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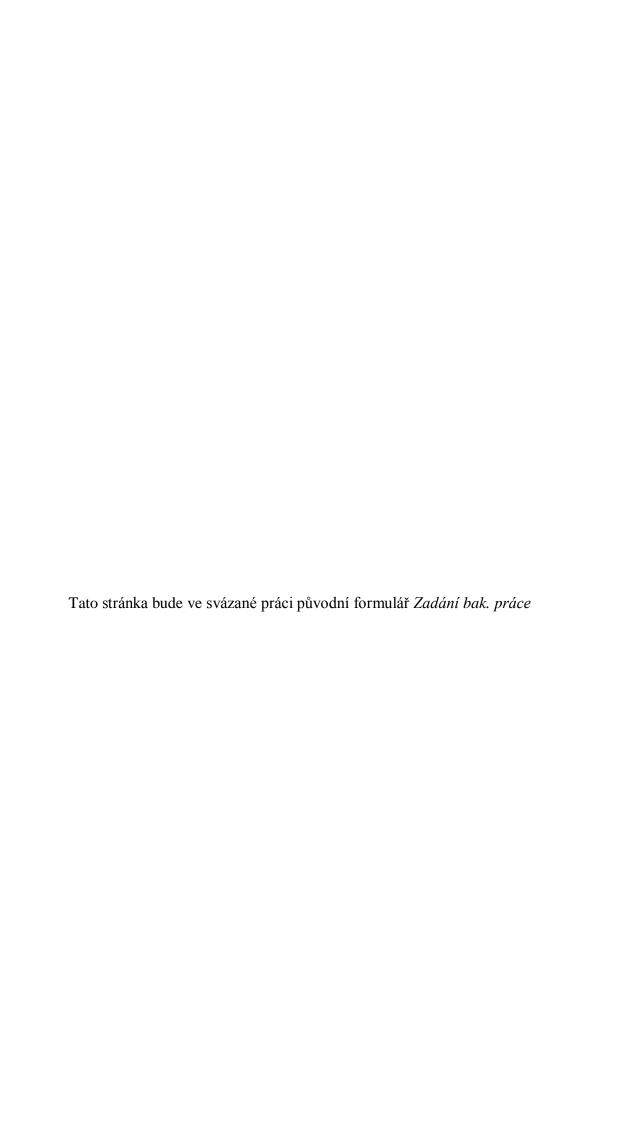## FACULTY OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

AFRICAN AMERICAN VERNACULAR ENGLISH

UNDERGRADUATE THESIS

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Supervisor: PhDr. Naděžda Stašková, Ph. D.

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ABSTRACT

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This bachelor thesis deals with African American Vernacular English (AAVE). It consists of four main parts: the Introduction, the Theoretical Background, the Analysis of excerpts and Conclusion.

Theoretical background covers labels and labeling process of the variety, the historical development and origin theories. Grammatical features such as verbal and preverbal markers, copula verb *be*, negation and properties of nouns and pronouns are discussed.

From phonological features the most important ones are consonant cluster reduction, word final devoicing and the production of *t/d* sounds and *f/v* sounds in words where *th* sound is normally present. Lexicon of AAVE is also featured and some patterns that change meaning of Standard English words.

The practical part consists of the analysis of a novel *Imani All Mine* by African American writer Connie Porter. Phenomena described in the theoretical part are demonstrated in use on chosen excerpts. Excerpts were chosen manually from the book and divided into groups according to the phenomena appearing in them.

The aim of this thesis is to show that AAVE is a language with set rules and patterns and that its features are not mistakes. The analysis proved that the AAVE really is a rule governed language and that phenomena, which differs from Standard English appear systematically and frequently usually without exceptions.

Key words: African American Vernacular English, AAVE, Black English, lexicon, grammar, phonology

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1 INTRODUCTION

African American Vernacular English (AAVE) is a very interesting and dynamic variety of English language spoken by most African Americans in the United States (Green, 2002, p. 1). Its uniqueness comes from specific set phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic patterns, verbal rituals and lexicon (Smitherman, 1998, p. 207).

American public used to understand AAVE as a lower, working-class slang and as Standard American English with mistakes in grammar and pronunciation, but AAVE has its own distinct rules and structure (Pullum, 1999, p. 40). Its distinctive features are often understood as mistakes by those, who are not familiar with these rules and patterns. What made the public more aware of AAVE was the decision of the Oakland City School board in 1996 that regarded AAVE and its use in school facilities. It was settled that teachers should be specially trained to look at AAVE more objectively and were able to better understand those students who speak it (Pullum, 1999, p. 40).

Also thanks to rap and hip hop music, literature, film industry and social media people are more acquainted with this variety and its differences from other varieties of the English language, however the use of AAVE is still somewhat constrained, especially the use in educational facilities as mentioned above, because only Standard English is considered appropriate to use. Teachers are still not sufficiently familiar with the system and the patterns of AAVE and this issue leads to misunderstandings and miscommunication between the teachers and students who identify themselves as speakers of AAVE.

The reason why I chose this topic for my undergraduate thesis is to show that AAVE is not a slang full of careless mistakes but a colorful variety with interesting culture, which manifests in the lexicon, with unique features in grammar and phonology and to point out the possible places of ambiguity.

This undergraduate thesis consists of four main parts: the Introduction, the Theoretical Background, the Analysis of excerpts and Conclusion.

The theoretical part deals with a description of the origin theories and history of AAVE, evidence about the development of the variety and the process of labeling

throughout the history. Grammatical, lexical and phonological properties of the variety are also discussed.

The practical part is concerned with an analysis of excerpts taken from a novel *Imani All Mine (IAM)* by Connie Porter (2000) written completely in AAVE.

The aim of this thesis is to show the rules and various patterns used within the variety which speakers follow and to prove that AAVE is not just Standard English with mistakes in grammar and with careless pronunciation.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Labeling the Variety

Labels are used to link speakers to a certain variety of language and they also serve as a general description of the linguistic features that occur in the specific variety. In the case of AAVE these labels changed throughout the time because of their connection to sociohistorical development and social climate in the USA (Green, 2002, p. 6). This labeling process will be discussed in the following subchapter.

Green (2002) provides a list of the following labels used throughout the history of AAVE until now (p. 6):

- 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 Vernacular English

Some of these labels include "English", suggesting its characteristics have a lot in common with other varieties of English. Other labels are highlighting the African/creole relation (Green, 2002, p. 6).

Another label Smitherman (2000) often refers to is *Ebonics*. This term became rather controversial after the Oakland City School Board decision. It is derived from words *ebony* (dark colored exotic wood) and *phonics* (method for teaching reading).

Word *ebony* points to the connection of AAVE to its African roots (Pullum, 1999, p. 40).

In labeling this variety of language we have to take in consideration the acceptability of the terms and political correctness. Negro dialect refers to a period when African Americans were referred to as Negroes, however, it is acceptable to use Negro English when referring to historical state of the language in the early period of its development (1620 - 1700), but at present it would be highly inappropriate to use such a term in referring to African American English and its speakers.

2.2 Labeling process

Smitherman (2000) describes the labeling process of speakers and language throughout the history from African to African American (p. 44).

