing completion is used, as in "I *done* told you before" for SE "I have already told you" (3.19g).

4.3.2.1 Other aspects of verbal tense marking in *Go Tell It on the* Mountain

Third person –*s* is omitted, as in "She *don't* look like you" for SE "She doesn't look like you" (3.20a). *Is* and *was* is used with plural and second person subjects, as in "no matter where they *is*" and "you *is* just determined to go anyhow" for SE "no matter where they are" and "you are just determined to go anyhow" (3.20b).

4.3.2.2 Nouns and pronouns in *Go Tell It on the* Mountain

And them marks associative plurals, as in "I do so you and them common niggers" for SE "I do so you and common niggers" (3.21c).

4.3.2.3 Negation in *Go Tell It on the* Mountain

Ain't is used, as in "they ain't going to bother me" for SE "they aren't going to bother me" (3.22a). Characters also use multiple negation, as in "Ain't nobody never going to look on that poor boy no more" for SE "Nobody is ever going to look on that poor boy anymore" (3.22b). Negative inversion occurs in the text, as is "Ain't nobody never took care of me" for SE "nobody has ever took care of me" (3.22c). *Ain't but* for "only" appears as well, as in "Ain't but you two who cleaned the church?" for SE "Did only you two clean the church?" (3.22d).

4.3.2.4 Questions in *Go Tell It on the* Mountain

Question are formed without auxiliaries, as in "You going where?"

4.3.2.5 Existential and locative constructions in *Go Tell It on the* Mountain

Existantial *ain't* is used instead of "there isn't/aren't," as in "'*Ain't* no need to wash your hands" for SE "'there's no need to wash your hands" (3.24a). *They got* for "there are" appears in the novel, as in "*They got* girls in the school I go to" for SE "There are girls in the school I go to" (3.24b)

4.4 *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker

Alice Walker, a 1944 born novelist, essayist, poet, and critic is the person who resurrected Zora Neale Hurston's work nearly after thirty years. Walker participated in the Civil Right movement. In 1985, she received the Pulitzer Prize for her novel analysed in this paper.

The Color Purple (1982), Walker's most famous novel was well received especially among black women. Black male critics rather despised the book for the same reason, claiming that African American literature should focus on racism. The novel gives an account on the lives of black women in the American South.

Celie, the protagonist and narrator, is a poor, uneducated, fourteen-year-old black girl. The story is narrated via letters that Celie writes to God and to her younger sister Nettie. The way the story is told resembles slave narratives. Nettie, the more clever and educated of the two, speaks in SE, unlike her sister Celie who speaks in the dialect.

4.4.1 Phonetic features in *The Color Purple*

Walker reduces word-final clusters, SE "and" is produced as *an'* or SE "I tapped the little ones" as "I *tap* the little ones." Celie also says *ast* instead of SE "asked" (4.1). Final *ng* is produced as *n*, as in *something*, but gerunds are produced with *ing* (4.4). *F* is used for voiceless *th*, as in *teef* for SE "teeth." Celie deletes some unstressed initial syllables as in *cause* for SE "because" (4.10).

4.4.2 Grammatical features in *The Color Purple*

Auxiliary *is* and *are* are absent in present tense uttered by Celie, as in "she ugly" or "she going round" for SE "she is ugly" and "she is going around" (4.19a). Invariant *be* is used for habitual aspects, as in "I be the one to cook" or "he be on her all the time" for SE "I am the one who cooks" and "he would be on her all the time" (4.19b). Invariant *be* is used for future appears in the text, as in "after that, I know she *be* big" for SE "after that, I know she will be big" (4.19c). *Steady* as an intensified continuative marker appears few times, as in "Nettie steady tries to teach me" (4.19d). Unstressed *been* for SE "has/have been is used," as in "it *been* five years"

for SE “it has been five years.” Nettie also uses this feature, though less frequently than Celie (4.19e). Stressed bin for remote phase is used, as in “he been up to something” for SE “he was up to something.” (4.19f). *Done* emphasizing completion is used, as in “you *done* changed your mind” for SE “you have changed your mind” (4.19g).

