

**SYNTACTIC FEATURES AND LINGUISTIC PROFILING OF AFRICAN
AMERICAN VERNACULAR ENGLISH IN *THE HATE U GIVE* AND *QUEEN N***

SLIM

BY

Zainab Opeyemi BAKARE (MISS)

ART2100185

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

FACULTY OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF BENIN

BENIN CITY

NOVEMBER, 2025

**SYNTACTIC FEATURES AND LINGUISTIC PROFILING OF AFRICAN
AMERICAN VERNACULAR ENGLISH IN *THE HATE U GIVE* AND *QUEEN N
SLIM***

BY

Zainab Opeyemi BAKARE (MISS)

ART2100185

**AN ESSAY SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND
LITERATURE, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN-CITY IN PARTIAL
FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF A BACHELOR OF ARTS (HONS)
DEGREE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE**

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project entitled: SYNTACTIC FEATURES AND LINGUISTIC PROFILING OF AFRICAN AMERICAN VERNACULAR ENGLISH IN *THE HATE U GIVE* AND *QUEEN N SLIM* was undertaken by Zainab Opeyemi BAKARE (Miss) of the Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, Benin City.

Prof. N. F. OGOANAH
(Supervisor)

Date

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to God for granting me the grace and strength to birth such impactful research and to myself for showing resilience and pushing to the end despite the challenges faced.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I wish to express my profound gratitude to God Almighty for granting me the grace, wisdom, and strength throughout the duration of my programme in the University of Benin.

My sincere and heartfelt appreciation go to my project supervisor, Prof. N. F. Ogoanah, whose invaluable guidance, insightful critiques and unwavering support were instrumental to the successful completion of this work. His expertise and patience have been a great source of inspiration. Thank you, sir, for all you do.

To my parents, Mr. Alasi Bakare and Mrs. Comfort Bakare, I want to say a big thank you for your unconditional love, prayers and immense sacrifices. Without your sponsorship, I would not even be writing this research thesis. I, also, want to thank my siblings, Miss. Maryam Bakare, Mr. Jibril Bakare and Miss. Aisha Bakare, for their constant support and love.

I sincerely appreciate my dear friends especially Comfort, Divine, Christabel and Praise, for their support and their direct and indirect contribution to the success of my work. I, also, want to appreciate Mr. Gift for his constant support, words of encouragement, pushing and his direct contribution to the success of this work. Thank you for all you do. To my lovely roommates, thank you for helping me walk through the researching and writing phase of my research.

To the communities that contributed one way or the other to the completion of my B.A programme especially Rhema Flames Int'l Gospel Church and ACJ UNIBEN, I want to sincerely appreciate you.

Finally, I acknowledge the great works of the scholars that was used to build the theoretical framework of this research. This would not have been possible without the support system I am privileged to have.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page	i
Certification	ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Table of Contents	v
Abstract	viii

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of Study	1
1.2 Background of Study	1
1.3 Objectives of Study	3
1.4 Statement of Problem	4
1.5 Research Questions	5
1.6 Scope of Study	5
1.7 Operational Definition of Terms	5
1.8 Limitations of Study	6

CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND REVIEW OF RELATED SCHOLARSHIPS

2.1 Theoretical Background	7
2.1.1 Minimalist Program	7
2.1.1.1 Core Concepts of Minimalist Program	7
2.1.2 Sociolinguistics	9
2.2 Review of Related Scholarships	10
2.2.1 Foundational Studies on AAVE Syntax	11
2.2.2 Studies on Linguistics Profiling	12
2.2.3 Studies on AAVE Dialect Representation in Film and Television	13

2.2.4 Related Studies on the Language and the Themes of Selected Crime Dramas	14
2.2.5 Justification of Study	15
Thesis Statement	16
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	
3.1 Research Design	17
3.2 Sampling Techniques	17
3.2.1 Purposive Sampling	17
3.2.2 Criterion-Based Sampling	18
3.3 Method of Data Collection	18
3.4 Method of Data Analysis	18
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION, DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS	
Introduction	20
4.1 Data Presentation	20
4.1.1 Selection Criteria	20
4.1.2 Brief Overview of Selected Scenes from <i>The Hate U Give</i> and <i>Queen N Slim</i>	21
4.1.21 <i>The Hate U Give</i>	21
4.1.22 <i>Queen N Slim</i>	21
4.1.3 Transcribed Scenes	22
4.2 Data Analysis	23
4.2.1 Syntactic Analysis of Selected AAVE Utterances	23
4.2.11 Syntactic Features of AAVE	24
4.2.12 Analysis of Selected AAVE Utterances in Transcript 1, 2, 3 and 4	25
4.2.2 A Sociolinguistics Analysis of Linguistics Profiling in Transcribed Scenes	36
4.3 Discussion of Findings	40

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary	42
5.2 Conclusion	43
5.3 Recommendations	43
Works Cited	45
Appendix	47

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the syntactic features of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and linguistic profiling as found in *The Hate U Give* (2018) and *Queen N' Slim* (2019). Using the dual framework of Chomsky's Minimalist Program for syntactic analysis and Sociolinguistics for social context, the research qualitatively analyses selected scenes to identify the key AAVE structures and its contribution to stereotypical representations. The findings also establish AAVE as a rule-governed dialect while revealing that its portrayal in crime narratives often links it to criminality, thereby reinforcing stereotypes. The study concludes that media representations can perpetuate linguistic profiling but also hold the potential for more balanced depictions that affirm AAVE as a legitimate and authentic form of expression.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1: Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the syntactic features of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and the linguistic profiling experienced by the speakers of this dialect as portrayed in the contemporary American crime films, *The Hate U Give* and *Queen N Slim*. The study aims to investigate the syntactic features of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and show how these features exemplify linguistic profiling, enabling possible discriminatory stereotypes.

1.2: Background of Study

Communication is key in the sharing of thoughts and ideas between two or more people and standing as the primary medium of communication is language. According to David Crystal, language is the systematic, conventional use of sounds, signs or written symbols in a human society for communication and self-expression (430). Language is therefore more than just a tool for sharing thoughts and ideas, it is a social instrument that mirrors culture and identity. In human societies, people use language in their daily interactions to express their thoughts and feelings and this language use results in the occurrence of language variations phenomenon.

Sociolinguistics is a branch of linguistics that study language in relation to the society and its factors which include differences in region, class, gender, ethnicity etc. Language plays a crucial role in shaping social identities and the study of sociolinguistics captures four kinds of speech variation: dialect, sociolect, idiolect and ethnolect. This study focuses on dialect variation. A dialect is a regional or social variation of a language characterised by differences in pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary. One of the dialectal varieties of English is the African American Vernacular English (AAVE).

The African American Vernacular English (AAVE), also known as Ebonics or Black English, is a significant and often stigmatised variety of English spoken predominantly by the black people of the United States of America. The development of African American Vernacular English can be traced to the trade and transportation of slaves from Africa to the Northern and Southern lands of the USA. The transatlantic slave trade saw the development of various pidgin and creole languages which were formed as a result of the need to communicate in a strange land. Over time, these creoles evolved into the African American Vernacular English (AAVE) which was largely influenced by indigenous African languages, contact with various English dialects and shaped by the history of African Americans. AAVE remains one of the major dialectal variations of English in the USA and the stigmatization of this dialect can be directly linked to the historical context and also the inequality experienced by the speech community, African Americans.

AAVE possesses syntactic features that differentiate it from the standard variations of the English language. Some of these features include the evident copula deletion (e.g. She my wife), multiple negation (e.g. I don't want no drugs) and the twisted use of habitual markers like “be” (e.g. she be running in the mornings). These features that distinguish AAVE are also a leading factor for linguistic profiling.

Linguistic Profiling is the practice of identifying the social characteristics of an individual based on auditory cues, in particular dialect and accent. This theory was propounded by Prof. John Baugh. He defines linguistic profiling as “the racial identification based on speech”. Baugh argues that linguistic profiling is synonymous to racial profiling, just an auditory version. He explains that just as racial profiling has devastating consequences, so does linguistic profiling (*Linguistic Profiling*, 155 - 156). Some scholars, however, insists that linguistic profiling is a

natural and psychological process, but agrees it can serve as the basis for discriminatory practices and promotion of harmful stereotypes (MacNeal et al., 2). They argued that while linguistic profiling is the identification of a person's race, identity or social background based on their speech, racial profiling, as the name connotes, is the blatant discrimination of the speaker based on their race.

Over time, AAVE has gained visibility in not just the society, but in the contemporary media. The media, especially in crime films, has shaped perceptions of this dialectal variety by portraying the speakers of this variety as deviant and resistant to peace and the law enforcers, influencing the public attitudes toward communities that use this variety. These representations can still be found in films produced in the last 10 years and it depicts the continual stereotypical promotion this variety keeps facing. The recurring use of AAVE in these contexts has raised the questions of linguistic profiling, prompting the study of how AAVE is represented in societal context and constructed in crime dramas.

One of the goals of this study is to explore how AAVE has been represented in crime dramas produced in the last 10 years. It will investigate the syntactic features of AAVE as portrayed in these crime films and how these features contribute to linguistic profiling. This study seeks to further understand the way AAVE is constructed and used in these dramas and how these features lead to discriminatory practices and stereotypes against the African American speech community.

1.3: Objectives of Study

The objectives of this study are as follows:

- i) To identify the prominent syntactic features of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) as portrayed in *The Hate U Give* (2018) and *Queen N Slim* (2019).

ii) To examine how the syntactic features of AAVE lead to linguistic profiling and aid discriminatory practices against the African American speech community.

1.4: Statement of Problem

The media is a powerful tool that is used to shape the perspectives, opinions, and beliefs of society. The African American Vernacular English (AAVE) has been a subject of misrepresentation, and misinterpretation in the media world. These misrepresentations can be easily linked to the societal attitudes towards the black people. Years after the ratification of the 13th amendment which abolished slavery in the USA and the implementation of systems aimed at ensuring equality in the society, the blacks still face prejudice and discrimination from their white counterparts, and this prejudice crept into the representation of the people and their dialect in mainstream media.

Contemporary American crime films often portray African American characters using the language marker, AAVE. While this portrayal can help to reflect the use of the language in its speech communities, it can also aid linguistic profiling where the language serves as a marker for criminality, deviance and low social status in these films. This raises the question of how these narratives use the syntactic features of AAVE to construct the characters and how this promotes stereotypical biases. For example, characters who speak AAVE are often depicted as delinquent personalities in the society like gang leaders or individuals who carry out crimes or illegal activities.

Despite the various studies carried on AAVE in media, there exist a gap in research that has not specifically analysed how the syntactic features of this dialect are constructed and represented in crime-based narratives. Previous studies that have been carried tend to generalise across media, not giving a specific analysis to crime dramas.

This study seeks to identify and solve the problem of how the syntactic features of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) are constructed and portrayed in contemporary American crime films, how this leads to linguistic profiling and also how linguistic profiling leads to discrimination, shaping stereotypes within crime-based narratives, using *The Hate U Give* and *Queen N Slim* as a case study.

1.5: Research Questions

This study will be guided by the following research questions:

- i) What are the prominent syntactic features of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) used in *The Hate U Give* (2018) and *Queen N Slim* (2019)?
- ii) How do these syntactic features lead to linguistic profiling and aid discriminatory practices against the African American speech community?

1.6: Scope of Study

This study is limited to two contemporary American crime films: *The Hate U Give* (2018) and *Queen N Slim* (2019). This study will specifically analyse AAVE sentences and phrases in these films, identifying syntactic features inherent to them and linking them to scenarios of linguistic profiling. This study will not focus on syntactic features of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and linguistic profiling outside the context of these films. Additionally, this study will not delve into discriminatory practices against the AAVE speech community but will only examine how linguistic profiling aids discriminatory practices and harmful stereotypes within the context of these dramas.

1.7: Operational Definition of Terms

1. **Syntactic Features:** This refers to the formal properties of syntactic objects which determine how they behave with respect to syntactic constraints and operations (such as selection, licensing, agreement, and movement). (Svenonius, 1)
2. **Linguistic Profiling:** This refers to the practice of identifying the social characteristics of an individual based on auditory cues in particular dialect and accent. (Baird, 1)
3. **Language Varieties:** Language Varieties refer to the different forms a language can take, including dialects, accents, registers, and styles, all of which are influenced by social, regional, and situational factors. These variations, while diverse, all relate to a shared underlying linguistic system.
4. **Dialect:** Dialect is a regional variety of language distinguished by features of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation from other regional varieties and constituting together with them a single language.
5. **Stereotypes:** This refers to a generalization that attributes certain traits or characteristics to all members of that group, ignoring individual variations.

