Negation in African American Vernacular English

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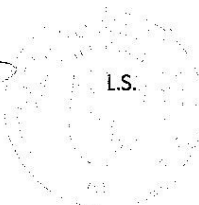
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ABSTRAKT

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá všeobecnou analýzou a popisem rozdílů mezi negací ve standardní a afroamerické angličtině. Hlavním cílem práce je zanalyzovat obě zmiňované negace z pohledu gramatických rozdílností a objasnit její užívání v každodenním anglickém jazyce. Proto jsem se detailně věnoval jak negaci v obou verzích anglického jazyka, tak i použití názorných příkladů, na kterých jsou zkoumané rozdíly znázorněny.

Klíčová slova: negace, negace v afroamerické angličtině, negace ve standardní angličtině

ABSTRACT

This bachelor thesis deals with analysis and general description of the differences between Standard English negation and African American negation. The main aim of the work is to analyse both mentioned negations in terms of grammatical differences and clarify their actual usage in the English language. Therefore, I studied both negations in detail and used practical examples to support the differences mentioned in the thesis.

Keywords: negation, negation in African American English, negation in Standard English, AAE, SE

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Declaration:

I hereby declare that the print version of my Bachelor's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

This bachelor's thesis is focused on negation in Standard English and African-American English. As linguists before Labov's work in 1970s assumed, African American English itself, including negation, is simply slang and its system is chaotic and hard to understand. However, in 1972 linguist Labov introduced the rules of African American English and proved that the language is systematic, logic and has its typical features. (Labov 1972)

The purpose of the thesis is to explain the grammar of African American English, introduce the main differences between African American English and Standard English, and to analyse how often the language is used in everyday English.

The first chapter deals with general information about African American English. The following chapter discusses negation from the point of view of Standard English. The work leads us through many possible variants of English negation from the most common ones such as clausal negation to less used or observed only in spoken Standard English.

The third part of the thesis deals with the topic of Negative concord. Negative concord is one of the most recognizable and discussed features of African American English. According to the rules of Standard English grammar this kind of negation is concerned as ungrammatical. In the work it is examined together with typical aspects of negation such as phenomenon *ain't* which is typical for African American English speakers.

In the very last chapter, the grammar of African American English is discussed and compared with Standard English. The features which are considerably different to Standard English are described and supported by examples from Non-standard English as well as from Standard English.

1 AFRICAN AMERICAN ENGLISH

In the very first chapter, I would like to focus on African American English as a whole. Since 1960, African American English has been defined as a variety that is characterized by features that either differ qualitatively from features of mainstream and other varieties of English or that differ in their quantitative distributions. This characterization of AAE as a rule-governed system let to continued study of the variety from sociolinguistic standpoint and more recently from a theoretical viewpoint. (Green 2002, 676)

Features which are often used to characterize AAE are e.g. multiple negation, third person singular -*s* does not always occur, or the absent of copula *be* etc. (Green 2002, 676) According to the research of Dillard (1972), it is often said that 80 percent of African American speakers use at least some of the features. It means that not every African American automatically speaks African American Vernacular English. In general, the phonological and grammatical features are most often used by younger lower and working-class speakers in urban areas and in informal styles. If we compare the language of African American families, there is a noticeable difference between women and men. The research shows that men use the common features more often than women. (Rickford 1999, 10-11)

As far as literature is concerned, AAE is used in order to achieve a number of goals such as connection the character with a particular region, identification the character as a particular type (e.g., belong to a certain class, making the character more authentic or to evoke some feelings. (Green 2002, 164) In American literature usage of non-standard varieties of English serves to carry a lot of means of interaction and to reveal our social behaviour. It is quite frequent to use African American English in connection with a low class, poor people or slaves. (Iles 2014, 84-5)

2   STANDARD ENGLISH NEGATION

Negative and positive clauses differ in several aspects in their syntactic distribution, i.e. in the way they are combined with other elements in larger construction. (Pullum and Huddleston 2002, 59) The grammatical system where positive and negative contrast is called polarity. In the example (1) you can see a clause with positive polarity, while clause in (2) has negative polarity. (Pullum and Huddleston 2005, 149)

(1) He has been in the USA.

(2) He hasn't been in the USA.

To understand the negation in African American English, the negation in Standard English needs to be discussed and characterized first. As far as negation is Standard English is concerned, it is possible to divide it into following categories:

- Semantic negation
- Partial negation
  - o   Lexical negation
  - o   Phrasal negation
- Sentence negation (clausal negation)
- Ordinary negation
- Metalinguistic negation

2.1 Semantic Negation

Semantic negation is formed with help of opposites. Opposite words, also known as antonyms, are part of each natural language. In English, as well as in other languages (4), semantics negatives have mostly different stems. Example (3) demonstrates several opposites with different stems in English, while (4) demonstrates different stems in Czech. Since the stems are different, no negative affixes are needed in order to create negation. (Veselovská and Emonds 2017, 53-4)

(3) Good vs. bad   Day vs. night   Mother vs. father   (English)

(4) Dobrý vs. špatný   Den vs. noc   Matka vs. otec   (Czech)

Native speakers of a language intuitively recognize different degrees of antonymy. Words can be strongly antonymous *(hot vs. cold)*, just semantically contrasting *(enemy vs. fan)* or not antonymous at all *(cold vs. chilly)*. There are many definitions of antonymy proposed by linguists. In its strictest sense, antonymy applies to gradable adjectives where the words

represent the two ends of a semantic dimension *(good vs. bad)*. However, in its broadest sense, it applies to any two words that represent contrasting meanings including other adjectives, nouns *(day vs. night)* and verbs as well *(shout vs. whisper)*. (Mohamad, Dorr and Hirst 2008, 982)

2.2 Partial Negation

The first stage of grammaticalization of negation is partial negation. This type of negation can be further divided into lexical and phrasal negation. For these kinds of negations, it is typical to use some specialized grammatical morphemes such as affixes *(un-, in-/-il/ ir, de-, dis, non-, -less, -free)* or a phrase *(not + a phrase)* to negate a grammatical unit. (Veselovská and Emonds 2017, 53)

2.2.1 Lexical Negation

Concerning lexical negation, also called affixal negation, it is a type of negation where negative elements do not make a clause negative. The most obvious case of this phenomenon can be observer in sentences where the negative element is an affix. The affixes make opposites to a positive word as in (5). The negative prefixes such as <u>*dislike*</u> or <u>*unhappy*</u> do not make the whole clause negative as shown below:

(5) He was unhappy. The clause is positive, using prefix *un.*

He wasn't happy. The whole clause is negative – clausal negation.

We call negation in *He was unhappy* subclausal because it works below the level of the clause. (Pullum and Huddleston 2005, 151) Lexical negation always works as syntactically subclausal.

2.2.2 Phrasal Negation

This type of negation is created by using the particle *not* which negates the whole phrase (usually some existing sentence member). It contains a negative phrase which consists of a negative element *(not, no)* and at least one lexical word. However, phrasal negation is not applied to a whole clause, but only to a part of it. In case the phrasal negation was applied to a whole clause, it would be clausal negation which will be discussed later on.