2.2.1 African
Initially the label *African* was linked to slaves brought to the Colonial America, because their connection to Africa was still very strong. *African* was the most commonly used term also Africans were referred to as "free" or "slave" depending on their enslavement status. Other labels used were *"Negro"* or *"nigger"*. "Negro" comes from Spanish and Portuguese and it means *black*. The term "nigger" did not acquire its well known negative connotation until the late nineteenth century (Smitherman, 2000, p. 44).

2.2.2 Colored
After several generations of Africans were born the term African lost its initial meaning. It was possible to encounter the label "New Negroes" to refer to descendants of the first Africans brought to the New World. In the nineteenth up to the early twentieth century the term *colored* came to use. This label was their starting point on their way to emancipation (Smitherman, 2000, p. 45).

2.2.3 Negro
Negro as a label for Africans was used in the past as mentioned above, but in the twentieth it gained a different meaning. The fight for racial equality and civil rights changed its understanding. It was supposed to "construct a new identity of dignity, respect and full citizenship" (Smitherman, 2000, p. 47).

2.2.4 Black

The "*Black* Power" movement (1966) urged Negroes to discontinue the usage of the term because of its strong connection to the enslavement period. The newly used term was supposed to be a source of empowerment, unity and self-definition on their way to achieve equality (Smitherman, 2000, p. 48).

2.2.5 African American

The end of the twentieth century brought the contemporary term *African American.* This term empowers the African heritage, but also shows the contribution of generations of Black people to creating the American culture and history (Smitherman, 2000, p. 50).

2.3 Origin Theories

Two main theories exist that explain the origin of AAVE. Linguists are still not able to reach agreement on one of them exclusively. According to Rickford (1998) the fundamental question is whether a significant number of the Africans who came to the United States between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries went through processes of pidginization, creolization and (possibly) decreolization in acquiring English - *the creolists' position*, or whether they learned the English of British and other immigrants fairly rapidly and directly, without an intervening pidgin or creole stage - *the dialectologists'/Anglicist position* (p. 157).

Rickford (1998) also mentions a *divergence* issue which is concerned with whether AAVE is currently becoming more different from white vernacular dialects in the US (p. 155).

2.3.1 Pidgins

A *pidgin* is sharply restricted in social role, used for limited communication between speakers of two or more languages who have repeated or extended contact with each other, for instance through trade, enslavement, or migration (Rickford, 1998, p. 157).

When African people were enslaved and brought to the New World they all spoke different African languages and had to establish a new way of communicating with each other. They created a new auxiliary language which was a mixture of all their

native languages - pidgin language (Dillard, 1973, p. 74). These *restricted* pidgins have limited vocabulary, less complicated morphology, and a more restricted range of phonological and syntactic options. But there still are some *extended* pidgins which serve as primary languages and are quite complex. These are for example Tok Pisin in New Guinea, Sango in the Central African Republic, Nigerian Pidgin, Cameroonian Pidgin and others (Rickford, 1998, p. 156).

2.3.2   Creoles

Rickford (1998) refers to a creole definition by Hall (1995): "A *creole* is a pidgin that has acquired native speakers, usually, the descendants of pidgin speakers." Creoles have more extensive vocabulary and more complicated grammar than pidgins (p. 156). These are a combination of a given European language with the grammatical and pronunciation patterns of African languages and they were reflecting systems, syntax and communicative style that were not found in the European languages (Smitherman, 2000, p. 33).

There still are creole languages used by this day. The most significant of these is probably *Gullah,* which is a language spoken on the islands off the coast of South Carolina and Georgia (Rickford, 1998, p. 154). This variety of American English is closely related to West African varieties. French Creole (Haitian French Creole) can serve as another example of such language. It is spoken in Louisiana and Southern Texas. Gullah and French Creole (Haitian French Creole) are related to Caribbean creoles (Dillard, 1973, p. 6).

2.3.3   Anglicist Theory

The second theory about the origin of AAVE is a *dialectologist/Anglicist theory*. Defenders of this theory state that "the characteristic patterns of AAVE are found in other varieties of English, especially in Southern varieties and earlier stages of English". Data collected from speech communities in Nova Scotia and Samaná in Dominican Republic showed that the settlers in these parts probably used the same variety of English language as Africans who came to America (Green, 2002, p. 9).
Smitherman (2000) explains this theory as follows: "Africans in enslavement picked up their English from white immigrants from places like East Anglia, that is, from whites

speaking various dialects of the British Isles, who had settled in the South during the Colonial era in US history" (p. 30).

In deciding between the two theories linguists have to take in consideration sociohistorical conditions under which Africans came to and settled in the United States (Rickford, 1998, p. 157). But the main problem is the lack of evidence during the early period: 1619 - 1620 until the Revolutionary War era (Smitherman, 2000, p. 31).

2.4   Historical Development and Evidence

In the early period (1620 - 1700) in the history of AAVE there unfortunately is not much evidence regarding the state of the language, however a little direct evidence in the form of letters and journal entries survived. These pieces of evidence usually come from slaves (Dillard, 1973, p. 77).

Parallel pieces of evidence from this period can be found in Pidgin French and Indian Pidgin English. These pidgins show the relation with African Pidgin English that was spreading in that phase of time as these two pidgins did. Established African Pidgin English was evident by the year 1715 (Dillard, 1973, p. 78). It was also possible to encounter it in literary works of Daniel Defoe specifically in novels: *The Life of Colonel Jacque* (also known as Colonel Jack) and *Robinson Crusoe*. Dillard (1973) mentions this sentence as an example:

"*Yes, yes ... me know, me know but me want speak, me tell something. O! me no let him makee de great master angry*" (Defoe, Colonel Jaque, 1810, p. 230).

By the early eighteenth century there were three established varieties of language used by Africans - *West African Pidgin English, Plantation Creole* and *Standard English* (Dillard, 1973, p. 85). The use of these varieties depended mostly on social factors within the slave community (Dillard, 1973, p. 86).

In the late eighteenth century Negroes usually spoke "good" English and were easily understood. However, their speech still included some pidgin or creole characteristics such as unmarked verb forms. Nevertheless, some of the slaves were not able to communicate with their masters at all (Dillard, 1973, p. 87).

Frequently it was possible to encounter Pidgin English with elements from African vocabulary and from phonological features the *enclitic vowel* in words such as *workee* (Dillard, 1973, p. 89).

One of the most important and treasured pieces of evidence from the early stages of AAVE are *Ex-slave narratives* also called *Ex-slave recordings*. These are recorded interviews with a number of former slaves talking about their lives. They demonstrate an authentic picture of the language, even though specialists claim that these recordings are not sufficient for systematic quantitative studies.

2.5   Phonology of AAVE

2.5.1   Consonant cluster reduction

AAVE chiefly differs from other varieties of English in pronunciation of final consonant groups or clusters (Green, 2002, p. 107). Consonant group or cluster, composed of two consonant sounds is reduced to a single consonant sound. This phenomenon is called consonant cluster reduction. Word final sound groups such as *nd* or *st* are reduced to a single consonant *n* or *s*. Green (2002) provides an example with words (p. 107):

> *test   tes*
>
> *kind   kin*
>
> *hand   han*

According to Green (2002) there are two possible analysis theories for consonant cluster reduction (p. 108). One of them points to the West African origin of AAVE. Green (2002) claims: "Speakers have such pronunciation not because the final consonant sound is deleted in some environments, but because the languages from which AAVE originated do not have final consonant clusters." (p. 108)

The second analysis theory is based on the fact that final consonant clusters in AAVE are intact. Green (2002) explains this as follows: *tes* actually starts out as *test*, and the final *t* is deleted under certain conditions. The word *tes* in AAVE has the same representation as test in mainstream English. This is purely a result of phonological process (p. 108).