1.8: Limitations of Study

This study is limited in two primary ways. First, its scope is confined to the crime film genre, and more specifically limited to just two (2) crime films: *The Hate U Give* (2018) and *Queen N Slim* (2019). Consequently, the findings cannot be generalised to represent the full portrayal of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) in crime films. Second, this study is based on scripted dialogues which might have been influenced by the writer's style and opinions, introducing a degree of subjectivity in the films. This inherent subjectivity in the source material introduces a potential bias in the interpretation of data.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND REVIEW OF RELATED SCHOLARSHIPS

2.1: Theoretical Background

This research is founded on a flexible theoretical framework combining the Minimalist Program (MP) and Sociolinguistics. These frameworks offer interrelated viewpoints, facilitating the examination of the syntactic structure and social roles of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) within crime dramas.

2.1.1: Minimalist Program

The Minimalist Program is a linguistic theory created by Noam Chomsky in the early 1990s. Grounded in earlier generative theories, such as government and binding theory and principles and parameters model, this program aims to present language using the least number of rules possible. Chomsky states that the Minimalist Program sets to explore the question of how we can best understand the nature of language, assuming it is a perfect system, optimally designed to meet the conditions of sound, meaning and structure (*The Minimalist Program*, 2). Chomsky asserts that human languages are constructed in the brain through straightforward rules. He introduced several fundamental concepts of MP which will aid the syntactic analysis in this

research. They include: Universal Grammar, Merge, Economy principles, Interfaces, Feature Checking, and Movement (Internal Merge).

2.1.11: Core Concepts of Minimalist Program

1. **Universal Grammar:** This is the theoretical notion that suggests all humans possess an inherent ability to learn language. Chomsky establishes that the theory of universal grammar is concerned with discovering the general principles that characterise all human languages (*Knowledge of Language*, 3). This idea supports the theory that every individual has a biological inclination to acquire language, which is essential for understanding the consistent syntactic patterns found in AAVE.

2. **Merge:** Merge refers to a core syntactic operation that unites two syntactic elements to create a new structure. Chomsky asserts that this computational process facilitates organization within language. For instance, $(D, N) \rightarrow NP$, where D represents Determinant, N signifies Noun, and NP stands for Noun Phrase. In AAVE, this operation can help us analyse some specific features like copula deletion. In “She fine”, the merge operation is used to combine the subject “she” and the adjective “fine” even though the copula “is” is not reflected in the surface structure. Minimalist Program helps analyse these syntactic features in-depth.

3. **Economy Principles:** Economy principles aim to analyse how language utilizes minimal effort to achieve structure. This notion employs principles to construct sentences that guarantee necessary structures are formed. Chomsky argues that these principles represent “natural computational conditions” free of redundant steps and symbols. Copula deletion, in AAVE, can be seen as an example of economy. The copula, which is deleted, is usually predictable in contexts, and AAVE still communicate effectively without the overt copula.

4. **Feature Checking:** This is a concept that examines the syntactic characteristics associated with words and ensures that these characteristics are verified or adjusted to adhere to grammatical constraints. This idea is crucial in analysing dialectal variations like AAVE and how these variations may express or omit particular features. For example, AAVE in subject-verb agreement has different rules, which feature checking helps expatiate. In instances where the Standard American English requires an *s* marker in subject-verb agreement, AAVE does not always which indicates a difference in how number feature is checked.

5. **Movement:** Movement or Move is a syntactic operation that enables the relocation of syntactic elements from one location in the sentence to another in order to fulfil grammatical requirements. This operation is essential in both Standard American English and AAVE as it helps in the formation of questions and so on. Although, AAVE might apply this differently.

6. **Interfaces:** Interfaces investigate the connection points between syntax and other linguistic modules through two primary systems: the Conceptual-Intentional (CI) System linked to meaning which can help us understand how the syntactic structures of AAVE convey meaning and the Sensory-Motor (SM) System associated with sounds which can help us understand the phonological features of AAVE. These interfaces facilitate the connection between syntax and how language is either interpreted or expressed.

These core concepts will serve as a guide in the detailed analysis of the syntactic features of AAVE as contained in the selected crime movies. However, despite the Minimalist Program providing a cognitive and structural foundation for syntactic analysis, it does not function in isolation. Language is not solely computational; it also represents a social practice. Consequently, sociolinguistics plays a vital role in this study.

2.1.2: Sociolinguistics

Wardhaugh & Fuller describes sociolinguistics as the field that examines the connections between language and society, aiming for a deeper understanding of the structure of language and how it operates in communication (1). This definition aligns with this study's objective, which is to comprehend the syntactic structure of AAVE as a linguistic variety and its representation in the media.

William Labov, the founder of Variationist Sociolinguistics, challenged the perception that dialect varieties like AAVE are arbitrary, emphasizing that “there is no such thing as non-grammatical dialect,” asserting that all dialects possess their own intricate and systematic rules. In the context of AAVE, he demonstrated that unique features of this dialect, such as copula deletion (“She smiling”), are not errors stemming from a lack of knowledge of the standard variety but are structured elements with distinct functions. He argues that the grammatical structure of Black English is not derived from mistakes or ignorance rather derived from a different history and a different set of social conditions, giving an apt analysis of the AAVE which he termed as Black English Vernacular (BEV) in his work (Labov, 184-185).

In an effort to examine language in relation to social characteristics, John Baugh introduced a social phenomenon called linguistic profiling, which refers to “racial identification based on speech.” Baugh propounded this concept from a housing experiment he carried out where he reached out to housing agencies via phone call using three distinctive variations of American English which included Standard American English, African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and the Chicano English (ChA). His results pointed not just the linguistic profiling evident in the society but also the subtle subsequent discrimination that comes with it. Although, scholars have argued that linguistic profiling occurs as a natural psychological process and is not a direct cause of discrimination, but rather the response of the listener is the issue. This

practice aids to shed light on the societal attitudes and media representation of AAVE and its speech community, particularly in contemporary American crime films.

By merging these two approaches, this research aims to demonstrate that the depiction of AAVE in contemporary American crime films not only masks the linguistic richness of this variety but also reinforces harmful and negative stereotypes. The minimalist program provides tools to analyse the syntactic features of AAVE while sociolinguistics highlights the society's response to this variety and its speech society.

2.2: Review of Related Scholarships

Several scholars have made contributions to the study of African Vernacular English (AAVE) as it significantly evolved over the years. Building on the theoretical frameworks in 2.1, works from scholars like Williams Labov, Lisa Green, Rosina Lippi-Green and so on, set tune for the in-depth review of foundational, structural and sociocultural of this dialectal variation.

2.2.1: Foundational Studies on AAVE Syntax

Foundational studies of the African American Vernacular English (AAVE) have established that this variety is a rule-governed dialect with systemic syntactic structure and not the perceived broken version of the Standard American English. Based on the foundational scholarship in Teilanyo & Ogoanah's work, "Black English and Black Identity in the United States of America", it further established that AAVE is not a deficient form of Standard English but rather a clear linguistic system with its own grammatical rules and historical depth. The article traces the dialect's origins to the forced migration and enslavement of Africans. The restriction on the usage of their native language saw the development of this variety shaped by their cultural orientation and world experiences. This historical context underscores that the linguistic features

of AAVE are not random errors but systematic patterns that form a “perfectly cohesive system” (Teilanyo & Ogoanah, 3).

Also, William Labov in his work, *Language in the Inner city: Studies in the Black English Vernacular* (1972), provided an extensive work, challenging the notion of AAVE being “bad English”. He documents the syntactic features unique to the AAVE variety such as copula deletion, the habitual aspect ‘be’, multiple negation, etc, to prove the notion of it being a rule-governed variety. He not only rejects the myth that the AAVE belongs to and should be exclusively by a race, he also reinforces that “the idea that dialect differences are due to some form of laziness or carelessness must be rejected” (Labov, 10).

Lisa Green supports Labov’s study, providing an extension in her work, *African American English: A Linguistic Introduction*, by comprehensively studying the syntactic description of AAVE, identifying core features and characteristics of AAVE. She reiterates that these features are not linguistic deficient but rather one that is rich and influenced by contact with West African languages. She also established that the AAVE is structurally related to West African languages and bears only superficial similarities to general English (Green, 9). Although, some scholars have argued the extent of the West African language influence, suggesting the role of internal language change in the development of AAVE. Her work provides an extensive study of the lexicon, syntactic and morphosyntactic properties of the AAVE.

These foundational studies establish the complexity of AAVE, trashing the notion of it being a random dialect but rather a dialect governed by a system of rules.

2.2.2: Studies on Linguistics Profiling

There have been several scholarly studies on how speech patterns directly or indirectly lead to prejudice or discrimination in the society.

John Baugh propounded the concept of linguistics profiling which he referred to as the “racial identification based on speech”. His research takes an in-depth look into how listeners make assumptions about a person’s background, race or ethnicity. In his work with two other scholars, he experimented this concept with housing developers. He questioned if a speaker will be treated differently based on their speech and he used three distinct dialects to contact landlords which includes Standard American English (SAE), African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and Chicano English (ChE). The results of their experiments suggests that listeners in fact not only linguistically profile speakers, they also, in some cases, discriminate against them.

Also, in his book, *Beyond Ebonics: Linguistic Pride and Racial Prejudice*, Baugh extensively looked at the development of Ebonics (a term coined to represent the dialects spoken by the blacks in America and Caribbean), the society’s reaction to this dialect and how this is used to discriminate against the speech community. Drawing from his experiences, he recalls how his parents were insistent on him speaking the Standard American English and boycotting the AAVE which they termed as “bad English”, and how he had to speak the AAVE to fit in his black neighbourhood (*Beyond Ebonics*, 5-6). These experiences further highlight how the AAVE is treated in the American society and it can be concluded that linguistic profiling and racial prejudice are occurrences that will be linked to the use of AAVE.

Rosina Lippi-Green also provides an examination of language ideology and how accent and dialect are used to forward linguistic profiling and subsequent prejudice in her work, *English with an Accent: Language, Ideology and Discrimination* (1997). Lippi-Green noted that despite the anti-discriminatory laws put in place, people still use accent as a litmus test for acceptability, listing some examples of how people are asked to suppress the way they communicate (92).

Lippi-Green's work is particularly important to this study as it provides a foundation in the understanding of biases that contribute to the stigmatization of AAVE in media.

MacNeal et al, also provides a comprehensive study of linguistic profiling in the legal world. The article highlights cases of interactions between the legal system and linguistic profiling, highlighting cases where linguistic profiling played a role, either actively or inactively. It highlighted a case against a housing agency identified as Habersham Properties where this agency refused to book appointments to people because they sounded black which particularly serves as a proof of the discrimination that comes with linguistic profiling. Although, the writers argue that linguistic profiling, which is allowed in the court of law, can be used to establish identity but it should not lead to discrimination and prejudice in the judgement system.

These studies have collectively proven the existence of the concept of linguistics profiling and how this concept has been influential in the judgement and discrimination of people based on their speech patterns, providing a framework in which this concept can be explored in crime dramas.

2.2.3: Studies on AAVE Dialect Representation in Film and Television

Scholars have also delved into the study of these dialectal representations in contemporary media especially films and television.

Cecelia Cutler in her study, *White Hip Hoppers, Language and Identity in Post-Modern America*, established the racial prejudice associated with AAVE. The same variety used by non-Black speakers to assume 'coolness' or 'swag' in mainstream media is quickly associated to criminality when used by the black speakers. She describes how the white youths in the 1990s and early 2000s began to adopt the hip hop culture as rap music began to gain grounds. This hip hop culture includes the speech patterns of AAVE and the overall culture of AAVE speech

community. Culter emphasised that regardless of the widespread acceptance of the hip hop culture which has, in its centre, the African American culture, it does not remove the racial prejudice still faced by African Americans. She makes reference to the African American teenager, Trayvon Martin, who was shot dead in 2012 for entering a predominantly white gated community, reflecting the societal double standards (145). Cutler's analysis is, however, limited to hip hop, and further research is needed to examine other media genres.