4.4.2.1 Other aspects of verbal tense marking in *The Color Purple*

Third person *–s* is absent, as in “finally he leave he leave her alone” for SE “finally he leaves her alone” or “she *have* to pack her stuff” for SE “She has to pack her stuff” (4.20a). *Is* and *was* is used with plural and second person subjects, as in “you *is* hungry again” and “they *was* nothing” for SE “you are hungry again” and “they were nothing” (4.20b). Past tense or preterit form is used as participle, as in “the most beautiful woman I ever *saw*” for SE “the most beautiful woman I have ever seen” (4.20c). Past participle form is used as past tense or preterit form, as in “I *seen* my baby girl” for SE”I saw my baby girl” (4.20d). Verb stem is used as past tense or preterit form, as in SE “she *do* more than that” for SE “she did more than that” (4.20e). Replication of past tens occurs once in the text, as in “they’d been attacked by lions, *stampeded* by elephants.” (4.20f).

4.4.2.2 Nouns and pronouns in *The Color Purple*

Possessive *–s* is absent, as in “with God help” for “with God’s help” (4.22a). *And (th)em* is used to mark possessive plurals once, as in “Nettie and them come” (4.21c). On some occasions subject relative pronouns are absent, as in “The man he had helping him” for SE “the man whom he had helping him” (4.21g).

4.4.2.3 Negation in *The Color Purple*

Ain’t is used as a general negator, as in “Fonso, I *ain’t* well” for SE “Alfonso, I am not well” (4.22a). Multiple negation appears throughout the text, as in “I *don’t neither*” for SE “I don’t either” (4.22b). Negative inversion occurs a couple of times, as in “naw, can’t sa I I is” for SE “no, can’t say I have” (4.22c)

4.4.2.4 Questions in *The Color Purple*

Direct questions are formed without inversion, as in “Whose it is?” or “Where it is?” for SE “Whose is it?” and “Where is it?” (4.23a).

5. Comparison of AAVE used in selected works

The occurrence and use of individual features in the selected works are compared in this chapter. Note that only in Walker's novel narrator's voice is represented in the dialect and that the features listed as used in the analysed works are not used by all black characters and are not used all the time by the speakers who use them. For a graphic illustration of the appearance of AAVE features in the texts see chart 1 (ap. 2).

5.1 Phonetic features

As the data show, William Well Brown in *My Southern Home* (1849) and Zora Neale Hurston in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) used practically the same phonetic features. No phonetic features appear in James Baldwin's *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953). Alice Walker did not apply as many phonetic features in *The Color Purple* (1982) as Wells and Hurston did in their works, though most of the features used by Walker appear in the two oldest books reviewed in this paper too.

Three features appear in Brown's, Hurston and Walker's works. It is a reduction of word-final consonant cluster (1), as in *ol'* or *jus'* for SE "old" and "just" (2.1); realization of final *ng* as *n* (4), as in *somethin'* for SE "something" (4.4). Walker does not delete the final *g* in gerunds, Brown and Hurston do, as in *huntin'* for SE "hunting" (2.4). The last feature that appears in given three works is deletion of unstressed initial or medial syllables, as in '*clare* for SE "decalre" (1.10).

Phonetic features that appear both in Brown's and Hurston's works are deletion of word-final single consonant (2), as in *mo'* and *o'* for SE "more" and "of" (1.2); realization of voiceless *th* as *f* (5a), as in *mosuf'* for SE "mouth" (2.5a); realization of voiced *th* as *d*, as in *den* for SE "then" (1.5b); deletion of *r* after a vowel (8), as in *fuh* for SE "for"(2.8) is more frequent in Hurston's work; and finally *v* is realized as *b* (12), as in *seben* and *heben* (2.12) in Hurston's novel. Note that the same words are produced as *sebben* and *hebben* in Brown's narrative.

Monopthongal pronunciation of SE "I" as *Ah* (14) is used in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Phonetic features like the realization of *thr* sequences as *th* (6), deletion or vocalization of *l*

after a vowel (7), deletion of initial *d* and *g* in certain tense-aspect auxiliaries (9), metathesis or transposition of adjacent consonants (11), the realization of syllable-initail *str* and *skr*, realization of "ing" as *ang*, and "ink" as *ank* (16), shifting stress on first syllable (17) and higher variation of intonation (18) are not realized in any of the books analysed.