Other phenomena that occur within the phonology of AAVE are word-final devoicing, change of pronunciation of *th* sound in final and initial position and

occurrence of *skr* in initial position in words, where *str* is situated under normal circumstances.

Word-final devoicing is a process in which final voiced consonants become voiceless, thus words ending in *b, d* or *g* are pronounced *p, t* or *k*. Green (2002) provides an example (p. 116):

cab   cap

pig   pick

feed   feet

Another process commonly occurring within the sound system of AAVE is the production of *t/d* sounds and *f/v* sounds in words in which *th* sound occurs in final or initial positions in general American English (Green, 2002, p. 117). The distribution of these sounds does not appear randomly, but it is based on phonetic properties. The state of glottis determines whether the sound is voice or voiceless, the place of articulation and the manner of articulation (Green, 2002, p 117).

Sound	State of glottis	Place of articulation	Manner of articulation
t	vocal folds apart, voiceless	alveoral	stop
d	vocal folds together, voiced	alveoral	stop
f	vocal folds apart, voiceless	labiodental	fricative
v	vocal folds together, voiced	labiodental	fricative

Green (2002) also mentions some other sound patterns. One of them is the realization of the final velar nasal *-ng /ŋ/* as alveolar nasal *n*. This involves the suffix *-ing* in polysyllabic words (p. 123).

walking   walkin

something   somethin

Occurrence of *skr* in syllable initial position where *str* is normally situated can be also encountered within the phonology of AAVE. This phenomenon is often confused with speech disorders by speech pathologists.
Green (2002) features these words as examples (p. 122):

skreet   street

skrawberry   *strawberry*

skretch   *stretch*

skraight   *straight*

Even though the phonological features of AAVE may seem like "lazy speech" they are all systematic and rule defined. Specific phenomena occur in specific environments (Green, 2002, p. 132).

2.6   Negation

There are several patterns for creating negation in AAVE. These are *negative inversion*, *negative postposing* and negating clauses and sentences with negative indicator *ain´t*.

AAVE is a *negative-concord* language. This can be characterized as "the use of two or more negative morphemes to communicate a single negation" (Martin, Wolfram, 17). This phenomena is also known as *multiple* or *pleonastic negation*. The term *pleonastic negation* means that the extra negative element or elements do not add any additional negative meaning to a phrase or a sentence. Critics often claim that this expression of negation is illogical because two negatives make a positive but this rule does not apply on AAVE (Green, 2002, p. 77). In Standard English, only one negative morpheme can be applied (Martin, Wolfram, p. 17).

These negative morphemes "can occur in many locations, both in the main clause and in embedded subordinate clauses" but the morpheme has to appear at least in one position where it can negate the whole sentence (Martin, Wolfram, p. 19).

2.6.1   Negative inversion
When two sentences or clause initial elements, an auxiliary and indefinite noun phrase, are obligatorily marked for negation we talk about *negative inversion.* The initial negated auxiliary is followed by a negative indefinite noun phrase. The indefinite pronouns such as *someone, somebody, somewhere,* etc. are replaced by their negative counterparts *no one, nobody, nowhere* (Green, 2002, p. 78).

Can´t nobody *tell you it wasn´t meant for you.*

Don't no *game last all night long.*

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2.6.2   Negative postposing

Negative postposing refers to the occurrence of post verbal negative quantifiers in isolation. This kind of negation sort of contradicts the fact that AAVE is a negative concord language, yet this type appears quite often (Veenendaal, Straatje, Zeijlstra, 2014).

> *I have **nowhere** to go.*
>
> *He know **nothing**.*

2.6.3   Negative indicator *ain´t*

One of the most commonly used ways of negating a clause or a sentence in many varieties of English language is a negative indicator *ain't,* however the usage in AAVE and in other non-standard varieties is slightly different.

In non-standard English, *ain't* can only be used as a variant of present tense "be+not" and "have+not" while *ain't* in AAVE has a wider distribution. In AAVE *ain't* has three kinds of usage: it can be used for present tense "be+not", "have+not", and past tense "do+not", which is unattested in non-standard English (Veenendaal, Straatjes, Zeijlstra, 2014).

> *You **ain´t** going to **no** hell, girl. (IAM, p. 83)*
>
> *I **ain´t** got **nothing** to say. (IAM, p. 101)*

2.7   Properties of nouns and pronouns

2.7.1   Genitive marking

Possession is realized by possessive pronoun or by a noun phrase in a possessive function marked with possessive marker *–s* as in Standard English, however in some cases the possessive *–s* is either not pronounced or it is fully omitted (Mufwene, 1998, p. 74).

Mufwene (1998) describes the phonological conditions under which the possessive marker is not pronounced; it depends on whether the noun to which it is attached ends in a vowel or a consonant and whether the head noun, which follows, starts with a vowel or a consonant – it is most often omitted between two consonants (p. 74). The other option, where the possession is not marked whatsoever, is a result of applying different morphosyntactic rules which mark the possessive function usually word order (Mufwene 1998, p. 75).

Possession can be also marked by pronoun *they* and compound *ya´ll*. It stands for *you all,* other variants possible to encounter are *yall, yall´s* (Smitherman, 2000, p. 24).

Pronoun *they* is not in a possessive form *their* as in Standard English but remains in the form of a personal pronoun. *Ya´ll* can have a possessive function as well as a function of a personal pronoun.

*It's **they** right to be respected.* (IAM, p. 19)

***They** birthright*. (IAM, p. 19)

*Mama say, Look like **ya´ll** moving in! Don´ it!* (IAM, p. 72) possessive function

*He know **ya´ll** asses too.* (IAM, p. 82) personal pronoun

2.7.2   Associative plural

Nem (other variations are *´n em, and nem*) stands for "them" or "and them" when referring to a group of people - friends, family, associates etc. (Mufwene, 1998, p. 73).

*When aunt Mavis **nem** didn´t come…* (p. 71)

*I was watching Mama **nem** in the kitchen*. (p. 74)

2.8 Auxiliary verbs – *be, do, have*

Green (2002) created an overview of the verbal system of AAVE including forms of copula verb *be* (p. 36).