*(6) I want to go out, **<u>not</u>** <u>to study English</u>.* VP is negated

*<u>Me</u>, **not** <u>my brother</u>, went to the supermarket.* NP is negated

(Veselovská and Emonds 2017, 66)

Phrasal negation differs from the others in two aspects. First, it never introduces the auxiliary verb *do* and second, it always requires analytic negation. (Pullum and Huddleston 2002, 803) Analytic negation does not allow inflection of the verb to the negative. It must stand in the sentence separately as in (6). (Pullum and Huddleston 2002, 799)

In all cases, then, phrasal negation is formed by placing negator *not*, as premodifier of a phrase. (Pullum and Huddleston 2002, 803) Another common example is exemplified in (7):

> (7) *She is a not unattractive woman in some ways.*
>
> **She is a not unattractive woman ~~in any respect~~.*

The negator *not* in (7) negates word *unattractive* but not the whole clause. Therefore, usage of the non-assertive item *any* is ungrammatical. The effect of *not* in the sentence is merely to reverse the already negative force of the following expression. Such double negative phrases are devices of understanding as, for example, sentence *He is a not too sympathetic man* can be understood as *He is a rather unsympathetic man*. The double negative phrases require a gradable adjective or adverb as a head.

In other types of phrasal negation, *not* modifies a degree adverb which in turn modifies a positive gradable adjective or adverb:

> (8) *I visit them <u>not too often</u>.*
>
> (9) *John landed <u>not too much earlier</u> than Jane.*
>
> (10) *They own two <u>not very peaceful</u> dogs.*

Sentences in examples (8 - 10) contain gradable adverbs. They correspond to negative sentences. For example, sentence (8) corresponds to the negative sentence *I don't visit them very often*, though it exhibits phrasal negation, not clausal. On the other hand, sentence (10) does not correspond to the negative sentence because the AP is not a clause element but is embedded in noun phrases which are elements.

An unusual type of phrasal negation appears in NPs that expresses a compressed predication:

> (11) *The company promised <u>no victimization</u>.*
>
> (12) *The children want <u>nothing but television</u>.*   (Quirk 1985, 791-2)

2.3 Sentence Negation (Clausal Negation)

In case of clausal negation, a simple positive sentence is negated by inserting the clause negator *not* between an operator and the predication. (Quirk 1985 776) This type of negation negates the whole clause. (Veselovská and Emonds 2017, 66)

	Positive		Negative
(13)	*I have worked there.*	*X*	*I have <u>not</u> worked there.*
	Dogs are friendly pets.	*X*	*Dogs are <u>not</u> friendly pets.*

The operator in the examples above is the first auxiliary verb of a complex verb phrase, or either *be* or stative *have* as the verb in a simple verb phrase. If an operator is not present in the positive sentence, the auxiliary *do* is introduced to the sentence which can be seen in the example below:

	Positive		Negative
(14)	*He works in the office.*	*X*	*He <u>does</u> <u>not</u> work in the office.*
	They go to the party.	*X*	*They <u>do</u> <u>not</u> go to the party.*

When it comes to dynamic main verb[1] *have*, this verb requires *do* as operator. (Quirk 1985, 776)

(15) We didn't have a party yesterday.

*We hadn't a party yesterday.

Concerning negator *not* except in formal English it is more usually used in the enclitic contracted form *n't.* (Quirk 1985, 776)

(16) He does<u>n't</u> work in the office.

2.4 Operator

One of the important parts of negation that need to be discussed is an operator. These words in English are sometimes called helping words as they do not carry any semantic meaning and their function are mostly just grammatical. (Quirk 1985, 178) Not all simple statement has an operator, but when it occurs, it is normally the word which directly follows the subject. It can be provisionally defined as the first or only auxiliary in the sentence. (Quirk 1985, 79) In cases when there is no auxiliary, and therefore no operator in the corresponding interrogative and negative structures, the verb *do* is introduced as a supportive auxiliary to perform the function as operator. (Quirk 1985, 80) Auxiliary *do* is a semantically empty syntactic component in sentence processes such as negation and interrogation, whereas *be* contributes to aspect and voice, and *have* contributes to aspect. (Quirk 1985, 120) An operator is in every finite sentence. There are sentences with operators called zero

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[1] Dynamic verbs are verbs referring to an event. (Quirk 1985, 178)

operators but it does not mean that the sentence does not have it. The operators in sentences like these are just hidden.

(17) I *hidden operator* work.

The sentence in the example (17) contains just lexical verb *work* and the operator is hidden (zero operator). The sentence can be also written with operator *do*. However, auxiliaries as an operator in interrogative clauses admit inversion, in other words, the subject noun phrase and the auxiliary, the first auxiliary if there are more, change the word order. (Quirk 1985, 124)

(18) I <u>plan</u> to work for this company.

(19) <u>Do</u> I plan to work for this company? → *Plan I work for this company?

Modal verbs *(can, may, will, shall, could, might, would should, must)* in a sentence are always an operator. (Veselovská and Emonds 2011, 79)

As far as morphology is concerned, the operator takes all morphology in the sentence (negation, tense, person etc.). In case of negation, negator *not* is followed immediately after the operator. (Veselovská and Emonds 2011, 79-80)

(20) He <u>does</u> not like ice-cream.   Third person – operator takes morphology,

do → does

(21) He <u>did</u> not go to school. / He didn't go to school.

2.4.1   Semi-negative Forms

Another way how of creating clausal negation is the usage of semi-negatives. In linguistics, they are also called approximate negators (Quirk 1985, 780) as these negators are not strictly negative but is almost negative in a meaning. In terms of grammar, approximate negators often gas the same effect as absolute negators. This type of negators includes several adverbs and determiners that are negative in meaning but not in form. They include determiners *few, little* and adverbs *rarely, seldom, barely, hardly, scarcely*. Using these words in a sentence can influence clause negation. (Quirk 1985, 780) About these types of items is referred as about approximate negators because using these items do not indicate absolute zero. They express an imprecise quantification that is close to approximates zero:

Approximate negators	Absolute negators
(22) <u>Few</u> of them will survive.	<u>None</u> of them will survive.
(23) She had <u>hardly</u> spoken.	She <u>hadn't</u> spoken.

As was previously said, *few* and *little* are determinatives and they function in NP structure as determiner where *few* selects count plural heads as in (24) and *little* non-count singulars or it can also function as degree adjunct modifying verbs (25) or comparatives (26).

(24) <u>*Few*</u> *people liked it.*

(25) *He* <u>*little*</u> *understood the implications of what he had done.*

(26) *He felt* <u>*little*</u> *better.*

On the other hand, adverbs *rarely* and *seldom* are adverbs of frequency, while the other three are adverbs of degree that are characteristic by modifying verbs (27), adjectives (28), and a restricted range of determinatives (29).

