Samaná English

Samaná English:

African American Language in the Dominican Republic

By

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To my darling wife and love of my life
Jacqueline
And to our sons
Fred and Charles Jr.
And our lovely granddaughter
Mona
I love you with all of my heart
And I thank you
For your loving support and encouragement

Charles Sr

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Preface

The topic of this book, Samaná English (SME), is maintained in the Dominican Republic by descendants of free Africans who migrated to Hispaniola in the early 1800's and settled on the Samaná Peninsula. The characterization of SME in the title as *African American Language in the Dominican Republic* is explicated in the following pages as a case study of the Black Experience: not only in the USA, but throughout the African diaspora. From such a perspective, SME and the variety currently maintained in African American communities in the USA, commonly known as African American Vernacular English. (AAVE), are members of an African diaspora family of languages referred to as Afro-American (Alleyne, 1980).

A sub-group of the Afro-American family, referred to by the term African American Language (AAL), includes AAVE, SME and varieties maintained by descendants of groups that migrated from the USA to Canada, Liberia and other locations during the era of European colonialism and the slave trade.

The primary focus of this study is on the relevance of SME to the history of AAVE. In the process of examining that issue, however, we confront another key issue that stems from the marginalized status of persons of African descent in American society.

Background of the present study

I first heard of SME when in training for Peace Corps service in the Dominican Republic through lectures on Dominican history and culture by H. Hoetink, author of "Americans in Samaná" (Hoetink, 1962), which incorporates the findings of a Commission of Inquiry from the United States which visited Samaná in 1870.

During my Peace Corps service, I met several English-speaking Black Dominicans and made an unsuccessful attempt to reach Samaná by driving eastward directly from Santo Domingo to Sabana del Mar on the southern shore of the Bay of Samaná; but failing to cross the Bay on a fishing boat. I completed my Peace Corps service and returned to the United States in

1963 and worked for several years for community service projects and agencies before deciding to continue my education.

I learned some important lessons from my first-hand experience in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic with language acquisition, language contact and acculturation that inform the issues discussed in the following pages.

In the 1970s, when I was a graduate student at Stanford University, taking courses in which I was introduced to the theory and practice of transformational - generative grammar (cf Chomsky, 1965). I was simultaneously becoming familiar with sociolinguistics, creole studies, and the rapidly-growing field of Black English studies. Most of the leading contributors to the first linguistic accounts of AAVE were not African Americans, and their approach to the subject is affected by their outsider perspective.

When a social group is viewed by outsiders, heightened attention is paid to aspects of the culture under study that differ from the culture of the observer, in which case it qualifies as *ethnicity*. Group members experience the same cultural elements intuitively, as normal. As a native speaker of AAVE, I was fascinated by the fact that I had very clear intuitions of a Black English linguistic system; and began to conceptualize an autonomous AAVE grammar.

Existing accounts of the grammatical structure of AAVE were based on lists of features corresponding to points of divergence from General American English, observed in empirical samples of Black speech data. Although some scholars refer to such lists as the grammar of AAVE, they are sorely lacking in precision and accuracy; and fall far short of the norm for state-of-the-art linguistic description as generally practiced in the twenty first century (DeBose, 1984). Labov acknowledges as much, stating in the introduction to his book: *Language in the Inner City*:

> "The definitive work on BEV [Black English Vernacular] grammar has not yet been done and will no doubt be written by black linguists who fully participate in vernacular culture" (Labov, 1972 xiv).

There is good reason to believe that it was not for lack of ability that Labov and his contemporaries avoided the option of describing AAVE as a system in its own right.

The academic study of a marginalized social group may be seen as an act of walking a tightrope: between authenticity, and widely held false beliefs; between accurate description and analysis of the culture under study, and established beliefs of mainstream society. This is especially true when the object of study is a variety of language commonly characterized as "incorrect," "broken" or simply "bad."

From the perspective of an investigator who happens to be a member of mainstream society, the path of the tightrope is between established beliefs in the *hegemony* of Standard English (DeBose, 2006) and the linguistic tenet of the systematic and rule governed nature of all human language. From the perspective of an investigator who is a member of the marginalized culture, the path of the tightrope is between the poles of a "double consciousness" (DuBois, 1903) of the Black Experience as an African and an American.

After completing my graduate studies at Stanford in 1975, I joined the linguistics faculty at Fresno State University and continued to engage in study of the overlapping fields of sociolinguistics, creole studies and African American language. One of the first products of that work was a paper entitled "Creole speech communities" (DeBose, 1975b). Shortly after that I presented DeBose 1977, "The status of native speaker intuitions in a polylectal grammar." Edited versions of both of those papers are included in this volume.