Present tense			
Person, number	**Present**	**Emphatic affirmation**	**Negative**
1st, 2nd, 3rd sg, pl	eat, run, rub	DO eat, run, rub	don´t eat, run, rub
Past tense			
Past		**Emphatic affirmation**	**Negative**
ate, ran, rubbed		DID eat, run, rub	din (didn´t) eat, run, rub
Past tense			
			Negative ain(´t) eat/ate, run/ran, rub/rubbed
Preterite *had* **Preterite** *had* **(Past)**		**Emphatic affirmation**	**Negative**
Had ate, ran, rubbed		-	-
Future tense			
Future		**Emphatic affirmation**	**Negative**
´a eat, run, rub		WILL eat, run, rub	won´t eat, run, rub
(reduced *will* (´*a*) attaches to the preceding pronoun, as in *I´a*, *she´a*)			
Future tense			
Person, number	**Future**	**Emphatic affirmation**	**Negative**
1st sg. 2nd, 3rd sg. pl.	I´ma eat gon eat	-	I ain´t gon/I´m not gon ain´t gon/not gon
(Note: There are also variations such as *I´m gonna / I´monna* and *you gonna*.)			
Present progressive (prog) (auxiliary *be***)**			
Person, number	**Pres prog**	**Emphatic affirmation**	**Negative**

1st sg.	I´m eating	I AM eating	I´m not/ I ain(´t) eating
1st pl, 2nd sg. pl.	we, you		
3rd sg. pl	she, they eating	IS eating	Ain(´t)/not eating
3nd sg neuter	It´s growing	It IS eating	it´s not growing it ain(´t) rating

Present copula *be*

Person, number	Present	Emphatic affirmation	Negative
1st sg.	I´m tall	I AM tall	I´m not tall / I ain´t tall
1st pl, 2nd sg, pl	we, you,		
3rd sg, pl	she, they	IS	ain(´t)/not tall
3rd sg neuter	it´s tall	It IS	it´s not tall/
			it ain(´t) tall

Past progressive

Person, number	Past prog	Emphatic affirmation	Negative
1st, 2nd, 3rd sg. pl	was eating	WAS eating	wadn´t (wasn´t) eating

Future progressive

Future prog		Emphatic affirmation	Negative
´a be eating		WILL be eating	won(´t) be eating

Present perfect (perf)

Person, number	Present perf	Emphatic affirmation	Negative
1st, 2nd, 3rd sg. pl	ate, ran, rubbed	HAVE ate, ran, rubbed	ain(´t)/haven(´t) ate, ran, rubbed

Past perfect

Past perf		Emphatic affirmation	Negative
had ate, ran, rubbed		HAD ate, ran, rubbed	hadn´t ate, ran, rubbed

Present perfect progressive

Person, Number	Present perf prog	Emphatic affirmation	Negative
1st, 2nd, 3rd sg. pl	been eating	HAVE been eating	ain(´t)/haven´t been

			eating
Past perfect progressive			
Past pref prog		**Emphatic affirmation**	**Negative**
had been eating		HAD been eating	hadn´t been eating
Modal perfect			
Modal perfect		**Emphatic affirmation**	**Negative**
should´a been eating		-	shouldn´a been eating
(´a in Paradigm (11) may correspond to a reduced from of *have*.)			

2.8.1 Omission of copula verb *be*

One of the distinctive features of AAVE is the omission of copula verb *be* in some environments. Critics often confuse this feature with ignorance and carelessness of the speakers, however there are detailed and strict rules for omitting the copula (Pullum, 1999, p. 45). This phenomenon also occurs in other languages such as Russian, Hungarian or Arabic (Pullum, 1999, p. 47).

Pullum (1999) mentions rules for omitting the copula (p. 45):

a) if the copula bears stress for any reason, it cannot be omitted. *"There already is one!"*

b) copula at the end of a phrase is stressed and cannot be omitted. *"Couldn't nobody say what color he is."*

c) verbal marker *been* in phrases that express remote past: *"She been married."*

d) copula also cannot be omitted when it is in a past tense - forms *was* and *were*

e) negated copula cannot be omitted

f) copula in first person, present tense cannot be absent - form *I am*)

g) copula in an infinitival base form cannot be absent in constructions such as: *"Be careful.", "You gotta be strong."*

h) verbal marker *be* carrying the habitual meaning

i) when copula appears in initial position in an interrogative sentence and also in question and confirmatory tags.

2.8.2 Verbal –*s* suffix

In the simple present tense verbs have the same form for singular and plural, including the third person singular, which in Standard English takes the *suffix -s* (Green,

2002, p. 38). The difference between third person singular and plural form is neutralized (Green, 2002, p. 99). Green (2002) also states that some speakers do not apply this rule, so both variants are possible to encounter. It depends on the social environments of the speakers (p. 38).

She eat.

We was sitting.

Occasionally in some environments and under specific conditions verbs are marked with *verbal –s* (Green, 2002, p. 100). Verbal –s appears as *narrative present marker* and *habitual marker*. Narrative present marker is used in narration of events. Habitual marker appears in sentences which express habituality or regularity (Green, 2002, p. 100).

I can show you some of the stuff we tesses them on.

2.8.3   Past verb forms

The simple past verb forms and present perfect verb forms are often identical. Simple past is usually used with both forms without using a separate participle (Green, 2002, p. 39). It is also possible to encounter the participle form in environments where simple past appears (Green, 2002, p. 95).

*Then I **seen** where his eyes was.* (IAM, p. 27)

2.8.4   Verbal markers - *be, been, done*

Green (2002) claims that verbal markers in AAVE are similar in form to auxiliary verbs in general American English, and this shared identity may cause some confusion between speakers of the two language systems (p. 44). This means that non-speakers of AAVE expect these verbal markers to possess the same role and meaning as some auxiliary verb forms in general American English (Green, 2002, p. 44).

Be, been [bɪn], *done* [dən] are aspectual (tense-aspect) verbal markers. They occur in specific environments and indicate a certain type of meaning (Green, 2002, p. 45).

2.8.4.1   Habitual *be*

A very significant syntactic feature of AAVE is a verbal marker *be*. It is used to indicate the habitual or iterative occurrence of an event. This phenomenon is referred to

as habitual *be* and it is followed by progressive form *-ing* (Green, 2002, p. 35). In this case the copula cannot be omitted as it can occur in other environments. This may cause misinterpretation or ambiguity (Green, 2002, p. 47).

Green (2002) illustrates this on examples (p. 47):

Bruce run.	*Bruce runs on occasions.*
Bruce running.	*Bruce is running now.*
Bruce be running.	*Bruce is usually running.*

All sentences above can have habitual meaning, but the first and second sentence can have also other readings while the third one with habitual be can only have habitual meaning (p. 47).

2.8.4.2 *Been*

Been [bɪn] refers to an activity or a state in remote past that started in the remote past and continues up to the moment of utterance or occurrence. Even though the spelling is the same *been* [bɪn] (stressed form) is distinguished from *been* [bən] (unstressed form) phonetically and semantically (Green, 2002, p. 55).

She been [bɪn] *running.*	*She has been running for a long time.*
She been running.	*She has been running.*
She been [bɪn] *had him all day.*	*She has had him all day.*

2.8.4.3 *Done*

Verbal marker *done* is pronounced with an unstressed syllable [dən] represents an event that has ended. It precedes verbs in past participle *-ed* form (Green, 2002, p. 60).

I told him you done changed.	*I told him that you have changed.*
I done already finished that.	*I have already finished that.*
I done pushed it.	*I have (already) pushed it.*

2.8.5 Preverbal markers – *steady, finna, come*

2.8.5.1 *Steady*

Verbal marker *steady* precedes progressive verbal form *-ing*. This verbal marker expresses an activity in an intense or consistent manner. It can be paraphrased as

constantly, *strongly* or *hard*. It cannot be used with verbs that denote states such as *have, own* and *know*. It must precede verbs that name activities. Usage with verbs which denote states is considered ungrammatical (Green, 2002, p. 71).

*People be on them jobs for thirty years just **steady** working.*

2.8.5.2 *Finna*

Finna (other variations are *fenna, fixina, fixna* and *fitna*) indicates that the event will happen in the immediate future – *fixing to do something*.

This form precedes non-finite verbs, which are not marked for tense and agreement (Green, 2002, p. 70). It is followed by verbs in non-finite form (Green, 2002, p. 71).