(27) *She* **hardly** *spoke.*

(28) *It is* **barely** *understandable.*

(29) *There was* **scarcely** *any food left.*   (Pullum and Huddleston 2002, 815-16)

2.4.2   Negative Forms

As mentioned in the first lines of this chapter, clausal negation is fixed with the negative preverbal particle *not* but also with other negative words such as *never, nothing nobody* or *nowhere.* (Jiráková 2014, 6) Other possible negative forms for accomplishing clausal negation are words such as *no, neither, nothing nobody, no one, none, never, nowhere, no place, no longer, in no way*. (Quirk 1985, 782) The clausal negators *not* and *never* are part of predicate, whereas the negators *nobody* or *nowhere* represent other sentence members such as subject, object or adverbial. (Jiráková 2014, 5)

(30) *I have* **never** *been in Paris.*

(31) **Nobody** *was there.*

(32) **Nowhere** *in the world can be found such a building.*

(33) *That was* **no** *fortune.*

(34) **None** *of them came.*

By using these negative forms, also called negative items, we sometimes have a choice between negation of verb and negation of some other element as illustrated below:

Verb negation	Other element negation
(35) That was **not** *a fortune.*	*That was* **no** *fortune.*
An honest man would **not** *lie.*	**No** *honest man would lie.*
I don't say a word.	*I say* **no** *word.*

As seen in the examples (30 – 34) above, clausal negation can be also accomplished by negation different clause element than the verb by using negators such as *none, never, no*

etc. (Quirk 1985, 778) In these sentences, the negator is not associated with the verb and stands in the sentence separately. (Pullum and Huddleston 2002, 806-7)

In case the negated subject is not generic – it refers to a specific subject, there is no corresponding negation with an operator. On the other hand, where negation with an operator is possible it changes the meaning of the sentence because of the scope of negation. In other words, the meaning and way of understanding the sentence through negation differs:

(36) *Many people didn't come to the party.*

(37) *Not many people come to the party.*

Regarding the examples (36) and (37), the first example implies the absence of many people, whereas the second example points out presence of just a few people. In other cases, negation with an operator is not possible because a non-assertive would be required to replace the negated subject. Such situation is ungrammatical as non-assertive items in a sentence cannot precede negator *not*.

(38) **Anyone doesn't listen to me*   *No one listens to me.*

In Standard English, the negative forms can be used in sentences only once as in (39). In Contrast to non-standard English, where the negative forms can be used several times. However, such sentences are concerned as ungrammatical in Standard English (40).

(39) *I give **no** money to **any** of my children at **any** time.*

(40) *****No one never** said **anything** to **nobody***.

The sentence (40) in Standard English needs to be represented as <u>*No one ever*</u> *said <u>anything to anybody</u>*. In a sentence the further the negative word is placed, the more questionable the sentence is as the sentence is first interpreted as positive and then needs to be reinterpreted as negative. (Quirk 1985, 787)

2.4.3 Inversion

Both previously discussed forms, semi negatives as well as negatives, have a common syntactic property known as inversion of a modal or auxiliary with the subject after an initial negative phrase. (Quirk 1985, 781) Inversion happens when we invert the normal word order of a structure, most commonly the subject verb word order. (Carter, McCarthy, Mark and O'Keeffe, 2016)

(41) ***Never** can I trust her.*

(42) ***Little** did I expect such enthusiasm from so many.*

(43) ***Scarcely** any wine has yet arrived, has it?*

In Standard English the negative element may be moved out of its usual position to the initial position. In this case, the subject operator inversion is often required as in (44), except initial negative adverbials such as *in, not even* or *with* which do not require inversion (45).

(44) **Not a word** *would he say.*

Under no circumstances *will she return here.*

(45) **In no time** *we cleared the table.*

With no coaching *will he pass the exam.*   (Quirk 1985, 779)

2.4.4   Syntactic Polarity

First of all, there are elements that clearly indicate a sentence negation. These elements are so called 'tests for polarity' and they will also be discussed in this chapter. (Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 785) A pair of clauses such as (46) and (47) are said to differ in polarity. The example (48) stands for a positive clause, in other words, a clause with positive polarity, while the second one (49) stands for a negative clause or a clause with negative polarity.

(46) *It is sunny.*

(47) *It isn't sunny.*

In most cases, positive constructions represent the default polarity, in the sense that they are structurally and semantically simpler than negative ones. (Pullum and Huddleston 2002, 786) As mentioned in the previous chapter, negation is marked by words such as *not, no, never* etc. or by affixes (e.g. *-n't, un-*) and it is very often that this effect of adding one of these negative words or suffixes make the whole clause negative.

The item that is most concerned in signalling the positiveness or negativeness of a construction is the operator as it takes all the morphology in a sentence. Also, we may notice that the operator emphasizes positiveness or negativeness when it bears the focus in elliptical replies:

(48) **Did** *you go out?* → *Yes, I* **did / didn't***.*

(49) *You* **did** *go out, right?*   (Quirk 1985, 1371)

2.4.4.1   *Not even Continuations*

These kinds of continuation are allowed only for negative clauses. Therefore, it could be one of the techniques how to test the polarity of a sentence. As stated, negative clauses allow a continuation with *not even* + complement or adjunct:

(50) *She didn't meet him,* <u>*not even*</u> *his friends.*

*She met him, <u>*not even*</u> *his friends.*

When the clause is negative, the following *even* is commonly preceded by the negator *not*. Usage of the negator *not* in a positive clause is inadmissible and that is the reason that the sentence *She met him, not even his friends* is ungrammatical. (Pullum and Huddleston 2002, 787)

2.4.4.2 Neither or nor

Again, usage of *neither* and *nor* is connected only with a negative polarity clause, whereas a positive clause is followed by *so* instead. These words are examples of connective adjuncts and their switching leads to ungrammaticality:

(51) *She didn't meet him; <u>neither / nor</u> did I.*

(52) *She met him; <u>so</u> did I.*

    *She met him, <u>neither / nor</u> did I.   (Pullum and Huddleston 2002, 787)

2.4.4.3 Polarity Tags

Another way how to examine polarity of a clause is the grammaticality of used polarity tags. Polarity tags, also known as reduced interrogative clauses, represent the most common type of interrogative tag that is used in order to seek confirmation of what has been said in the clause to which the tag is attached. Tags reverse the polarity of the preceding clause which means that if the preceding clause is negative the attached tag must be positive and vice versa:

(53) *She **didn't** meet him, <u>did she</u>?*   → negative clause preceding = positive tag

(54) ***She met him**, <u>didn't she</u>?*   → positive clause preceding = negative tag

As far as grammaticality is concerned, there are some circumstances that do not require a negative tag following a positive clause and vice versa but these. These are clearly different intonationally and in they also differ in pragmatic effect from those mentioned in (53) and (54). (Pullum and Huddleston 2002, 787)

2.5 Ordinary and Metalinguistic Negation

To cover all possible forms of negation in Standard English, one of the lasts way how to negate a sentence is by the help of ordinary and metalinguistic negation. These types of negations are primarily dealing with understanding and meaning of the negative sentence. To compare the difference between these two types of negation, see the examples below:

(55) *He hasn't got four children, he's got three.*   Ordinary negation

(56) *He hasn't got four kids, he's got five.*   Metalinguistic negation

In the example of ordinary negation, the statement that "*he has four children*" is actually not true as he has only three. On the other hand, in the example of metalinguistic negation the claim that "*he has four*" is actually true since anyone who has five children must logically also have four children. The fact which is being negated in the sentence with metalinguistic negation is the appropriateness of the word choice, which is in this case misleading. (Pullum and Huddleston 2002, 790)

3   POLARITY SENSITIVE ITEMS

The term polarity sensitive items refers to expressions that need to be licensed by positive or negative trigger within a given domain. Broadly speaking, the context of occurrence of these expressions is modelled by including overt information on polarity along with syntactic and other specification. (Tovena, Déprez and Jayer 2004) There is a significant number of such items which are sensitive to the polarity of the environment in which they occur. Some of them are admissible in negative environments but not normally in positive ones. On the other hand, some occur in positive environments but generally not in negative ones: (Pullum and Huddleston 2002, 822)

(57) He **doesn't** visit her <u>any longer</u>.   He knows her <u>already</u>.