2.2.4: Related Studies on the Language and Themes of the Selected Contemporary American Crime Films

Scholars have attempted to understand different perspectives of the crime films selected for this study, *The Hate U Give* (2018) and *Queen N Slim* (2019).

One notable contribution is Dowie et al.'s critical media analysis of *The Hate U Give* movie which is an adaptation of Angie Thomas' novel. This study argues that the movie adaptation generally weakened the original text's narration on racism and police brutality. The study established that the novel offered an unfiltered look into the racial injustice and profiling faced by the blacks which the movie adaptation weakened to appeal to the mass audience, signifying a phenomenon they termed "racial ventriloquism". Outside the critique of the alterations in the movie adaptation which signifies an issue they termed "Whitewashing in Hollywood", their work provides a lens for the analysis of linguistic profiling in the movie.

Scholars have also looked into *Queen N Slim* (2019) through the perspectives of the predominant themes of racism, police brutality and Black identity. Ronic Ngambwe's work, "Get Out, Queen & Slim: A Content Analysis of How Race is Portrayed in Two Mainstream Movies", challenged the traditional stereotypes, attributing the movie's depth to the Black production team in place that gives off an authentic representation on-screen.

Queen N Slim also employs narratives that highlights the experiences of the Black person and the thwarted justice system. The New Yorker in an article titled “The Powerful Perspectives of ‘Queen & Slim’” noted that the protagonists remained unnamed until the end of the movie, signifying how any Black individual can find themselves in similar situations due to linguistic and subsequent racial profiling, not excluding the police brutality.

These studies establish how crime dramas use language and themes to address the complex societal structures. It also portrays the authenticity of the characters in the movie using the African American Vernacular English (AAVE) as a lens.

2.2.5: Justification of Study

This study is justified on the following grounds:

- i) This study addresses the research gap as highlighted in 1.3 and 2.2; there is a significant gap in empirical research in the specific analysis of how syntactic features of the AAVE contributes to linguistic profiling within the crime film genre. Previous research has studied AAVE in media but have failed to narrow it down within crime-based narratives which this study aims to do, using *The Hate U Give* and *Queen N Slim* as a case study.
- ii) This study addresses the issue of linguistic profiling and its connection to discriminatory practices and stereotypes against the speakers. By examining how AAVE is represented in crime dramas, this study seeks to shed light to how this can influence the audience’s perceptions and further biases.
- iii) This study helps establish AAVE as a complex and rule-governed dialect by providing syntactic analysis of dialogues and statement in selected scenes of *The Hate U Give* (2018) and *Queen N Slim* (2019). This will help challenge the notion of AAVE as “bad English” and the perceptions of it being “lower” to Standard American English.

Thesis Statement

The syntactic features of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) in the *The Hate U Give* and *Queen N Slim*, not only establishes AAVE as a rule-governed dialect, it also reflects patterns that triggers linguistic profiling and reinforces racial discriminations and harmful stereotypes against the African American speech community.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1: Research Design

This study adopts the qualitative research method. Qualitative research method involves the collection and use of non-numerical data (text, interviews, focus groups, images etc.) for the analysis and exploration of concepts. This research method is crucial in the exploration of the reasons behind human experiences, perceptions and behaviour. Creswell defines qualitative research as an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to social or human problem. (1)

This study will use the method for critical examination and analysis of the syntactic features of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and how it leads to linguistic profiling as represented in selected crime films.

3.2: Sampling Techniques

Sampling techniques are the methods used to select a representative of a larger population for study and analysis, allowing conclusions about the population based on the representative. This study will adopt two (2) sampling techniques which includes the Purposive Sampling and Criterion-Based Sampling. These sampling techniques are non-probability techniques and it allows for the intentional selection of materials that are relevant to the research purpose.

3.2.1: Purposive Sampling

This technique was used in the selection of the crime dramas, *The Hate U Give* (2018) and *Queen N Slim* (2019) as the primary materials for study. These dramas were selected due to its relevant thematic engagement that aligns with the purpose of this study. The selection was also guided by presence of African American protagonists and contexts where AAVE is linguistically and symbolically significant.

3.2.2: Criterion-Based Sampling

This technique was used to select specific scenes for analysis based on a few criteria that ensures it aligns to the research objectives. Below are the criteria used for selection:

1. The presence of African American characters who used the AAVE.
2. Conversations that highlight linguistic profiling and code switching.
3. Scenes that involves the law enforcement agencies or justice system.

Only scenes that meet these criteria are selected and transcribed for study.

3.3: Method of Data Collection

The data for this study were collected through a systematic process of viewing, identifying and transcribing relevant scenes from the selected crime films, *The Hate U Give* and *Queen N Slim*. The collection process was designed to capture both the linguistic and contextual data.

The procedures for data collection were as follows:

- 1.Viewing and Note-Taking:** The two films were watched in their entirety to gain a comprehensive understanding and thematic structures. During the initial viewing, preliminary notes were taken to identify potential scenes that met the pre-established criteria outlined in 3.2.2.
- 2. Scene Identification and Isolation:** A second and more focused viewing was conducted based on the initial notes. Scenes were formally selected if they meet the following criteria:

- i. The presence of African American characters who used the AAVE.
- ii. Conversations that highlight linguistic profiling and code switching.
- iii. Scenes that involves the law enforcement agencies or justice system.

3. Data Extraction and Transcription: The selected scenes were isolated and the dialogue were transcribed manually. The transcription process aimed for verbatim accuracy to preserve the syntactic features of AAVE. The transcription conventions included:

Verbatim Utterances: All words and grammatical constructions were transcribed exactly as they were spoken without changing to Standard American English.

Contextual Notes: Contextual notes like non-verbal cues, significant pauses and character actions were noted in parentheses.

Speaker Identification: Each line of dialogue was attributed to the character speaking.

4. Data Organisation: The transcribed were compiled into an appendix for easy reference. For the analysis, specific utterances that contained the syntactic features were extracted from the full transcripts and served as the primary data for the syntactic analysis using Minimalist Program.

This method ensured that the data collected was rich, contextual and directly relevant to the answering of the research questions in 1.5.

3.4: Method of Data Analysis

As mentioned earlier, this study will adopt the qualitative research method. There will be no numerical data present within this study. This study will also make use of syntactic and sociolinguistics analysis to ensure its alignment with the research objectives.

The syntactic analysis in this study will examine selected transcribed dialogues from selected scenes for syntactic features unique to the African American Vernacular English

(AAVE). Syntactic features like copula deletion, multiple negation, habitual aspect *be* etc. will be examined.

The sociolinguistic analysis will examine the society's reaction to the AAVE as portrayed in the selected scenes of the drama. This analysis will examine how linguistic profiling, a sociolinguistic phenomenon, occurs and promotes discrimination against AAVE speech community as portrayed in the selected scenes.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION, DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

This study aims to analyse the syntactic features and linguistic profiling of African American Vernacular English as contained in selected scenes of the following American crime films: *The Hate U Give* (2018) and *Queen N Slim* (2019). Guided by the objectives in 1.3 and research questions in 1.5, this chapter will establish AAVE as a rule-governed dialect using Chomsky's Minimalist Program for the syntactic analysis of utterances from selected scenes. It will also see how these features are depicted, leading to linguistic profiling and subsequent discrimination of the African American characters in these dramas, using the sociolinguistic lens as a means of analysis.

4.1: Data Presentation

This study will use data from selected scenes of the following American crime films: *The Hate U Give* (2018) directed by George Tillman Jr. and *Queen N Slim* (2019) directed by Melina Matsoukas. These films provide a linguistic and social content relevant to this research, particularly in the African American identity representation and their interaction with the police. The selected scenes from these films features the use of African American Vernacular English and also showcases linguistic profiling and discriminatory practices against the African American characters.

4.1.1: Selection Criteria

As mentioned in 3.3.2, the scenes used are selected based on the following criteria:

1. The presence of African American characters who used the AAVE.
2. Conversations that highlight linguistic profiling and code switching.
3. Scenes that involves the law enforcement agencies or justice system.

4.1.2: Brief Overview of Selected Scenes from *The Hate U Give* and *Queen N Slim*

4.1.21: *The Hate U Give*

The Hate U Give is a drama adaptation of Angie Thomas novel with same title, directed by George Tillman. Jr and released in 2018, a year after the book was published. This film revolves around the protagonist, Starr Carter, an African American teenager who lived with her family in a predominantly Blacks community known as Garden Heights. It explores the pressure faced by the protagonist after watching her friend, Khalil Harris, gunned down by the police for no reason and it also uncovers the ongoing discriminatory practices against the African Americans even in the contemporary USA.

Two scenes were selected from this drama for analysis using the criteria as stated in 3.3.2 and 4.1.1. The first focus is the scene where Khalil and Starr were stopped by a white police officer for failing to signal a lane change. This is the scene Khalil was killed by the policeman and it features the dominant use of African American Vernacular English and a case study of discriminatory practices against the blacks. The second focus is the scene of the altercation between Maverick Carter, Starr's father, and King, the leader of the King Lords and when the police came around after the altercation. It features the sparse use of AAVE and more of the linguistic and racial profiling of Maverick and Seven Carter by the policemen of Garden Heights.

4.1.22: *Queen N Slim*

Queen N Slim is a crime film that is centred on a young black couple, Queen and Slim, who killed a police officer in the act of self-defence, during an argument in a traffic stop that escalated quickly. Released in 2019 and officially aired on January 24, 2020 in Nigeria, this film, directed by Melina Matsoukas, is relevant to this research as it has its focus on not just the representation of AAVE, but also linguistic profiling and subsequent racial profiling of the African American characters.

Two scenes were selected from this film for analysis. The first focus is the police stop scene from the drive to the point of the shooting. This scene features the use of AAVE by the protagonists and highlights the profiling of the protagonists by the officer. The second focus is the Black bar scene where the protagonists, Queen and Slim stops to dance and chill after running for days. This scene features the communal use of AAVE by the participants of the scene, highlighting a more relaxed atmosphere that showcases a sense of authenticity and solidarity-building by the AAVE speech community.

4.1.3: Transcribed Scenes

The transcription of the selected scenes that are relevant to this research objectives using the selection criteria as stated in 3.3.2 and 4.1.1 can be found in Appendix 1. However, the relevance of these scenes to this research can be found below:

Relevance of Transcript 1

This scene is relevant to this research as it contains the presence of African American characters and the use of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) as identified by its significant syntactic features markers. This is the scene where Khalil is killed and it sets the tune for the analysis of the linguistic, racial profiling and the overall sociolinguistics analysis of the data used for this research.

Points to note: The Police Officer is a White man. Khalil and Starr are Black teenagers.

Relevance of Transcript 2

This scene is relevant to this research as it contains the presence of African American characters and the use of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) as identified by its significant syntactic features markers. This is scene where Maverick has an open altercation with King and the subsequent police “intervention.”

Points to note: Police Officer 1 is a Black man. Police Officer 2 is a White man. The other participants in this scene are Black people.

Relevance of Transcript 3

This scene is relevant to this research as it contains the presence of African American characters and the use of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) as identified by its significant syntactic features markers. It also highlights the profiling faced by the protagonists and the near-death experience of Queen and Slim.

Points to note: The Police Officer is a White man and in later scenes of the drama, is said to have killed an unarmed Black man two years ago in the same state. The police officer also practices a phenomenon called linguistic accommodation as he code-switches to the AAVE at intervals in his interaction with Queen and Slim.

Relevance of Transcript 4

This scene is rich in the use of AAVE and it provides a contrast to the earlier tension in the drama. Although, it does not show linguistic profiling and discriminatory practices against the AAVE speech community, it, however, highlights the communal spirit of the African Americans where they can speak and act without being policed or discriminated against.

4.2: Data Analysis

4.2.1: Syntactic Analysis of Selected AAVE Utterances

This research will use Noam Chomsky's Minimalist Program as expanded in 2.1.1 for the analysis of the syntactic structure of its selected utterances in a bid to establish AAVE as a rule-governed dialect. As earlier mentioned in 2.1.1, Minimalist program is a linguistic theory propounded by Noam Chomsky and it emphasizes on the ability to understand language using the least number of rules as possible. Using this theory and its core concepts for the analysis of these utterances will aid the countering of notions of AAVE being a "broken" or "corrupt" version of SAE.

