

White people be frontin': Identification and Indexicality of Self Aware Failures of Blackness in African American English on Twitter by Stephanie DeMarco

Reviewing research on African American English (AAE) stances and indexicality, I contend that there are additional forms of AAE indexicality that have not been examined. Using TWITTER as a forum for authentic AAE users and inauthentic users I aim to label, define and legitimize another possible index of AAE use. The usage I examine is one where writers combine Standard English and AAE in a bricolage of topics and intentional misappropriation of lexis. This usage constructs a stance that is not fully indexical of African American English, nor fully indexical of Standard English and is many times regarded as humorous. In my research, surveying African Americans and testing their ability to correctly identify authenticity in AAE I hypothesize this combination (which I dub Self Aware Failures of Blackness) is not considered an authentic use of AAE or a mocking of the validity of AAE, but also not considered an effort to be authentic. This lack of effort disassociates it from other labels that have been designated for inauthentic employment of AAE. In addition to the recording of a structural, lexical and historical analysis of AAE as researched by Rickford (1999; 2002), Mufwene (1998; 2001), Smitherman (1977; 2003) and many others, previous research on other forms of indexicality of AAE use has been done primarily on Mock Ebonics (Ronkin & Karn, 1999), Wiggers (Cutler, 1999) and the rarities of non-African Americans using AAE nearly authentically (Sweetland, 2002). Through text analysis and data from participant surveys I will present my findings about this novel way people are using AAE, that does not fall into the aforementioned categories.