    *He visits her <u>any longer</u>.   *He doesn't visit her <u>already</u>.

As you can see in (57), *any longer*, it the case when it is acceptable in negative but not in positive. This does not apply for *already* as it is acceptable in positive but not in negative. Items with only possible usage in negative are called negatively-oriented polarity-sensitive items, while these with possible usage in positive are called positively-oriented polarity-sensitive items. (Pullum and Huddleston 2002, 822)

According to Randolph Quirk, it is possible to divide items into three categories:

- Assertive items or positively-oriented items (*some, something, someone, already, always, sometimes* etc.)

- Non-assertive items (*any, anything, anybody, ever, yet, anytime* etc.)

As far as this division is concerned, there is a close connection between English questions and negation. Both constructions involve operator and moreover, yes-no questions are also related to negation through their association with a set of words that we may call non-assertive forms. (Quirk 1985, 83)

The contrast between assertiveness and non-assertiveness is basically logical one. While assertive sentences (58) asserts the truth of the previous proposition, the question in (59), as well as negative statement in (60) do not claim the truth of the corresponding positive statement.

(58) *Yes, I have to **some** of them.*   Assertive form

(59) *Have you ever been to **any** African countries?*   Non-assertive form

(60) *No, I haven't been to **any** of them yet.*   Non-assertive form

3.1 Assertive Forms (Positively-Oriented Polarity Sensitive Items)

Assertive forms such as *some, somebody, somewhere, already* etc are associated with the positive statement. Using them in negative statements in Standard English is concerned as ungrammatical.

The main words of this category are:

- *Some, somebody, someone, something, somewhere, somehow, somewhat*
- The degree adverbs: *pretty, fairly*
- The paucal determinatives: *a few, a little several, various*
- Aspectual: *already, still*
- Connective: *so, too, as well*
- The modal idioms: *would rather, would sooner, would as soon*

(61) I made <u>some</u> mistakes.	* *I <u>didn't</u> make **some** mistakes.*
(62) It's <u>pretty</u> big.	* *It <u>isn't</u> **pretty** big*
(63) My brother heard it, and <u>so</u> did Peter.	* *My brother didn't hear it, but <u>not</u> **so** did Peter.*

Whereas it is frequently impossible for a positive statement to contain non-assertive forms (64), it is by no means unusual for assertive forms to occur in questions and negative clauses (65). (Quirk 1985, 84)

*(64) *I have **any** ideas.* (Within the meaning of *I have some ideas*)

*(65) Do you have **some** ideas? / Don't you have **some** ideas?*

However, *any* can also be used in a positive statement despite fact that it is word belonging to non-assertive forms. These are discussed in the following chapter. In such cases, the meaning of a sentence changes. Using the item *any* before nouns can refer to indefinite or unknown qualities or an unlimited entity.

*(66) You can take **any** book.*

*(67) I refused to answer **any** questions.*

According to the meaning of *any* in a sentence, we recognise two forms: a strong form and a weak form. Weak form stands for indefinite quantities in questions and negative sentences, while a strong form is used to mean 'it does not matter which or what', to describe something which is not limited. This can be seen in (66) and (67). (Carter, McCarthy, Mark and O'Keeffe 2016)

3.2 Non-assertive Forms

In Standard English usage of non-assertive forms is also one of the signs of clausal negation. On the other hand, non-assertives are not very frequent in African American English which will be discussed later on. (Rickford 1999, 8) However, not only negative sentences can be introduced by using these forms. The main markers of non-assertiveness are negative, interrogative, and conditional clauses. (Quirk 1985, 390) Clausal negation is frequently followed by one or more non-assertive items.

Non-assertive forms: *any, either, anything, anybody, anyone, anywhere, anyplace, ever, anytime, yet, any more, any longer, at all, any (the), either.* (Quirk 1985, 782)
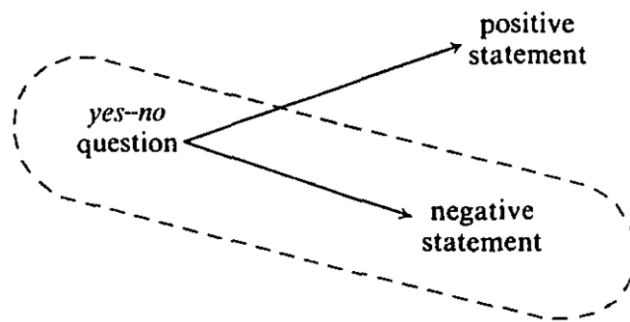

Figure 1: Non-assertive territory (Quirk 1985, 83)

The arrows in the figure (1) represent the relation between question and answer, while the area enclosed by the broken line may be termed as non-assertive territory. (Quirk 1985, 84) In most cases, the combination of non-assertive form with a negator *not* can be replaced by the negative form. However, the combination of *not* and non-assertive words is more colloquial and idiomatic than the forms using clearly negative forms:

> *(68) We haven't had **any** breakfast.   /   We have had **no** breakfast.*
>
> *(69) I wasn't speaking to **anyone**.   /   I was speaking to **no one**.*

Nevertheless, non-assertive forms *yet, at all* and *either* cannot be combined with negative forms as there is any clearly negative word which can replace them:

> *(70) They haven't arrived **yet**.   /   -*
>
> *(71) There can't see **at all**.   /   -*
>
> *(72) Peter is not coming **either**.   /   -*   (Quirk 1985, 783)

With regard to non-assertive items, they can also be used in the sentence more than once. If the clause is negative, it is usually negative throughout, or at least until the beginning of a

final adjunct, in other words, an optional part of a sentence. In terms of negative items, they must normally be used after the negative element in place of *ever* negative item that would have occurred in the corresponding positive clause:

(73) *I've never travelled **anywhere** by plane **yet**.*

    *No one has **ever** said **anything** to **either** of us.*

  In comparison with already discussed negative items, the non-assertive forms can be used in sentences multiple times, while the negative ones only once. As already discussed, the sentence (75) shows the combination of negative form with non-assertive one. As can be seen, the negative one always precedes the non-assertive one. Otherwise, such sentences are ungrammatical.

(74) *I **don't** give **any** pocket money to **any** of my children at **any** time.*

(75) *I give **no** money to **any** of my children at **any** time.*

(76) *I give pocket money to **none** of my children at **any** time.*

4 DOUBLE NEGATION

To cover all possible forms of negation in Standard English, I will now focus on double negative structures. This chapter contains several possible ways of creation double negation In Standard English, when we use negative forms such as *nobody, never* or *nothing* it is not common to use them together with a negative verb as in (88).

(77) She had <u>nothing</u> to say.   Standard English

(78) She <u>hadn't nothing</u> to say.   Dialectal English

However, there is a possibility to use double, even triple negatives in spoken regional dialects of English. Double negatives and triple negatives in (79) and (80) are not acceptable in formal situations or written language. (Carter, McCarthy, Mark and O'Keeffe 2016)

(79) He <u>never</u> says <u>anything</u> to <u>anyone</u>.   Triple negation in SE

(80) He <u>never</u> says <u>nothing</u> interesting to <u>no one</u>.   Dialectal triple negation

Double negative in English dialectal varieties uses two negatives for emphasis the meaning of the sentence even though only one negative is necessary:

(81) I <u>can't</u> get <u>no</u> satisfaction.