5.2 Grammatical features

Some of the grammatical features of AAVE listed by Rickford appear in the works analysed in this paper. The widest range of grammatical features, namely seven, is used in Walker's *The Color Purple*. Hurston used six grammatical features in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Three grammatical features appear in both Brown's *My Southern Home* and Baldwin's *Go Tell It on the Mountain*. See chart no 1.

Only two grammatical features appear in all four works. Unstressed *been* is used for present perfect (19e), as in "I *been* telling you so much about" for SE "I've been telling you so much about"(3.19e); and *done* is used to emphasize the completed nature of an action, as in "I've *done* gone busted" for SE "I've already been busted" (1.19g).

Hurston and Walker used the absence of copula/auxiliary *is* and *are* for present tense (19a), as in "What you waitin' on?" for SE "What are you waiting on?" (2.19a) and stressed *bin* for remote phase (19f), as in "Ah *been* waitin'" for SE "I had been waiting" (2.19f). Both Walker and Baldwin used invariant *be* for future "will be" (19c), as in "I *be* mighty delighted" for SE "I'll be very delighted" (3.19c).

Done for future perfect (19h), as in "you'd be *done* woke me up" for SE "you would have finished waking me up" (2.19h) and use of *come* to express the speakers indignation (19j), as in "they can't come *runnin'* over nice people and loud-talk" (2.19j) are features that appear solely in Hurston's work.

Of the four authors, only Walker used invariant *be* for habitual aspect (19b), as in "I *be* the one to cook" for SE "I am the one who cooks" (4.19b) and *steady* as intensified continuative marker (19d), as in "Nettie *steady* tries to teach me" (4.19d).

Use of *finna* (19i), *had* for simple past (19k), double modals (19l), or quassi modals (19m) are features that do not appear in any of the work that were analysed.

5.3 Other aspects of verbal tense marking

Walker applied all six features listed in 20. Two of the features appear in all four works. All of the writers omitted third person singular present *–s* (20a), as in "he *have* to" for SE "he has to" (2.20a) and used generalized *is* and *was* with plural and second person subjects (20b), as in "no matter where they *is*" for SE "no matter where they are" (3.20b).

Besides (20a) and (20b), Walker also used past tense and preterit form as past participle (20c), as in "the most beautiful woman I ever *saw"* for SE "the most beautiful woman I've ever seen" (4.20c), past participle form as past tense or preterit form (20d), as in "I *seen* my baby girl" for SE "I saw my baby girl" (4.20d), verb stem as past tense or past participle (20e), as in "she *do* more than that" for SE "she *did* more than that" (4.20e), and in case reduplication of past tense or past participle suffix (20f), as in "… *stampeded* by elephants" (4.20f).

5.4 Nouns and Pronouns

Walker and Hurston used three features of AAVE related to nouns and pronouns, Baldwin used only one, while Brown used none. The only of these features which appeared in more than one of the books, specifically in Baldwin's and Walker's, is use of *(th)em* to mark associative plurals (21c), as in "I do so you and *them* common niggers" for SE "I do so as well as you and other common niggers" (3.21c).

Walker also omitted possessive *–s* (21a), as in "with God help" for SE "with God's help" (4.21a) and relative pronoun in the subject (21g), as in "the man he had helping him" for SE "the man *whom* he had helping him" (4.21g).

Hurston used three features of this section. She applied absence of plural *–s* (21b), as in "it's two month" for SE "it's been two months"(2.21b), use of *y'all* for second person plural (21e), as in "*y'all* ain't got enough here" for SE "you don't have enough here" (2.21e), and object pronouns after a verb as personal dative (21e), as in "trying to ketch *me* a fish" (2.21f).

5.5 Negation

All of the authors used features associated with negation. All of the features from (22) occur in the speech of Baldwin's characters. Both Walker and Hurston used three out of four features, while Wells applied two.

The feature that appears in all four texts is *ain't* used as general negator (22a), as in "dis *ain't* de most stravagant nigger" for SE "this is not the most extravagant nigger" (1.22a).

Wells, Baldwin and Walker used multiple negation in their texts (22b), as in "yer *can't* get *no* better" for SE "you can't get any better" (1.22b). The common, less frequently used feature of Hurston's, Baldwin's and Walker's books is negative inversion (22c), as in "*can't* no ole man stop me" for SE "no old man can stop me" (2.22c).

