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Department of Education, University of Oxford

Ideas of identity and investment in language communities
among multicultural AAVE speakers learning foreign
languages

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ABSTRACT

Imagined communities and investment have both been identified as dynamic forces in the process of learning a foreign language, yet few studies have explored these concepts in relation to Black foreign language learners, and even fewer still have touched on AAVE speaker status and Black multiethnic backgrounds. To address this gap in the literature, this case-study utilizes narrative interviews and short story analysis to examine the relationship between imagined communities and investment in the language learning journeys of three AAVE speaking and multiethnic, monoracial participants. Results suggest that the nuances of Black ethnic identity and the identity struggle bilingual AAE speakers in the US face have an impact on learners' assessments of speech communities, as well as how they invest in their imagined communities. Given these findings, further research is necessary to determine how best to accommodate Black foreign language learners with differing linguistic profiles and different ethnic backgrounds in the foreign language classroom.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAVE	African American Vernacular English
HBCU	Historically Black College or University
L2	Language 2/Second language learners
SAE	Standard American English
SE	Standard English

CHAPTER 1 — Introduction

1.1 – Aims of the study

This study aims to explore the language learning experiences of AAVE speakers learning foreign languages, specifically those identifying as multiethnic and monoracial. Focusing on their investments and imagined communities (Norton Pierce, 1995), the research hopes to provide insight into the negotiation of their AAVE and multiethnic/monoracial identities when in contact with target, foreign language speech communities offering alternative or additional identities. While research on Black language learners exists and is growing (Anyà, 2011; Anyà, 2020; Moore, 2005), there is a gap in research regarding Black learners from an ethnic perspective. As Black ethnic groups have differing views of each other and language, (Githoria, 2009; Jackson & Cothran, 2003), Black multiethnic, monoracial individuals have unique perspectives to draw from that are not often portrayed in language research.

Studies on multiethnic and multiracial identities in relation with other subjects conflate the two terms more often than not (Jiménez, 2004). In the field of applied linguistics, which has dedicated large amounts of time and effort towards the topics of identity, foreign language learners, and investment (Dörnyei, 2009; Norton Pierce, 1995; Ushioda, 2011), the growing relevance of raciolinguistics in addition to these topics show the need to study this group of AAVE speaking (Flores & Rosa, 2019), multiethnic/ monoracial people to investigate how these topics merge together.

1.2 – Outline of the dissertation

This dissertation contains eight chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the aims of the study and an outline for the remainder of the dissertation. Chapter 2 provides an overview of existing literature and research regarding foreign language learning motivation models, AAVE, studies linking ethnoracial identity and foreign language learning within the context of the US, and a consideration of gaps in the research and research questions. Chapter 3 covers the methodological approaches and procedures undergone to conduct the study, including ethical consideration and areas for improvement. Chapter 4 presents the research findings of each case in the study, while Chapter 5 provides a cross-analysis of individual findings in order to engage in wider theoretical discussions. Chapter 6 concludes the dissertation with a reflection on the

study's research question answers, limits, and potential pathways for future research on the study's topic. Chapter 7 includes the references. Chapter 8 includes the appendices.

CHAPTER 2 — Literature Review

2.1 – Overview

This chapter covers the theoretical frameworks of investment and imagined communities for this study. It also provides a brief history of AAVE, including arguments regarding its origins, the extent to which it is spoken, court cases debating its existence, and stigmas confronted by its speakers. An examination of ethnicity and race in conversation with language identity in the United States follows, succeeded by an overview of key studies on Black foreign language learners. The chapter concludes with an assessment of gaps in the literature and the study's research questions.

2.2 – Theoretical Frameworks

2.2.1 Communities and Identity Negotiation

Speech communities, immediately consisting of speakers and a language to be spoken, are further defined by the behaviors of the speakers within the community and their perceptions of those collectively and individually deemed outsiders (Hymes, 1973). As Hymes (1973) claims, it is not enough to draw a line from a person directly to a language they speak. The words chosen, sounds formed, and topics discussed have the potential to bend the borders of a speech community towards or away from a supposed member. Given the flexibility of speech community inclusion criteria, attempting to join a speech community or existing within one presents the opportunity for identity negotiation (Hymes, 1973; Wenger, 1998).

Communities require participation and from a poststructuralist point of view, it is in these interactions that identities are assigned, assumed, or not accepted (Darvin & Norton, 2015; Ushioda, 2011; Wenger, 1998). A speaker would qualify as a “competent” member of a speech community if they were able to have rapport with the established community member, meaning both parties respond to each other, as they successfully maneuver around the unspoken rules of interaction and recognize material that signals community membership (Wenger, 1998). Through several iterations, the speaker that fails these tests at first might develop an identity compatible with the community, readjusting the newly acquired identity alongside the “old” one and the one that emerged in the transition. Instead of abandoning previous identities, the speaker keeps each and deploys the appropriate ones as needed, possibly losing individual community membership in favor “multi-membership” (Wenger, 1998). In the context of foreign

language learning journeys, multi-membership would come to fruition as multilingualism. Some foreign language learners are in pursuit of a multilingual identity, while others are motivated by different factors.

2.2.2 Motivation models

In an attempt to make foreign language learner motivation a marked and/or measurable phenomenon, researchers have proposed various models of motivation. Spanning decades, motivation theory has undergone several reinventions in three different eras: the social-psychological period, the cognitive-situated period, the process-oriented period, and the socio-dynamic period (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). The progenitors, Gardner and Lambert (1972), at the start of the motivation theory timeline advocate for integrative and instrumental motivation. Integrative motivation accounts for people-focused pursuits and a desire to become a member of the target language community while instrumental motivation relies on an outward focus that needs practical rewards to be sustained (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). The next phase, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, takes a step inward as changes in an individual not necessarily in relation to a speech community signify intrinsic motivation, and external resources fuel extrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Moving into the current motivational period—socio-dynamic—Dörnyei (2009) creates the prominent L2 motivational self system. Splitting the self into two actors within the context of the learner's experience acquiring language, Dörnyei (2009) describes several aspects of motivation in a non-linear, learner and context-focused manner. The ideal L2 self—with L2 referring to the target language—represents a romanticized version of the learner if they were to achieve a prized identity developed by achieving goals and maintaining peak linguistic homeostasis. The ought-to L2 self thrives on doing what is expected of the learner, using feedback from external figures to regulate and avoid failure. As these two selves develop and react, the language learner navigates experiences within the learning context based on input from the past, current, and future selves and the outside world. Although Dörnyei (2009) does not cite Norton's (1995) imagined communities and investment theory as parallels to his system, the ideal L2 self could be construed as an imagined future self operating within an imagined community. Ushioda (2009)—in a more abstract rendition—also argues for emphasis to be placed on the person-in-context with the ideal self not existing as a separate entity in the learner's mind, but as a future point in the learner's journey, serving simply an extension of the learner's present self with more lived history (Ushioda, 2011).

2.2.3 Imagined Communities and Investment Theory

First coined by Anderson (1991), imagined communities work to conceptualize the formation of nation states. On language, Anderson (1991) comments that nations can now form without the binding of a common tongue. Norton (1995) takes Anderson's (1991) imagined communities, along with Wenger's (1998) thoughts on community, and applies them to language learning motivation. However, Norton (1995) adds nuance to the term 'motivation' with 'investment'.

Norton's formative 1995 case study centers on five immigrant women and their experiences learning English in Canada. Spanning a year and involving two questionnaires, one-on-one and group interviews, as well as visits to their homes, Norton (1995) formulates a theory of investment, proposing the participants were investing in language by taking actions that would result in greater access to resources capable of carrying them into their target—or imagined—communities. In essence, investment is a gamble, because there is risk of no return, as seen in the cases of Felicia, Katrina, and Mai (Norton, 2001; Norton, 2013). Each invested in additional classes meant to improve their language skills only to discover the classes were not targeting the skills they were invested in, leading them to divest and drop out (Norton, 2001; Norton, 2013). Here, investment operates on a different axis than motivation as the learners remained motivated to learn English, but found the classes were not worth investing in (Darvin & Norton, 2015).

Language learners do not invest arbitrarily but use their imagined communities as guides (Norton, 2016; Norton & Toohey, 2011). Kanno and Norton (2003, p. 241) define imagined communities as “groups of people, not immediately tangible and accessible, with whom we connect through the power of the imagination.” Capable of residing in different times and spaces, encompassing large or small swathes of people and places, imagined communities connect learners to their ideals or arise when they are introduced to new ideals (Kanno & Norton, 2003). Pakistani students and Ugandan women can become participants in global conversations in English when building relationships with technology (Norton & Kamal, 2003; Norton et al., 2011), assuming imagined identities with the potential to disrupt language ideologies currently in place (Darvin & Norton, 2015). Imagined identities, which entail the habits learners aim to attain in order to achieve homeostasis within their imagined communities, are capable of informing ideology when the learner chooses to deviate from a pre-accepted

learner role in society and performs according to their particular needs (Darvin & Norton, 2015). In doing this, the learner's identities are also subject to reshaping and replacing as they develop new ways of interacting (Darvin & Norton, 2015; Norton & Toohy, 2011). AAVE speakers have the potential to influence language ideology by attempting to realize foreign language learner imagined identities, possibly creating the space to shift the uneven status of SAE and AAVE.

2.3 – African American Vernacular English

2.3.1 *History*

Although referred to as African American Vernacular English (AAVE) in this paper, the stigmatized English language variety defined by its nonstandard features and association with African Americans has been rebranded countless times since its conception, including but not limited to: Negro Dialect, Substandard Negro English, Nonstandard Negro English, Black English, Afro-American English, Ebonics, Vernacular Black English, African American English, and African American Language (Filmer, 2003; Rickford, 2007). Two primary camps of scholarship have emerged regarding the genesis of AAVE. Dialectologists, also known as Anglicists or neo-Anglicists, argue that contact between African languages and British English, as well as other incubating American English varieties, led to the development of AAVE (Rickford, 2007; Schneider, 2015). Creolists, on the other hand, believe AAVE descends from creole, citing the Gullah creole spoken in coastal, southeastern US, as evidence of a basilect predecessor to the decreolized AAVE (Rickford, 2007; Schneider, 2015). Unlike other indigenous American languages, the origins of AAVE cannot easily be confirmed as its source material and original speakers hail from multiple European and African nations (Baugh, 2007).

AAVE has subsisted largely due to residential segregation (Labov, 2010). With a heritage attached to the southern United States, the variety has spread across the country—first migrating north in large quantities during the Great Migration of African Americans from rural southern states to northern cities in the early to mid-20th century (Labov, 2010; Rickford, 2007). In the most insular inner cities produced by housing segregation, AAVE presents the majority of its features and begins to veer closer to Standard American English (SAE) or other regional American English varieties where African American populations are less compact, as seen in many western states (Labov, 2010; Pearson et al., 2013).