4.2.11: Syntactic Features of AAVE

The African American Vernacular English (AAVE) has features that are quite different from the Standard American English (SAE). These features are the unique markers of the African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and they include:

1. Copula Absence: Unlike SAE, the AAVE features the omission of the copula verb "be" in sentences/utterances that would normally be required in SAE. For example:

SAE: She is going.

AAVE: She going.

2. Multiple Negation: Also called negative concord, multiple negation features the use of two or more negations such as *don't*, *no* and *nothing* and so on, in one sentence. For example:

SAE: He does not know.

AAVE: He don't know nothing.

3. Invariant "be": The verb "be" is often used in AAVE as habitual markers and doesn't change based on subject, person or tense. For instance:

SAE: We are always drinking.

AAVE: We be drinking.

4. “Ain’t” for Negation: In the place of “didn’t” or “doesn’t” in SAE, the AAVE makes use of “ain’t” to express negation. For example:

SAE: I didn’t do it.

AAVE: I ain’t do it.

5. Subject-Verb Agreement: The AAVE deviates sometimes from the standard subject-verb agreement rules, especially with the third-person singular. For example:

SAE: She sings well.

AAVE: She sing well.

6. Demonstrative “Them”: Unlike SAE that makes use of *this, that, those, these*, AAVE makes use of *them* as demonstrative. For example:

SAE: Give the chairs to the elders.

AAVE: Give them chairs to them oldies.

7. The Use of Contractions: The use of contractions is quite common in both SAE and AAVE. However, AAVE’s contractions, unlike SAE, are unique, demonstrating the linguistic creativity of AAVE speakers. Unlike SAE where we find contractions like *can’t, don’t, I’m*, and so on, we find unique contractions like *i’mma, gonna, wanna, y’all, kinda* in AAVE. For example:

SAE: I am going to challenge the man.

AAVE: I’mma challenge the man.

These syntactic features are the unique markers that are used to identify AAVE utterances in this research and the subsequent analysis of the utterances.

4.2.12: Analysis of Selected AAVE Utterances in Transcript 1, 2, 3 and 4

The following AAVE utterances from Transcript 1, 2, 3 and 4 were selected for in-depth syntactic analysis:

1. *Starr, we ain't done nothing* (Transcript 1, *The Hate U Give*, 25:35)
2. *You ain't got no right to do this to me* (Transcript 1, *The Hate U Give*, 26:14)
3. *I wanna know why you pulling me over.* (Transcript 1, *The Hate U Give*, 26:05)
4. *Starr, you okay? You all right?* (Transcript 1, *The Hate U Give*, 27:20)
5. *You comin' close to gettin' your own* (Transcript 2, *The Hate U Give*, 1:11:53)
6. *Nah, I ain't got no warrants* (Transcript 3, *Queen N Slim*, 5:56)
7. *Ain't nothing in there but shoeboxes* (Transcript 3, *Queen N Slim*, 8:59)
8. *You been drinking tonight?* (Transcript 3, *Queen N Slim*, 8:42)
9. *I ain't done nothing wrong.* (Transcript 3, *Queen N Slim*, 10:43)
10. *Ain't nobody out here thinking about us.* (Transcript 4, *Queen N Slim*, 59:27)
11. *I think we good* (Transcript 4, *Queen N Slim*, 1:02:33)

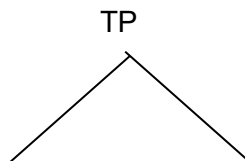
Analysis:

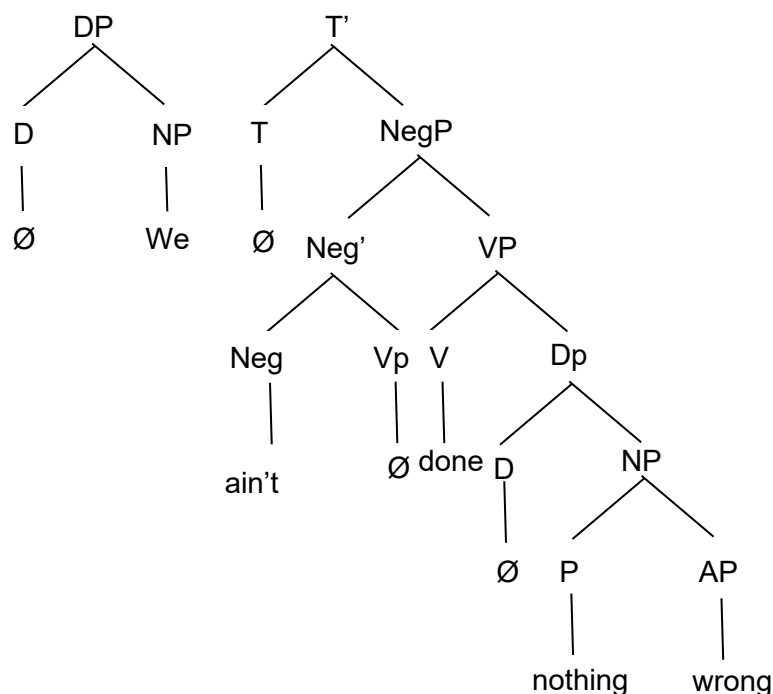
1. We ain't done nothing wrong:

SAE Equivalent: We didn't do anything wrong

where *didn't* was replaced with the negation, *ain't*, *do* replaced with its past participle, *done*, and *anything* replaced with its negative quantifier, *nothing*.

Using the Minimalist Program, the underlying structure of this utterance can be simplified as follows:





This utterance has its analysis on the foundation of merge operation. Tense Phrase (TP) which encompasses the entire utterance is achieved by merging Determiner Phrase (DP) and T-bar (T'). The T' is achieved by merging the Tense Head(T) and Negation Phrase (NegP) and the Negation Phrase (VP) is achieved by merging the Negative Head(Neg) and Verb Phrase (DP). It also uses feature checking to analyse Tense head(T) features. T has [+neg, +past] features which is matched to *ain't*. The use of *ain't* and *done* simplifies tense and aspect without the use of *have*, thereby, keying into the economic principle. Using Conceptual-Intentional (CI) System, the double-negation in the utterance is interpreted emphatically.

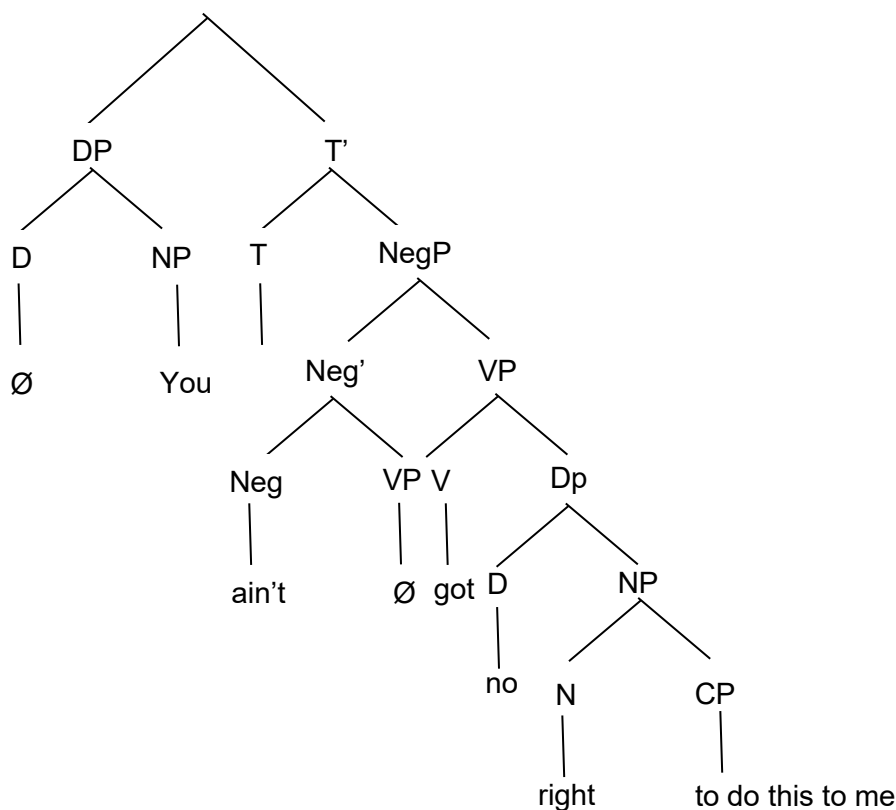
2. You ain't got no right to do this to me:

SAE Equivalent: You don't have any right to do this to me

Where the negation, *ain't*, is introduced and *have* is replaced with *got*.

The underlying structure of this utterance can be simplified as follows:

TP



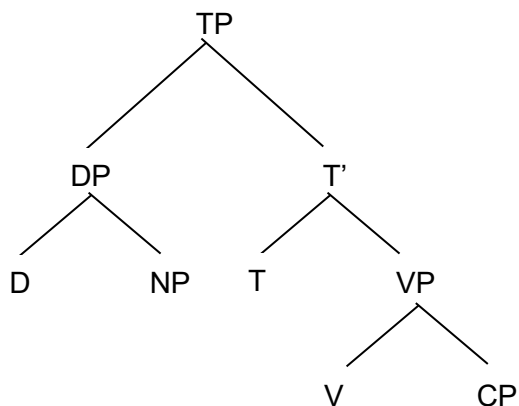
The utterance uses the merge operation as well. *Ain't* merges with *got* as Negative Tense + verb. *Ain't* checks the negative tense feature and *no* checks the negative quantifier. The entire utterance makes use of fewer auxiliary checking the economy principle of minimalism.

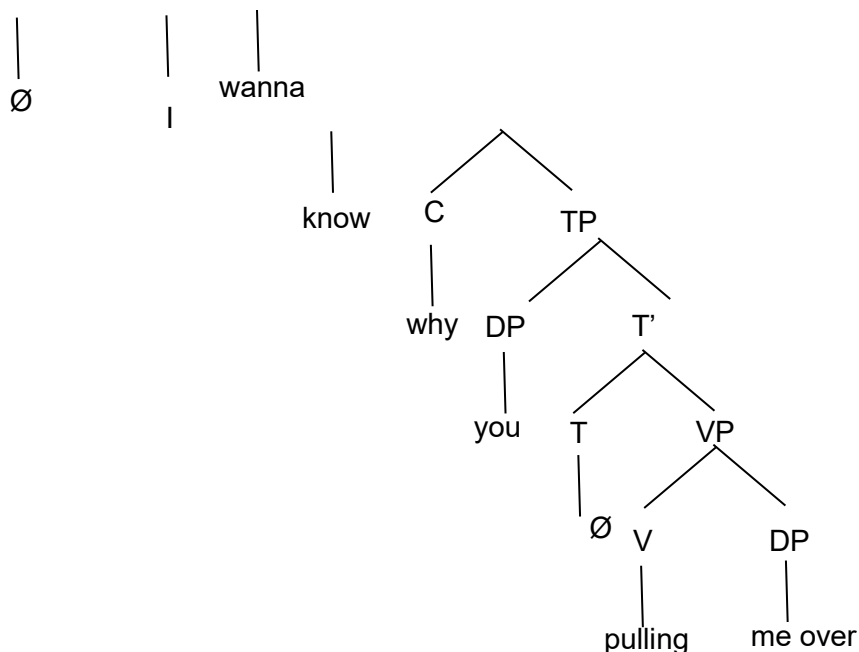
3. I wanna know why you pulling me over.

SAE Equivalent: I want to know why you are pulling me over.

Where *are* is omitted in the formation of the questions.