In 1979, en route to a conference in Saint Thomas, I stopped briefly in the Dominican Republic. I succeeded in reaching Samaná by land, driving north to Puerto Plata and eastward along the northern coast to the peninsula. Once in Samaná, I had no difficulty finding English speakers, but Spanish appeared to be the usual language of public interaction. I spoke at length with two adult males (ages 70, 40) who supplied most of the data upon which I based the first published linguistic article on SME.

In my first encounter with a speaker of SME, I asked him if there were many speakers of English in Samaná and got the reply:

Yes, but they speaks it bad.

Several informants for the 1992 study used the term *brutish*, apologetically, in reference to their English. The terms *fine* or *fino* were often applied to their ideal of acceptable standard English. C.K. used such terms; as she reluctantly fulfilled my request to tape-record her speaking SME to her sister.

C.K: *Come on! We talks it. I say we speak it, brutish, ain't true? What they speak, it more finer than us, you know.*

An informant referred to as G. S-K. offered the following negative evaluation of SME in confirming the existence of English-speaking children among the descendants of the immigrants:

G.S-K: *... What they speaks is English, but not good English. The bad English of Samaná, cause Samaná don't speak the good... They speaks the funniest English. Yeah, they don't speak good English here.*

For all her protestations about SME being "bad," however, GS-K's language exhibits complex and native-like clausal structures and includes phonemes that tend to be lost from English in contact situations. The words *they* and *the*, for instance, are pronounced with a voiced interdental fricative, and virtually all of the phonemes typically found in modern dialects of American English are found in SME, including schwa, contrasting tense and lax high and mid vowels, the low front vowel /æ/ in words like *bad*, and the morphophonemic variants of the *-s* and *-ed* suffixes corresponding to the voicing and other features of the final segment of the stem to which they attach. The suffix *-s* attached to the verb *speak* does not conform to the standard English rule that restricts it to third person singular subjects. It is consistent however with rules of SME grammar, discussed in the following pages, that differ in certain ways from those of General American English, characterized as *African continuities*

Similar responses were made by several other informants, and in each case provoke a response from the researcher of affirmation of the intrinsic worth of SME, e.g., "I like your language," or simply, "It's not bad."

As a linguist and native speaker of AAVE, I could sympathize with the experience of stigmatization of such a key part of one's identity as language; and I tried my best to affirm the intrinsic worth of SME. It was the least I could do in exchange for the data they allowed me to record. Informants were assured that the purpose of the research was to contribute to academic knowledge of their language and promised a modest honorarium in appreciation for their effort.

In isolation of its context, maligning of a language by one of its own speakers could be mistakenly seen as evidence of a linguistic inferiority complex, or symptomatic of low self-esteem. The context of a dialogue between academic scholars and members of a disenfranchised social group

whose language is the object of their research makes it clear that the informants are not simply voicing their acceptance of hegemonic characterizations of their language, but speaking in a counter-language (Morgan, 1993); in which their questioning of, and indignation with, prevailing attitudes about their language is veiled as statements of fact.

The response of the researcher may be seen as a microscopic instance of a tension between the norms of objectivity and impartiality that are supposed to govern academic inquiry; and an ethical obligation toward research subjects to share empowering knowledge of the true nature of their language with them. Such a tension motivated decisions of the linguists who produced the first studies of AAVE, who tried to avoid unintended perpetuation of stereotypical characterizations of it that served to justify the subordinate status of persons of African descent. They were always careful to underscore the fact that all Black folk do not speak it. Their classification of it as a *nonstandard dialect* called Black English was intended to correct prevailing characterizations of it as "bad," "incorrect" or" substandard" English. It had the unintended consequence, however, of assigning to AAVE a status that symbolizes the subordinate status of persons of African descent in American society, and was a major factor in the Ebonics controversy.

  The findings of my SME research give substance to the truth that when SME speakers talk as they do, they are not trying and failing to speak "good" English; but, rather, speaking correctly according to a different set of rules than Standard English. A cardinal tenet of linguistics is that all human language is systematic and rule governed. It does not matter whether the language in question is recognized as such. Regardless of whether a variety of language is assigned an elite status such as classical or standard, or a lowly status such as "incorrect," "substandard" or simply "bad" by members of a social group: from the perspective of scientific linguistics, it is a system of elements and rules shared by members of a community that qualifies for recognition as a language, regardless of its status in society.