2.3.2 Variety within a Variety

As an established variety of English, AAVE also has a standard—African American Standard English—characterized by “distinctively black grammatical features” that do not carry the same stigma as other AAVE varieties (Spears, 2015). African American Standard English, however, has on average a 60+ years old speaker population and wealthy, college-educated members (Spears, 2015). This variety accurately represents the generational and socioeconomic divides between AAVE varieties and speakers (Mazrui, 2007; Wyatt, 2001). Despite its name, AAVE is not spoken by all African Americans, and is not spoken the same amount by those who do (Linnes, 1998; Rickford, 2007; Van Hofwegen and Wolfram, 2010). In a 1998 study, Linnes—a non-African American researcher—compares the qualities of codeswitching between middle-class German-English bilinguals and middle-class AAVE and SAE bilinguals in Houston, Texas. In this paper, bilingual rather than bidialectal will be used to refer to speakers of both AAVE and SAE in an effort to avoid the politically fraught connotations that accompany the term ‘dialect’ (Ogbu, 1999; Rickford, 2007). Linnes (1998) conducted interviews with 30 AAVE/SAE bilinguals split into three age groups: 55+ years, 30-54 years, and 16-25 years, analyzing their speech for AAVE features and codeswitching deployment based on whether mainstream or cultural topics were discussed. The study found that, although each group spoke SAE significantly more than AAVE, the 55+ years group and the 16-25 years groups produced the most AAVE switches, and speakers over the age of 35 had AAVE features markedly different from those of younger speakers, matching the claims of other scholars (Linnes 1998; Rickford, 2007). Children have also been the subjects of AAVE use frequency studies. Van Hofwegen and Wolfram (2010) and Wyatt (2001) both cite environment as a primary factor in determining the amount and maintenance of AAVE use among children. In Van Hofwegen and Wolfram’s (2010) longitudinal study following 32 African American children from approximately 6 months to grade 10 in the American school system, data showed sharp decreases in use when entering the education system in grade 1, followed by a steep increase at grades 6 and 8 and subsequent fall at grade 10. Exposure to SAE at school—through language attitudes divulged by peers, teachers, family as well as SAE-medium instruction—is likely a contributing factor to the discrepancies (Van Hofwegen & Wolfram, 2010; Wyatt, 2001). School has long been the site of AAVE identity exploration and eradication.

2.3.3 Educational Outcomes and Legal Proceedings

In the 1960s, as research on the poor educational outcomes of African American children were underway, researchers crafted the deficit theory (Baratz, 1969; Labov, 1972). Rooted in racist

ideology, the deficit theory asserted Black children were cognitively—and thus, linguistically—handicapped to the point of possessing faulty language and at the extreme end of the spectrum, lacking the ability to produce language at all (Baratz, 1969; Howard, 1996; Labov, 1972). These theorists argued that the poverty Black children grew up in did not allow for enough linguistic stimulation to result in valid language use, alluding to parental failings (Labov, 1972; Smitherman, 2015). In one of his seminal works, Labov (1972) challenged deficit theory, highlighting the systematic patterns found within African American children’s speech. Despite his findings, the legitimacy of AAVE would continue to be doubted and discredited in both classrooms and courthouses for years to come.

According to Pearson et al. (2013), approximately 80% of African American students utilize at least some features of AAVE by the time they reach schooling age. Teachers, unable or unwilling, to recognize the structure of AAVE failed to effectively teach SAE to African American students, who were consistently ranked the lowest academic achievers compared to their peers of other ethnic/racial backgrounds (Ogbu, 1999; Smitherman, 2015). Relying on deficit theory, teachers did not play to African American students’ strengths and instead of adopting programs designed to promote AAVE through free usage in the classroom or as a subject of study, they placed struggling African American students in special education programs (Howard, 1996; Ogbu, 1999; Siegel, 1999; Wheeler & Thomas, 2013).

In 1977, a group of African American mothers in Ann Arbor, Michigan filed a lawsuit against the Ann Arbor School District Board for relegating their children to special education classes, preventing them from advancing to the next grade, and doing little to cultivate SAE in the students—an essential variety in an academic environment (Smitherman, 2015). Their children, raised in Ann Arbor projects, were the minority at Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary as only 13% of students were Black and even fewer of these students were low income. Although attacks against the mothers’ parenting capabilities became the focus of the suit, the judge sided with the children, deciding the Ann Arbor School District was obligated to provide AAVE speaking students with the resources necessary to become proficient SAE speakers in order to participate fully in the American education system. A teacher training program was created the following year, but little observable change occurred in the school. However, the ruling on *Martin Luther King Jr Elementary School et al v. Ann Arbor School District Board* set a precedent for the recognition of AAVE in the court of law (Smitherman, 2015).

The next influential AAVE legal ruling occurred in 1996, addressing poor academic achievement among African American students in Oakland, California (Smitherman, 2015). African American students accounted for a disproportionate number of special needs enrollments and suspensions, with their West African peers performing better, highlighting the fact that AAVE did not function on purely racial lines (Ogbu, 1999; Smitherman, 2015). The Ebonics resolution was proposed—making use of the portmanteau of “ebony” and “phonics” first coined in 1973—and asked for the recognition of AAVE as a language that could be utilized for facilitating the teaching of SAE to students (Smitherman, 2015). The proposal was accepted, and the Linguistics Society of America issued a statement denouncing stereotypical depictions of AAVE, noting that language versus dialect—a vague term often employed solely to denote a someone’s speech as different than your own (Rickford, 2007)—was a politicized topic that ignored the evidence proving AAVE to be a rule-governed system.

Citizens met the decision with outrage. Following the ruling, computer generated websites dedicated to mocking AAVE, called Ebonics at the time, by undermining its systematicity through search and replace speech applications came into the spotlight (Ronkin & Karn, 1999). The unsuccessful attempts at emulating AAVE by overusing vulgar pragmatic functions and deploying the habitual *be* in incompatible linguistics environments highlighted the misunderstanding of AAVE’s true nature by critics (Ronkin & Karn, 1999). Middle-class and academically performing African Americans, suggested to prefer SAE in the classroom, were especially outspoken (Godley & Escher, 2012; Smitherman, 2015).

The stigma AAVE speakers encounter manifests in regional, socioeconomic, and racial prejudices (Filmer, 2003). Given informal SAE—more widely spoken than the formal, standardized version that appears in English grammars—is no more standard or static than AAVE in terms of the discrepancies in its use either grammatically or phonetically (Trudgill & Hannah, 2017; Rickford, 2007), the stigmatization of AAVE is linked to a culturally contextualized diglossia cultivated in the US (Ogbu, 1999). Diglossia, which can occur naturally as two or more languages are ascribed to certain settings based on societal functions (Wheeler & Thomas, 2013), becomes disproportionately imbalanced when the value and context of each language is not agreed upon, and the dominant language speakers in the situation remain powerful in any given context due to their language use (Endo & Reece-Miller, 2010; Ogbu, 1999).

2.4 – Ethnicity, Race, and Foreign Language Learners

2.4.1 *Definitions of Ethnicity and Race*

Ethnicity and race, much like SAE and other English varieties, do not have irrefutable, operationalized definitions. Although often conflated, in attempting to operationalize the terms ethnicity and race are assigned dichotomous positions: race being enforced, ethnicity being elected (Brubaker, 2009; Gunew, 1997). Rather than proposing a fixed definition, Brubaker (2009) offers criteria worth reflecting on before establishing the two terms: categorization and membership, social organization, and politics. Within these themes, Brubaker (2009) deepens the level of analysis further. Utilizing the provided subcategories under the social organization criterion: boundaries, groupness/salience/thickness, territorial concentration or dispersion, economic differentiation and inequality, institutional separation or integration, and reproduction, this paper will operationalize ethnicity and race for the purposes of this study.

Ethnicity will be defined as identification with a group of people exhibiting formal social boundaries for entry (i.e., cultural understanding), characterized by often concentrated population centers, displays of collective action, relative ingroup social equality, and defined pathways for sustained growth (i.e., passing down traditions). Thus, multiethnic would refer to the simultaneous identification with two or more such ethnic groups.

Race will be defined as identification with a group of people exhibiting arbitrary biological boundaries for entry, (i.e., phenotype), characterized by potentially concentrated population centers, displays of collective action associate with activism or extremism, ingroup social inequality, and unreliable pathways for sustained growth (i.e., sexual reproduction). Thus, multiracial would refer to the simultaneous identification with two or more such racial groups.

2.4.2 *Multiethnic and Raciolinguistic Gaps*

There are few studies regarding the plural identities of individuals within an American context where multiethnic identity, as defined above, is prioritized over multiracial identity (Jiménez, 2004; Lorenzo-Blanco et al., 2013). In Lorenzo-Blanco et al. (2013), the two terms, although employed in differing environments, are not appropriately distinguished in the questionnaire provided to the participants, who were asked for their race and whether their ancestry was African or Hispanic. Thus, the study's analysis of the impact of parental roles on their multiethnic and multiracial children does not hold. Jiménez's (2004) study proved more

successful, discussing several multiethnic individuals with one White parent and one Mexican parent. Out of 20 in-depth interviews conducted with those that met the criteria, more than one participant noted their multiethnic status while appearing monoracial, meaning only identifying with one racial group: White. In these cases, the participants were not readily welcomed in the ethnoracial spheres of cultural organizations and were often relegated to adopting symbolic identities in practice, meaning operating on the surface of Mexican identity: eating Mexican food, celebrating Mexican holidays, but not traversing into Mexican politics and social causes (Jiménez, 2004). The multiethnic, monoracial participants reported feeling responsible for their lack of connection with Mexican culture, although it was others valuing observable racial identification over ethnic identification that led to the disconnect (Jiménez, 2004).

In conversation with linguistics research, ethnicity enjoys more overt ties to language than race—likely due to prototypes of culture when referring to ethnicity (Gunew, 1997), so much so that Flores and Rosa (2019) called for the introduction of a “raciolinguistic” perspective in the field. Referencing colonialism, Flores and Rosa (2019) explain how racial identity can lead to assumptions of linguistic subordination. The assumption of subordination between race and language can be determined via three pathways: sociophonetic, ethnographic, and discursive (Anderson, 2015). The sound of someone’s voice, the way someone acts as they speak, and the topic of their conversation each have the ability to bond someone’s racial identity to their linguistic identity (Anderson, 2015). This is especially relevant concerning Black people in the language learning environment, as someone—whether a teacher or target language speaker—might allow the learner’s Black racial identity to overwhelm their potentially multiethnic background, reducing the number of factors that could play a role in their language learning experience and motivations.

2.4.3 Black Ethnicities

As with any race, Black people are not a monolith and contain a multitude of ethnicities within a racial category. In an American context, these ethnic categories are often defined as African, African American, and Caribbean American. There have been concerted efforts to insert African ethnic values into African American culture with movements such as Afrocentricity and Pan-Africanism (Asante, 1991; Mazrui, 2007). These movements center the African ethnicity and consider African American and Caribbean American ethnicities as African at the core, creating a sense of unity that spreads to the use of English (Mazrui, 2007). Despite English varying considerable across these ethnicities, sporting AAVE, Caribbean English and

creoles, Nigerian English, and countless more, Afrocentrism and Pan-Africanism focus on Black Englishes as whole enduring stigmatization from European and colonial forces (Mazrui, 2007). While European forces did indeed impact each of these English varieties, the speakers of these varieties come from different ethnic upbringings and carry with them their own evaluations of Black people and Black Englishes.