*Mama say, I was **fenna** to leave you a note.* (IAM, p. 45)

*When you knew my baby was **fenna** die.* (IAM, p. 178)

2.8.5.3 *Come*

Come as a preverbal marker expresses a speaker´s attitude specifically indignation with an action or an event. It precedes verbs ending in *–ing* (Green, 2002, p. 73).

*Don´t **come** acting like you don´t know what happened and you started the whole thing.*

*Don´t **try to act** as if you don´t know what happened, because you started the whole thing.*

2.9   Lexicon

The vocabulary of AAVE can be divided into two main categories. First category consists of lexical items universally known to members of all age groups. Second category involves words and phrases used by a certain age group for example teenagers. Speakers of AAVE have access to words and phrases from the vocabulary of AAVE as well as from American English (Green, 2002, p. 19). Also the importance of social class is not of a great importance when dealing with the lexicon of AAVE (Green, 2002, p. 13).

Green (2002) states, "a study of the lexicon and semantics of AAVE should reveal information about the type of meaning that is associated with lexical items in the language system, and it should also reveal information about the unique meaning in the variety" (p. 12). The uniqueness comes from the process that gives ordinary American words different meaning in AAVE (Smitherman, 2000, p. 26).

Green (2002) gives an example of a word *kitchen*. This word naturally possesses the same meaning as in Standard English but it also has a unique meaning in AAVE referring to the hair at the nape of a neck (p. 20).

One of the patterns that give words from Standard English different meaning is *semantic inversion.* Words with negative connotations in Standard English have positive meaning in AAVE. This can often lead to ambiguity and miscommunication between the speakers of AAVE and other varieties of English (Smitherman, 2000, p. 26).

Boy, you bad. (IAM, p. 27)

Damn, her outfit sick!

Green (2002) in her publication *African American English: A Linguistic Introduction* compiled some essential lexical items used in the variety. Important part of the lexical entries compiled by Green is labels used to refer to people – males and females (p. 28). It shows how African Americans often address each other.

Terms for females:

bopper – woman preoccupied with material gain

dime – attractive woman

honey – pet name usually for a girlfriend

ma (also mama) – attractive woman

shorty (also shawty) - pet name usually for a girlfriend

wifey – girlfriend

Terms for males:

cuz - cousin

dawg (also dog) – common term used by males to address each other

homes (also homie) - friend

money - friend

scrub – derogatory, a male who is not self-sufficient and depends on others for livelihood

The terms for females are usually used by males to label females. The second group of names is used when males address each other. Females use more general terms such as *sister* (also sista) or *girl* (Green, 2002, p. 28).

3   ANALYSIS

3.1   Methods

The aim of this analysis is to demonstrate phenomena described in the theoretical part how they appear in use and how they follow specific rules and patterns which are not used randomly.

The source for analysis is a novel *Imani All Mine* by African American writer Connie Rose Porter and it is written entirely in AAVE. It was awarded the BCALA Honor Book for 1999. It tells a story of a teenage mother 15 year-old Tasha and her daughter Imani. Tasha lives in a ghetto with her mother Earlene among drug dealers and violence which in the end affects her life greatly because her daughter is killed in a drug related shooting.

I will analyze the aspects mentioned in the theoretical part as they appear in use. Excerpts were picked out manually from a printed version of the book, entered into Microsoft Word document and then divided into groups according to the kind of phenomenon appearing in them: preverbal and verbal markers, zero copula, negation, verbal *–s*, past verb forms, properties of nouns and pronouns and lexicon. The phenomenon examined is in bold.

Those terms that were discussed and explained in the theoretical part are listed. Phenomena which can be identified such as negation were subdivided. Lexical entries are explained further with their meaning.

Phenomena which were occurring frequently throughout the text but are not supported by theoretical research are also listed and described such as *nam*, indefinite articles and reflexive pronouns.

3.2   Preverbal markers – *steady, finna, come*

3.2.1   Steady
1. *His eyelashes was tickling my face and he was **steady** kissing me.* (p. 33)
2. *All the while he **steady** kissing me and I´m **steady** trying not to breathe.* (p. 51)
3. *… and he´s **steady** sweating.* (p. 85)
4. *While that woman **steady** screaming.* (p. 91)
5. *But it was still hard to comb, and she was **steady** whining.* (p. 97)
6. *…he pushed the door up while he was **steady** saying, Wait wait wait.* (p. 124)

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7. *Mama was screaming behind me and bullets **steady** hitting our house.* (p. 180)

8. *While I was **steady** screaming.* (p. 181)

9. *Mama was **steady** rocking.* (p.187)

10. *People was **steady** coming in around us and leaving around us.* (p. 198)

3.2.2   Finna

11. *Mama say, I was **fenna** to leave you a note.* (p. 45)

12. *But I say, I know what you **fenna** say, Miss Lovey.* (p. 57)

13. *They be looking at you like you stole something or **fenna** steal something.* (p. 108)

14. *I was **fenna** give him a tissue for his nose...* (p. 129)

15. *I was **fenna** give her one when the bottle flew out her mouth.* (p. 156)

16. *When we was **fenna** turn at the corner, a dealer walked right up to the car.* (p. 167)

17. *When you knew my baby was **fenna** die.* (p. 178)

3.3   Zero copula

18. *She say Imani Ø all mine.* (p. 1)

19. *Imani Ø so little.* (p. 1)

20. *We Ø watching whatever come on for free.* (p. 3)

21. *What the hell Ø wrong with you?* (p. 10)

22. *She Ø my baby.* (p. 11)

23. *Who Ø the father?* (p. 11)

24. *Like Imani some idea.* (p. 19)

25. *It was a black woman doctor and she Ø pretty.* (p. 20)

26. *You Ø a young girl,...*(p. 21)

27. *Them other boys Ø jealous of him, I think.*(p. 25)

28. *Then why Ø you crying?* (p. 33)

29. *Hell, she smell like she Ø dying.* (p. 35)

30. *Who Ø in there?* (p. 35)

31. *Miss Lovey Ø a good cook.* (p. 38)

32. *Royster Ø old enough to be Mama daddy.* (p. 46)

33. *Mostly I ain't like him because he Ø married.* (p. 46)

34. *You Ø a good mother.* (p. 71)

35. *You Ø not perfect, Tasha.* (p. 71)

36. *No parent Ø perfect.* (p. 71)

37. *Frankie Ø still a baby.* (p. 74)

38. *... we Ø trapped in the seventies...* (p. 74)

39. *Omar real fine...* (p. 77)

40. *...they Ø just shooting like they usually be.* (p. 79)

41. *Even though he Ø married.* (p. 82)

42. *We Ø living it right here in these streets.* (p. 83)

43. *They Ø shadows to me.* (p. 84)

44. *He look like he Ø probably in high school.* (p. 85)

45. *While that woman Ø steady screaming.* (p. 91)

46. *She say his name Ø Mitch.* (p. 96)

47. *You Ø looking at a future doctor right here.* (p. 99)

48. *Mrs. Poole say secondhand smoke Ø bad for a baby lungs.* (p. 103)

49. *You Ø renting him and his wife own him.* (p. 104)

50. *You Ø a smart girl...* (p. 112)

51. *Imani Ø nosey.* (p. 113)

52. *On account he Ø a principal.* (p. 119)

53. *They Ø working for Mitch?* (p. 119)

54. *You Ø carrying it around like it´s some toy.* (p. 127)