INTRODUCTION

During the era of European colonialism, Africans– free and slave- in new multilingual communities and other situations that brought them together speaking a variety of African languages, with no other language in common, acquired the European languages, or created new languages with varying mixtures of material from the ancestral languages and the colonial languages, to bridge the communication gap. Such languages were established along the African coast, in islands off the coast of Africa, in the Caribbean and in North and South America. Several such diaspora varieties are acknowledged pidgins or creoles. Others are the object of ongoing debate over their linguistic history, and appropriate classification: as a nonstandard dialect, post-creole or other type of language. One such variety, referred to as Samaná English (SME), is maintained in the Dominican Republic on the Samaná Peninsula by descendants of free Africans who migrated from the United States to Hispaniola in 1824. Many of the original settlers shifted to Dominican Spanish and assimilated to Dominican culture after a generation or two. Those who settled on the Samaná peninsula however, in isolation from the Dominican mainstream had maintained the English dialect spoken by the original settlers, for over 150 years when the variety came to the attention of linguists in the late 1970's.

Due to the isolated conditions under which SME was maintained scholars agree that it has changed little since the time of the original settlement and can serve as crucial evidence for debated issues of the origin and development of the variety currently maintained in African American communities in the USA, commonly known as African American Vernacular English. (AAVE).[1]

This writer is author of several frequently-cited papers on SME, some of which are published in conference proceedings, others are unpublished papers or works in progress, including the first linguistic account of it,

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[1] Although I have used different names: for the variety, i.e.: Black English (BE), and African American Language (AAL), in most of my writing, in the following pages, I use AAVE in reference to the variety maintained in the USA in contrasting it to SME. I restrict my use of BE and AAL to direct quotes where the variety is referred to as such.

"Samaná English: A dialect that time forgot" (DeBose, 1983). Their inclusion together in this book hopefully makes the author's position on debated issues regarding the origin of AAVE, and supporting data, accessible to a larger audience.

In the process of converting the papers into book chapters, I have taken the liberty to edit, revise and rearrange their content toward the goal of relating it to pervasive issues and themes, the most central of which is the relevance of SME to current issues regarding the origin and development of AAVE.

The Anglicist Hypothesis

When the first studies of AAVE emerged, in the 1960's, the received position of practicing linguists, referred to in the following pages as the *Anglicist Hypothesis*, was that AAVE is a *nonstandard dialect* of American English that originated in the same way as other American dialects: through divergence from the British dialects with which Africans, free and slave, came into contact in colonial settlements in North America. Existing accounts of AAVE based on that assumption describe it by lists of distinctive features with the goal of proving that they are minor deviations from the General American English (GAE) norm. At the top of the list of such features is the copula / auxiliary *be*: which is the focus of two articles in *Language*, the flagship journal of the Linguistic Society of America. In one of those articles, "Contraction deletion and the inherent variability of the English copula" William Labov makes the case that the frequent absence of full or contracted forms of *is* and *are* in AAVE sentences such as 1 and 2 results from the deletion of a contracted form in the underlying structure of such sentences (Labov 1969).

1. *She at home.* 'She is at home.'
2. *They playin ball.* 'They are playing ball.'

In the other article, Fasold (1969) accounts for AAVE sentences such as 3, in which *be* occurs directly following the subject of a sentence, uninflected for tense, and is referred to as "habitual *be*."

3. *I be takin my time.* 'I am taking my time [on certain recurring occasions].'

Fasold explains this anomaly by claiming that AAVE, in the process of diverging from British Colonial English (BCE), came to have two

different words *be*: the one common to other dialects, that is inflected for present or past tense, which he calls *be1* and a distinctive AAVE marker of habitual aspect which he labels *be2*.

Advocates of a dissenting view of the origin of AAVE, referred to as the *Creolist Hypothesis*, cite copula absence, and other features discussed in the following pages, as evidence that AAVE evolved to its present status from a prior creole.

The Creolist Hypothesis

In linguistics, a creole is defined as a pidgin that has become the native language of a community of speakers. A pidgin, for present purposes, may be defined as use of an existing language by non-native speakers who are in the process of acquiring it, as a means of emergency communication, or lingua franca. Such conditions prevailed in typical situations in which African slaves adjusted to the experience of captivity: from slave factories on the coast of Africa, to slave ships crossing the Atlantic, to forced plantation labor.

The Creolists argue that in newly created slave communities in North America, the diversity of African languages that had served the captives as a means of everyday communication in their former lives, were frequently unknown by their new neighbors, and the only language they would have in common with other Africans was the European language of the slaveholders. Under such conditions, they would have little choice but to use their limited knowledge of English, or other European language, as the primary means of everyday communication. Younger members of those communities acquired the pidgin of their elders as a first language at which point it expanded and stabilized as a new creole language.