Ain't but for "only" (22d), as in "*Ain't but* you two who cleaned the church?" for SE "Did only you two clean the church?" (3.22d) appears in Hurston and Baldwin.

5.6 Questions

Walker's characters form direct questions without subject-auxiliary inversion (23a), as in "You going where?" for SE "Where are you going?" (4.23a). Hurston, Baldwin and Walker also omit auxiliary *do* in questions, as in "You and Janie wanta go?" for SE "Do you and Janie want to go?"

5.7 Existential and locative constructions

Features of this section appear in Hurston's and Baldwin's work. Existential *they got* is used instead of *there are* (24b)

5.8 Coplementizer and quotative say

(25a) does not appear in any of the works analysed.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this paper is to analyse the evolution of representation of AAVE in African American Literature. In order to do so, it must be stated what AAVE is, where it comes from, what it is associated with, where and whom it is used by, and what have been the reasons for (not) using it. A brief introduction to African American literature is inserted to clarify the reasons for selecting the particular literary works for the analysis.

The first chapters of the thesis explains that AAVE is a systematic, rule-governed, sociolinguistic variety of English. The text states that the question whether AAVE is a language or a dialect lacks of relevance, since both are rule-governed. The claims that AAVE is a wrong or incorrect version of SE are disproved.

Three different hypotheses of origin of AAVE are presented. According to the creole hypothesis, AAVE comes from West African pidgins; the dialectologists claim that it comes from incorrect English learnt by slaves, and finally the Ebonics theory suggests that AAVE has its roots in African Hamito-Bantu families. This thesis does not intent to attribute to the search for answer of the truthful origin of the variety, therefore only a limited space is given to this question.

The variety has not always been called African American (Vernacular) English. All labels and some incorrect pejorative ways it has been called are listed. The motives behind the labels are explained. One part of the labels reflects the attitude of the American society towards the speakers of the variety. The other part has expressed authors' inclination towards a particular hypothesis of the origin of black speech.

The paper also informs about the speakers of the variety. A list of whole range of people who use Black English is provided. AAVE is not spoken by all African Americans. Age, gender, education, economic, social and regional backgrounds are some of the determining factors of use of the variety. Speakers of the variety do not use exclusively the variety, as they switch codes between AAVE and SE. AAVE is not used only by black people, as there are also white speakers of AAVE.

Next chapter presents distinctive features of the variety. The account starts with the lexicon. On one hand, it is pointed out that there are words that are used only in AAVE. On the other hand, there are words that can be found both in SE and in other varieties. Such words may

have different meaning in AAVE. Ways in which the lexicon has been presented and divided are listed. Generally, AAVE lexicon can be divided according to age of speakers who use a particular lexical entry. There are words uttered without regards to speakers' age as well as there are words that are more likely to be used by speakers of a certain age group.

The following subchapters present distinctive phonetic and grammatical features of the variety. Examples with their SE equivalents are provided.

Next chapter gives a brief introduction to African American Literature. Information on particular eras is provided. Role of language in literature and American society is pointed out. The issue of language related to African Americans has gone hand in hand with opinions about their capability of learning, intelligence, creativity, identity, equality to the whites, and rights for freedom. The decision whether to advocate their roots, claim their equality as American citizens, attempt to achieve a realistic portrayal of black voice, or the possibility of being published has been some of the issues the authors had to deal with.

My Southern Home: Or, The South and Its People by William Wells Brown, author of a slave narrative and the first novel published by an African American, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston, one of the most important authors of the Harlem Renaissance, *Go Tell It on the Mountain* by James Baldwin, a leading activist of the Civil Rights Movement, and *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker, a Pulitzer-Prize winning contemporary writer, are the works analysed in this paper.

The following chapters focus on analysis of AAVE features used in the selected works. The occurrence of the features presented by Rickford is analysed in each of the books separately. The data collected are compared in order to identify similarities and differences in the representation of the variety.

Despite the fact that the works were selected on basis of literary review and that all the authors are said to be masters in the representation of AAVE, it would be unwise to claim that if Hurston reduced word-final consonant cluster, all other authors writing in the dialect of her era did necessarily the same.

Many factors must be taken into account. To name some, authors' personal style, the importance the author gave to the representation of the dialect, skill, experience, educational, regional and religious background, preferences, approach to writing and issues related to race,

and the period the author lived in must be kept in mind before making conclusions about language used in a certain era.