55. *He say they Ø some of the most honest women he done ever met.* (p. 135)

56. *She Ø sleeping already.* (p. 145)

57. *Not because Mama say I Ø grown* (p. 146)

58. *I say, This Ø Peanut.* (p. 160)

59. *Who Ø my daddy?* (p. 171)

60. *Imani Ø going to make it.* (p. 187)

61. *Mama say she Ø in heaven.* (p. 190)

3.4 Verbal markers – *be, been, done*

3.4.1 Habitual be

62. *When I **be getting up** with her at night, it **be** my own face **looking** back at me.* (p. 1)

63. *I **be smiling** at her.* (p. 1)

64. *When I **be crying** crazy like that, all these strange noises **be coming** out my mouth.* (p. 10)

65. *...where he **be scribbling** out problems and they solutions.* (p. 11)

66. *Maybe that's all right for boys, but don't he know what girls **be having to do** in the lavatory sometimes?* (p. 12)

67. *They **be shooting** around here sometimes at night.* (p. 15)

68. *Mrs. Poole **be making** a good sense, the kind of sense you know be right.* (p. 19)

69. *Mama ain't one to brag on me much, but when she do, I **be liking** it.* (p. 23)

70. *We'd **be lining** ourselves up so we could end up on the same side.* (p. 44)

71. *These days she **be putting** all kinds of things in her mouth she find on the floor.* (p. 46)

72. *He **be kissing** her on the bus.* (p. 48)

73. *She **be** funny sometimes. But sometimes she **be getting** on my nerves.* (p. 81)

74. *But I don't **be believing** she know the men she say she do.* (p. 81)

75. *Mrs. Poole **be making** us read about a blessing.* (p. 94)

76. *… they **be telling** you not to take them.* (p. 100)

77. *They **be looking** at you like you stole something or fenna steal something.* (p. 108)

78. *I still don't **be seeing** him.* (p. 108)

79. *I **be looking** for Peanut to come through the door.* (p. 109)

80. *I don't know who **be putting** up the memorials.* (p. 122)

81. *She **be acting** like I done slapped her, though.* (p. 204)

3.4.2   Done

82. *Mama **done told** me…* (p. 1)

83. *I **done had** her…* (p. 1)

84. *What you **done did**?* (p. 34)

85. *Seem like she **done** already **figured out** the answer.* (p. 42)

86. *I think he **done changed**.* (p. 48)

87. *It seem like after you been with somebody, after they **done been** all up inside you...* (p. 48)

88. *Maybe she **done met** some of them men.* (p. 81)

89. *Mama **done went** and got herself a white man!* (p. 96)

90. *I **done been** in love.* (p. 104)

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91. *When this white man **done had** enough…* (p. 105)

92. *Looking to see if he **done made** a star out of hisself.* (p. 109)

93. *He used to go to Lincoln, but I guess he **done quit**.* (p. 110)

94. *She **done got** her hair braided…* (p. 118)

95. *Girl, some nigger **done broke** in my house…*(p. 125)

96. *He say they some of the most honest women he **done** ever **met**.* (p. 135)

97. *A whole season **done changed** in just a few weeks…* (p. 174)

98. *She be acting like I **done slapped** her, though.* (p. 204)

99. *My father **done let** me down.* (p. 208)

3.4.3   Been
100. *It looked like she **been crying**.* (p. 13)

101. *She **been saying** that for a while now,…* (p. 47)

102. *I **been meaning** to talk to you.* (p. 57)

103. *My baby **been** sick.* (p. 66)

104. *I **been** traumatized.* (p. 118)

3.5   Verbal -*s*

105. ***She don't*** *know.* (p. 1)

106. ***Mama say*** *I'm grown now because I got Imani.* (p. 1)

107. *We watching **whatever come** on for free.* (p. 3)

108. *He **don't** never leave the overhead projector…* (p. 11)

109. ***Don't he*** *think we might need more …* (p. 12)

110. *Ain't no way **a baby know** what gunshots **is**.* (p. 15)

111. *My **baby like** that.* (p. 20)

112. ***She like*** *rap.* (p. 20)

113. *Hell, she **smell** like she **dying**.* (p. 35)

114. *Eboni **know** me real good.* (p. 37)

115. *It **seem** like after you been with somebody…* (p. 48)

116. *… if **it do** try to climb.* (p. 78)

117. *I know she **don´t** trust her.* (p. 81)

118. *But I don´t be believing she **know** the men she **say** she **do**.* (p. 81)

119. *Mama **say**, He **don´t** know me.* (p. 82)

120. *He **look** like he probably in high school.* (p. 85)

121. *I can´t see her face at all. Her hat **make** it into a shadow.* (p. 85)

122. *Imani **don´t** like it.* (p. 91)

123. *Because a baby **need** a blessing.* (p. 94)

124. *She **say** his name Mitch.* (p. 96)

125. *Mrs. Poole **say** secondhand smoke bad for a baby lungs.* (p. 103)

126. *You renting him and his wife **own** him.* (p. 104)

127. *Mitch **love** me.* (p. 105)

128. *If Mama **say** Mitch **love** her, he **do**.* (p. 105)

129. *What **make** they closed lips talk.* (p. 109)

130. *She probably **want** to eat.* (p. 112)

131. *She **like** to see.* (p. 113)

132. *How anybody **know**.* (p. 113)

133. *He say they would even do it for **kibbles and bits**.* (p. 135)

134. *...when water **run** through them.* (p. 149)

135. *Don't no fresh air **get** in the room and it always **smell**...* (p. 149)

136. *Mama **don´t** knock.* (p. 157)

137. *My stomach **hurt**, I say.* (p. 157)

138. *Where **do** it go?* (p. 182)

139. *Mama **love** him.* (p. 204)

140. *He **want** you to wait.* (p. 206)

3.6 Negation

141. *I **ain't** got to get up and go **nowhere**.* (p. 1)

142. *I **don't** care what **nobody** say...* (p. 1)

143. *I **ain't** want to be on **no** pills.* (p. 17)

144. *I **don't** care **nothing** about **no** Peanut.* (p. 38)

145. *They **ain't** going to catch **nobody**.* (p. 41)

146. *Them the kind of niggers **don't** care about **nobody**.* (p. 41)

147. *She **wasn't nothing**.* (p. 43)

148. *We **don't** mess around **no** more.* (p. 48)

149. *I **don´t** want you to do **nothing**.* (p. 48)

150. *I **ain´t** had **nobody** to talk to.* (p. 49)

151. *He **ain´t** even have on **no** skates.* (p. 49)

152. *He say **not** to take her to **no** daycare.* (p. 62)

153. *I **don´t** know **no** girl he got a baby by.* (p. 77)

154. *But I waited until I **ain´t** hear **no** more bullets…* (p. 79)

155. *I **don´t** even joke about **no** God, Miss Odetta say.* (p. 82)

156. *He **ain´t nobody** husband.* (p. 82)

157. *You **ain´t** going to **no** hell, girl.* (p. 83)

158. *…we **wouldn´t** even be living in **no** ghetto.* (p. 83)

159. *… but she **ain´t** said nam word to me about you.* (p. 97)

160. *I **ain´t** mean **no** harm to Mitch.* (p. 97)

161. *We **ain´t** got **no** beer.* (p. 98)

162. *… your ass **ain´t** having nam up in here.* (p. 98)

163. *I **ain´t** got **nothing** to say.* (p. 101)