In a 2003 study, Jackson and Cothran conduct a survey with 427 Black people at a conference attracting highly educated population. The survey contained 40 questions probing attitudes towards African, African American, and Caribbean American peoples. Of the respondents, 23.3% were African, 33% were African American, 31.4% were Black, and 12.3% did not report a race or ethnicity. The survey's findings showed that attitudes towards ethnicities differing from one's own within the Black racial group were largely negative (Jackson & Cothran, 2003). African Americans were deemed to be long suffering from a slavery mentality. Africans were seen as conceited and unable to collaborate. Caribbean Americans, although chosen as the friendliest, were considered too apolitical (Jackson & Cothran, 2003). Githiora (2009) in a thesis exploring African immigrant's attitudes toward AAVE found that opinions differed even at the regional level, West African generally valuing AAVE higher than East and South Africans. However, the main descriptor of AAVE used by all groups, "proud", enjoys a vague mixture of positive and negative connotations (Githiora, 2009).

Given this discrepancy between shared Black identity and divergent ethnic identity, attitudes toward varieties of English would be better explored from the unique perspective of speakers of each Black English with explicit reference to their ethnic background rather than Black people in general. Most studies detailing attitudes toward SE do not distinguish between a Black person and the particular Black English they speak or whether the Black person has a multiethnic background at all, only repeatedly noting that Black people *or* AAVE speakers view SE as "talking/sounding/attempting to be White" (Filmer, 2003; Howard, 1996; Labov, 1972; Linnes, 1998; Ogbu, 1999; Rickford, 2007; Wyatt, 2001). The need for clarification is vital as McKinney's (2007) study in South Africa at three schools with sizeable Black populations featured Black South African students reporting similar results, associating a standard variety of South African English as White English. The students even had a term, "coconut", to refer to South African Black speakers of standard South African English that parallels an American term for the same phenomenon, "Oreo" (McKinney, 2007). Where the results diverged, however, was that often the students calling other students "coconut" were referred to as "coconut" as well, meaning there was potentially a culture of shameful respect for

White English not as present in American studies (Filmer, 2003; McKinney, 2007; Ogbu, 1999; Wyatt, 2001). In the US context, schools with sizeable Black populations or majority Black friend groups, denounced Black users of SAE and often did not adopt SAE, even if for academic purposes (Filmer, 2003; Ogbu, 1999; Wyatt, 2001). While Black attitudes toward SE appear similar, the different behaviors behind these attitudes could be attributed to ethnic or linguistic variety. If behaviors defining SE attitudes are complicated by ethnic and linguistic variation, the same could hold true for foreign language learning. The foreign language learning experience of Black students of all ethnic and English backgrounds are even further complicated by the American context, where SAE is a hegemonic force acting on both English varieties and foreign languages.

2.4.4 English Hegemony and Foreign Language Learning

Wiley and García (2016) state a fact that, given the dominance of English in American society, does not seem true at first glance: the US has been a wholly multilingual nation since before its founding. Citing indigenous languages, French, Spanish and West African languages, Wiley and García (2016) expose the multilingual underbelly of the US disfigured by “English only” policies targeting new migrant groups in recent years. Beyond language policies directed at immigrants, the hegemonic force of English, particularly SAE, has also been perpetuated by the lack of government support for foreign language learning (Endo & Reece-Miller, 2010; Wiley & García, 2016). The Office of Bilingual Education and Language Minority Affairs, as of 2016, had changed into the Office of English Language Acquisition, boldly stating the monolingual language policy the US is invested in (Wiley & García, 2016). While those in the US education system who choose to enroll in non-heritage foreign language classes could potentially enjoy a cosmopolitan status by learning languages not out of necessity but curiosity, the vast majority do not partake in acquiring a culturally divested transnational identity (American Councils for International Education, 2017; Friedman, 2003; Looney & Lusin, 2019). In the 2014-2015 school year, only 19.66% of US students in K-12 grade were enrolled in foreign language programs, although this could be attributed to an insufficient number of programs offered in the first place (American Councils for International Education, 2017). In the university and college system, enrollment numbers have dropped 9.2% from 2013 to 2016 (Looney & Lusin, 2019). While data indicates that the Spanish-speaking population in the US is growing, the number of US students interested in joining the speech community, although higher than the number of enrollments for all other languages combined, is decreasing with an enrollment drop of 9.8% from 2013-2016 (Looney & Lusin, 2019).

Thompson (2017) studied the motivation of 195 undergraduate students enrolled in foreign languages, specifically with regards to prevailing multilingualism sentiments in the US. Noting the lack of studies using the L2 motivational self model in this context (Dörnyei, 2009), Thompson provided the students with a questionnaire aiming to determine the relationship between motivation in connection to language choice and multilingualism respectively. The results suggested that the ought-to-self guided the Spanish language learning experiences of students (n=70) who chose the language more so than the ideal self in comparison to other languages. This may have been due to the growing presence of Spanish in the US and the intrinsic practicality of learning Spanish, but Thompson (2017) also notes that heritage was another motivating factor with a somewhat obligatory slant. Just as studies reporting enrollment numbers include heritage language speakers, Thompson's data is skewed, as it does not accurately represent the non-heritage speakers without familial ties that might provide more insight into the opinions of US students towards multilingualism without cultural obligation (Thompson, 2017; Wiley & García, 2016; Looney & Lusin, 2019). On the reverse side, a study focusing on heritage language learners and their respective ethnic backgrounds could enhance understanding of American multilingualism with regards to degree of ethnic identity, such as symbolic identity.

2.4.5 Black Foreign Language Learners

Bringing together discussion of Black persons and foreign language acquisition in the US, the first study to explore the relationship was Rivers Jr. (1933). Conducted at 30 HBCUs across the US, Rivers Jr. (1933) determined a Black student foreign language enrollment number of 3,503 students. While the study did little more than call for more teachers and describe the current language situation for Black students at the time, it set the stage for future studies on the subject (Rivers Jr., 1933).

Moore (2005) conducted a two-year longitudinal study utilizing a survey to observe foreign language enrollment decisions among Black students at a large state university. Analyzing factors such as early exposure to language, family influence, and course offerings, Moore (2005) determined external pressures (i.e., counselors discouraging foreign language classes), lack of cultural instruction, and unknown career options associated with language drove students to avoid enrolling. In a 2012 study, Pratt (2012), looking at a Black student population,

also suggested the lack of Black foreign language teacher role models may prevent students from entering the field.

The lack of cultural instruction and the lack of Black foreign language role models also emerged in Anya's (2020) literature review covering Black students within the foreign languages research. She emphasized the need to do more research with Black students prior to college and revealed that African Americans study Spanish more than any other language, in line with overall US trends (American Councils for International Education, 2017; Looney & Lusin, 2019). Although, the literature review makes use of Black and African American interchangeably, it does highlight gaps in the field that a more nuanced approach to Black ethnicity in relation to language study could fill.

Anya's (2011) study provides a step in that direction by investigating the relationships between prior language exposure at home, classroom experiences, and race or ethnicity among Black college foreign language learners within the frameworks of Dörnyei's (2009) L2 motivational self system, as well as Norton's (1995) concepts of imagined communities and investment. Seeking to determine what factors might predict a Black college foreign language learners' success, she had six students fitting this criterion—four female and two male—write four to six page essays detailing their language experiences, including in their home life and as learners.

Upon review of the participants' essays, Anya (2011) noted successful learners, five out the six, came from homes in diverse neighborhoods or from families speaking other languages due to interest or immigration. They also appreciated tasks that differed from traditional foreign language class activities, sought after community, looked forward to immersion in the target language's community through travel, and had a sense of unity with other Black people despite different ethnic backgrounds. The participants themselves varied ethnically, with two identifying as Cape Verdean and four identifying as African American. In what appears to be a first, Anya (2011) describes the motivational journeys and linguistic backgrounds of Black foreign language learners from an ethnoracial lens.

2.5 – Assessment of gaps in the literature

In conclusion, researchers have undertaken crucial roles in the fields of education and second language acquisition by providing robust research on foreign language learning motivation, AAVE, and even Black language learners. However, these areas of expertise have largely

developed independent of each other. Research regarding foreign language learning motivation has not centered the experiences of nonstandard variety speakers or the ethnoracial identities of the learners (Norton, 1995; Norton, 2001; Norton, 2013; Norton et al., 2011; Norton & Kamal, 2003). AAVE-related research has focused on the educational outcomes of speakers in relation to SAE or academic achievement as a whole rather than the experiences of the speakers in a non-English context (Baratz, 1969; Labov, 1972; Ogbu, 1999; Siegel, 1999; Smitherman, 2015). Studies on Black language learners, although remarking on motivation, do not collectively delve into the ethnic identities of Black language learners that might further inform their language journeys (Anya, 2020; Moore, 2005; Rivers Jr., 1933). It is the aim of this study to merge these distinct disciplines and offer insight into the foreign language learning experiences of nonstandard variety speakers—specifically, AAVE speakers—with regards to investment from an ethnoracial lens.

2.6 – Research Questions

The following are the research questions for this study:

1. How do the participants assign value to the speech communities of each of their languages?
 - a. To what extent does identifying as an AAVE speaker influence their evaluations?
 - b. To what extent does identifying as multiethnic and monoracial influence their evaluations?
2. How do their identities (AAVE speaker and multiethnic/monoracial) and speech community evaluations impact their language investment and imagined communities?

CHAPTER 3 — Methodology

3.1 – Overview

This chapter will cover the overarching methodological approaches informing this study, before detailing participant recruitment and data collection methods. The research procedures followed in line with qualitative short story analysis will also be discussed. The chapter concludes with summaries of the study's ethical considerations and methodological limitations.

3.2 – Methodological Approach

3.2.1 Constructivism

This study operates under a constructivist paradigm. The ontological backing of constructivism views reality as intangible, gaining authenticity from interactions as participants co-construct meaning and identity (Lincoln & Guba, 2005). Epistemologically, research is considered subjective as the researcher and participants construct meaning and provide interpretations together (Lincoln & Guba, 2005). Research defined by constructivism focuses on the researcher and participant relationship, acknowledging that their findings are not objective fact and could be further interpreted (Lincoln & Guba, 2005; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Given the narrative focus of this study, constructivism is an applicable paradigm.

3.2.2 Qualitative Multi-case Study

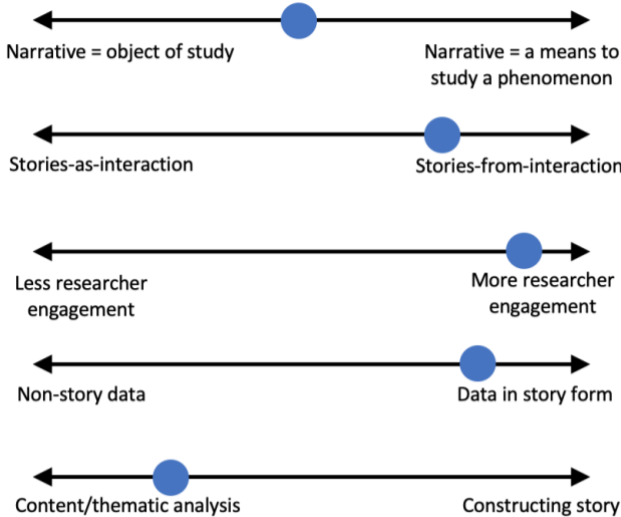
Born of a qualitative approach to conducting research, this study positions the participants' reported experiences as the basis for extracting themes and developing theories about the foreign language learning process (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). Instead of approaching the data via hypotheses requiring confirmation or rejection, the data refines pre-existing theories by adding nuance and exposes new or neglected areas ripe for further exploration (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Liebscher & Dailey-O'Cain, 2009). Auerbach and Silverstein (2013, p. 25) claim, "Qualitative research has the potential to avoid interpreting difference as deficit because it assumed that difference, rather than uniformity, of behavior is the norm." Considering the deficit theory that arose out of quantitative studies on the speech of African American children (Baratz, 1969), qualitative research is better suited to project the voices of the historically marginalized (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Pavlenko, 2002).