Data collected in researches like this gain relevance when looked at from a wider perspective, for example when put in context among other similar analyses conducted on works by a whole range of authors. If a feature appears constantly in the works of different authors from different periods, it can be claimed that such a feature was at that particular moment part of what nowadays is known as AAVE.

Data collected show that significantly higher variety of phonetic features appear in the two oldest works analysed in this paper. The three phonetic features used in the youngest of the works, *The Color Purple*, also appear in *My Southern Home* and *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, therefore it can be said that these features, namely reduction of word-final consonant clusters (1), realization of final *ng* as *n* (4), and deletion of unstressed initial and medial syllables (10) have formed a part of AAVE since the first half of the 19th century, as Brown finished the text in 1849.

Comparing Walker's and Brown's works, the results show that Brown favoured phonetic features to the grammatical ones when representing the speech of his black characters, while in Walker's case it was vice versa.

The results confirm Green's statement that there has been a shift from emphasizing representation of phonetic features towards focus on syntactic and lexical properties. (Green, 2002, p. 214).

As mentioned above, the biggest attribution of this paper is in context with similar analyses. The more works analysed and compared, the more adequate conclusions on the use of AAVE in literature, or existence of particular features in certain periods can be made. Such a comparison is behind the scope of this work.

The paper may serve for the design of further studies or for comparison with researches that have already been conducted. The work also provides opportunity to learn about a nonstandard variety of English, which is not taught in common classrooms, and therefore enrich learners' knowledge and allow them to create a more complex picture of English.

7. Resumé

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá zobrazením afro-americké angličtiny v afro-americké literatuře, jmenovitě ve čtyřech dílech vybraných autorů, jimiž jsou William Wells Brown, Zora Neale Hurston, James Baldwin a Alice Walker. Cílem práce je prokázat, že znázornění dané varianty prošlo určitým vývojem, tudíž při porovnání textu z 50. let 19. století s textem z 80. let 20. století budou nalezeny rozdíly v užití jednotlivých prvků zmíněného dialektu.

Otázky týkající se vzniku této systematické, sociolingvistické varianty anglického jazyka jsou nastíněny v úvodu práce. Původ afro-americké angličtiny je spjat s příchodem otroků na Nový kontinent v první polovině sedmnáctého století.

Na dané téma jsou představeny tři teorie. Dle jedné teorie afro-americká angličtina pochází z kreolštiny, jež byla užívána coby obchodní jazyk mezi západoafrickými národy. Druhá teorie tvrdí, že původ se nachází v dialektu angličtiny, který vzešel z nesprávné angličtiny, kterou se otroci naučili po příjezdu do Ameriky. Další hypotézou je takzvaná *Ebonics hypothesis*, jež zastává názor, že afro-americká angličtina má základ v afrických Hamito-Bantu jazycích.

V další části práce jsou vysvětleny motivy týkající se způsobů, jimiž byla tato varianta nazývána. První část názvu reflektuje způsob, jímž byli mluvčí dialektu nazýváni v daný moment. Druhá část vystihuje autorův záměr zdůraznit své africké kořeny, nebo naopak rovnost postavení Afroameričanů v rámci americké společnosti.

Tato varianta angličtiny je užívána zejména Afroameričany. Ne všichni lidé tmavé pleti žijící ve Spojených státech amerických však tímto dialektem mluví. Ti, kteří tak činí, nemluví výhradně afro-americkou angličtinou, i během krátké konverzace alternují mezi dialektem a standardní angličtinou.

V další části práce jsou představeny prvky probírané varianty. Jsou zahrnuty informace o lexikonu, tedy způsobu, jimž je členěn jeho obsah a jimž byl znázorněn. Lexikon probírané varianty anglického jazyka se skládá jednak ze slov, která se nachází pouze v afro-americké angličtině, tak i ze slov, jež se vyskytují ve standardní angličtině i jiných variantách. Jsou představeny jak prvky fonetické, tak i gramatické.