As far as Standard English is concerned, double negation is a frequent way of using two negatives for expressing positiveness. Therefore, two negatives in Standard English cancel each other and make the meaning of a sentence positive. (Nordquist 2017)

Usage of *not* + an adjective or adverb with a negative prefix such as *un-, in-* can be used as a way of softening or downtoning the meaning of the adjective. The meaning becomes affirmative, but the double negation shows that the writer or speaker is cautious about it. (Carter, McCarthy, Mark and O'Keeffe 2016)

*(82) That he will come was **not unexpected**. → Meaning: That he will cam **was expected**.*

*(83) That's **not unreasonable**. → Meaning: That's **reasonable**.*

Two negatives occur in the same clause occasionally and according to Standard English grammar, they are understood positively. In the examples below there are involved combinations of auxiliary verb negation as well as main verb negation:

(84) <u>Not</u> many people have <u>nowhere</u> to live.   *→ Most people have somewhere to live.*

(85) <u>No one</u> has <u>nothing</u> to offer to society.   *→ Everyone has something to offer to society.*

(86) <u>Nobody</u> has <u>nothing</u> to eat.   *→ Everyone has something to eat.*

Sentences (84 - 86) are somewhat similar to the double negative of logic. Each negative element has its separate value and it is possible to find phrases which cancel out each negative and leave an entirely positive sentence in meaning. These positive sentences (84 – 86) are given on the right. However, the sentences are syntactically negative which can be proved by adding a required positive tag.

*(87) Not many people have nowhere to live, **do they**?*   (Quirk 1985, 798-99)

According to Huddleston and Pullum, the constructions in Standard English where the negation of a clause is morphologically expressed at more than one point can be divided into four categories:

- Disjunctive coordination concord
- Parenthetical concord
- Negative retort
- Pleonastic subordinate negative   (Pullum and Huddleston 2002, 845-6)

4.1 Disjunctive Coordination Concord

Neither as a marker of coordination is usually paired correlatively with *nor*, as you can see in the example (88).

*(88) Their action was **neither** illegal **nor** immoral.*

Disjunctive coordination can be expressed non-verbally, as you can see in the example above, or verbally as in:

*(89) Their action was**n't** (neither) illegal **nor** immoral.*

In case of non-verbal expression of disjunctive coordination, it is generally incorporated into all markers of coordination, and we can, therefore, talk of concord. (Pullum and Huddleston 2002, 845)

4.2 Parenthetical Concord

In the example (90), semantically there is a single negation as it is in non-parenthetical versions:

*(90) They **aren't** here, I **don't** think.*

On the other hand, in the parenthetical version, the negation is expressed in both part of the sentence – *they <u>aren't</u> here* and also in *I <u>don't</u> think.* Nonetheless, parenthetical negation is

optional in sentences, and therefore we can also have *They aren't here, I think.* (Pullum and Huddleston 2002, 845)

4.3 Negative Retort

(91) A: *I am just driving into town.*

B: <u>Not</u> *in my car, you're* <u>not</u>*.*

This type of negation might be used in dialog as a respond of person B to A's. Therefore, this is the type of negation that can occur mostly in spoken English rather than in written form. In (91) the B's response is reduced version of the sentence *You're not driving into town in my car*. The negated initial constituent represents new information, while the rest is discourse-old, recoverable from A's utterance. The effect is to emphasize a rejection of a proposition or proposal that is more specific than the one just uttered. (Pullum and Huddleston 2002, 846)

4.4 Pleonastic Subordinate Negative

In comparison to standard multiple negation, pleonastic negation in the subordinate clause is an extra mark of something that has already been negatively marked:

(92) <u>No one</u> *can say what might* <u>not</u> *happen if there were another tsunami.*

The range of constructions where this pleonastic *not* is possible to use is very restricted and not very often used. (Pullum and Huddleston 2002, 846)

5   NEGATIVE CONCORD

One of the main difference between Standard and African American English is negative concord also known as multiple negation. (Finegan 2011, 392). We talk about negative concord in situations when negation is interpreted just once although it seems to be expressed more than once in the clause. This phenomenon can be observed in many languages, e.g., Romance, Slavic, Greek or Nonstandard English etc. **(**Giannakidou 2000**)**

> *(93) He did**n't** hear **no**body **no**where.*   English
>
> *Petr **ne**viděl **ni**koho **ni**kde.*   Czech

In comparison with previously discussed double negation, negative concord uses additional negative forms such as *nothing, no* or *nobody* in place of non-assertive forms (*any, anything* etc.). (Quirk 1985, 799) In negative concord constructions, negation can be marked on auxiliaries (e.g. *don't*) and indefinite nouns such as *anybody (nobody)* and *anything (nothing)*. (Green 2002, 77)

> *(94) He **didn't** say **nothing**.*   African American English
>
> *(95) He **didn't** say **anything**.*   Standard English
>
> *(96) **Nobody** here pointed **no** gun at **nobody.***   African American English
>
> *(97) **Nobody** here pointed **any** gun at **anybody**.*   Standard English

As Green pointed out, the number of negators that can be used in a single sentence is not limited. In African America English, the rule that using two negatives is ungrammatical and yields a positive does not work. As can be seen in the examples above, the negative meaning of the sentences is not affected by addition of negative elements and they also do not become positive. (Green 2002, 77)

Researchers have referred to these additional negative elements in the African American English sentences as pleonastic, suggesting that they do not contribute any additional negative meaning to the sentence. This means, that in the sentence such as (98), the first negative marker *didn't* does all the work of marking negation, while following *no* simply agrees with the negation on *didn't* and perhaps adds emphasis. But it does not contribute any other negative meaning. (Green 2002, 78)

> *(98) Sometimes it **didn't** have **no** chalk, **no** books, **no** teacher.*

When a clause contains two or more negatives it is important to distinguish cases where they express separate semantic negation form those where only one semantic negation is involved. This can be seen in the examples below:

(99) I **didn't** say I **didn't** want it.   Two semantic negations

(100)   John meet **neither** his friends **nor** his family.   One semantic negation

The negation in (99) is non-verbal. The fact that there is only one semantic negation can be proved by creating the version of the same sentence using verbal negation which is semantically equal: *John didn't meet either his friends or his family.* (Green 2002, 78)

From the historical English development point of view, Negative Concord was not that restricted and considered as ungrammatical. In Old English (before c. 1100), the principal sentential negator was *ne*, which was prefixed to the verb or auxiliary and could co-occur with other negative elements.

(101)   I **ne** work at school.

(102)   You **ne** have **nothing**.

In Middle English (c. 1100-1500), the negator *ne* was reinforces with *nought* or, with its reduced form *not* which progressively replaced the negator *ne* in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and it is still used in today's English. This negator could be accompanied by other negative elements such as *never* or *nothing* until the period of Late Middle and Early Modern English which is dated between 1650 and 1650. After this period, negative forms accompanying the negator *not* were replaced by non-assertive items in most kinds of writing as seen in today's Standard English. (Nevalainen 2006, 258-9)

5.1 Negative Inversion

Negative inversion is closely related to the previously discussed phenomenon of negative concord. Negative inversion means that negative indefinite noun phrase or negative form of auxiliary are inverted. In these constructions, the initial negated auxiliary is followed by a negative indefinite noun phrase:

(103)   **Don't no game** last all night long.   AAE, conversation

(104)   **No game lasts all night.**   SE

The sentence (103) begins with a negated auxiliary verb *don't* which is followed by a negative indefinite noun phrase *no game*. The noun phrase is called indefinite because it does not name any game in particular. See other examples below: (Green 2002, 78)

(105)   **Can't nobody** tell you it wasn't mean for you.