Creolists do not take issue with the received position that AAVE is presently a nonstandard dialect, but only with the claim that it originated through divergence from dialects of British Colonial English. An unstated implication of the received position is that the underlying grammatical structure of AAVE is essentially the same as that of GAE. Based on that assumption, studies of AAVE have focused on isolated features, with the goal of proving that they are minor deviations from the GAE norm.

Data collected by this author on two trips to Samaná, in 1979 and 1992 support a different view of the history of AAVE than the Creolist or

Anglicist hypotheses, referred to as the *Africanist Hypothesis* (DeBose and Faraclas, 1993).[2]

The Africanist Hypothesis

The Africanist Hypothesis contrasts markedly with the Anglicist account of AAVE in two important ways:

- by describing it as an autonomous system, which accounts for distinctive AAVE features as the output of "an independent, coherent system in its own right (DeBose and Faraclas, 1993 p. 364),"
- and by shifting the focus of the diachronic study of its origin from a Eurocentric explanation of it as divergence from BCE, to an Afrocentric account of what it has in common with English-lexified languages and cultures of the African diaspora.

A central component of the autonomous AAVE grammar is an innovative variant of a system of marking tense, mood and aspect common to African and African diaspora languages referred to as the lexical stativity parameter (LSP), according to which the temporal reference of spoken utterances is based on the value of a predicated event for the feature [+/-stative].

The role of the LSP is highly transparent in acknowledged creoles in which sentences may be marked for tense mood and aspect by particles pre-posed to an invariant verb. Cognates of *done* function to redundantly mark non-stative predicates for completive/past aspect/tense. Cognates of English *go*, *will* or *shall* function as markers of future time; and cognates of *been* function as preverbal markers of anterior aspect, as in the following Gullah examples (Turner, 1949).

The particle *done* marks an action complete, and may be translated as Standard English *have* or *has*, e.g.:

> *I done tell dem nyoung one now* 'I have told those young ones now.'

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[2] I am indebted to Nick Faraclas, with whom I collaborated as co-authors of DeBose and Faraclas 1993: "An Africanist approach to the linguistic study of Black English: Getting to the roots of the tense-aspect-modality and copula systems in Afro-American."

The particle *bin* marks an action or state as anterior to an established time of reference and might translate as English *was* or *had*, e.g.

> *I think it been a Friday,* 'I think it was a Friday.'

The particle *gwine* marks an action as occurring in the future, e.g.

> *I sho gwine scare you again.* 'I'm sure going to scare you again'

In the AAVE system, the role of the LSP is masked by superficial similarities to the tense- dominant General American English (GAE) system. The autonomous AAVE grammar accepts sentences in which a number of different predicate types occur directly following the subject including:

> A noun phrase (NP), e.g.: *He my best friend*.
> An adjective phrase (AP), e.g.: *She nice*.
> A locative phrase (LOC), e.g.: *We at home*.
> A present participle (V+in) phrase, e.g.: *They havin fun*.

Sentences with the four above types of predicates (NP, AP, LOC, V+in) derive a present/continuous tense/aspect interpretation from the LSP, based on their [+stative] value, and there is no need to postulate a different Standard English sentence from which an underlying copula has been deleted, and as such it renders obsolete the contraction/deletion hypothesis.

The autonomous AAVE grammar also accepts sentences in which an uninflected verb directly follows the subject. A non-stative verb such as *cook*, for example, in a sentence such as *I cook some rice* 'I cooked some rice' derives a default past/completive tense/aspect interpretation from the [-stative] value assigned to it by the LSP. Hence, there is no need to postulate an *-ed* suffix which Anglicists claim has been deleted from the past tense form *cooked* by a phonological rule that removes the final element of the consonant cluster /kt/.

A cognate of the *-ed* suffix functions in the AAVE system as an optional marker of past/completive aspect/tense. A cognate of the suffix *-s* functions as an optional marker of non-completive aspect, in a sentence with a stative predicate such as *I needs a haircut*. It functions to override the past/completive interpretation of a non-stative verb in a sentence such as *I cooks rice sometime*.

Cognates of *done* and *go* continue to function in the AAVE system as preverbal markers, and are referred to as *archaic* markers. The form *done* functions as an optional marker of past/completive aspect in a sentence such as

> *I done cook some rice* 'I cooked / have cooked some rice.'