V další části je poskytnut krátký úvod k afro-americké literatuře, jež slouží k vysvětlení výběru děl pro analýzu. Role jazyka v literatuře a americké společnosti je zmíněna. Je zdůrazněna skutečnost, že otázky spojené s jazykem byly v Americe úzce spjaty s otázkami

týkajícími se schopností učení, inteligence, kreativity, identity, rasy, rovnosti a práv na svobodu. Tato témata, společně s dobou, ve které daný autor žil, měla vliv na rozhodnutí týkající se výběru jazyka použitého k vykreslení děje a postav. Důvody pro volbu dialektu či standardní angličtiny byly různé. Pokud autor chtěl zdůraznit svůj původ či poskytnout realistický obraz, užil dialekt. Chtěl-li prokázat svoji schopnost zpracovat text ve standardní angličtině, volba jazyka a styl psaní tomu musely být uzpůsobeny. Možnosti publikování byly rovněž důvodem pro volbu toho či onoho jazyka.

Pro jazykový rozbor v této práci byla vybrána díla *Jih a jeho lidé* od Williama Wellse Browna, autora prvního románu vydaného černochem ve Spojených státech amerických, *Jejich oči sledovaly boha* od Zory Neale Hurston, jedné z nejvýraznějších postav tzv. Harlemské renesance, *Jít žalovat tomu na horu* od Jamese Baldwina, vůdčí postavy boje za občanské svobody a *Barva nachu* od soudobé autory Alice Walker.

Cílem práce je analyzovat prvky afro-americké angličtiny ve zmíněných dílech a jejich porovnáním zjistit vývoj užití daného dialektu v afro-americké literatuře a přispět tak k určení původu a všeobecného užití patřičných prvků.

Porovnáním výsledků byly zjištěny jisté rozdíly v užití afro-americké angličtiny. Rozdíl je nejvíce patrný v užití fonetických a gramatických prvků, při porovnání mladších a starších děl. Zatímco starší díla inklinují především k užití fonetických prvků, u mladších děl je tomu naopak - důraz je kladen na gramatické znázornění dialektu.

I přes to, že byli vybráni autoři, jež jsou považováni za mistry v zobrazování afro-americké angličtiny, na základě analýzy 4 děl nelze vyvést všeobecné závěry zahrnující celou afro-americkou literaturu. Výsledky této práce nabírají váhu v kontextu s obdobnými analýzami mnoha dalších autorů. Lze však konstatovat, že znázornění v rozebraných dílech se liší, a to tím samým způsobem, jež zmiňuje Green ve své práci.

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9. Appendices

Ap. 1 Labels

- Negro dialect
- Nonstandard Negro English
- Negro English
- American Negro speech
- Black communications
- Black dialect
- Black folk speech
- Black street speech
- Black English
- Black English Vernacular
- Black Vernacular English
- Afro American English
- African American English
- African American Language
- African American Vernacular English (AAVE)

Ap. 2 Charts

Numbers in the columns stay for each work analysed in the paper.

1 *My Southern Home* by William Wells Brown

2 *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston

3 *Go Tell It on the Mountain* by James Baldwin

4 *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker

PHONETICS

	1	2	3	4
1	●	●		●
2	●	●		
3				●
4	●	●		●
5a	●	●		
5b	●	●		
6				
7				
8	●	●		
9				
10	●	●		●
11				
12	●	●		
13				
14		●		
15				

16				
17				
18				

GRAMMATICAL FEATURES

	1	2	3	4
19a		●		●
19b				●
19c			●	●
19d				●
19e	●	●	●	●
19f		●		●
19g	●	●	●	●
19h	●	●		
19i				
19j		●		
19k				
19l				
19m				

OTHER ASPECTS OF VERBAL TENSE MARKING

	1	2	3	4
20a	●	●	●	●
20b	●	●	●	●

20c				●
20d				●
20e				●
20f				●

NOUNS AND PRONOUNS

	1	2	3	4
21a				●
21b		●		
21c			●	●
21d				
21e		●		
21f		●		
21g				●

NEGATION

	1	2	3	4
22a	●	●	●	●
22b	●		●	●
22c		●	●	●
22d		●	●	

QUESTIONS

	1	2	3	4
23a		Aux do omitted	Auxiliaries omitted	●
23b				

EXISTENTIAL AND LOCATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS

	1	2	3	4
24a		●	●	
24b			●	
24c				

COMPLETIZER, QUOTATIVE SAY

	1	2	3	4
25a				