(106)   ***Don't nothing*** *come to a sleeper but a dream.*

Notice, that the only way how to achieve sentence negation using negative inversion is through the contracted morpheme *n't*. Using uncontracted form – *not* is not acceptable as demonstrated below:

(107)   **Can **not nobody** beat them.*

(108)   **Will **not none** of the students go to the party.*

As previously mentioned, subjects are usually quantificational or indefinite. Definite subjects as pronouns or proper names headed by definite of possessive elements are not allowed. Some quantificational or indefinite subjects are also ruled out, such as subjects headed by *few* or *some*.

(109)   **Don't the police break up a fight.*

(110)   **Won't they catch us.*

(111)   **Don't few of you move to Prague.*

(112)   **Didn't some of you plan to come.*

As far as expletives in negative inversions are concerned, in the southern white English varieties they are acceptable as in (113) and (114). (Matyiku 2011) To explain, expletives are words without any semantic meaning since their function in sentences is only syntactic. (Quirk 1985) In comparison with negative inversion constructions in African American English, these forms are not acceptable. Therefore, the examples (115) and (116) are ungrammatical for African American speakers.

(113)   *They didn't nobody like him.*   Alabama English

(114)   *We don't any of us need anything.*   Appalachian English

(115)   **There didn't nobody laugh.*   African American English

(116)   **It don't nobody be drinking tea.*   African American English.

(Matyiku 2011)

5.2 Social Aspects of Negative Concord

To appreciate the uniqueness of negative concord in today's English, we need to take a look at the number of those who use these constructions understand them. There is no doubt that every native English speaker understands the majority sentences which use multiple negation, since they are passively aware of the meaning of these constructions. According to Trudgill's study (1975: 30), in Detroit 2% of the upper-middle class and 70% of the working class use negative concord. Despite this fact, negative concord is still not a part of

Standard English as it is considered as ungrammatical and unacceptable in written and formal English. In some literary works negative concord is used as a method to picture less educated, illiterate or unintelligent people from lower class. This fact is supported by the research shown in the figure (2). Correlation between social class and frequency of negative concord has been subject of several studies. The chart below shows, that Standard English speakers perceive negative concord as a feature of middle and working class. Only few of them was not able to specify the social class of speakers based on sentences with negative concord. Therefore, figure (2) proves, that negative concord is judged negatively and carries a social stigma. (Szoke 2010)
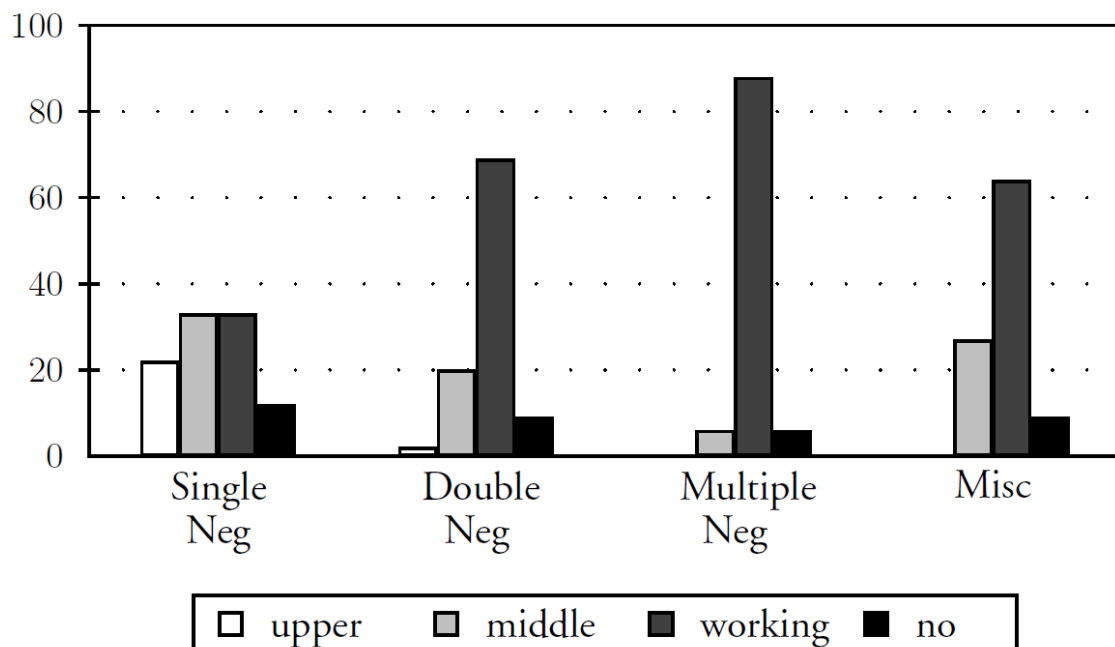

Figure 2: Identifying of social class based on usage of negative concord (in percentage). (Szoke 2010, 146)

Until 1970s when linguists Labov (1972) published *The Logic of Non-Standard English* the minority children who used negative concord such as *I don't know nothing* had to face negative discrimination in schools. Thanks to the publication, Labov proved that negative concord is not an ungrammatical and illogical phenomenon but a sensible system with consistent rules. Nowadays, using negative concord is becoming a symbol of 'coolness' as Labov showed that those in central position in the society use more negative constructions then those in peripheral roles.

Similarly, another argument to again negative concord being illogical can be showed from facts of first language acquisition when children in certain period use multiple negation until school, where standard language is required. (Szoke 2010, 140-2)

5.3 Geographical Aspects of Negative Concord

Although we inevitably touched the geographical aspects in the previous chapter, in this chapter these aspects will be discussed more detailed. Negative concord is generally considered as American trait, even though standard American English does not use it. Its usage is restricted to non-standard forms and African American Vernacular English. However, we can observe negative concord structures even in the United Kingdom.

Firstly, let me specify what is a dialect. Dialect is a form of the language that is spoken in particular part of the country by a particular group of people. It needs to be pointed out, that dialect is not the same as accent. Accent refers only to the way of pronunciation of words and even standard form of English can be spoken with different accents. But dialect also differs in usage of words and grammar. (Carter, McCarthy, Mark and O'Keeffe 2016) In the world, there are many English dialects such as Scottish English, Welsh English, Hawaiian Pidgin, Quebec English, Australian English, African American Vernacular English, Farnworth (spoken at the north of Manchester) and many others.

As far as British dialects are concerned, regarding negative concord, they are not very different from each other. The composition of these structures is basically the same, only the number of negators and their placement in the sentence can differ. In the example below there are some examples of dialects which can be found in Britain using negative concord:

(117) *He never said nawthen [nothing] t'nobody.*   Suffolk dialect

(118) *She never lost no furniture nor nothing.*   Irish English

(119) *I am not never going to do nowt [nothing] no more for three.*   Farnworth

When taking into consideration the Scottish English, negative concord in commonly used among speakers. However, in some cases the two negatives cancel each other out and the structure works as regular double negative structures – the meaning is positive. On the other hand, in Irish English the appearance of multiple negation is frequent and we can easily find sentences such as in (118). (Szoke 2010, 142-3)

6   AFRICAN AMERICAN AIN'T

In comparison to Standard English which uses *am not, isn't, aren't, hasn't, haven't* and *didn't*, African American Vernacular English speakers use *ain't* as a general preverbal negator. (Rickford 1999, 8) Obviously, while *not-* constructions exist in just about every variety of English, standard or non-standard, *ain't* is highly stigmatized. (Walker 2005, 5) Even though AAVE is not the only vernacular dialect using *ain't* as a general preverbal negative, it is unlike most European American vernacular varieties that use the negator *ain't* also for *didn't*. (Wolfram 2004) But in fact, *ain't* together with negative concord is perhaps the best-known phenomenon of non-standard English.