A case study is appropriate for this research project as it allows for the in-depth investigation of issues related to specific groups of people (Hadley, 2019). A multi-case study approach, necessitating two cases minimum and a recommended eight cases maximum cap, provides the freedom to determine the relative uniformity of the cases, creating a data landscape where cross-case analyses might yield a significant number of similarities and differences in seemingly identical participants (Duff, 2012; Duff, 2019). In this study, involving participants with a high degree of shared characteristics as will be expanded upon in section 3.3.1, such flexibility is necessary. Data can also be reported in a variety of ways—including in narrative form—the form of choice for this study, which will be discussed in detail below (Duff, 2019).

3.2.3 *Narrative Inquiry*

Narrative inquiry is a methodological approach that bears multiple pathways to the data, requiring a clear plan of action before implementation (Barkhuizen 2019). Due to its reputation as a catch-all term for telling the stories of participants in any manner (Benson, 2014), Barkhuizen (2019) proposes five facets of narrative inquiry considered the main determiners of the particular approach a researcher adopts when using narrative inquiry. He presents the facets as continuums with no distinguishing term for research that lies in the middle. Figure A depicts the approximate positions of this study along each continuum.

Figure A. Adaption of Barkhuizen’s (2019) Narrative Inquiry Continuums



Falling in between narrative study and narrative inquiry, this study exhibits characteristics of short story analysis, a branch of narrative inquiry that views narrative as both a data point and a point from which to pull data (Barkhuizen, 2016; Barkhuizen, 2019). This approach will be

clarified further in the following section (3.2.4). Skewed towards stories-from-interaction, this study treats data as providing story to be investigated, while also recognizing the researcher and participant interaction as a story in itself to be reflected upon when discussing reflexivity (Barkhuizen, 2016; Barkhuizen, 2019). As a researcher and insider within the community being investigated, the study sits firmly on the side of more researcher engagement as the researcher is all present in the broader experiences shared by participants (Barkhuizen, 2019). By analyzing short stories extracted from interview data, the study utilizes data in story form, referring to non-story data to support the storied data analysis (Barkhuizen, 2016; Barkhuizen, 2019). With a heavy slant toward content and thematic analysis, this study works with stories constructed during the interview process and studies their content to build themes. However, the short stories in conversation with each other create a larger story about the participant's language learning experience, resulting in some aspects of story construction.

Despite evading the poles on each end of the continuums, this study is still contains defining elements of narrative inquiry. This study accepts the notion that participants share experiences through story as a way to ground the intangible (Duff & Bell, 2002), and that these stories are not fact, but filtered through the lens of the participants before reaching the researcher (Barkhuizen, 2019; Duff & Bell, 2002; Pavlenko, 2002). At this point, both the researcher and participants play a part in molding the story into a digestible and transferable piece of data that is still infinitely open to interpretation (Barkhuizen, 2011; Duff & Bell, 2002; Pavlenko, 2002). This process, which Barkhuizen (2011) terms "narrative knowledging" is a key part of narrative inquiry that this study recognizes.

3.2.4 Short Story Analysis

Within narrative inquiry resides the subcategory, short story analysis. Barkhuizen (2016, p. 656) defines short stories as "storied extracts from a larger data set analyzed for both content and context." In this context, the larger data set is the interview elicited from each participant. Not to be confused with "small stories", an approach more aligned with conversation analysis, short story analysis utilizes aspects of narrative: 'who', 'where', and 'when', to analyze the data content (Barkhuizen 2016; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Small stories and short stories, however, share an important perspective: that stories derived from the lived experiences of participants do not have a beginning-middle-end, but a past-present-future format (Barkhuizen 2016; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). To be considered a short story, the extract must include: 1) reference to the past or the future where the retelling exists 2) remarks on feelings or values in

relation to the retelling, 3) a time scale, 4) ‘action’ or an event where something happened, and 5) mention of ‘who’, ‘when’, and ‘where’ as mentioned above (Barkhuizen, 2008; Barkhuizen, 2016).

The analysis takes place in two stages, beginning with extracting the ‘who’, ‘where’, and ‘when’ from each line in the story, followed by placing these artifacts within the scales of context. Visibly distinguished by lower-case and capitalized letters, ‘story’, ‘Story’, and ‘STORY’ operate as vehicles for bringing the stories into a larger conversation (Barkhuizen, 2008; Barkhuizen, 2016). ‘story’ involves immediate, small-scale interactions and intimate emotions, while ‘Story’ involves interactions just beyond the immediate context of the retelling such as policy decision that creates the opportunity for the participant to interact with a new person (Barkhuizen, 2008; Barkhuizen, 2016). ‘STORY’ is the point at which data might more easily become transferable as it makes connections between large-scale phenomenon on a potentially national or global level (Barkhuizen, 2008; Barkhuizen, 2016). It is through systematic short story analysis that this study connects the experiences of an under researched case-study group to pre-existing themes.

3.3 – Participants

3.3.1 *Case Recruitment*

Given the qualitative nature of this study, random sampling was not feasible (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). Adopting a grounded theory approach to sampling sometimes deployed in case study research, participants were initially recruited using convenience sampling (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Friedman, 2012; Hadley, 2019). After receiving ethical approval from the University of Oxford’s Central University Ethics Committee, the researcher sent a message to a group chat on a social media messaging app (Appendix D). As an insider in the community explored in this study, the researcher was a member of the group prior to engaging in research and identified the group as a pool of potential participants after finalizing the research topic. The group consisted of Black university age adults who were either current students or recent alumni at several universities across the US. In the message, group members interested in participating in the study were invited to contact the researcher for further information.

Five group members reached out to the researcher. Via the messaging app, the researcher asked the potential participants questions regarding their background and foreign language learning experience to confirm they fit the criteria for inclusion: 1) at least two years of experience

learning a foreign language in a classroom setting, and 2) self-identification as a speaker of AAVE. These criteria were chosen to ensure participants could speak on their experiences in foreign language classes in a temporal fashion to increase the likelihood of producing story or narrative and do so in the context of AAVE. The inquiry revealed three out of the five potential participants had the following additional qualities: 1) experience learning two or more foreign languages in a classroom setting, and 2) a multiethnic, monoracial background. As the researcher possessed these qualities as well, the researcher shifted to theoretical sampling after the initial sampling (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Friedman, 2012; Hadley, 2019). The decision to shift focus was taken to determine if these additional characteristics might provide novel insights missing in existing studies the researcher had already reviewed (Anya, 2011; Anya, 2020; Friedman, 2012; Hadley, 2019; Moore, 2005). The two potential participants that did not have the additional criterion did not respond after their initial contact message and were not included in the study. The three remaining participants agreed to participate in the study, and Table 1 includes an overview of their key information and (Tables 2-4 include data matching the criterion for inclusion in more detail.

Table 1. Overview of Participants

Overview of Participants			
	Panyin	Janice	Amani
Age	21	22	25
Pronouns	he/him/his	she/her/hers	she/her/hers
Race	Black	Black	Black
Ethnicity 1	African American	African American	African American
Ethnicity 2	Ghanaian	Guyanese	Native American
Known Languages *	SE, AAVE, Spanish, Twi	SAE, AAVE, Spanish, Portuguese, German	SAE, AAVE, Spanish, Portuguese, Swahili
Additional Languages**	Sierra Leone Creole, Yoruba, Ga, Ewe	Guyanese Creole	Cherokee

* able to read, write, speak

** some exposure, little/no proficiency

3.3.2 *Setting*

Given the state of the COVID-19 pandemic, the entire scope of the study took place online. The participants and researcher, each in disparate regions of the United States, joined the interviews from their homes. Interviews lasted 48, 61 and 73 minutes.

3.4 – Procedure and Analysis

3.4.1 *Research Review*

In line with tenets of qualitative research design, the study began with a review of literature related to potential research areas (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). Topics covered in the initial literature review were AAVE speakers in SLA, L2 learner motivation, and foreign language policy in the US. After yielding no results, AAVE speakers in SLA was expanded to nonstandard language variety speakers and dialect speakers in SLA, but this also failed to produce results, highlighting a gap in the research. L2 learner motivation was condensed into imagined communities and investment theory research, while foreign language policy in the US expanded to subsume Black foreign language learners in an effort to find AAVE-related studies. The literature review revealed research gaps this study aims to fill regarding foreign language learning investment from an ethnoracial and nonstandard language variety perspective.

3.4.2 *Semi-structured Interviews*

Drawing on Rubin and Rubin's (2005) recommendations for narrative semi-structured interviews, the researcher crafted an interview schedule (Appendix E). The schedule contains broad questions utilizing compare and contrast frames to uncover similarities or differences in the relationship between the participants and each of their languages (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Hypothetical questions were employed to investigate possible future or imagined selves (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). In addition, the interview schedule includes potential probing questions to illicit information regarding sequence of events and clarification to contextualize any short stories that might arise in the interview data (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The researcher did not ask every question to avoid interview fatigue on the participant's behalf (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). Interviews focused on providing participants opportunity to share their stories through narrative (Talmy, 2010).

3.4.3 *Coding*

Interview data was transcribed and read twice for familiarity. Upon the third reading, the researcher scanned the transcription for extractable short stories, looking for sections of data that included the five key elements of a short story: past-future reference, self-reflective commentary, temporality, action, and story elements consisting of characters, setting, and plot (Barkhuizen, 2011; Barkhuizen, 2016). After identifying potential short stories, the researcher reread these excerpts to locate stories that would provide a developmental outline of each case's language learning history, using temporal markers and relevant characters within the stories as guides (Barkhuizen, 2016). One story was chosen for each case to represent major shifts in their learning experiences or identities.

Using Barkhuizen's (2016) heuristic for short story analysis—created in an attempt to address the need for a systematic procedure when conducting content analysis in narratives (Pavlenko, 2007)—the researcher coded each story line-by-line, noting the 'who', 'where', and 'when' mentioned in each line. 'Why', 'what', and 'how' were not coded at this stage as these aspects would be added in the context phase (Barkhuizen, 2016; Elliot, 2018). These were emergent codes as there was no theoretical basis for including or excluding data based on the characters, places, and times mentioned in the stories (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Cohen et al., 2017; Elliot, 2018; Révész, 2012). Consisting mainly of nondescript nouns, these codes were then contextualized on either a 'story', 'Story', or 'STORY' scale utilizing non-storied interview data to provide a basis for analysis. Short stories were coded on two separate occasions, two days apart, by the same researcher to ensure intra-coder reliability (Révész, 2012).