The underlying structure of this utterance can be simplified as follows:





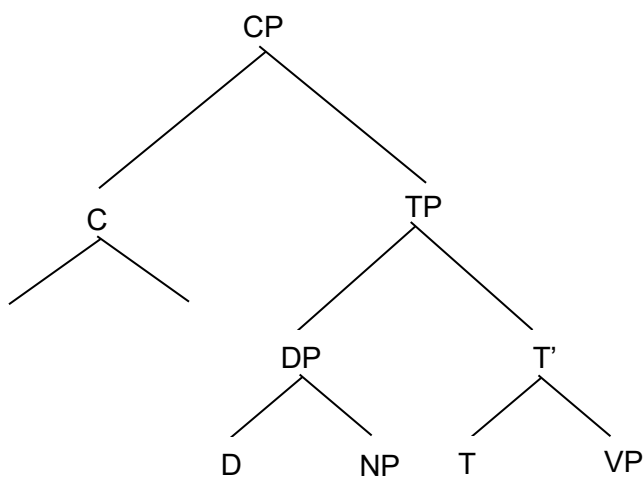
This utterance analysis is also based on the foundation of merge operation. The copula is deleted which is another trait found in the AAVE. The Determiner Phrase (DP) is merged with the T-Bar (T') – and T' when expanded houses the merging of the common AAVE contraction, *wanna* and the Verb Phrase (VP). The utterance also omits *are* as the progressive aspect feature can be checked with just using *pulling*, thereby marking the Economy Principle.

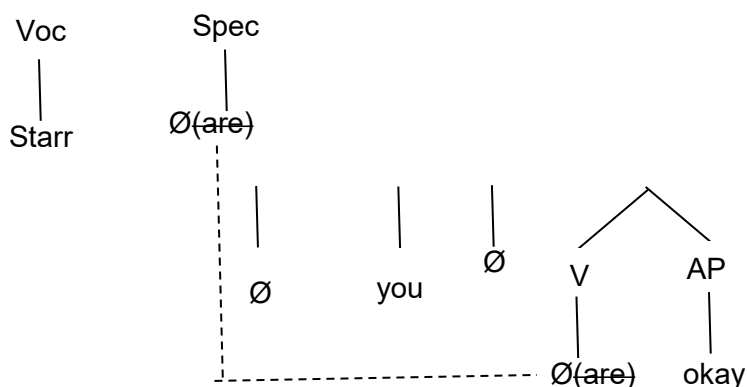
4. Starr, you okay?

SAE Equivalent: Starr, are you okay?

Where *are* is omitted in the formation of the questions.

The underlying structure of this utterance can be simplified as follows:





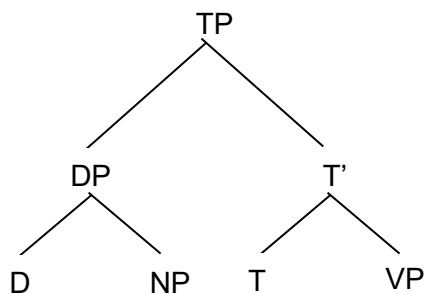
This utterance analysis is also based on the foundation of merge operation. The copula is deleted and the Determiner Phrase (DP) is merged with the Adjective Phrase (AP). It also uses the Conceptual-Intentional (CI) Interface System where the meaning is not lost upon the deletion of the copula and from the Economy Principle perspective, the deletion is due to its predictable context.

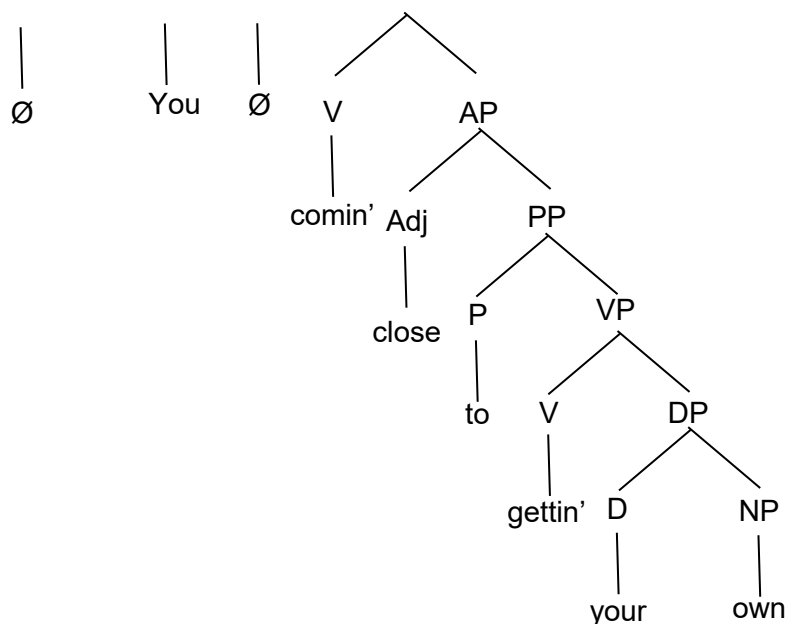
5. You comin' close to gettin' your own.

SAE Equivalent: You are coming close to getting your own.

Where *are* is omitted and there is evident cutting of the *g* in *-ing* which will be more evident in the phonological analysis of the utterance.

The underlying structure of this utterance can be simplified as follows:





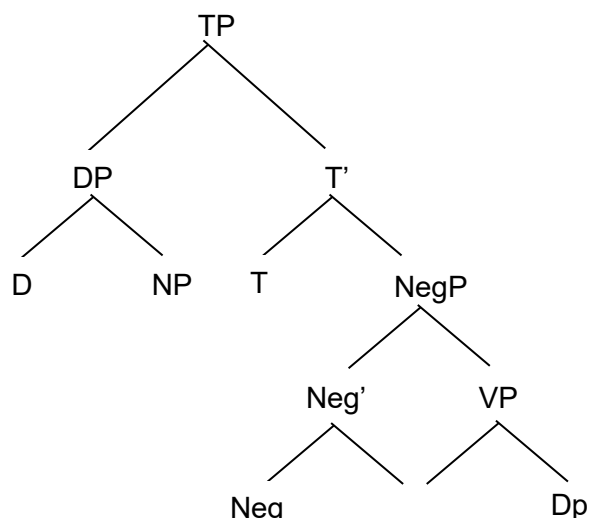
This utterance analysis also uses merge operation. To get the Tense Phrase (TP), the Determiner Phrase (DP) is merged with the T-bar(T') which comprised Verb Phrase (VP) and the Tense Head. The copula *are* is omitted and the –ing is reduced, though more evident phonologically, still reflected in the sentence structure. The –ing reduction is explained using the Sensory-Motor (SM) system which is associated with sounds.

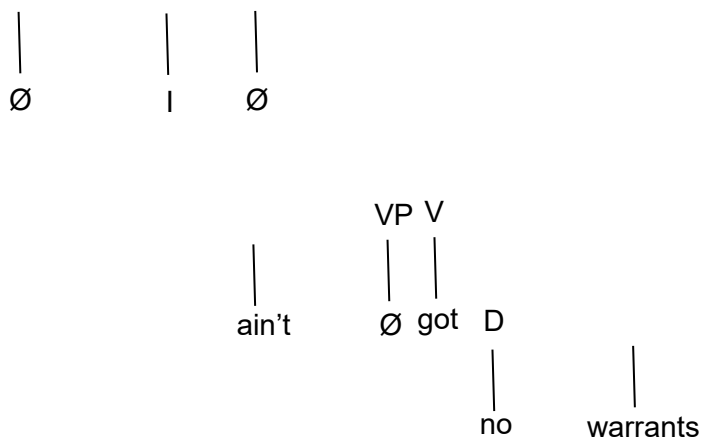
6. Nah, I ain't got no warrants

SAE Equivalent: No, I don't have any warrants

Where *don't* is replaced with the *ain't* negation, *have* replaced with *got* and *any* replaced with *no*.

The underlying structure of this utterance can be simplified as follows:





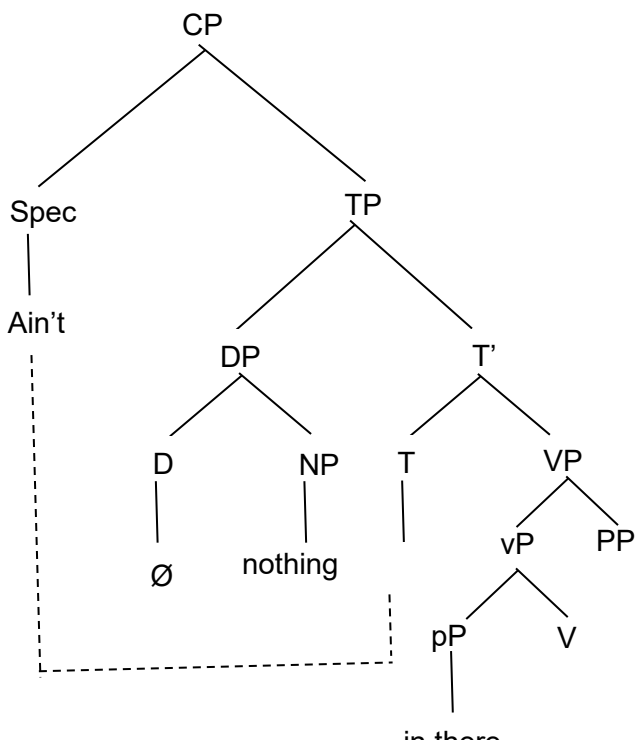
This utterance analysis is also based on the foundation of merge operation. The Tense Phrase (TP) is formed by merging the Determiner Phrase (DP) and the T-bar(T'). *Ain't* and *no* marks negation, satisfying the negative-feature check. The usage of *got* instead of *have* and perfect marker, reducing the use of auxiliary verb, marking the economy principle concept in minimalism.

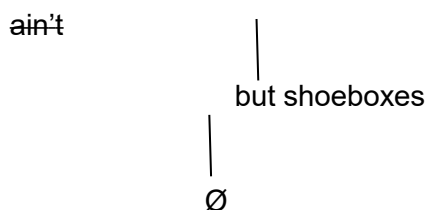
7. Ain't nothing in there but shoeboxes

SAE Equivalent: There is nothing there except shoeboxes

Where *ain't* is used in the replacement of *there*.

The underlying structure of this utterance can be simplified as follows:





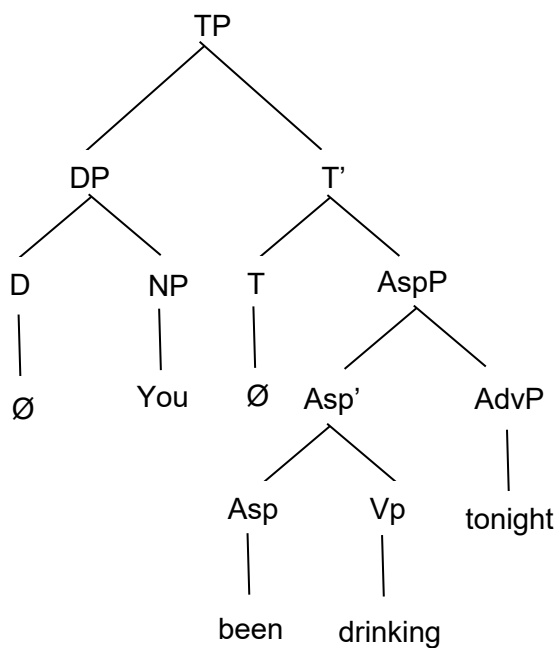
This utterance, like others, using the primary merge operation in the formation of the Tense Phrase (TP) where the Tense Head(T) is joined with the Determiner Phrase (DP). *Ain't* replaces *there* and functions as the existential and negative marker. It also moved from the Tense head position to the Specifier (Spec) position, thereby fulfilling the movement operation. This utterance relies heavily on the Conceptual-Intentional (CI) Interface System for interpretation.

8. You been drinking tonight?

SAE Equivalent: Have you been drinking tonight?

Where there is an evident omission of *have* in the AAVE utterance.