164. *You **ain´t** even went out with **nobody** from **no** damn Rolling Stones.* (p. 103)

165. *There wasn´t no clouds to keep in the heat.* (p. 110)

166. *He **ain´t** in **no** NBA.* (p. 161)

3.6.1   Negative inversion

167. *There **don't** be **nothing on**.* (p. 2)

168. *He **don't never** leave the overhead projector…* (p. 11)

169. ***Ain't no** way a baby know what gunshots is.* (p. 15)

170. ***Ain´t none** of her bussines why I have a baby.* (p. 21)

171. ***Not having no** more babies was a way to start.* (p. 23)

172. *She say **don't nobody** know what they dream about.* (p. 36)

173. ***Wasn't never** even **no** shooting there until that day.* (p. 39)

174. *They **don´t never** be in the botom of the box.* (p. 78)

175. *It **ain´t no** real church.* (p. 80)

176. *I **don´t** care **nothing** about who preaching in there.* (p. 82)

177. ***Can´t neither** one of us swim.* (p.84)

178. ***Ain´t nobody** talking to you* (p. 100)

179. *There **wasn´t no** clouds to keep in the heat.* (p. 110)

180. ***Don't no** fresh air get in the room…* (p. 149)

3.7   Plural

181.   *Me and Mama was* *sitting out on the front porch.* (p. 2)

182.   *Mama say me and other* *girls is* *spoiled.* (p. 4)

183.   *They was* *soft at first …* (p. 7)

184.   *Just last week when* *we was* *up…* (p. 14)

185.   *Ain't no way a baby know what* *gunshots is.* (p. 15)

186.   *I think* *we all was.* (p. 19)

187.   *We was* *all laughing.* (p. 24)

188.   *All us* *girls was* *lined up.*(p. 25)

189.   *We was* *just being dismissed.*(p. 39)

190.   *Then I seen where his* *eyes was.*(p. 27)

191.   *His* *eyelashes was* *tickling my face…* (p. 33)

192.   *…it seem like my* *tears is* *all dried up in me…* (p. 35)

193.   *Niggers was* *getting shot before there ever* *was drug dealers.* (p. 42)

194.   *…how big my* *feet was.* (p. 49)

195.   *Me and Coco was* *sitting together at lunch.* (p. 59)

196.   *You* *sure is* *a good mother.* (p. 63)

197.   *While* *the pies was* *cooking…* (p. 73)

198.   *…when* *things is* *marked down.* (p. 77)

199.   *The* *windows is* *all painted over.* (p. 84)

200.   *The twins was* *all dressed in long white dresses.* (p. 93)

201.   *… they was* *calling about.* (p. 107)

202.   *There wasn´t no clouds to keep in the heat.* (p. 110)

203.   *Words I knew* *was* *lies.* (p. 121)

204.   *These two* *boys was* *going at each other…* (p. 149)

205.   *Aunt Mavis nem got pictures of Junior and Little Frankie from the day* *they was* *born.* (p. 152)

206.   *Like* *they was* *shadows haunting me.* (p. 182)

207.   *Cops was* *everywhere.* (p. 183)

208.   *Tiny little* *worlds was* *spinning around me…* (p. 205)

3.8 Lexicon

209. *I needed some new **kicks**.* (p. 9) – shoes, usually sneakers

210. *stinking little **ho*** (p.17) **–** derogatory**,** girl with loose manners, prostitute, "whore"

211. *People think they **hos**. (p. 135)*

212. ***bogart** our jump-rope game* (p. 25) - ruin

213. *Yvette **put some pepper** to them ropes.* (p. 26) – make something more difficult

214. ***Boy, you bad.*** (p. 27) - semantic inversion, negative meaning of a word *bad* changes into positive

215. *Coco the one **brung me that bone**.* (p. 48) - dialectal variety of *brought*

216. *They skin **ashy**.* (p. 86) – skin condition connected with black skin, which makes it look grey or white (color similar to ash)

217. *Her hair was all **napped up**. (p. 97)* – curly hair usually connected with African American people

218. ***Nappy** hair (p. 98)*

219. *Mama kissed Mitch **dead in the mouth**.* (p. 101) – directly in the mouth

220. *Mama say, If I had money to pay the goddamn bill in the first place, we wouldn´t have to **bootleg*** (p. 3) – illegally using services (cable TV, Internet etc.) without paying

221. *I tried to **fix my face** right* (p. 18) – to have a certain facial expression

222. *I had **my face fixed** real plain…* (p. 22)

223. *Then she got **real** still.* (p. 14) – really

224. *His mouth tasted **real** nasty.* (p. 51)

225. *I wasn't **stutting him** when I first seen him.* (p. 23) – "I didn´t pay attention to him when I first saw him."

226. *Imani wasn't even **stutting me**.* (p. 47) **-** "Imani didn´t even care about me."

227. *What up, **dog?*** (p. 111) – means of addressing between males

228. ***I got to roll**, dog. (p. 114)* – "I have to go."

229. ***Girl**, I´m going to see one of them counselors.* (p. 118) – means of general addressing between females

230. ***Girl**, some nigger done broke in my house…* (p. 125)

231. ***Dag**, Tasha, stop playing.* (p. 124) - other term for "damn"

232. *Not by the hair on my chinny chin chin.* (p. 124) – expressing refusal, "No way!"

233. *He say they would even do it for **kibbles and bits**.* (p. 135) – originally brand of dog food, expression is also connected with drug culture meaning little pieces of crack, usually crumbs

3.9 Nouns and Pronouns

3.9.1 Genitive marking

234. *It was **Peanut** turn then.* (p. 26)

235. *his **daddy** hand* (p. 28)

236. *Royster old enough to be **Mama** daddy.* (p. 46)

237. *...me and Imani went back in **Eboni** room.* (p. 55)

238. ***Miss Odetta** sneakers* (p. 82)

239. *I trip over **somebody** foot.* (p 85)

240. *I was combing **Imani** head.* (p. 96)

241. *Mrs. Poole say secondhand smoke bad for **a baby** lungs.* (p. 103)

242. *There was a light in **Mama** face, too.* (p. 108)

243. *That´s probably **June Bug** gun...* (p. 128)

244. *We got **Imani** name wrote on it...* (p. 170)

3.9.2 Associative plural

245. *Him and Reuben **nem** ain't come and join us jumping.* (p. 27)

246. *It's all the time some teachers **nem** act like they know you.* (p. 36)

247. *... where the principal and secretaries **nem** be.* (p. 39)

248. *Them secretaries **nem** maybe never give him my message.* (p. 67)

249. *When aunt Mavis **nem** didn´t come …* (p. 71)

250. *I was watching Mama **nem** in the kitchen.* (p. 74)

251. *I don´t see Eboni **nem** no place.* (p. 85)

252. *like me and Eboni and Coco **nem** used to...* (p. 107)

253. *The people work in the stores and security guards **nem** act...* (p. 108)

254. *My mama went to a prayer vigil his mama **nem** had...* (p. 120)

255. *heard June Bug **nem** pull out fast* (p. 146)

256. *Aunt Mavis **nem** got pictures of Junior and Little Frankie from the day they was born.* (p. 152)

3.9.3 They

257. *...where he be scribbling out problems and **they** solutions.* (p. 11)

258. *It's **they** right to be respected.* (p. 19)

259. ***They** birthright.* (p. 19)