The particle *gon,* pronounced /gõ/ /õ/, may precede an uninflected main verb (including *be*) and thereby mark the predicate for future tense, e.g.

> *We gon be eatin breakfast.*
> *Im'on try to outlive you, baby, be as old as possible.* (Oakland 39)

Other AAVE features, which are shown in the following pages to function as anterior aspect markers include cognates of *was*, *had* and the *-ed* suffix; and are referred to as *innovative* markers: not only in AAVE but also in SME. Those and other such markers, archaic or innovative, are assumed by Anglicists as supportive of their position. For Creolists such features are too similar to GAE to satisfy criteria for prior creolization, i.e., divergence from other dialects and similarity to creoles (Rickford, 1977). For Africanists, however, the same features, despite their similarity to GAE, co-occur in form and function with TMA markers in acknowledged creoles in a manner that supports the claim that AAVE and SME are genetically related; to each other as well as to acknowledged creoles of the African diaspora.

A seminal 1988 work by Thomason and Kaufman, *Language Contact, Creolization, and Genetic Linguistics*, provides a useful theoretical model for framing the issues under study. Using the Thomason and Kaufman model, the debated pros and cons of the Creolist hypothesis may be framed in terms of whether or not AAVE and SME are genetically related.

According to Thomason and Kaufman, for languages to qualify as genetically related, they should meet two kinds of criteria: social and structural. To meet the social criterion, the varieties in question should be transmitted from generation to generation of members of the same community, in a manner referred to as language maintenance, or shifted to by new communities in a manner referred to a "perfect shift." To meet the structural criterion of genetic relatedness, there should be evidence of "massive correspondences at all levels of structure" (ibid.). In certain cases of shift, the shifted-to variety fails to meet this criterion and qualifies as what Thomason and Kaufman call "imperfect shift," and is referred to elsewhere as "shift with restructuring" (DeBose, 1999). As such, they

qualify as "mixed languages." Pidgins and creoles, for example, typically contain numerous lexical correspondences with native speaker varieties of the shifted to language but differ considerably at other levels of structure.

There is no doubt that AAVE and SME are genetically related, insofar as both are descended from a common proto language, referred to as Early African American Vernacular English (EAAVE) spoken by members of the Free African community in 1824:

- those who migrated to Hispaniola,
- as well as those whom they left behind in the United States. Their genetic relationship is also supported by numerous structural correspondences.

It is debatable, however, whether EAAVE is genetically-related to BCE as claimed by the Anglicist Hypothesis.

A hopefully convincing case is made that the Anglicist Hypothesis is incompatible with evidence that SME differs more than AAVE from GAE. While such evidence is consistent with the Creolist claim that AAVE originated through a process of convergence with, rather than divergence from, GAE it falls short of definitive proof that the divergence is from a creole. The same evidence strongly supports the Africanist claim that AAVE and SME are genetically related, not only to each other, but also to the Afro-American family of African diaspora languages.

CHAPTER ONE

A DIALECT THAT TIME FORGOT

In the first paragraph of DeBose (1983) I explain the relevance of SME, as I saw it then, to current issues regarding the origin of present day AAVE.

> *The fact that the dialect has survived until now in a virtually monolingual Spanish-speaking nation is attributed mainly to the isolation of most remaining speakers on the sparsely populated Samaná peninsula. The assumption that language change is retarded by isolation invites speculation that Samaná English is representative of the speech of 'free' Afro-Americans around 1824, when the first American immigrants set foot on Hispaniola.* (47).

SME resembles modern AAE in terms of such features as absence of post-vocalic /r/; "simplification" of final consonant clusters; nonstandard usage of the copula/auxiliary *be*; and non-inversion of the subject NP and AUX in questions. Certain features, however, which occur variably in modern AAE, in alternation with standard or mesolectal forms, seem to occur categorically, or nearly so, in SME.

Non-realization of post-vocalic /r/, for example, is categorical in the speech of one informant (Table 1B); and nearly so in the other (1A); the only exception being his pronunciation of *girls* in a manner that seems strongly influenced by orthography.

The feature commonly referred to as "final consonant cluster simplification," which occurs variably in modern AAVE occurs categorically in the speech of both informants, as illustrated by The pronunciation of 'gift' and 'host' in "*Big gift shops charge a whole host of money . . .*," by the 40 year old informant. The other informant also consistently produces words without final consonant clusters in such forms as *priest*, *island*, *just*, etc.