Discrepancies in codes were largely attributed to word choice as the central point of each codes remained consistent. Adopting Barkhuizen's (2016; 2017) format, lines are numbered, and orthographic features such as punctuation marks are kept to a minimum to emphasize focus on content.

3.4.4 *Justifiability, Reflexivity, and Transferability*

The concepts of reliability, validity, and generalizability do not readily apply to qualitative research (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). Dealing with a small, non-representative sample, findings are not meant to confirm or reject theories, but to supplement them (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). Scholars have proposed replacements for quantitative concepts suitable for qualitative research: justifiability, reflexivity, and transferability (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003;

Berger, 2015). According to Auerbach and Silverstein (2003), justifiability of interpretations refers to the steps taken by the researcher to ensure the research process is transparent, easy to understand, and coherent. This study meets this criterion by explaining the heuristic coding process and including tables and figures to illuminate the steps and stories contained within the study. Transferability refers to the extent to which themes established in the study can be applied to subjects outside of the study's target community (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). This study meets this criterion by broadening the scope of analysis beyond case-focused to 'STORY', discussed in more detail in sections 3.2.4 and 3.4.3 (Barkhuizen, 2008; Barkhuizen, 2016; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Finally, reflexivity addresses the researcher's positionality within the study and requires a reflection on their active role in the researcher and participant relationship that might be subject to their biases and power dynamics (Berger, 2015). This study addresses this criterion by acknowledging the researcher as insider in the target community, allowing the researcher to infer meaning and observe subtleties within responses where it would otherwise need to be explicitly stated. The researcher also shares characteristics with the participants that position the researcher closer to the ideal role of conversational partner rather than authority figure (Rubin & Rubin, 2005), although the interviewer-interviewee relationship often places the onus on the interviewee to provide appropriate answers. The researcher utilized responsive interviewing techniques to mitigate this effect (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

3.5 – Ethical Considerations

The ethics of this study were taken under careful consideration. Research was conducted according to the Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research provided by the British Educational Research Association, and a CUREC form detailing the ethical risks of the study was approved by the University of Oxford's Central University Ethics Committee (Appendix A). The central concern, discussions of topics pertaining to race and ethnicity, was assuaged by the researcher's insider role in the case community, eliminating the need for entry into the community and resolving outsider-insider power dynamic that could more easily lead to participant harm (Cohen et al., 2017).

The researcher also provided potential participants with information sheets encouraging them to contact the researcher if they had any questions or concerns (Appendix B). Those willing to participate in the study returned signed consent forms (Appendix C). The researcher also obtained verbal consent from participants before commencing with interviews. Following the completion of the interviews, participant names and identifying information were

pseudonymized, and all subsequent analysis and reporting of data only refers to the pseudonymized versions.

3.6 – Methodological Limitations

Despite the researcher’s best efforts to conduct methodologically sound research, this study has several limitations. Although case studies typically have small sample sizes, the initial use of convenience sampling to risked jeopardizing the integrity of the case study. Case studies need purposive sampling to ensure the chosen population is definable to allow for more ease of transferability of theories to other populations (Friedman, 2012; Hadley, 2019). More deliberation in the initial stages of research topic generation could have resulted in more precise sampling. In addition, the study utilizes one data source—interviews. Triangulation can provide insight into issues not particularly suited to verbal or narrative sharing (Duff, 2019). The study relies on one-time interviews ranging from 48 to 73 minutes, narrowing the amount of material that could be covered in-depth without risking participant interview fatigue (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). A longitudinal aspect could have remedied this limitation.

CHAPTER 4 — Findings

4.1 – Overview

This chapter presents the findings of the study. Each section pertains to one of the participants and includes a brief introduction of the participant, a summary of their short story, followed by the short story itself. Analyses of the short stories are divided according to Barkhuizen’s (2016) coding procedure: ‘who’, ‘where’, and ‘when’.

4.2 – Panyin

Panyin, a 21-year college student, logged into the interview perched on a faded floral couch in his family home. Headphones fully covered both of his ears, possibly in an effort to keep out the sounds of a sister, Ghanaian dad, and Sierra Leonean aunt in the background—all three members of his immediate family. His mom, who was African American, was not part of his everyday life, but he managed to pick up AAVE “just being everywhere” in his neighborhood,

which was “in a predominantly Black area and even though it had a huge West African population...it was still predominantly African American”. The diversity of his neighborhood gave him early exposure to Yoruba through friends and Sierra Leone Creole at church and from his aunt. At school, he began learning Spanish in the 7th grade as it was “the only foreign language available to us” and enrolled in Twi in addition to Spanish at university. At home, Panyin spoke AAVE with his sister and heard Ga and Ewe—two Ghanaian languages—from his dad, but only ever engaged with him in SE.

Table 2. Panyin’s Profile

Panyin		
	Timeline of Study	Context of Acquisition
SE	native	home, school (classroom)
AAVE	native	neighborhood, school (friends)
Spanish	7 th grade – 1 st year at uni	in-person language classes
Twi	1 st year at uni	virtual language classes

4.2.1 *How do I work on the things I don’t know?*

Panyin struggles to come to terms with his Spanish language learning history in this short story. Referring to the beginning of his experience, he recounts the stifling atmospheres that characterized his middle and high school Spanish classes, attributed to a hyper-focus on graded academic achievement. In college Spanish classes, he realizes that while the environment might be more accepting, he has internalized feelings of invalidation that have prevented him from asking questions or seeking help. He is unsure how to correct his past mistakes and move on. In the accompanying story, Panyin recounts a funny story from his Twi class, where his classmates support each other and reference AAVE to make Twi more accessible.

Short Story #1:

1. when I was in high school it was all about getting the highest grades
2. because even in middle school like you were tracked since it was all about getting the highest grades

3. and then it got to college and like there was just so many I feel like I mean I wish I had done my first year of college differently
4. I wish I had more outside support like I wish I had had like a personal tutor
5. I didn't know I could have one so I wish I'd had a personal tutor my first semester
6. because a lot of the mistakes that I like make now or like a lot of the things that I'm concerned about now
7. come from when I was too shy to ask questions or didn't feel safe or comfortable asking questions
8. I that's what I realized my second semester Spanish in college
9. I was like all the things I don't know are the questions that I had the things that questions that I never felt like I could ask
10. and so I wished from seventh grade on we had I guess just spaces that felt more inclusive for me to ask questions because I that's why I feel stuck
11. I don't know about all of those things now like how to go about them right
12. and it's not like do I want to retake the course or something
13. just kind of like I don't know how to I don't know
14. I'm still trying to figure out what does that look like
15. I'm still gonna take like Spanish courses
16. but like how do I work on the things that I don't know that I still don't know right
17. yeah I never did that so I think that's frustrating

Short Story #2:

18. what's really funny is
19. that sometimes when one of us had a hard time understanding a concept or knowing how to say something
20. one of us would just say to say it like a Black American
21. I remember one of my classmates said that
22. she was like “just say it like a Black American and you got it”
23. and that's what made it make sense

4.2.2 Who

Panyin’s short stories do not involve many characters and those not present seem to loom the largest. Line 2 mentions Panyin being ‘tracked’, something that occurred throughout middle school and high school. The people tracking his grades were likely teachers and school administration working on behalf of an education policy created to place academically excelling

students into advanced classes. As a young student, he was placed into fast-track, advanced classes on account of his grades and according to his third-grade teacher, “because of the way that [he] spoke and the way his [dad] was.”

Raised around African immigrants, Panyin noted his dad, aunt, and other senior African community members revered SE, speaking down on “poor” English spoken by immigrants and AAVE. He was held to a higher standard compared to his fully African American peers, as his dad worked to discount stereotypes surrounding single Black fathers by rearing academically high achieving, SE-speaking children. Thus, Panyin held two subordinate identities: a child/father relationship with the expectation to perform better than other children, and in advanced classes, a student/teacher relationship with the expectation to perform better than other students. Both identities were linked to SE preference and AAVE contempt. He attempted merging school and his AAVE-identity through speech and debate, an activity tracked students had available to them (lines 1, 2). However, coaches deemed his speeches written and spoken in AAVE as “too niche” and hard to understand, leading him to try SE speeches which immediately resulted in higher scores.

Thus, Panyin’s personal expression, best articulated through AAVE which he called his “default” was constrained to friendships and locked out of other parts of his life unless he was willing to meet derision. While speaking SE around his Black friends also came with comments of him “talking White,” White was not part of his identity while Black was. He assigned White to colonizers and thus, SE to be “the colonizers’ language.” Therefore, in this seemingly dichotomous situation, Panyin chose to side with AAVE. Strongly identifying with his AAVE identity also improved his Black status, as his ability to speak SE and his Ghanaian ethnic background were not always readily accepted by African Americans, who could not codeswitch into either identity. Unlike his Ghanaian classmates who were able to use ‘Black Americans’ as a frame of reference, the reverse was not the case (lines 20-23). Therefore, Panyin’s recognizable half-African American, fully Black identity solidified with AAVE usage. Prior to learning Twi, he seemed to invest entirely in the AAVE speech community, entering high school “kind of want[ing] to rebel against everybody” and “speck however the fuck [he] want[ed] to”. As his rebellion must have cooccurred with Spanish classes where Black teachers spoke SE and didn’t encourage community in the classroom or incorporate material exploring Black identity in the Spanish speech community, Panyin’s non-participation is not a shock. His identity was essentially shut out of the Spanish learning environment, making participation unlikely or even unwelcome (lines 7, 9, 10).

In college, Panyin entered a predominantly White Spanish language learning classroom for the first time. In another part of the interview, he explains how surprising it was to witness the confidence of his White classmates as they participated, possibly leading to his realization in line 9. No such realization was necessary in his Twi class, however, as the students collaborated with ease, even referring to AAVE as source material when completing assignments (lines 19-22). His classmates in the Twi class were Ghanaian as well, meaning both of his ethnic identities were invoked in a positive manner by those in his Twi language learning community, supporting his investment in the language (line 23). The contrast between Panyin's Spanish and Twi experiences could not be better described than through his own words, with 'funny' reserved for Twi and 'frustrating' reserved for Spanish (lines 17, 18).

4.2.3 Where

In his final year of high school Spanish, Panyin reported another level of dissatisfaction with the course. As the school was underfunded, he and his small number of classmates in the advanced class were forced to teach themselves. This may have been the reason why he did not know a tutor was available to him once in college, still expecting the same treatment in a new place (line 5).

Despite becoming aware of options available to him, Panyin still feels unsure about his next steps regarding Spanish, saying, 'I'm still trying to figure it out what does that look like' (line 13). He mentions social media as a place to interact with speakers, sharing the fact that he's "in a couple of Facebook groups and Duolingo if you're the type of person to use all the other features of the app are really helpful for feeling connected and these are free and just talking to people". Creating community online brings hope to his Spanish speech community dreams, as his interest lies in speaking to Spanish speakers with Afro-Latino backgrounds that are not represented in his Spanish classes, sharing "people don't know that there are like Black people who speak Spanish in Africa." These statements suggest the desire for 'spaces that felt more inclusive' in his Spanish classes was not just a desire for his voice to be heard, but also for speakers sharing his racial background to be included in the class material (line 10). Looking for a way to stay invested in Spanish, Panyin essentially recreates a different version of his Twi class, which is held virtually. His Twi classmates are spread out, physically at different universities and locations in the same way Spanish speakers in online are out of reach, but possibly more receptive.