The underlying structure of this utterance can be simplified as follows:



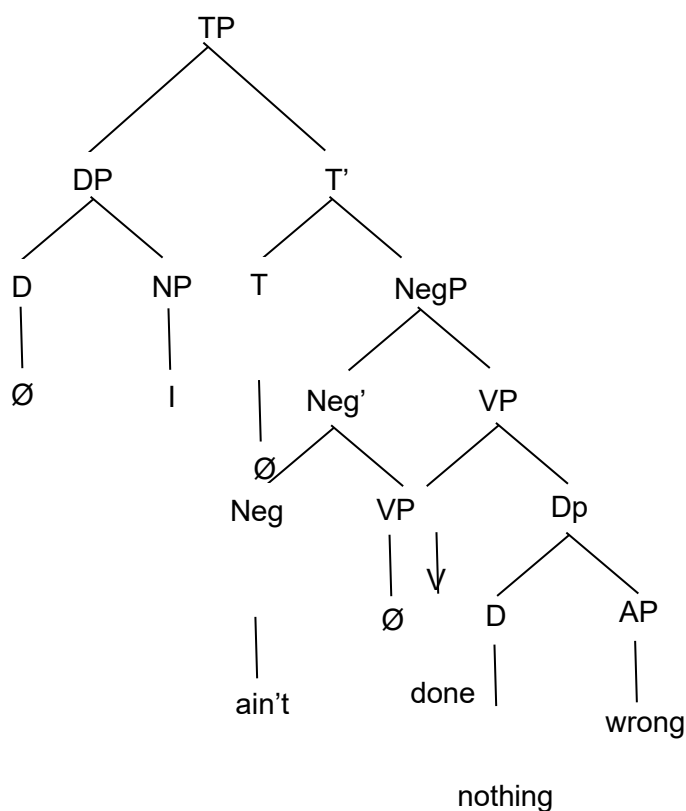
This utterance merges the Determiner Phrase (DP) and T-bar(T') to form the Tense Phrase (TP). The auxiliary *have* is omitted and it uses the Conceptual-Intentional (CI) Interface System where the meaning is not lost upon the deletion of the auxiliary and from the Economy Principle perspective, the deletion is due to its predictable context. It also cancels out the normal question format, making the utterance a tone-induced question.

9. I ain't done nothing wrong

SAE Equivalent: I didn't do anything wrong

Where *ain't* serves as the replacement of *didn't*, *do* replaced with its past participle, *done*, the negation, *nothing*, used instead of *anything*.

The underlying structure of this utterance can be simplified as follows:



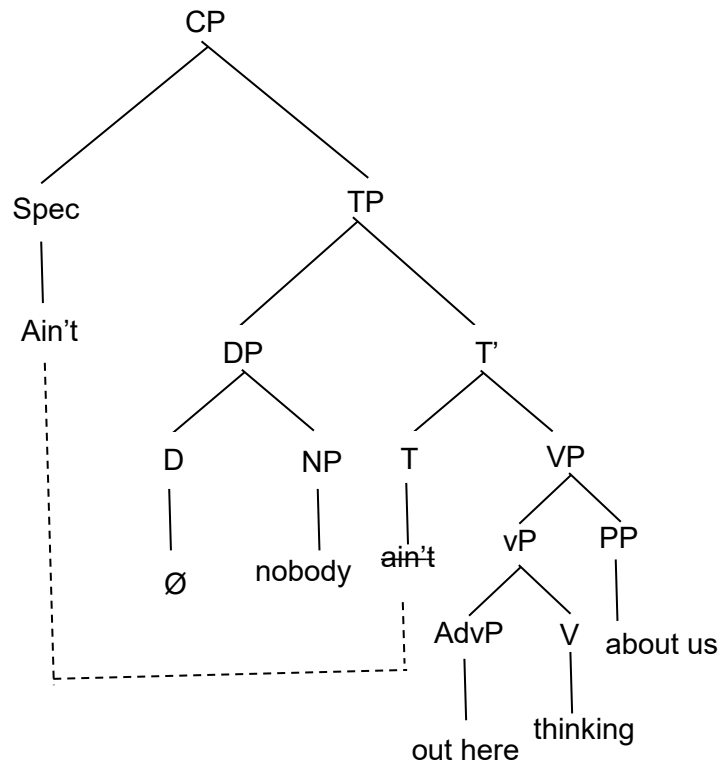
This utterance has the same analysis as the first analysed in this section.

10. Ain't nobody out here thinking about us

SAE Equivalent: Nobody is thinking about us.

Where the AAVE utterance utters the surface structure to make use of the *ain't* negation, and the multiple negation.

The underlying structure can be simplified as follows:



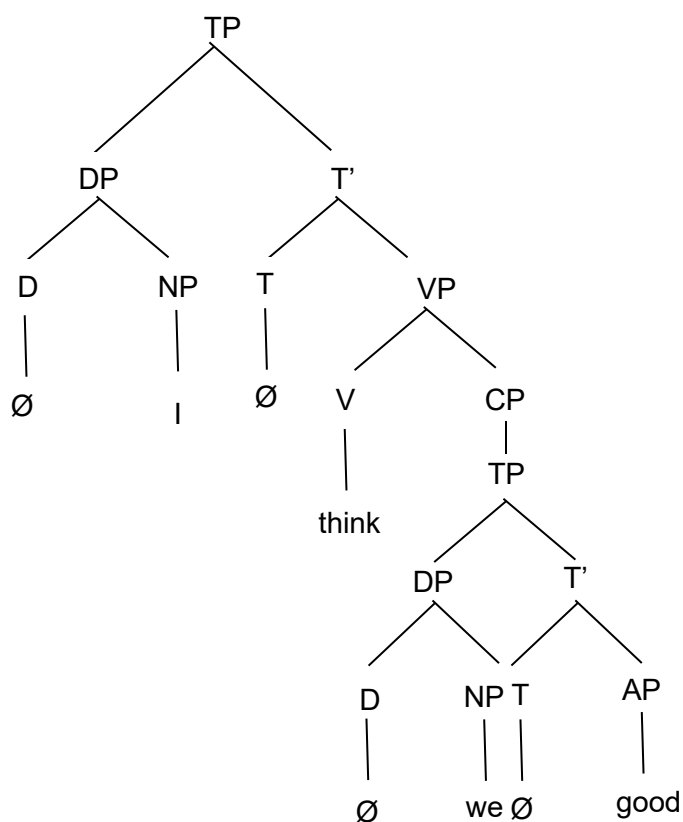
This utterance, like others, using the primary merge operation in the formation of the Tense Phrase (TP) where the T-bar (T') is joined with the Determiner Phrase (DP) and the Verb Phrase (VP). The negation *ain't* precedes the subject *nobody* and there is an evident copula absence. This utterance uses the Conceptual-Intentional (CI) Interface System for interpretation. This utterance also uses the movement operation in the derivation of the utterance.

11. I think we good.

SAE Equivalent: I think we are good.

Where there is an evident omission of *are* in the AAVE utterance.

The underlying structure can be simplified as follows:



This utterance also uses merge operation and the copula is also omitted due to contextual interpretation, from the economy principle perspective.

4.2.2: A Sociolinguistics Analysis of Linguistic Profiling in Transcribed Scenes

Linguistic profiling, as mentioned in 1.2, is the racial identification of a person based on their speech. This linguistic concept was propounded by John Baugh and it is evident in the scenes selected from the crime films used in this research. It shows how police officers interact with African American characters, often escalating situations unnecessarily as a result of biases which is usually triggered by their speech and skin colour.

Guided by the objectives of this research in 1.3 and the sociolinguistics theoretical framework in 2.1.2, this section will analyse the transcribed scenes for linguistic profiling and discriminatory practices against African American characters.

1. Analysis of Transcript 1

Sociolinguistics Features:

This scene features the use of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) which is a dialectal variation of Standard American English (SAE). Khalil uses AAVE in his interaction with Starr and the police officer: “We ain’t done nothing”. Starr also uses AAVE in this scene but she occasionally code-switches to SAE under pressure: “Khalil, put your hands on the dash! I’m not playing.”

Linguistic Profiling and Discrimination:

The Police Officer exhibits linguistic profiling as he escalates a not-so-seemingly serious situation basing Khalil’s use of AAVE and informal register as a form of criminality and defiance. The officer’s question: “You looking for a score tonight?” highlights criminal assumptions based on speech patterns which is rooted in language and societal ideologies.

Sociolinguistics Interpretation:

This scene shows how AAVE is seen as a marker for criminality and deviance by the law enforcement agency. Khalil's attempt to assert his rights using the AAVE was interpreted as aggression and it reinforces the stereotype of the use of AAVE equating to lawlessness.

2. Analysis of Transcript 2

Sociolinguistic Features

This scene captures the use of AAVE in the altercation between Maverick and King and the subsequent code-switching when the police officers arrive. During the heated argument, Maverick and King conversed in AAVE while when the police arrive, Maverick switches to a formal tone to avoid the linguistic profiling by the police and subsequent discrimination which occurs regardless.

Linguistic Profiling and Discrimination

Despite Maverick showing no signs of wrongdoing or defiance, the police proceed to search him, saying he came to “score” which indicates a criminal activity, demanding for his ID and attempting to detain Seven, his son, for trying to speak against the arrest. To avoid further escalation, Lisa switches SAE to asserts her resistance against the arrest of her husband and the attempted detention of Seven.

Sociolinguistic Interpretation

This scene postulates how code-switching to SAE does not prevent African Americans from being profiled as the society has attached the expectation of deviance to just the skin colour and a more expectation upon the usage of the AAVE.

3. Analysis of Transcript 3

Sociolinguistic Features

This scene features the use of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) which is a dialectal variation of Standard American English (SAE) and the use of a register. Slim's use of AAVE is evident as his utterances are laced with the features of AAVE: *"I ain't got no warrants"*. The Officer makes use of the "police language" in his report of the situation in a detached and coded way using the radio: *"Two occupants. Driver's a black male, passenger black female in a white Honda Accord. License, 'Trust God'. Operator failed to execute a turn signal, is driving erratically. Possible DUI. Over."*

Linguistic Profiling and Discrimination

The Police Officer escalating the situation, drawing gun on Slim who has not been hesitant to his orders, despite it being out of the context of the failure to execute a turn signal, highlights both linguistic and racial profiling. It is noted that Slim's speech in the drama was primarily AAVE and he barely code-switched to SAE unlike Queen and this fact could be the reason the Officer is quick to assume he was driving under influence for a minor swerve. The Officer pulling a gun on Slim for no reason highlights racial profiling that sees the black skin as an automatic threat.

Queen's use of SAE and legal authority, "I am an attorney...I demand to know why this man is under arrest" is ignored and this indicates how the average Black person is discriminated against despite linguistic choices.

Sociolinguistics Interpretation:

This scene aligns with John Baugh's theory as the Officer reacts not to the crime but rather the speech and race of the characters. Despite Queen's use of SAE and various attempts to assert her legal authority, she is seen as a suspect and she is shot at first by the officer.

4. Analysis of Transcript 4

Sociolinguistic Features

This scene features the communal use of AAVE as it occurs in a Black-owned bar. The characters are more comfortable using their dialect and the bartender uses solidarity language: “Don’t worry. You’re safe here.”

Linguistics Profiling and Discrimination

This scene rejects linguistic profiling. AAVE is not marked as deviant or criminalized rather normalized and accepted. There is a communal connection with binders as same race and language which builds solidarity and cultural identity.

Sociolinguistics Interpretation

This scene reflects the in-group linguistic security of African Americans. It reflects the contextual nature of linguistic profiling, highlighting how outside institutional powers and social stereotypes, AAVE affirms identity and safety.

4.3: Discussion of Findings

The research analysis of the syntactic features and linguistic profiling in *The Hate U Give* (2018) and *Queen N Slim* (2019) reveals a significant number of representations of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) in crime drama. Guided by the research objectives and the theoretical frameworks, some significant findings were made based on the data gathered.

Guided by Noam Chomsky’s Minimalist Program, the syntactic analysis of the selected AAVE utterances establishes AAVE as a rule governed dialect with distinct grammatical structures. The Minimalist Program explains how utterances like “Starr, you okay?” are not incorrect but just adhering to AAVE’s grammatical rules, through the merge operation and the Economy Principle. The Program also explains how double negation fulfils grammatical requirements using the feature checking system and how AAVE uses *ain’t* to mark tense and

aspect. All these features and the application of the Minimalist Program help to fully establish AAVE as a rule-governed dialect, challenging the “broken English” misconception.

The sociolinguistics analysis reveals how the syntactic features of AAVE contributes to the linguistic profiling and discrimination faced by African Americans as portrayed in *The Hate U Give* and *Queen N Slim*. In Transcripts 1 and 3, characters (Khalil and Slim) using AAVE are immediately perceived as deviant and criminals without any solid evidence for such suspicion. Khalil and Slim’s AAVE utterances trigger criminal behaviour assumptions which led to Khalil being shot down for picking up a hairbrush and Slim almost getting shot. It also reveals how African Americans code switch to SAE to avoid being labelled as deviant or as a criminal. In Transcript 2, Maverick code-switches in his interaction with the police and he is still profiled regardless. These findings illustrate how media representations reinforce stereotypes linking AAVE to criminality and deviance.