The selection of the /iz/ allomorph of the plural suffix in the production of 'tourists' by the 40 year old informant, when saying *When we ain't sellin to the tourises* may be seen as evidence that the absence of final consonant clusters in SME words is better described as different pronunciations of certain words in the basic vocabulary in the heads of speakers - their

linguistic competence - rather than the way it is described in existing literature; as variable deletion of certain sounds from the basic structure of a word.

Table 1: r-less forms in Samaná English

Informant A		**Informant B**	
/hi/ ˜ /hiyə/	'here'	/ye/ ˜ /hye/ ˜ /hi/	'here'
/boən/	'born'	/bo:n/	'born
/la:nz/	'learn	/lʌnz/	'learn'
/ye:z/	'years'	/ye:z/	'years'
/əʌd/	'third'	/əʌdiyeyt/	'thirty-eight'
/đeyə/ ˜ /đæ/	'there'	/đey/	'their'
/fa:m/	'farm'	/fa:mz/	'farms'
/owvə/	'over'	/owvə/	'over'
/fʌs/	'first'	/yandə/	'yonder
/ha:d/	'hard'	/skye:s/	'scarce'
/sɔvis/	'service'	/yʌnstəz/	'youngsters'
/wʌkin/	'working'	/ʧa:ʤ/	'charge'
/mʌđə/	'mother'	/brʌđə/	'brother'
/hʌ/	'her'	/ʌndə/	'under'
/girlz/	'girls'	/kyælifonyə/	'California'

The more frequent occurrence of such features as absence of post-vocalic /r/ and final consonant clusters in SME than in modern AAE is, as noted above, consistent with the Africanist view that SME has evolved from EAAE at a slower rate than modern AAE; and that British Colonial English (BCE) was rapidly restructured, in contact with speakers of African and African Diaspora languages, into a new English-lexified mixed language. At the level of vocabulary, words derived from such English words as *born* and *tourist* would be restructured to fit phonetic restrictions on the shape of words in the speakers' ancestral mother tongues.

It was noted above that the isolation of SME on the Samaná peninsula accounts for its maintenance, and the slow rate at which it has evolved from proto-EAAL. Other "factors affecting the rate of language change" (DeBose,1999), discussed in detail in Chapter Seven, account for the faster rate at which EAAL evolved into modern AAE. Notwithstanding the faster rate at which EAAL evolved into modern AAE, it shares with SME a common underlying grammar, referred to in DeBose 1983 as "basilectal Black English" (DeBose, 1977).

In DeBose 1977, I note that within certain speech communities "where two or more divergent lects of a language coexist, patterns of variation may be observed which imply a ranking of the varieties on an attitudinal continuum based on the relative frequency of occurrence of prestige or stigmatized forms. The ideal variety representing the maximal occurrence of prestige variants is known as the *acrolect*, and the opposite pole, where stigmatized forms are most heavily concentrated is known as the *basilect*," and that "the area of the continuum intermediate between the basilect and acrolect is known as the *mesolect*." Each pole of such a continuum is represented by an idealized grammar, the output of which does not consistently match the output of individual speakers: which varies in ways that are accounted for by the occurrence of one or another of a set of choices referred to as a linguistic variable.

Cognates of the English copula, discussed in detail in Chapter Five, include copula absence in basilectal sentence patterns in which the subject is directly followed by a nominal, adjective or locative predicate; a V+in predicate, or the future marker *gon*; and optional marking of such predicates by *is*, or the negation marker *aint*.

Both of the DeBose (1983) informants produce so-called "zero copula" constructions; and both use *ain't* as a negator.

> *They scarce.* (40)
> *We at your service.* (70)
> *Y'all ain't goin to find it.* (70)
> *When we ain't sellin to the tourises* (40)

Neither informant shows any instances of NP-AUX inversion, and typically produce such questions as:

> *This is the first time you come here Santo Domingo?* (70)
> *You is just givin a little walk?* (70)
> *When you will be comin back?* (40)

In modern AAE, by comparison, noninversion of NP-AUX is a variable feature.

Both informants exhibit more frequent usage of the verb suffix *–s* with subjects other than third person singular than is characteristic of modern BE, e.g.:

> *Plenty people goes to the country.* (40)

> *When we gits 'em we sell 'em to the touris'es.* (40)
> *We speaks it bad.* (70)

Both exhibit full forms of *is*, *am*, and *are*, though not always with standard subject-verb agreement.