This negator appears in written English in curious plays and novels in 18th century. The first form that could be observed in English was *an't* which was later transformed to *ain't*. Later in 19th century *ain't* stated to be widely used in regional dialects such as Cockney in the UK and became a distinctive feature of colloquial American English. (Nordquist 2017) However, *ain't* entered the written language before the process of codification and therefore from the existing evidence it is simply not clear how the negator *ain't* was developed. (Dohaner, and Katz 2015) Nowadays, *ain't* is considered as non-standard, even though it is linguistically formed by the same rule that speakers use to form *aren't* and other standard forms. (Nordquist 2017)

As said*, Ain't* is widely regarded as non-standard but it is relatively widespread in use. It can be applied to all persons and may correspond both to *be* and *have* in both present and past temporal contexts, so the negator *ain't* does not have any past form as can be observed in the examples below. (Biber 1999, 167-8)

Corresponding to *be* examples:

(120)	*She **ain't** at the USA.*	AAE
	She isn't in the USA.	SE
(121)	*She **ain't** born in New York.*	AAE
	She wasn't born in New York.	SE

Corresponding to *have* examples:

(122)	*I **ain't** done nothing.*	AAE
	We have done nothing.	SE
(123)	***Ain't** you got any consideration?*	AAE

Have you hot any consideration?   SE

Nevertheless, despite all these possible usages of the negator *ain't*, it is never used for *have + not* in past tense. It does not occur in any narratives, nor in other corpora representing earlier African American English such as Samaná English or the Ex-slave Recordings. Therefore, unsurprisingly, using these phenomena for expressing *have + not* in past tense is also absent in modern African American Vernacular English. (Howe 2005, 175)

(124)   **I **ain't** read that much books by the time I was twelve.*   AAVE

           *I **hadn't** read that much books by the time I was twelve.*   SE

The interpretation of (124) in AAVE would be **I haven't red that much books by the time I was twelve* because *ain't* in AAVE does not function for *had+not*.

Ain't is not common in academic texts and occurs only very rarely for example in quoted speech in the news texts. However, in conversation the usage is very common. According to statistics, there are 400 occurrences per million words. (Bieber 1999, 167-8) While the replacing of *haven't* by *ain't* is robust in all nonstandard English dialects, African American Vernacular English appears to be the only American variety in which *ain't* option is frequently preferred one. As said in the research, using *ain't* is preferred over constructions using *have + not* in almost all varieties of African American English, except Southern European American English vernacular. This preference of *ain't* appears to be more common in earlier African America English rather than in modern one. (Howe 2005, 174) Moreover, in today's English the usage of the negator *ain't* is more frequent in lower-class speech. In case of upper-class, it is used just in a personal relationship and informal situations. (Nordquist 2017)

Lastly, African American English speakers can use the negator *ain't* as the negative instead of *didn't*. But, as was stated above, the past form of *ain't* does not exist, thus the past form needs to be marked on following verb as showed in the following examples. (Green 2002, 37)

(125)   *He ain't studied languages.*   AAVE

           He didn't study languages.   SE

6.1 Ain't in British English dialect

In this chapter the usage of originally African American negator *ain't* in British English will be discussed. This chapter analyses variation in the occurrence of the grammatical variable *ain't* in England.

British English is defined as the English language as it is spoken and written in the UK and certain other countries. (McIntosh 2013) Most of differences between British and American English are in vocabulary, pronunciation and in some ways the grammar also differs. All differences are more frequent in spoken language rather than in written.

(126)	*I **have got** a picture of my brothers.*	British English
	*I **have** a picture of my brothers.*	American English
(127)	*He **learnt** to play the piano.*	British English
	*He **learned** to speak fluent French.*	American English

The fact is, that grammar is constantly changing and many new ways of its usage in British English come from American English. That is mainly because of influence of American popular culture and American media. (Carter, McCarthy, Mark and O'Keeffe 2016) The same situation can be observed in case of *ain't* in British English.

Regarding young generations in the UK, a high frequency of negatives is observed in their everyday spoken English. It is certainly higher than in spoken adult's English. Among teenager's everyday spoken English, negatives with *ain't* are very common, despite being long stigmatized. As previously described, *ain't* stands out for its multiple functions since it can be equivalent to forms *be* and *have* in British English. However, young British generation uses the negator *ain't* more often in interrogative and declarative clauses as the equivalent of negativized forms of the verb *be* (128) than of *have* (129). On the other hand, in question tags the opposite tendency is more usual and the proportion of *ain't* as the negative of *have* is noticeably higher (130). (Martínez 2011, 110-11)

(128) There ain't no laws.

(129) Considering you ain't got your glasses on.

(130) Well you got a book ain't you?

7 OTHER MORPHOLOGICAL AND SYNTACTIC FEATURES OF AAVE

Besides usage of negation in African American English, there are some other examples of grammatical differentiation in comparison with Standard English. Many of the features that distinguish AAE from other varieties of English are in the syntactic and semantic components of the language. (Green 2002) In this chapter the main differences will be discussed and compared to Standard English. African American English differs in many ways. Not only from the perspective of grammar such as morphology and syntax but also from the perspective of phonology, in other words pronunciation. (Rickford 1999, 4) Many of the features that distinguish AAE from other varieties of English are in the syntactic and semantic components of the language. The AAE lexicon can be divided into three parts: first general words and phrases, second verbal or grammatical markers and third current slang. (Green 2002)

7.1 Absence of Copula

The term copula refers to the verb *be* and copular verbs are those verbs which are functionally equivalent to the copula. (Quirk 1985, 54) Absence of copula, also known as zero copula is together with negation one of the most distinctive characteristics of African American Vernacular English. (Nordquist 2017) As examined in Labov's work, the rule for use of zero copula is simple. In the place where the copula is located in a Standard English sentence can be also deleted in an African American English sentence.

(131) He - fast in everything he do. → *He **is** fast in everything he does.*

(132) But everybody - not black. → *But everybody **is not** black.*

This phenomenon is not observed only in African American English. It is important to say that using zero copula is not common in Standard English at all, however, the same patterns are seen for example in the French Creole of the Caribbean or the English Creole of Jamaica. Despite frequency of absence copula in African American English, if we focus on past tense these forms are rarely deleted. Past forms of the verb *be* (*was* and *were*) appear regularly. (Labov 1969, 717)

7.2 **Use of Invariant** *be*

African American speakers use verb *be* for habitual aspect. The verbal marker *be* often referred to us as aspectual *be*, indicates that something occurs from time to time as in (133). On other hand, AAE speakers do not use aspectual *be* to talk about the present state of an activity (134). It can occur preceding verbs, prepositions, and other words. Another property of aspectual *be* is that is always occurs in its bare form. In other words, it never conjugated or inflected as *is, am, are, was, were* etc. (Green 2002, 681-2) In this non-standard English, there is also a possibility to use *be* in questions, negatives and questions tag together with *do* as seen in (135). The form *be* is also used for future tense instead of *will be* forms. It is essentially a result of the phonological rule deleting the contracted *'ll* of *will* as in (136).