4.2.4 *When*

Time in Panyin’s short story takes place parallel to the schools he attended or now attends. His actions and feelings in a temporal sense are bounded by his status as a middle schooler, high schooler, or college student. The past involves real pain (lines 7, 9, 10); the present involves reluctant persistence; (lines 11-13) the future includes rusty planning (lines 14, 15). He states himself that the high school Spanish situation “derailed” his Spanish in another part of the interview, which can be examined here in the context of him feeling ‘stuck’ (line 10). Future, beyond concern, has no place in the narrative of Spanish. Twi, on the other hand, while not mentioned in the short story, has an assigned imagined community of interacting with native speakers and family in Ghana, where he plans to go next year for research. The fact Twi has a clearly defined future while Spanish does not, suggests Panyin’s imagined future for Spanish has deteriorated.

4.3 – Janice

Janice, a 22-year-old Spanish teacher at an urban high school, kept her phone on the table next to her as the interview proceeded. The few times it rang out—maybe receiving texts from her Guyanese mom or African American dad—she quickly checked it and then jumped back into the conversation, showcasing the attentiveness and ability to multitask of someone used to working in fast-paced, service-focused environments as she had. In her hometown of Chicago, she attended a predominantly White school and received Spanish education early on. Her languages skills allowed her to take a job at a Mexican restaurant where she loved “seeing [customers’] faces brighten up when they realized that [she] spoke Spanish” but refused to call herself a Spanish speaker. Study abroad jaunts in Cuba and Spain changed her mind. Now a full-fledged multilingual, speaking Spanish, German, and Portuguese in addition to English, she “feels like there’s more of an incentive to go out and explore and learn about how other people live.”

Table 3. Janice’s Profile

Janice		
	Timeline of Study	Context of Acquisition
SAE	native	home, friends, school
AAVE		home (extended family), friends

native

Spanish	3 rd grade – 4 th year at uni, teacher	work, in-person language classes, study abroad
German	1 st – 4 th year at uni	in-person language classes, friend
Portuguese	1 st – 4 th year at uni	in-person language classes

4.3.1 I really feel like you are me 10 years ago.

In the following short story, Janice proclaims her newfound respect for her linguistic identity. Before taking classes in college that enlightened her, she felt that the way she spoke was a problem and something to be ashamed of. Her transformation has been so profound that teasing does not bother her anymore, and she feels comfortable speaking in any variety at the school where she teaches Spanish. By staying true to herself, she is able to help a young student reminiscent of her younger self. The level of comfort she has reached thanks to her studies is a state she believes everyone could benefit from.

1. I think taking my classes in college
2. and in kind of learning about the different ways that people speak and communicate with each other
3. and the different types of communities that are out there
4. I think I've learned to accept the way that I am and the way that I speak
5. so I don't necessarily find an issue with it like I can speak lightheartedly about my students making fun of my accent
6. or for example when I describe sprite as pop instead of soda they'll make fun of me
7. and even my friends will say something they'll be like pop is a genre of music
8. so I now can accept the fact that I speak different and be totally okay with that
9. it's just who I am and it's how I speak
10. and I feel like everybody can learn something from that
11. and I've noticed that in me accepting how I am and how I speak and you know my journey my linguistic journey
12. it's definitely helping some of the students
13. like I had one student come up to me this past semester

14. and he expressed that he was having trouble fitting in because he was a freshman at the school and he just moved to the school from a suburban predominantly white school
15. and now he's in this very urban school where all the kids speak AAVE
16. and he doesn't feel like he can fit in and he's really concerned because he's like I want to make friends and I want to them to like me and things like that
17. and I was like I really feel like you are me 10 years ago I was exactly that person
18. and he said that he felt comfortable coming to me with this information because he could tell by the day that I first spoke to him or introduced myself to him that I had some type of suburban background
19. and I love that I love that he felt comfortable coming to me
20. whereas if I were to put on a front and try to speak AAVE all the time while I'm at the school and try to pretend to be someone I'm not
21. then he wouldn't have necessarily felt comfortable coming to talk to me about his identity struggles and things like that
22. so I personally just at this moment do what comes naturally to me
23. and I don't have any shame about that and I feel very comfortable with who I am

4.3.2 *Who*

This short story centers Janice as a language learner, but from the perspective of her learning *about* languages rather than learning languages. She frequently mentions acceptance of who she is and how she is (lines 4, 9, 10, 23) in contrast to a version of herself from ten years ago (line 17). This prior person is implied to have been a false version of Janice who assumed the role of codeswitching based purely on context instead of comfort (line 20) and through that decision, would end up receiving comments or teasing from people who spoke differently than her that affected her internally (lines 2, 8).

The identities of those who spoke differently than her were not static in her life, explaining their impersonal descriptor. At times, they were her father's family members who were raised in a predominantly Black neighborhood and avid speakers of AAVE, while Janice moved to a predominantly White neighborhood and predominantly White school in second grade to participate in advanced classes. Her school, therefore, had people who spoke differently as well, coming from backgrounds based in SAE. She says she was often "the only Black kid in a lot of [her] classes" and felt by changing how she was and fixing her language through speaking SAE, she would feel belonging instead of "feeling too Black." Back at home, however, this switch led

to her extended family members asking her, “Janice, why are you talking so White?”. This is the Janice of ten years ago, “exactly that person” who was anxious as she felt pressured to respond linguistically to each environment to avoid isolation (line 17).

Janice is still around people who speak differently than her. Her students and friends, who are AAVE speakers, tease her for saying pop instead of soda, pointing to a regional variety distinction (lines 6, 7). Present-day Janice handles this in stride and chooses “to speak what comes naturally to [her]” (line 23), allowing her to assume positions of positive role model/confidant/helper in addition to her status as a teacher for the student that came to her (lines 13-21). Her own teacher, a professor at her university, was the one she learned radical acceptance from in lines 1-4. His acceptance of her AAVE and SAE identities meant her acceptance by extension into a profoundly small German community—himself and his two children. Barring her friendship with her professor and his kids, Janice does not have a personal connection to the German speech community.

Another character present in Janice’s short story is ‘everybody’ (line 10). While a self-described “people-pleaser” who might genuinely want to help everyone, Janice’s comment might truly be a veiled critique of her school administration and US foreign language policy. In a different part of the interview, she laments the apathy her colleagues and higherups present towards foreign languages, claiming their sidelining of foreign languages makes it difficult as a teacher to convince her students languages and “different types of communities” are worthy subjects. Janice’s school appears to be a microcosm of US foreign language policy as enrollment numbers are low and as of 2008, schools with lower socioeconomic student populations received less foreign language resources (Rhodes & Pufahl, 2009). Just as she has invested in Spanish and the futures of her students, Janice wishes for those in higher institutional and national roles to do the same by providing resources that would allow students to better understand the diversity and benefits of language.

4.3.3 *Where*

The bulk of Janice’s short story takes place in college and at her school workplace. She begins by crediting university classes with transforming her way of thinking, a pivotal point in her linguistic journey (lines 1-4, 11). Although the details of her university experience are not explicitly stated in her short story, the place—particularly in her introductory linguistics and German classrooms—is the source of her self-acceptance. Janice enrolled in a German course

to fulfill her university's foreign language requirement after missing the Spanish placement exam. She enjoyed the German professor's teaching so much that upon his recommendation, she elected to take his linguistics class the following semester. Janice proceeded to take four years of German, Spanish, and linguistics as a Spanish and linguistics major with German minor after fully intending to be pre-law psychology major.

She pursued this track because the course material affirmed her speaker status, providing an academic explanation for her struggle as an AAVE and SAE speaker. Not even knowing the term AAVE prior to taking the intro to linguistics course, she realized that there are indeed 'different ways that people speak and communicate with each other' and unfounded stereotypes accompany them, including being uneducated, which was an accusation she felt the need to combat through her use of SAE at predominantly White schools. As was the case for her student as well, predominantly White educational environments promote SAE and for those with different racial and ethnic backgrounds, this can cultivate feelings of inadequacy at the school or when returning home. For Janice, returning to a culturally African American home life after attending a predominantly White school was the problem, while her student seemed to struggle with attending a predominantly Black school then returning to a home that, although Black, may have been more in line with non-Black cultural norms (lines 14, 15). Either way, these 'different communities' became sites for intense identity construction and with the assistance of her professor (lines 3, 21), Janice was able to invest in her multilingual self rather than her AAVE and SAE selves separately. Her confidence as a multilingual English user likely aided her in pursuing foreign languages and even teaching one that was not her native language, mirroring her German professor—a non-native German speaker himself.

4.3.4 When

Snippets of temporal information appear in the short story: '10 years ago', 'the day that I first spoke', 'I can now accept', all refer to past and present points in time (lines 8, 17, 18). A time stamp with particular significance is in line 12, "it's definitely helping students." Helping could be interpreted as ongoing, an action she has done, is doing, and will continue to do. The help Janice offers, in conjunction with her insight into her 'linguistic journey', points to her future and imagined communities. As mentioned before, Janice describes herself as a "people-pleaser", often using her linguistic knowledge in service of others. In a part of the interview outside of the short story, she shares plans to apply for a government job dealing with language and diplomacy. Such a job would rely on her Spanish, German, and/or Portuguese. Investing in

her multilingual identity—which encompasses her English varieties—by helping primarily AAVE-speaking students learn Spanish bodes well for her achieving some version of her imagined community as a diplomat or in any role that would involve using to language to communicate and comfort.

4.4 – Amani

Amani, a 25-year-old about to embark on a PhD journey, had her hair wrapped in a scarf—possibly hailing from one the many countries she had visited—when joined the interview. She was excited to return to the classroom after a few years in workforce, a comment about classrooms she would be unlikely to make regarding language learning as she “preferred learning language outside of the classroom “. Her fluent Spanish was a result of immersive learning as a child in her neighborhood, spurred on by her African American mom. Learning language in a structured setting were unsettling at first, especially once confronting the same ethnoracial ties to language in Spanish and Portuguese that were present in English, a language which provided people with the opportunity to say, “Oh, you’re Black, but barely “, because of her speech and her Native American dad. Despite the challenges, Imani has every intention of learning “one or two more” languages to communicate with more people.

Table 4. Amani’s Profile

Amani		
	Timeline of Study	Context of Acquisition
SAE	native	home (older relatives), school
AAVE	native	home (cousins), friends
Spanish	pre-school – 4 th year at uni	neighborhood, friends, in-person language classes, study abroad
Portuguese	1 st – 4 th year at uni	in-person language classes, study abroad
Swahili	1 st – 2 nd year at uni	in-person language classes, study abroad

4.4.1 *I'm not gonna speak English to my kids.*

The following short story is about Amani's language plans for her future children. Depending on the linguistic background of her spouse, she will provide her children with one of her languages and her spouse will provide the other. Neither language will be English, which will be acquired from time spent with her family in both varieties, SAE and AAVE. She discusses the importance of raising multilingual children equipped with the skills and traits desirable for interaction with a variety of people. Although she does not provide a definitive answer on the languages her children will learn, she speculates Swahili will be declared the lingua franca of Africa within the next decade, and therefore, will likely be the language she teaches them.