> *She said you is quite beautiful . . .* (70)
> *They are lookin' now for teachers.* (70)
> *The Chinos they is uptown,* (70)
> *I am of them.* (40)

Contractions of *are* do not occur in the data, and contracted *is* occurs only with the demonstrative *that*:

> *That's a island.* (70)
> *That's the(hotel) Cayacoa.* (40)

One instance of uninflected *be* occurs with apparent habitual meaning. The seventy year old, when asked if he had any relatives in the United States, replied:

> *By the radio I bees hearin nowadays plenty family I have out from here ... but not because I know that . . .*

In all of the above characteristics of the copula system, Samaná English and BE are quite similar. The younger informant produces what appears to be the contraction *I'm* before the past participle *been*, in a manner which suggests that in his idiolect /ʌm/ is classified as a lexical variant of the subject pronoun *I*. In answer to the question *Have you ever been to the United States?* he replied:

> *No. I'm never been. I'm been in Puerto Rico, I'm been Miami, I'm been Spain because I belong to the Navy, you know, Dominican Navy, and, I'm been in the Guantanamo base, but, uh, I'm got some brothers over there New York . . .*

Previous suggestions that /a/ and /ʌm/ function in AAE as variants of the first person singular pronoun (Stewart, 1966; Dillard, 1972) have been met with skepticism; the best know example being Labov's (1972) review of arguments for and against an underlying copula in the structure of BE sentences. The case for variation rests primarily upon the fact that speakers who frequently produce "zero" variants of *is* and *are* after other pronouns normally produce *I'm* /ʌm/, *that's* /ðæs/, *it's* /is/ and *what's* /hwʌs/ before predicate noun phrases, adjectives, locatives, V+in constructions. etc. It

receives additional support from occasional observations of North
American children using /ʌm/ as a subject pronoun, e.g.: /ʌm is a kawboy/
'I'm a cowboy.' Similar usage has been attested by adult speakers, i.e.: /iz
ðæs ə fæk/ 'Is that a fact?' uttered by a gentleman in his fifties or sixties in
Berkeley California in 1981. While such observations may be dismissed as
atypical or marginal behavior limited to a few among the very young and
very old, the Samanà data provide the most solid evidence yet of the
lexical alternation between *I* and *I'm* as a firmly established dialectal
feature.

The main purpose of DeBose 1983 was to demonstrate that Samaná
English resembles modern AAVE but appears archaic in comparison. The
inference that an archaic variety of AAL was spoken by the original
settlers, and their counterparts whom they left behind in Philadelphia,
Baltimore and thereabouts, is consistent with the hypothesis developed in
DeBose 1984; i.e.: that AAVE is the result of continuing decreolization of
a North American basilect distinct from Gullah or "Plantation Creole"
(Dillard op. cit.) which has always been highly decreolized in comparison
to English-lexified creoles of West Africa and the Caribbean.

CHAPTER TWO

THE LANGUAGE SITUATION IN THE USA
AT THE TIME OF THE SAMANÁ MIGRATION

Evidence of the internal structure of SME discussed in the previous chapter supports the claim that SME diverges more than present day AAVE from British Colonial English (BCE) in a consistent manner to what the Creolist Hypothesis predicts. This chapter calls attention to aspects of the *language situation* in the USA at the time of the Samaná migration that were conducive to the emergence of a creole, or post-creole variety of Early African American English (EAAE) rather than a dialect of BCE, as claimed by the Anglicists. Key issues are framed within the theoretical perspective of *macroscopic sociolinguistics*, i.e.; language in its social context; and the manner in which members of a social group, referred to as a *speech community*, interacts on the basis of shared norms of language use.

The term *language situation* is defined, for present purposes, as

> *A set of interlocking socio-historical factors, such as history, geography, demography, politics and culture that account for the ways in which members of a given speech community use various languages and language varieties in the course of their everyday interaction.*

In contrast to *general linguistics*, the primary focus of which is on description of the internal structure of a particular language variety with reference to a set of structural elements that are common to all languages, the primary focus of sociolinguistics is on situational factors that motive members of a given speech community to use one or another of several different linguistic codes, or ways of speaking, referred to as the community's *linguistic repertoire*.

A useful model for description of the language situation in a particular speech community is with reference to its proximity to one or another of a set of *ideal types* including, but not limited to, the following:

- Monolingual
- Multilingual
- Diglossia
- Bilingual, with or without diglossia

A *monolingual* language situation is one in which a single language variety serves as the default means of face-to-face public interaction, or *vernacular*; locally, regionally and nationally. It should be noted that this definition allows for the frequent use of different languages in particular households or enclaves, occupied by individuals or groups who maintain different ancestral mother tongues.

A *bilingual* language situation is one in which two different languages are alternatively used by the same speakers in a given geographic domain. A *multilingual* language situation is one in which different vernaculars are typically used: in different regions of a nation; in different local communities within a region; and/or by different groups in a single locality.