260. ***they** gym period, and **they** underarms* (p. 24)

261. *We let the boys have **they** try.* (p. 25)

262. ***They** lives be just like the white women's.* (p. 36)

263. *Yams roasting with **they** juice dripping in the stove.* (p. 55)

264. *You could bounce **they** brain against the inside of **they** head ...* (p. 61)

265. ***They** car was loaded ...* (p. 71)

266. ***They** daddy was supposed to be there.* (p. 93)

267. *...smoking all day around **they** baby.* (p. 103)

268. *What make **they** closed lips talk.* (p. 109)

269. *They won′t hold me in the center of **they** eyes.* (p. 173)

3.9.4 Ya′ll

270. *Mama say, Look like **ya′ll** moving in! Don′ it!* (p. 72)

271. *He know **ya′ll** asses too.* (p. 82)

272. *I know **ya′ll** wasn′t going to like him.* (p. 104)

273. *Don′t you want to take Imani with **ya′ll**?* (p. 141)

274. ***Ya′ll** dating?* (p. 160)

3.9.5 Reflexive pronouns

In Standard English reflexive pronouns have different form than the dialectal variations found in IAM. This phenomenon was not described in used literary resources.

275. *Kente patted **hisself**.* (p. 26)

276. *He say he be home by **hisself** most of the time.* (p. 29)

277. *...looking at **theyselves*** (p. 35)

278. *...had he done it **hisself**?* (p. 100)

279. *Looking to see if he done made a star out of **hisself**.* (p. 109)

3.10 Articles

Throughout the text words beginning with a vowel take indefinite article "a" instead of "an". At first I considered it a mistake but it appears without an exception with every word starting with a vowel. Even though this phenomenon was not discussed in theoretical part its frequent occurrence in the text suggests it is a common feature in AAVE.

280. *a inch of water* (p. 17)

281. *put **a ice-cream** sandwich on my tray* (p. 27)

282. *I got me **a extra**. (p. 28)*

283. *He say he got **a older** sister* (p. 28)

284. *What's **a anther**? (p. 29)*

285. *Right, you getting **a athlete's** scholarship. (p. 31)*

286. *to get me **a excuse*** (p. 35)

287. *Mr. Diaz had **a assembly**... (p. 42)*

3.11 Past verb forms

288. *I wasn't stutting him when I first **seen** him.(p. 23)*

289. *Then I **seen** where his eyes was. (p. 27)*

290. *That's why she **brung** me for the pills.(p. 22) - dialectal variant of brought*

291. *The last thing Uncle Willis **brung** was ... (p. 71)*

292. *Santa the one **brung** it. (p. 76)*

3.12 Nam

Nam is a kind of a negative particle used in the variety. However, these particles were not discussed in the theoretical part and were not found in any of the recourses, but as they occur quite frequently within the text I consider them quite important to be mentioned.

293. *Don't be **nam** grain of sand in them. (p. 6)*

294. *... but she ain't said **nam** word to me about you. (p. 97)*

295. *... your ass ain't having **nam** up in here. (p. 98)*

296. *...wearing not **nam** bra and a clinging black sweater dress... (p. 108)*

297. *Without saying **nam** word, Mama put the light on…* (p. 128)

298. *They won´t hold me in the center of they eyes. **Nam** one of them.* (p. 173)

299. *I ain´t say nothing. Not **nam** word.* (p. 183)

300. *But my feet ain´t take **nam** other step.* (p. 209)

All of these excerpts were taken from novel Imani All Mine by Connie Porter and they reflect the distinctive features of AAVE.

4 CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis was to show that AAVE is a rule governed language and that various phenomena appear frequently and not just as accidental errors. The analysis consists of 300 excerpts from a novel *Imani All Mine* by Connie Porter.

Used excerpts were manually searched for in the novel and examined. The analysis proved that AAVE really is a rule governed language. All of the phenomena listed in the practical part appear systematically not randomly and they follow language patterns mentioned in the theoretical part.

Preverbal markers *steady* and *finna (*in this text it takes the form *fenna)* do not appear frequently in the text. In this novel the preverbal marker *come* was not found at all. *Steady* usually has emphatic function.

Verbal markers *be*, *been* and *done* were all found in text *done* being the least frequent of them. Copula verb *be* follows the rules for omission so all the sentences with zero copula meet the conditions for omission. Also it appears in the habitual sense as a verbal marker. Another phenomenon connected with verbs is the verbal *–s* and its possible omission. Without an exception verbal *–s* is left out in all environments throughout the book in which verbs usually take the 3rd person suffix *–s*. No narrative present marker or habitual marker was indentified.

Singular verb forms occur with plural subjects without exceptions in forms such as *they was* and *we was*.

There were also found two types of negation - basic multiple negation (usually with negative indicator *ain´t*) and negative inversion. As described in the theoretical part negation in AAVE is often considered illogical or incorrect but it has the same pattern (multiple negation or negative inversion) in every chosen excerpt. Negative postposing was not found in the examined text also it is the least frequent pattern from all of the mentioned above.

All specific properties of nouns and pronouns can be presented on examined excerpts such as the use of *ya´ll*, associative plural *nem* and distinct means of genitive marking. Possession is not marked on all nouns and pronouns listed. It is only suggested by the word order. *Ya´ll* is used in both functions possible - in possessive function and in a function of a personal pronoun. It is used mostly in direct speech not in narration of

events. Associative plural *nem* was usually found in environments where several nouns are present and the author did not want to list them all.

Unfortunately, there were not a lot of interesting phenomena from the field of lexicon as was expected. Some means of addressing between the speakers could be found such as *dog* or *girl*. Also some features connected with drug culture such as *kibbles and bits*. The meaning of the expression *stutting someone* is just derived from the context as I was not able to support the meaning with a definition from literary source. One example of negative inversion was found connected with word *bad*. In this environment it does not have a negative meaning.

The analysis also showed some phenomena which were not discussed in the theoretical part and were also not explained or described in any reliable resource. These are the occurrence of a negative particle *nam*, different form of reflexive pronouns such as *hisself* and indefinite article "a" appearing in an environment where "an" should be present. Because of their frequent appearance throughout the text it can be assumed that it is a common feature in AAVE.

All of the phenomena examined support the view that AAVE speakers follow distinct rules. Their occurrence in the text is not accidental but rule governed.

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Summary in Czech

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá afro-americkou lidovou angličtinou (AALA). Cílem této práce je dokázat, že AALA není standardní angličtinou s chybami a nedbalou výslovností, ale zajímavou a živou variantou jazyka, která má svá přísná pravidla, kterými se mluvčí musí řídit.

Práce se skládá ze čtyř hlavních částí: úvodu, teoretické části, rozboru úryvků a závěru. V teoretické části je popsáno pojmenování a vývoj názvů této variety jazyka, historický vývoj a teorie původu. Dále jsou rozebrány gramatické, fonologické a lexikální jevy.

Praktická část se skládá z analýzy vybraných úryvků z knihy *Imani All Mine* od afro-americké spisovatelky Connie Porter. Jevy popsané v teoretické části jsou demonstrovány na úryvcích, které jsou rozděleny do skupin podle druhu jevu, který se v nich objevuje.

Rozbor textu dokázal, že AALA se opravdu řídí specifickými pravidly. Jevy, lišící se od standardu, se objevují systematicky a v pravidlech většinou nebývají výjimky.