1. **Amani:** if I have kids
2. I think I would consider okay you know what does my partner speak
3. and kind of balance so that my kids have good exposure
4. because I've already told my mom I'm not gonna speak English to my kids yeah that's just gonna be like the policy
5. they'll learn they'll learn that when I spend time with you
6. but I wanna speak one language to them their father will speak another
7. and then by the time I know there's a gap in terms of how they meet the same I guess reading and writing standards of kids that are typically monolingual but what's first grade versus third grade like
8. **Researcher:** it balances out eventually anyway
9. **Amani:** right yeah so I want them to have like that really strong foundation of language
10. and so whether that language is Spanish or Portuguese or Swahili I don't know
11. it really depends on what their dad speaks
12. but I want them to have that exposure so that it's challenging them
13. because I think there's a lot you learn from being able to communicate with people and being able to communicate with so many different types of people
14. but also being humble enough to realize that the one language you do know is not going to get you everywhere and you shouldn't expect it to
15. at the same time yeah I'm not sure which language I would actually teach them it really just depends I think yeah
16. I've been looking just a lot of articles look which language will kind of be the official language of the continent there's been a lot of back and forth
17. honestly I think it should be Swahili and that's what I would imagine it being ten years from now

18. so it's probably what I'll teach my kids.
19. **Researcher:** and how about AAVE would that be something important to you for your kids to know
20. **Amani:** I struggle with this a lot in terms of identity
21. how do I express what my identity is to my kids and how it relates to them
22. I think part of me is just wanting to spite people who don't like AAVE I really I think that's part of it
23. but I also recognized same thing like the cousins that I grew up with
24. who I guess would be their older cousins but in my family we just call them aunts and uncles
25. like those would be they will learn they will still learn that from them
26. and so there's a lot of different I think types of language that they would learn or be exposed to
27. and I think just depending on you know where I raise my kids and what the current context looks like
28. and you know what exposes them the most is what I would want to share with them

4.4.2 *Who*

Amani begins her story with an overt mention of one of her imagined communities. Speaking hypothetically, she shares plans to raise multilingual children with a partner who also speaks a language other than English (lines 1-3). She positions herself and her future partner as the manufacturers of a multilingual environment for their children, implying her own identification as a multilingual with access to communities that would allow her to meet such an individual. The languages she mentions her partner potentially speaking, 'Spanish or Portuguese or Swahili,' (line 10) align with languages spoken in the countries she has studied abroad and/or done research in: Tanzania, Mozambique, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Portugal, Brazil, Kenya. Through her travels, she has established friendships around the world and confirmed in a different part of the interview that she felt a member of each respective speech community. Lines 12, 13, and 26 reveal her desire for her children to be prepared for diverse life experiences, believing a multilingual upbringing would be 'challenging' for them and set them up for 'being able to communicate with so many different types of people.' In this way, she has already invested in the linguistic lives of her imagined offspring who could grow up to be at minimum bilingual and at maximum, transnational, cosmopolitan individuals.

The proposed childhood of her imagined future family does not differ too drastically from her own. Amani's mom still plays an important role in her life as she delegates her mom to be the children's English language teacher (lines 4, 5). When prompted on the presence of AAVE in the children's repertoire, she then mentions her cousins as sources (lines 23-25). Here, the divide between SAE and AAVE in her childhood comes into the foreground. Amani's mom, as well as her grandparents and other older relatives, spoke and promoted SAE in the household. With her cousins, Amani spoke AAVE, and the elder members of the family would admonish them, saying, "Oh, why are you speaking Ebonics? You should speak proper English." This hints at a generational divide in AAVE usage. Despite her mom's preference for the standard variety of English, her mom also dedicated time to exposing Amani to Spanish. Just as Amani wishes for her children to receive 'exposure' and a 'really strong foundation' in languages (lines 3, 9, 12, 28), she credits her mom with giving her the same as she was encouraged to play with Caribbean and Puerto Rican children in her neighborhood who taught her Spanish.

Her upbringing prepared her for a future filled with transnational friends and travel, explaining her desire to have children cut of the same cloth. However, nostalgia is not the only factor at play as Amani mentions monolingual kids as a point of comparison (line 7). Demonstrated in the way she dismisses the vocabulary size lag that can occur in bilingual children with 'I guess' and 'but what's first grade versus third grade like,' Amani touches on concerns often raised by monolinguals and expresses disdain for that lifestyle (line 7). Her distaste for monolingualism seems to extend to the English language as a whole (line 14). In another part of the interview, regarding the English phonetic system, she claims, "...that really irritates me about English is just how unnecessarily complex it is in ways that don't provide any true value." This statement in conversation with her decision not to speak English to her children paints the picture of someone not invested in her English-speaker identity, eschewing it for a multilingual identity of Spanish, Portuguese, and Swahili better suited to bring her imagined future family to life.

Her AAVE-speaker identity becomes relevant when addressing identity, however likely in terms of ethnoracial rather than linguistic identity (lines 20-21). Given her multilingual identity is well-established early in the short story, she only mentions AAVE when prompted (line 19) and links its significance to 'spit[ing] people who don't like AAVE' (line 22). In this case, AAVE is not an important part of her future or, despite a brief contemplation on identity, a critical component to expressing her identity. People who don't like AAVE are likely of the older generation of African Americans as stated before or White people, mentioned in another part of the interview where she experienced microaggressions at school and in the workplace.

In these environments, however, her Black identity was enough to warrant discrimination as “no one’s gonna question [her] being Black” in the US.

4.4.3 *Where*

This short story takes place in largely abstract, undefined locations. Wherever Amani’s children would receive the most exposure to language inputs ‘depending on you know where [she] raise[s] [her] kids’, that is where her imagined family resides (line 27). The location of Amani’s upbringing also defined her introduction into multilingualism, as she was surrounded by Spanish speakers who “were like [her] skin color”. “[She] grew up earning with them and from them” through immersion. Thus, they provided her initial sense of the language and so when she arrived in the classroom, her Spanish suddenly became incorrect. “[She] was baffled...everything [she] learned was a lie,” she shared, as her teachers would mark her wrong in cases where they were simply synonyms. Although the lack of tolerance for Spanish vocabulary used by non-White Spanish speakers was upsetting, she found it helpful to approach a more “neutral” version of Spanish that would allow her to reach more people. In this way, her neighborhood and school were the contexts for her exposure to ‘different...types of language’ which gave her access to more Spanish speakers and the places where they live, the same thing she wants for her children (lines 26-27).

The two locations explicitly stated, ‘everywhere’ (line 14) and ‘the continent’ (line 16), are equally undefined at first glance. In this case, everywhere refers to the communities and opportunities her children will have access to by being multilingual. The arrogance ascribed to monolinguals, in Amani’s opinion, will likely close doors for them as they will not have the capabilities required to deal with ‘a lot of different...types of language that [her children] would learn and be exposed to’ (line 26). Her children will be able to travel and connect with people as they do, just as she does.

Africa is the continent Amani refers to in line 16. Drawing on a vision of pan-Africanism, she predicts Swahili will be the official language spoken continent-wide. If this were the case, she would teach her children Swahili. It is unclear if it would be her specifically, but ‘the continent’ represents a place where she could meet the Swahili-speaking partner necessary for building her imagined family. Africa could also be a place where her multilingual and Black identities coexist more peacefully, as family members in the US questioned her Blackness based on her multiethnic background and “neutral” speech, saying, Her African American and Native

American ethnic identities and her English on a continuum between SAE and AAVE might meet a community of acceptance in Africa, where she has already felt welcomed in Mozambique, Kenya, and Tanzania. It is clear that place for Amani is likely beyond US borders.

4.4.4 When

The vast majority of Amani's short story occurs in the future. It is not a definite, planned future, as she opens with 'if' she has children, passing down language to her children is something she has thought about before (line 1). Her conversation with her mom about excluding English in her future home indicates this thought has been brewing for some time (line 4). She also spent time reading about official language in Africa, aging her prediction as well (line 16). Since that conversation in the past, her present displays uncertainty as she does not settle on a language to pass down or a way to express her identity (lines, 11, 15, 18, 17, 21). After deciding the languages her children will learn, her confidence in her future will be high as she has set firm expectations for what should happen in her own life and outside as well.

CHAPTER 5 — Discussion

5.1 – Overview

This chapter will discuss the findings of the short story in conversation with relevant studies in an effort to provide potential answers to the following the research questions for this study:

1. How do the participants assign value to the speech communities of each of their languages?
 - c. To what extent does identifying as an AAVE speaker influence their evaluations?
 - d. To what extent does identifying as multiethnic and monoracial influence their evaluations?
2. How do their identities (AAVE speaker and multiethnic/monoracial) and speech community evaluations impact their language investment and imagined communities?

5.2 – External Ideology Index

A factor underlying each short story was ideological conflict concerning the appropriate places for a language to be spoken and by who. Due to their identities as AAVE speakers, outside opinions on the speech communities they were expected belong to—and opinions of the members within those communities—were almost a guarantee. Ogbu (1999, p. 152) refers to such a situation as “a speech community with both diglossia and bilingualism but the frames of reference for the two languages or dialects are oppositional,” which is the form of diglossia present characterizing the relationship between SAE and AAVE. The frame of reference for AAVE speakers is that SAE is in direct conflict with AAVE, meaning to become more proficient in one entails a reduction in ability or abandonment of the other (Ogbu, 1999; Segalowitz et al., 2009). Each participant has connections to individuals or institutions that stand on each side of the frame of reference. Unlike Japanese-English bilinguals in Kanno’s (2003) book, who after spending time studying away in primarily English-speaking countries

were welcomed back to Japan with a higher status for having the ability to engage in and communicate with two different cultures, those who return to an African American community with SAE are looked down upon. Due to ideology, proficiency in two English varieties does not result in increased symbolic capital. Existing in the middle of the frame of reference is a disorienting experience, as they must assume their SAE identity for acceptance in academic and White settings and must shed that identity completely when entering Black spaces using AAVE.

In this case, even if the participants are comfortable with their bilingual English identities, they must navigate external language ideology battles. Ideology serves as an underlying societal rulebook (Darvin & Norton, 2015). Those that subscribe to it have identities that support the societal structure through their behavior, aligning their goals with the values of their ideology (Darvin & Norton, 2015). In a language situation, not aligning with prevailing ideology could mean having your identity stripped away or denied by those that feed into the dominant narrative. Panyin, Janice, and Amani, not aligning on the account of being AAVE and SAE speakers, use the amount of expected ideological pushback to their identity to determine which speech communities they place the most value in and invest in, presently referred to as the external ideology index.