In a counter-narrative in Transcript 4, it shows how AAVE should be portrayed, unmarked and celebrated. The bartender’s reassuring words (“*You are safe here*”) even in the middle of their flight, shows how AAVE is a tool for cultural belonging and not a marker for criminality and defiance. This contrasts the policing scenes and its rare portrayal in crime drama where AAVE is a tension marker, makes the scene a change from the norm. Crime dramas often amplify the association between AAVE and criminality, usually neglecting its richness and versatility. This has consequences as the media plays a key role in the shaping of perceptions of a language and its identity.

Using the lenses of syntax and sociolinguistics, this research rightly challenges stereotypes and advocates for a more objective portrayal of AAVE in the media, underscoring the need for literacy to dismantle such existing stereotypes.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1: Summary

This study examined the syntactic features of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) as duly represented in the two selected contemporary American crime films, *The Hate U Give* (2018) and *Queen N Slim* (2019), exploring how these features contribute to the linguistic profiling and the reinforcement of harmful stereotypes against the African American speech community.

This research was guided by the theoretical frameworks of the Minimalist Program and Sociolinguistics.

Using Noam Chomsky's Minimalist Program, the syntactic features of selected AAVE utterances were analysed, establishing AAVE as a rule governed dialect while challenging the misconception of it being "broken English."

The sociolinguistic perspective, guided John Baugh's linguistic profiling theory, analysed how these syntactic features are used to create stereotypes and forward discrimination against the African American speech community. It was observed how the use of AAVE in a tensed situation with law enforcement agents are usually marked as signs of deviance and criminality. Even in cases where speakers code-switch to Standard American English (SAE), profiling still occur, pointing to a discrimination greater than just linguistic markers.

The study also identified moments where AAVE functioned positively as a marker of solidarity and identity, particularly in community settings. Such portrayals contrasted sharply with the criminalised representations in police interaction scenes, highlighting the potential for more balanced depictions in media.

5.2: Conclusion

The findings of this research firmly establish that African American Vernacular English is a rule-governed variety of English with distinct syntactic structures that can be clearly explained through the Minimalist Program. However, its portrayal in crime dramas often reinforces societal biases that somehow links linguistic difference with moral or criminal deficiency. By repeatedly linking AAVE to confrontations with law enforcement, media narratives unknowingly push these stereotypes deeper into public consciousness, influencing how AAVE speakers are perceived and treated in real life.

Such portrayals have real time implications. In the real world, linguistic profiling can affect job opportunities, educational experiences, housing access, and even interactions with the justice system.

At the same time, the presence of scenes where AAVE is used as an unmarked, accepted mode of communication like the bar scene in *Queen & Slim (2019)*, illustrates that alternative representations are possible. These portrayals allow AAVE to be seen as an authentic expression of identity, community, and creativity rather than a sign of deviance.

Ultimately, the primary contribution of this research lies in precisely demonstrating how the syntactic structure of AAVE is systematically used within crime-based narratives to rationalise linguistic profiling. It reveals that these films do not merely represent AAVE, they often weaponize its distinct features such as the copula deletion, multiple negation etc. as audible cues for criminality. By applying a dual-analytic framework, this research provides a model for understanding how syntax becomes a plot device, where a character's use of AAVE can trigger a chain of events leading to possible discrimination and violence. This establishes a clear link between linguistic structure and the social and narrative consequences in a genre where such portrayals have profound real-world implications.

Therefore, this study concludes that while crime films might have amplified negative associations with AAVE, they also hold the potential to challenge these stereotypes by offering balanced, varied, and culturally respectful depictions. The responsibility lies with media producers, educators, and policy makers to shift the narrative so that linguistic diversity is celebrated rather than criminalised.

5.3: Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. **For Media Producers and Scriptwriters:** Crime films and other mainstream productions should aim for more accurate and diverse representations of AAVE. This includes portraying it in neutral or positive contexts, rather than always keying into crime-related narratives.
2. **For Linguists and Educators:** Awareness campaigns and educational programs should be held to emphasise that AAVE is a legitimate, rule-governed variety of English, thereby, highlighting its grammatical structure, which could help reduce linguistic prejudice.
3. **For Law Enforcement Agencies:** Training modules on linguistic diversity should be integrated into police education to reduce the role of language bias in stop-and-search situations and other interactions.
4. **For Future Researchers:** Further studies should examine other media genres beyond crime dramas, expanding to comedies, documentaries, and music-related films to gain a more comprehensive understanding of AAVE's portrayal.
5. **For Policy Makers:** Anti-discrimination laws should explicitly recognise and address linguistic profiling as a form of bias, ensuring that it is treated with the same seriousness as racial profiling.

Works Cited

- Baird, Patricia A., program manager. "Linguistic Profiling Investigative Report." *Fair Housing Center of Eastern Michigan*. 2017.
- Baugh, John. *Beyond Ebonics: Linguistic Pride and Racial Prejudice*. Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Baugh, John, et al. "Linguistic Profiling and Discrimination." *Housing Policy Debate*, vol. 11, no. 3, 2000, pp. 373–404.
- Cobb, Jelani. "The Powerful Perspective of 'Queen & Slim'." *The New Yorker*, 27 Nov, 2019.

- Chomsky, Noam. *The Minimalist Program*. MIT Press, 1995.
- .*Knowledge of Language: Its Nature, Origin, and Use*. Praeger, 1986.
- Creswell, John W. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. 3rd ed., Sage, 2009.
- Crystal, David. *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language*. 2nd ed., Cambridge UP, 1997.
- Cutler, Cecelia. *White Hip Hoppers, Language and Identity in Post-Modern America*. Routledge, 2014.
- Dowie-Chin, et. al. “Whitewashing Through Film: How Educators use Critical Race Media Literacy to Analyse Hollywood’s Adaptation of The Hate U Give.” *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, vol. 22, no. 2, 2020, pp 129-143.
- Green, Lisa J. *African American English: A Linguistic Introduction*. Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Labov, William. *Language in the Inner City: Studies in the Black English Vernacular*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972.
- Lippi-Green, Rosina. *English with an Accent: Language, Ideology and Discrimination in the United States*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2012.
- MacNeal et al. ““Sounding Black’: The Legal Implications of Linguistic Profiling.” *Northeastern University College of Science*.
- Ngambwe, Ronic. “Get Out, Queen & Slim: A Content Analysis of How Race is Portrayed in Two Mainstream Movies.” *Student Research Submission*, 2020.
- Purnell et. al. “Perceptual and Phonetic Experiments on America English Dialect Identification.” *18 Journal of Language and Social Psychology*. 1999, Pp 10-30.
- Queen & Slim*. Directed by Melina Matsoukas, performances by Daniel Kaluuya, Jodie

- Turner-Smith, Bokeem Woodbine and Chloe Sevigny, Universal Pictures, 2019.
- Svenonius, Peter. "Syntactic Features." *Aronoff M. Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Linguistics*. Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Teilanyo, Diri. I, and Felix. N. Ogoanah. "Black English and Black Identity in the United States of America." *Nigerian Journal of the Humanities*, no. 13, pp. 1-20. Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, 2006.
- The Hate U Give*. Directed by George Tillman Jr., performances by Amandla Stenberg, Regina Hall, Russell Hornsby, and KJ Apa, 20th Century Fox, 2018.
- Wardhaugh, Ronald, and Janet Fuller. *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. 8th ed., Wiley-Blackwell, 2015.

APPENDIX

Transcribed Scenes

Transcript 1: The Traffic Stop Scene (Time Frame: 25:04 – 29:04)

(Police Siren)

Khalil: Damn. What I do?

Starr: I don't know.

Police walkie-talkie: Eight-Charlie, Fourteen and Third.

(both cars stop. Police officer approaches Khalil's car)

Starr: Damn (puts hands on the dashboard)

Starr: Khalil, put your hands on the dash where he can see them.

(Khalil fails to respond, looks at the side mirror)

Starr: Khalil, put your hands on the dash! I'm not playing.

Khalil: Starr, we ain't done nothing. What'd we drive? Like 50 feet?

Starr: Please. Please, just do it.

Khalil: Okay.

(Police officer gets to the car door, points a torchlight to their faces)

Police Officer: *(knocks)* Sir, can you roll your window down for me?

Khalil: Here we go. *(rolls down window)*

Police Officer: I need to see your driver's license and registration.

Khalil: For what? What'd I do?

Police Officer: Sir, license and registration.

Starr: Khalil, keep your hands on the dash.

Khalil: Starr, how am I supposed to get him my license and registration if I have to stay still? *(to the police officer)* I wanna know why you pulling me over.

Police Officer: You failed to signal a lane change.

Khalil: *(protests)* Come on.

Police Officer: Turn the music off.

Khalil: Why? I can hear you.

Starr: Please, Khalil.

Police Officer: Turn it off.

Khalil: This is my car. So how can you tell me...

Police Officer: Step out of the car.

Khalil: You ain't got no right to do this to me.

Police Officer: Listen, I'm giving you a lawful order.

Starr: Khalil, listen to him.

Khalil: Is it for failing to signal my lane change or for failing to turn down my music? Which one?

Police Officer: Sir, out of the car, now! Either you get out of the car yourself, or I'm gonna do it for you. Now!

(Khalil switches off the music and gets out of the car. Starr attempts to record with her phone)

Police Officer: Drop the phone! *(Starr drops the phone)*

Khalil: Yo, why don't you just give me my ticket?

Police Officer: Hands on the car. Anything on you?

Khalil: *(put hands on the car)* No, there's nothing on me.

Police Officer: Any drugs?

Khalil: Nah, man.

Police Officer: Can you remove your driver's license, please? *(Khalil puts hand into pocket)*
Where'd you find her?

Khalil: I know her. That's my friend.

(Officer opens Khalil's wallet to check for license)

Police Officer: You looking for a score tonight?

Khalil: What? A score? Yo, come on, man.

Police Officer: *(moves to his car)* Keep your hands on the car. Do not move.

Police Officer: *(distant)* Can I get a license run on...

Starr: Shit *(searches frantically for her phone)* where's my phone? Shit!

Khalil: *(through the opened window)* Starr, you okay? You all right?

Starr: *(scared)* Go back where he told you.

Khalil: He gonna take his time doing whatever he gotta do.

Starr: *(visibly scared)* I'm not playing. Go back.

Khalil: Yo, but come on! Why you messing up my car?

Starr: Just listen to him, Khalil!

Khalil: Okay! All right, chill. *(picks up a hairbrush and attempts to brush his hair)*

(gunshots... Khalil goes down)

(Starr screams and rushes out of the vehicle)

Police Officer: *(to Starr)* Stop right there! Stop! Do not move.

Starr: No. No. *(cries as the officer put cuffs on her hands)* No, Khalil.

Police Officer: Be quiet, ma'am. *(pushes her to the floor)* You sit down.

Starr: *(continues to cry)* No.

Police Officer: *(to walkie talkie)* Officer needs help. Shots fired. One suspect down. The other in custody. Requesting an ambulance.

Starr: *(to the officer)* What did you do? What did you do?

(Khalil keeps coughing out blood, struggling for his life)

Police Officer: Be quiet, ma'am. *(keeps pointing the gun at Khalil's struggling body)*

Starr: Help him!

Police Officer: I want you to stay where you are! Do not move, okay?

Starr: *(crying)* He's bleeding! Help him! Come on! He's bleeding!

Police Officer: *(searches)* Where is it? Where's the weapon? Okay? The gun! Where is it?

Starr: *(crying)* What gun?

Policer Officer: Where... *(realizes it was a hairbrush)* Shit!

Starr: Khalil!

Police Officer: Shit! Shit!

Starr: Khalil, look at me! Come on, look at me, Khalil.

(Police Officer grunts)

Starr: Khalil, come on, look at me!

(Khalil's breathing becomes more erratic)

Starr: I'm right here. You're okay, all right? There's a ambulance coming. Can you hear it? It's coming. It's gonna take care of you. You're gonna be fine, all right? *(Khalil's breathing becomes more erratic as he struggles for his life)* You're gonna be okay. Don't be scared. *(cries harder)* Come on, look at me! *(Khalil's breathing stops)* Look at me, Khalil. Come on!

Scene ends.