*(133) She **be** running.*   For Standard English: *She is usually running.*

*(134) She **IS** running.* or *She – running.*   For Standard English: *She is running <u>now</u>.*

*(135) She **don't be** running, do she?*   For Standard English: *She is not running, does she?*

*(136) She **be** sick tomorrow.*   For Standard English: *She will be running tomorrow.*

From the perspective of using *be* in different tenses, another difference is in usage in present perfect tenses. In this case, verbs *been* are unstressed and can co-occur with time adverbials such as *since last week* and so on and do not connote remoteness.

*(137) He **been** sick*   for Standard English: *He has been sick.*

Another different use of be can be seen in *be done* for resultatives of the future or conditional perfect tense.

*(138) She **be done** had her baby.* for Standard English: *She will have had her baby.*

(Rickford 1999, 6)

The verbal marker *BIN* differs also in pronunciation. Therefore, it is written in capital to point out that it is pronounced with stress. This marker indicates that an event started or occurred a long time ago. (Green 2002, 678)

(139) They BIN left.   for Standard English: *They left a long time ago.*

(140) They BIN reading.   for Standard English: *They have been reading for a long time.*

7.3 Usage of Verbal Tense Marking

As could be already observed in some of the previous examples, in African American English the grammatical rule for creating verbs accordingly to person and tense is different. In the third person it is very common to use not enclose *-s* to the end of the verb after third person.

(141) He walk-. for Standard English: *He walk**s**.*

Also using *don't* in negatives instead of *doesn't* or *haven't* instead of *hasn't* is not unusual for African American speakers.

*(142) She **haven't** come yet.*   *She **hasn't** come yet.*

*(143) He **don't** like him.*   *He **doesn't** like him.*

Another feature of African American English is generalization of *is* and *was* in plural and second person subjects, in other words instead of *are* and *were*.

*(144) They **is** some crazy folk.*   *They **are** some crazy folk.*

*(145) We **was** there.*   *We **were** there.*   (Rickford 1999, 7)

7.4 General Verbs and Phrases

When we take into consideration the pronunciation of words in AAE, it is identical to words in mainstream English. However, they may have different meanings. General words and phrases refers to those lexical items that are used by speakers in all age groups and that have retained their meanings over the years. These words are for example:

*(146) Ashy = Adjective. Dry condition of the skin; whitish colour of dry skin: They have suggested a remedy for **ashy** skin.*

*(147) Steady = Adverb. It specifies that the action specified by the verb is carried out in an intense, consistent and continuous manner: The music does not seem to be bothering her. She is **steady** reading.*

*(148) Get over = Verb. Take advantage of, to succeed by using wit but little effort: The students worked very hard. None of them tried to **get over** by pretending they didn't know how to solve the problem.*

Speakers who know AAE know the meanings of these words and use them in grammatical contexts. (Green 2002, 678)

7.5 Current Slang

Slang is vocabulary that is used between who belong to the same social group and who know each other well. The language usually refers to particular words and meanings but can include longer expression and idioms. It is very informal language and it can offend people if it is used outside the group. It is more frequently used in speaking rather than writing. (Carter, McCarthy, Mark, O'Keeffe 2016)

The slang lexical items in AAE are primarily used by those in the age groups ranging from adolescent to young adult. The examples below can be grouped into labels for money (149), actions (150), people (151) and description for labelling that which is good (152).

(149) *Cheese = Noun. Term for money: She makes more **cheese** than you do.*

(150) *Get my grub on = Verb. To eat: I am going to take a break so I can **get my grub on**.*

(151) *Money = Noun. Term for male, friend: What's up, **money**?*

(152) *Off the chain = Adjective. Great, exciting: The party was **off the chain**.*

Typically, slang items are not ling-lived but the phrase from (150) is. Note, that any verb can be inserted between the possessive pronoun *my* and the preposition *on*. For example, the word *sleep* can be inserted *(= get my sleep on)* and the resulting meaning would be "to sleep." (Green 2002, 679)

7.6 Marking the Past in AAE

Another syntactic and semantic pattern of marking the past in the language. AAE makes at least six distinctions in the past. Each type of past is listed below with a representative example:

- Simple past: event culminates before now

(153) *He **drunk** the milk.*

- Preterite *had*: event culminates before now, often used in narrative contexts

(154) *He **had drunk** the milk.*

- Remote past: whole event or some part of the event is in the remote past

(155) *He **BIN drunk** the milk. = "He drunk the milk long time ago."*

(156) *He **BIN drinking** the milk. = "He has been drinking the milk for a long time."*

- Past perfect: event is in the past before the past

(157) *He **had drunk** the milk.*

- Remote past perfect: event is in the past before the remote past

*(158) He **had BIN drunk** the milk. = "He had drunk the milk a long time ago."*

*(159) He **had BIN drinking** the milk. = "He had been drinking the milk for a long time."*

- Resultant state: resultant state holds now, the event is over

*(160) He **done drunk** the milk. = "He has already drunk the milk."*

As showed in the examples above, AAE shares certain patterns with Standard English. This can be seen in (153) and (157) where AAE marks the simple past as well as past perfect the say way as Standard. The only difference here is that in the simple past, the past participle form instead of the simple past form of the verb is used.

As illustrated in (156-156) and (158-159), AAE has a separate way of talking about an event that occurred in the distant past. The events that occurred in the distant past are often marked by *BIN* (written in capital to demonstrate that it is stressed). Speakers understand these uses of *BIN*, and they also understand that the remote past is relative.

Finally, AAE speakers use the unstressed form of *done* as in (160). It is necessary to understand that this marker is distinguished from the main verb *done* thanks to the pronunciation. The main verb *done* is strongly stressed. The unstressed verbal marker *done* in (160) indicates that the drinking the milk event took place in the past; it is over. (Green 2002, 684-6)

CONCLUSION

The bachelor's thesis dealt with general characterization of negation in Standard English as well as in African American Vernacular English. The work generally analysed the negation in African American English and Standard English and showed the main differences between them.

The first chapter described African American English as a whole and included the main information about this English variety.

The second chapter focused on more detailed division and characterization of possible negation in Standard English. Also, many examples were provided so all information was supported and examined. As a part of the first chapter, many features in Standard English connected with negation such as polarity items were also discussed and examined.

The third chapter of the thesis examined negation in African American English. The goal of this section was not only to provide general information but also to support this information with examples and include other aspects of using this phenomenon. Therefore, this chapter also includes social and geographical aspects. The main discussed topics were Negative Concord and the usage of the negator *ain't*: *(Ain't nobody can do that)*. Moreover, this chapter proved that negation in African American English is understandable to almost all English speakers despite it being a non-standard variety.

To conclude, even though negation in African American English is considerably different from Standard English (sentences such as *He didn't say nothing* are considered grammatically correct) it is used by many speakers in everyday English, including those who do not have African American origins. As far as other syntactic differences are concerned, they are mostly used only by African American English speakers but also well understandable for Standard English speakers.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAE   African American English

AAVE   African American Vernacular English

SE   Standard English

LIST OF FIGURES