 In certain language situations, characterized aa a *diglossia*, the language which typically serves as the vernacular (designated L) coexists with a standard or classical variety of the same language, or a completely different language, (designated H) in a complementary functional relationship.

At the time of the Samaná migration, English was typically used as the default medium of everyday communication throughout the USA, and to that extent the national language situation was monolingual. In several areas of the country, non-English mother tongues coexisted with English in a bilingual linguistic repertoire. Dutch was maintained in New Amsterdam. German, Scottish, Scots-Irish and other European languages were maintained in immigrant communities in Pennsylvania and elsewhere. Persons of African descent in coastal areas of South Carolina and Georgia spoke the English-lexified creole Gullah as well as a regional dialect of General American English (GAE).

The language situation in African American communities outside of the Gullah area, is a subject of ongoing academic debate and conjecture. As noted in the Introduction, Creolists maintain that a creole similar to Gullah was maintained by enslaved Africans on plantations in the South, whereas the Anglicist Hypothesis implies that Early African American English was then, and continues to be, a nonstandard dialect of European American English.

My SME data supports the characterization of Early African American English (EAAE) as an archaic lect of a continuum of convergence toward the GAE norm, that differs more from GAE than present day AAVE. At the time of the Samaná migration, EAAE was, by all indications, a different system than GAE, and continues to be to the present day. Members of the African American speech community are typically bilingual, in AAVE and a regional dialect of GAE.

Certain aspects of a national language situation are highlighted by a descriptive model that accounts for the typological and functional statuses of varieties that coexist in the linguistic repertoire of the speech community in question.

Stewart (1968) has proposed a "sociolinguistic typology of national multilingualism" on the basis of which a particular language situation might be characterized as consisting of one or more distinct languages each of' which is assigned to a particular typological category (e.g., creole, standard, artificial), and a particular functional label (e.g., official, literary, group, religious).

Stewart's typological categories are determined by the presence or absence of four defining attributes:

1. *Standardization*, or the extent to which a codified set of written norms of acceptability are in force.
2. *Autonomy*, the criterion which distinguishes languages which are considered 'real' by members of the speech community from those which are considered 'dialects' 'corruption,' 'bad' speech so forth.
3. *Historicity*, the criterion by which languages thought to have evolved normally from some parent language, are distinguished from those which are created artificially or thought to have emerged rather recently from a contact situation resulting from conquest, trade or migration.
4. *Vitality*, or the existence of a community of native speakers.

The typology realized on the basis of the above criteria is summarized in Figure I

Figure 1

Standardization	Autonomy	Attribute Historicity	Vitality	Type	Symbol
+	+	+	-	Classical	C
+	+	+	+	Standard	S
-	+	+	+	Vernacular	V
-	-	+	+	Dialect	D
-	-	-	+	Creole	K
-	-	-	-	Pidgin	P
+	+	-	-	Artificial	A

Applied to the language situation in the USA at the time of the migration, English, Dutch and German would all be classified typologically as a Standard; and Gullah would be classified as a Creole.

The typological classification of EAAE is a subject of continuing debate (cf. Poplack and Tagliamonte, 2001; Rickford, 2015; Mufwene, 2015; Winford, 2015). By all indications, however, it is not a *nonstandard dialect*, as claimed by the Anglicist Hypothesis.

A working hypothesis of the typological classification of EAAE is stated at the conclusion of DeBose (1983), i.e.:

> *The inference that an archaic variety of BE was spoken by the original settlers, and their counterparts whom they left behind in Philadelphia, Baltimore and thereabouts, is consistent with the hypothesis developed in DeBose in progress; i.e.: that BE is the result of continuing decreolization of a North American basilect distinct from Gullah or "Plantation Creole" (Dillard op. cit.) which has always been highly decreolized in comparison to English-derived creoles of West Africa and the Caribbean.*

The source of that hypothesis, referred to as "DeBose in progress," was completed in 1984 and presented at a conference. It includes an overview or the grammatical structure of "Basilectal Black English" (BBE). The assertion that BBE has "always been highly decreolized" fits the criteria for what is called a "mixed language" by Thomason and Kauffman (1988). A key implication of that classification is that, contrary to the Anglicist view, EAAE is not genetically-related to BCE.

To account for the mixed language classification of EAAE, Stewart's typology could be revised by changing the *creole* category, abbreviated K, to mixed language, abbreviated M; a type that includes varieties with the [-historicity] attribute, regardless of whether or not it resulted from decreolization of a prior creole variety.