REVIEW

Non-standard vernaculars in education

John R. Rickford, Julie Sweetland, Angela E. Rickford & Thomas Grano, *African American Creole, and Other Vernacular Englishes in Education: A Bibliographic Resource*. New York and London: Routledge and NCTE, Urbana, Illinois, 2012. Paperback xx + 306, £39.99, ISBN 9780805860504. Hardback £90, ISBN 9780415888677.

Reviewed by Loreto Todd, University of Ulster

Even before one opens this book, a potential reader is impressed by the suggested coverage and by the quality of the authors, two of whom are very well known in the fields of creolistics, education and linguistics. A closer survey confirms the coverage, revealing a listing and categorisation of 1626 (p. xviii) or 1624 (p. xix) texts written over the last fifty years and covering:

African American Vernacular English	c. 50% of Entries
Pidgins and Creoles	c. 20% of Entries
Native American English	c. 8% of Entries
Latina/o English	c. 7% of Entries
Asian and Asian American English	c. 4% of Entries

The remaining percentage is devoted to '. . .other English Vernaculars, including Appalachian English, Aboriginal English in Australia, and White Vernacular Englishes in various parts of the world. . .' (p. xvi).

The orientation towards United States varieties is thus apparent but the compilation will, nonetheless, have value for any teacher or researcher interested in the intersection between education and language, and especially in how education can best serve the needs of speakers whose mother tongue may be classified as 'English' but which may differ markedly from the standard norms. The wealth of material produced on this subject over the last five decades is astounding and yet perhaps the saddest fact to emerge is how little has changed for such speakers over the period. Books, articles, dissertations have described vernacular Englishes and shown that difference cannot – and must not – be equated with deficiency, and yet vernacular Englishes continue to be stigmatized and their speakers still do not seem to match the scholastic achievements of their standard English speaking peers.

Apart from an effusive foreword, generous acknowledgements and some information about the authors, the book is divided into three unequal segments:

- Introduction (pp. xiii–xx)
- Topic Overviews and Short Citation Lists (pp. 1–64)
- Main Bibliography (pp. 65–304)

The Introduction describes the genesis of the bibliographic resource, explaining how terms such as 'vernacular' are used and why some books and articles that may seem to belong here are excluded. Books, journal articles, book chapters and web accessible dissertations that relate to English vernaculars and educations are incorporated; those that deal with, for example, French-related creoles and bilingual education are omitted. The Introduction also supplies code numbers for easy access to specific topics, so the main subject areas are coded as follows:

1 African American Vernacular English
2 Anglophone Pidgins and Creoles
3 Asian and Asian American English
4 Latina/o Englishes
5 Native American English
6 Other Vernacular Englishes

The Topic Overviews divide the items selected into 22 categories, each provided with a letter that is intended to function as a mnemonic:

Assessment and Achievement (A)
Bidialectalism and/or contrastive analysis (B)
Culture and curriculum (C)



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Disorders of speech, language or communication (D)
Edited volumes, overviews, reviews, or other bibliographies (E)
Features (F)
Ideology, attitudes, and/or identity (I)
Controversies about vernacular Englishes in schools (K)
Language or dialect awareness approach (L)
Materials for instruction (M)
Narrative, discourse, speech events, or style (N)
Oral and aural arts: Speaking and listening (O)
Politics and policy (P)
Language acquisition (Q)
Reading (R)
Strategies for instruction (S)
Teacher preparation and practice (T)
Code choice (U)
Vernacular literacy or dialect readers (V)
Writing (W)
Language transfer or interference (X)
Video resources (Z)

This section also includes a complete alphabetized list of authors whose works are classified in each coded category and the dates of each work. Thus, in A, we have authors from Caroline Adger to Jane Zeni and Joan Krater Thomas classified very simply as:

Adger et al. 1992
Zeni and Thomas 1990

Thus a reader who is interested mainly in Assessment has a quick and easy way of accessing writers on the topic without having to work through the larger alphabetically-arranged set of entries.

The main section of the book is the Bibliography, and here the reader is provided with the bibliographical references for the 1600+ texts selected. Approximately one third of these are annotated and, although the authors suggest that abstracts were provided 'on the basis of the importance of the piece to teachers or scholars' (p. xix), there is an arbitrariness about bibliographers making decisions on the importance or otherwise of pieces of research for their readers. As a partial compensation for the lack of summary annotations on so many entries, however, the writers have supplied a coded method of assessing the coverage of each entry. Two random examples will clarify the methodology. On p. 144, we find:

Funkhouser, James. 1973. A Various Standard. *College English* 34. 806–27
1BFISW

meaning that Funkhouser's article deals with African American Vernacular English (**1**) and is relevant reading for people interested in Bidialectalism and/or contrastive analysis (**B**), the linguistic features of AAVE (**F**), Ideology, attitudes and/or Identity (**I**), Strategies for instruction (**S**) and Writing (**W**). On the following page, the indispensable Krio dictionary is classified thus:

Fyle, Clifford N. and Eldred D. Jones. 1980. *A Krio–English Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
2F

meaning that it deals with an anglophone Creole (**2**) and is relevant to people interested in the features (**F**) of this vitally important African Creole. The coding is a useful shorthand but can result in the apparent asymmetry of a twenty-one page article seeming to cover more ground than this pioneering dictionary of 469 pages (li +418). The second reference also illustrates the fact that the number of pages in books is not provided.

This book is indeed a treasure trove of information and one quickly learns to master the descriptive labels and find the texts that are most germane to one's interests. One also acknowledges and admires the amount of time, energy, enthusiasm and scholarly effort that has gone into this collation. There are, however, a few points that I, as a creolist and long-time researcher into non-standard Englishes, would like to make. First, I think that the authors should have annotated all the entries. I appreciate that this would make the text longer but it would allow readers to make their own judgement on the importance of an entry. Secondly, there are some unexpected omissions. I searched in vain for *A Bibliography of Pidgin and Creole Languages*, compiled by John E. Reinecke et al (Reinecke et al., 1975), and there is no place in the book for Ian Hancock, for example, even though he is and has been one of the most prolific and respected writers on anglophone Pidgins and Creoles in the world. Thirdly, I think that this type of compilation ought to be on the internet rather than in book form. With an electronic database, it is much easier for the authors to update entries and to rectify unintentional errors of omission. It would also enable most teachers and researchers to access the wealth of data that is undoubtedly available by means of their computer which is, for many, their first port of call when they look for information. And finally, it would give scholars in other parts of the world who are also working on non-standard English vernaculars and the pedagogical issues that they raise an opportunity to extend the Rickford et al. corpus.

Reference

Reinecke, J. E., Tsuzaki, S. M., DeCamp, D., Hancock, I. F. & Wood, R. E. 1975. *A Bibliography of Pidgin and Creole Languages*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

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