Transcript 2: Maverick and King's Altercation after Starr's Jury Testament and the Subsequent Police Intervention Scene (*The Hate U Give*) (Time Frame: 1:11:22 – 1:14:09)

(Maverick sees King and his gang outside the restaurant he and his family are having dinner)

Maverick: Lisa. Stay here. *(stands up and go out)*

(Lisa and the other children except Starr are confused... realization hits them when they look out through the window)

King: Hey, Starr did some real stupid shit today.

Maverick: *(approaches him)* Keep my kids out your mouth, King.

King: *(approaches him)* Your hard head makes for a soft ass whoopin'.

(The attention of the people in the restaurant are getting drawn to the scene)

Maverick: *(faces him)* You comin' close to getting' your own.

King: *(touches him)* Well, why don't you try it?

(Maverick pushes King and it becomes a schuffle)

Member of the King Lords: *(pushes Maverick)* Hey, why don't you... *(police siren)*

King: *(to his gang member)* hey, come on. *(walks into his car and drives off)*

(Police vehicle stops at the scene)

Police Officer 1: You got a problem here?

Maverick: *(steps backward)* No, sir, Officer.

Police Officer 2: What was that?

Maverick: I'm just having dinner with my family.

Police Officer 1: *(approaches him)* Until you came out to score?

Police Officer 2: *(grabs Maverick)* All right, come on. Let's go. *(pushes him towards the window)* Lean against the wall.

Lisa: *(inside the restaurant)* It's okay, Sekani. *(to Starr)* Starr, you breathe. Just breathe, okay, baby?

Police Officer 2: *(searches him)* All right, he's clean.

Police Officer 1: Take out your ID.

Maverick: My wife has my wallet.

Police Officer 1: Where is she?

Maverick: *(to Lisa through the window)* Get my wallet!

(Lisa and the children comes out of the restaurant with it)

Starr: *(runs out)* Daddy?

Maverick: *(grunts)* It's okay!

(Police Officer 2 puts his hands to stop them from reaching him)

Lisa: All right, I got it right here, Officer.

Police Officer 2: *(to Officer 1)* Maverick Carter. Sound familiar? *(to Lisa)* Go back inside now.

Lisa: No, thank you, Officer. I will wait right here until you release my husband.

Police Officer 2: I said go back inside.

Seven: No, sir. My father didn't do anything wrong.

Police Officer 2: *(to Seven)* Show me your ID.

Lisa: He is a child! Do you wanna see his school ID or his learner's permit?

Police Officer 2: Ma'am, go back inside... *(Starr starts to record)*

Seven: He didn't do anything!

Police Officer 2: *(tries to arrest Seven)* All right, that's it.

Seven: *(struggles)* I know you saw that car drive away. I know you saw that car drive off
(Maverick attempts to move but gets pinned down by Officer 1) Why don't you talk to him, huh?

Lisa: *(stands in between)* No! No! *(to Sekani)* Sekani, go inside!

Police Officer 1: *(to Starr)* Put that down, now!

Starr: I have a right to record this.

Police Officer 1: *(realizes)* She's the witness.

Lady: Yeah, we see y'all. And all these cameras do, too! Go on and show everybody how y'all really treat us.

Police Officer 2: *(to Officer 1)* Let's go. *(Officer 1 releases Maverick)* Consider this a warning.

(Lisa helps Maverick stand)

Lisa: *(to Maverick)* You okay? You okay?

Maverick: Y'all get y'all stuff and let's go.

Lisa: Okay. *(to Starr)* You Okay? All right, Come on. Let's get Sekani.

(Sekani is crying)

Scene ends.

Transcript 3: The Police Traffic Stop Scene (*Queen N Slim*) (Time Frame: 5:35 – 12:37)

(Siren wails)

Police Speaker: Pull Over.

Queen: Damn

(car stops)

Queen: Do you have any warrants?

Slim: Really?

Queen: Do you?

Slim: Nah, I ain't got no warrants.

Queen: Do you have any weapons in the car? Any narcotics?

Slim: Um, I got a... I got a pocketknife in the glove compartment.

Queen: That's fine.

Slim: I know it is. *(watches the police officer leave his vehicle from the side mirror)*

Police Officer: (knocks, pointing a torchlight into the car) Can you turn the radio down?

(Slim turns it off) Put your hand down.

Queen: He only had it up because you're shining a light in his eyes.

Police Officer: I'm just trying to see inside the vehicle.

Queen: It's just us.

Police Officer: *(keeps shining the light)* License, registration.

Slim: *(stutters)* I'm...I'm grabbing my wallet.

Police Officer: *(chuckles)* I can see that.

Queen: Well, y'all like to shoot first and ask questions later, so...

Police Officer: *(to Queen)* Got something you wanna say to me?

Queen: No, I don't.

(Slim opens compartment to grab his wallet)

Police Officer: You know why I stopped you tonight?

Slim: No, sir.

Police Officer: Failed to execute a turn signal back there. *(Slim looks up)* You're swerving a little bit too

Slim: Oh, my bad. *(gives him his license and registration)*

Police Officer: Yeah, it is.

(Police radio chatter, Officer walks back to his vehicle)

Queen: *(distant)* I can't believe this shit.

Slim: *(distant)* Just chill. I ain't trying to die tonight

Radio: Copy that.

Police Officer: *(to the radio)* 1104, Dispatch

Radio: What've you got?

Police Officer: Two occupants. Driver's a black male, passenger black female in a white Honda Accord. License, "Trust God". Operator failed to execute a turn signal, is driving erratically. Possible DUI. Over.

Radio: Do you need backup?

Police Officer: Negative.

(Officer comes out of the vehicle and walks back to Slim's vehicle)

Police Officer: *(knocks on the window)* I'm gonna ask you to step out of the vehicle for me.

Slim: *(confused)* Can I ask why, Officer?

Police Officer: No, you may not. Step out of the car. *(opens the door)* Let's go man.

(Slim hesitates but leaves his vehicle)

Police Officer: Back bumper, right there. Hands on the hood. I'm gonna ask you one time, you got anything on you I need to know about?

Slim: *(places his hand on the roof)* No, sir.

Police Officer: Illegal substances?

Slim: No, sir.

Police Officer: What about in the vehicle?

Slim: No, sir. *(Officer continues to search him)*

Police Officer: You been drinking tonight?

Slim: *(chuckles)* No.

Police Officer: Why's that funny?

Slim: 'Cause I don't drink.

Police Officer: Could you do me favor, pop the trunk?

Slim: *(with his hands still on the roof)* Why?

Police Officer: 'Cause I asked you to.

Slim: *(removes his hands and walks to the back)* Ain't nothing in there but shoeboxes.

Police Officer: Let's see 'em.

(Slim opens the car trunk)

Police Officer: *(motion with his hands where Slim should stay)* Right there.

(Officer starts to search, Slim looks cold, breathing hot air into his hands, Queen hoots the horn)

Police Officer: May I help you?

Queen: Do you have a warrant?

Police Officer: *(sighs)* Ma'am, he's already agreed to the search. I don't need a warrant. *(to Slim)*

What's in the boxes?

Slim: Shoes.

Police Officer: You mind if I take a look?

Slim: That's fine.

(Officer continues to search, Slim is visibly cold as he keeps blowing hot air from his mouth to his hands)

Slim: Could you please hurry up?

Police Officer: *(stops searching)* What did you say?

Slim: It's just cold.

Police Officer: *(closes trunk, pulls out a gun)* Put your hands on your head and get on the ground now.

Slim: *(shocked, raises up his hands)* Are you serious?

Police Officer: Get on the fucking ground!

(Queen comes out of the vehicle)

Police Officer: *(repeats)* Get on the fucking ground!

Queen: Why is he under arrest?

Police Officer: *(points the gun)* get back in the car or you're going to jail too!

Queen: I am an attorney and I demand to know why this man is under arrest.

(Officer switches the gun position between Queen and Slim)

Slim: *(scared, on the ground with his hands on his head)* Sir, sir, sir, we don't have to do this, sir.

Queen: Why is he under arrest? What is your name?

Police Officer: Get back in the car!

Slim: *(stammers)* n..o, no....

Queen: What is your badge number?

Police Officer: I'm not gonna tell you again! Get back in the fucking car!

Slim: *(to Queen)* Get back in the car. We got this.

Queen: Why is he under arrest?

Slim: Sir, we don't have... sir, sir...

Queen: What is your badge number?

Slim: ...sir, sir. It was a turn signal. I ain't done nothing wrong.

Queen: I'm reaching for my cell phone.

Police Officer: Keep your hands where I can see 'em!

Queen: I have the right to record this arrest.

Queen: I'm reaching for my cell phone!

(Officer shoots Queen in the leg, Slim leaves his position in a self-defense attempt and gets into a struggle with the Officer)

Police Officer: Put your fucking hands--- stop resisting! *(Queen gasps for air, Officer continues to struggle with Slim)* Stop! Stay down on the fucking ground!

Police Officer: *(continues to struggle)* Stop!

Slim: Please stop! *(groans)*

Police Officer: Stop fucking resisting! Goddamn--- stop

(Slim pushes him off his body, reaches for his (the Officer) gun and shoots him. Officer goes still.

Queen stands up)

Queen: Are you okay?

Slim: Yeah

Slim: *(sighs and stands up)* You good? Huh? You okay?

Queen: *(shallow breathing)* Let's go.

Slim: We can't just leave him here.

Queen: Yes, we can. Now, let's go. *(grabs the gun from his hands and enters the vehicle)* Come on!

Scene ends.

Transcript 4: The Scene at the Black Bar in New Orleans (*Queen N Slim*) (Time Frame: 57:03 – 1:04:58)

(band playing in distance, Slim stops the car)

Queen: What are you doing? Are you crazy?

Slim: I heard a band playing. I wanna see where it was coming from.

Queen: We need to keep going.

Slim: I mean, I know. But, I'm exhausted. Plus, you knocked out in the back while I'm trying to stay awake.

Queen: Fine. I'll drive.

Slim: When was the last time you heard some live music?

Queen: I don't know.

Slim: We only a few hours from Georgia. So we got time.

(Queen sighs)

Slim: Would you have gone on a second date with me?

Queen: No.

Slim: Damn.

Queen: It's not personal. I just like being alone.

Slim: I get it.

(band continues playing in distant)

Queen: What would the second date had been?

Slim: I'm not telling you.

Queen: Come on. Don't do me like that.

Slim: Nah. You should have said yes.

Queen: Okay, fine. I'll go.

Slim: It's too late now.

Queen: I have the right to change my mind.

(Slim starts the engine of the car)

Queen: Okay, I'm officially saying yes to the second date. Now, what are we doing?

(Slim switches off the engine and comes out of the car)

Slim: I'm taking you dancing. Let's go.

Queen: Can we dance when we get where we're going? Just to be safe?

Slim: I'm tired of playing it safe.

Queen: You willing to risk getting caught so we can dance?

Slim: Hell yeah.

(Queen sighs)

Slim: One dance and we can leave. I promise. *(Queen contemplates)* I'll buy you a drink.

(Queen agrees)

Slim: Yeah. Come on. *(helps her out of the car)* You good? Let's go. We gotta get a move on.

(Slim and Queen enters the club, Band is playing, people are dancing)

Slim: Why are you so jumpy?

Queen: I'm nervous.

Slim: Ain't nobody out here thinking about us.

(They walk to the dance floor and started moving to the rhythm of the music)

Queen: Watch your hands *(as Slim's hands began to go below her waist)*

(After the dance, Slim goes to buy a drink)

Bartender: Hey, handsome.

Slim: Hi.

Bartender: What can I get you?

Slim: A bourbon.

(Bartender goes to get the drink)

Slim: Oh, I don't drink *(as bartender attempts to pour another drink)*

Bartender: *(scoffs)* Maybe, you should start.

Slim: *(brings out money, attempts to pay)*

Bartender: Oh, these are on the house.

Slim: Thank you.

Bartender: *(holds his hands)* Don't worry. You're safe here.

(Slim is shocked and surprised, looks around, goes back to where Queen is standing)

Slim: The bartender recognized me.

Queen: Oh, shit. We gotta go *(downs her drink)*

Slim: I think we good.

Queen: I don't know.

Slim: Trust me *(downs his drink)*

(They go back to the dance floor and continue to dance)

Scene ends.