Panyin exemplifies use of the external ideology index. Associating SE with Whiteness but needing the language to excel at school where his voice is not appreciated and keep the peace at home, he adopts SE only to receive critical comments about talking white from friends—the ones who accept his desire to express through AAVE. The ideological pushback from his dad and teachers is not as isolating as the pushback from his friends who, to an extent, share a similar ideology as Panyin. Instead of continuing to straddle both identities equally, Panyin decides the AAVE identity and the ideological pushback that comes with it is more worthwhile, allowing for community connection. Speaking in SE would cut him off from his friends and leave him with a community of people tracking him and his achievements. As his Spanish classes uphold a similar SE framework, with SE speaking teachers and centering of non-Black material, Panyin also retreats from the Spanish speaking community. Similar to how Katarina, a Polish woman in Norton's (2001) study decides to stop attending a supplementary English course after the teacher ridicules her English level, Panyin does not participate or invest in the Spanish classroom, as the main interests of his Spanish classes are supported by an opposing ideology that he has decided to not to fight against.

Janice and Amani also demonstrate the use of an external ideology index in the relative ease of engaging with and entering their foreign language speech communities. Beyond disagreements on grading with Amani's teachers, neither report negative experiences in their foreign languages and both are eager to interact with individuals within those speech communities. The participants might ask themselves the following question: Does belonging to this speech community require extensive ideological negotiation in various contexts? While the answer is almost always yes for AAVE and SE in the US, their foreign languages fair well. Results from Moore (2005) lend credence to this index as African American students with counselors who told them languages classes would be too difficult for them—promoting a language ideology—were unlikely to enroll in foreign language courses in college. Deciding the fight against ideology too much, they may have decided to remain invested solely in their monolingual identities.

5.3 – Culture within Immediate Community

Another question the participants appeared to ask themselves when determining the value of a speech community was: Does belonging to this speech community connect me with more people of my racial/ethnic background in my day-to-day life? Garrett and Young (2009) explore the concepts of immediate and distant community in their study. Garrett acts as both researcher and participant in the study, learning Portuguese over eight weeks in an intensive course. She cites relationships with her teachers and classmates as helpful, crediting even more help from cultural connections to Brazil made in the classroom (Garrett & Young, 2009). Culture and immediate community assist her in her learning experience. Anya's (2011) study also points of the relevance of community and culture. Each of the five successful Black foreign language learners in her study reported a sense of community and opportunities for global ethnoracial solidarity as important aspects in their language learning systems. Panyin, Janice, and Amani highlight the importance of community access and cultural significance in their experiences, as the absence of a relevant community could lead to declines in investment and its presence could lead to the realization of imagined communities.

For Amani, each of her foreign languages provide opportunities for more ethnoracial connections in her daily life, especially considering her imagined community of multilingual children and a multilingual partner engaging with various cultures. The connection is especially clear with Spanish as acquiring the language allowed her to interact with her Puerto Rican and Caribbean neighbors, expanding the size of the racial community she could identify with right

outside her door. Now, she has invested in the language to the point she considers herself able to pass it on to her children. This question regarding culture and immediate community also applies to her AAVE and SE identities. Amani attributes SAE with the older generation of African Americans. Those that speak it to her have been in her life and are the ones that will teach her children SE. Similarly, her AAVE community is also strong with extended family and friends speaking it but given her imagined community being centered towards travel, AAVE would not introduce her to more racial community members where she is headed. This could partially explain her low investment in both English varieties and high investment in her foreign languages.

Panyin eagerly invests in Twi which allows him to meet Ghanaian classmates, who although limited to an online space, serve as his immediate community. Technology allows for distant communities to become closer as seen in two of Norton's studies (Norton & Kamal, 2003; Norton et al., 2011). Working with young Ugandan woman, Norton, Jones, and Ahimbisibwe (2011) led a course on digital literacy to help cultivate online research skills in the women so they could locate HIV/AIDS material. The course led the women to develop new identities and new imagined communities, imagining themselves as participants in an international space (Norton et al., 2011). Once in constrained to Uganda, they were suddenly potential conversation partners and therefore, potential speech community members of people around the world (Norton et al., 2011). The community came closer. Norton and Kamal (2003) share a similar story with Pakistani children. They viewed English as a gateway to the world and technology as the gateway to both English and global society (NK). Internet breeds immediacy in both cases, and does so for Panyin, too, but not with regards to Spanish.

While his investment in Twi soars, Panyin's Spanish investment stagnates. The lack of Afro-Latino and Black Spanish speaker material and actual access pose problems. As far back as 1987, Kennedy (1987) wrote a piece about how to incorporate Black identity content into Spanish classroom. While his analysis is somewhat problematic—only referring to non-Spanish speaking countries in Latin America with large Black communities as ways to introduce Latino culture—few attempts to address this issue seem to have made it into Spanish classrooms. In Moore's (2005) study, Spanish was the most learned language among the African American students and increase in cultural instruction was one of the most recommended adjustments to enroll more students. While it's unclear whether the Facebook groups and social media Panyin has joined to provide ways to connect with Black Spanish speakers, it is clear that without the internet to bring the culturally relevant community within reach, the low level of Spanish

investment will remain as the answer to previously proposed question would be a resounding ‘no’. Janice invests in SE and AAVE as they both can help her connect with more of her Black students—those who speak SE and struggle to fit in socially and those who speak AAVE and struggle to fit in academically. The one case where investment in both English varieties remains at a relatively high level, Janice has the chance to meet new people with her racial background speaking these varieties every year with a new class.

5.4 – Transnational Transformation

The final set of questions operating in the participants’ speech community evaluations process are tied more closely with the racial and ethnic aspects of their identities: Does this speech community offer me a more multilingual/transnational identity? Will this speech community, in relation to my existing identities, lead to a more “neutral” identity?

Dagenais (2003) conducted a longitudinal study on 12 families in Vancouver, with nine of the families being from immigrant backgrounds. Defining transnationalism as identifying with two or more nations with respect to their key cultural practices, contrasted to active assimilation, Dagenais (2003) explored the relationship between transnationalism and multilingualism in the parents. The immigrant parents invested heavily in promoting multilingualism within their children with the goal of replacing the “immigrant” child identity with a transnational one. Associating multilingualism with greater opportunity career-wise and relocation-wise, the parents pushed dominant languages that would allow their children to go anywhere and become anyone (Dagenais, 2003).

The multiethnic identities of Amani and Janice seem to take a backseat to their racial identities. Only Panyin appears to have observable and sustained expressions of both ethnic identities, with his Ghanaian identity appearing in an individual capacity after learning Twi. Before Twi, Panyin was Ghanaian simply because his dad was as he had not been taught any native Ghanaian languages. The flourishing of his Ghanaian identity boosts the multilingual and transnational identities that lay dormant as Twi reconnects Panyin to family still in Ghana that he plans to visit. While Ghanaian ethnic identity does not necessarily “neutralize” his identity as the stigma related to AAVE and being Black in the US do not go away, his Black identity extends from purely diasporic to having valid roots in a foreign nation with a culture he could connect with, thus a transnational identity.

Amani and Janice also adopt multilingual, transnational identities that distance them from their AAVE speaking and Black identities. Both choose foreign languages—excluding Spanish—with speaker populations that are significantly larger abroad than in the US. Amani travels to these places often and plans to find a spouse with a connection to those places and languages. Janice plans to take on a diplomatic roll, meaning her communications will be aimed outward as well. Her acceptance of all of her linguistic abilities seems to signal a multilingual individual with languages as subcategories rather than an AAVE, Spanish, German, and Portuguese. The same could be said for Amani, who pushes away from her English ties to establish her future in a multilingual fashion, open to any combination of languages in her future household as long as they are not English.

CHAPTER 6 — Conclusion

6.1 – Revisiting the Research Questions

6.1.1 How do the participants assign value to the speech communities of each of their languages? To what extent does identifying as [an AAVE speaker / multiethnic and monoracial] influence their evaluations?

The participants calculated the predicted amount of external ideological conflict they would encounter if they subscribed to a speech community. Their experiences as bilingual AAVE and SE speakers informed these decisions as they were well-acquainted the ideological tension that accompanied claiming two English varieties in a US context where diglossia is shaped by different language frames of reference. They also determine speech community value based on whether the community offers a connection to people with shared cultural, ethnic, or racial background within an easily accessible range, either physically or virtually. Seeking a community that could supply support and potentially a more well-defined and accepted racial or ethnic identity spurred this factor. Finally, they assessed the speech community's value given its ability to provide with a multilingual or transnational identity subsuming their pre-existing selves, possibly in an effort to distance themselves from stigmatized identities and reap symbolic capital.

6.1.2 How do their identities [an AAVE speaker / multiethnic and monoracial] and speech community evaluations impact their language investment and imagined communities?

Using the aforementioned evaluation strategies, the participants adjusted their investment in a language and its community based on its evaluation. Imagined communities seemed to arise from the third evaluation standard more readily as each participant had desires to speak to a wider community of speakers in a non-US context. Investment rose and fell sharply depending on the availability of an accessible, culturally relevant community. Not wanting to be consistently subjected to the sting of existing outside of structures defined by ideology, they lessened their investment in languages that were especially stigmatized and did not articulate their imagined communities unless adopting the identity in direct opposition of the prevailing ideology.

6.2 – Implications

The findings in this study have implications for understandings of Black identity in a foreign language learning context. Discrepancies between speakers' investment and imagined communities can at times be attributed to their ethnic backgrounds rather than their racial identity. A nuanced approach to understanding the motivations of Black language learners could help identify what language ideologies they or their surrounding social contacts are operating under, which in turn would allow teachers to dismantle any language ideologies that might leave learners feeling defective or invalidated. If feelings of invalidity were addressed, Black students might be more likely enroll in foreign language classes and sustain their practice.

Short story analysis provides a vignette of participant's life that captures context in an efficient thorough manner. This format is especially suited for studying the lives of those in marginalized communities as it presents each factor that could play a role in their language learning journey.

6.3 – Limitations

This study has several limitations. The data was collected, analyzed, and reported on by one researcher. Given the subjectivity and constructive view for constructing identity and narrative adopted in this study, it would be helpful to include more perspectives when interpreting the

data. Discourse or conversation analysis would have been a useful way to unspool meaning from the data. The study also utilizes the short story analysis method which is a heuristic and has not been consistently applied in the field. [Questions were basic or something]

6.4 – Further Research Recommendations

Future research should continue exploring this community more in-depth as there is no existing research connecting AVVE with foreign language learning. Nonstandard variety speakers in other languages or other English varieties also deserve a closer look. The negotiation of identities in relation to racial and ethnic identity should not be a sensitive topic to be avoided, but one to be confronted so everyone—no matter their background—can find home in their language or find a language to call home.

CHAPTER 7 — References

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CHAPTER 8 — Appendices

Appendix A – CUREC Form

Fw: MSc Applied Linguistics for Second Lan [REDACTED] sition/Applied Linguistics for
Language Teaching CUREC application for [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] < [REDACTED] >

Wed 4/14/2021 4:34 PM

To: [REDACTED] < [REDACTED] >

CUREC guidance on research involving human participants,
<https://researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/governance/ethics/coronavirus>.
If relevant please also check the CUREC website for their best practice research
guides, <https://researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/governance/ethics/resources/bpg>
Good luck with your research study,
Keep well and safe,
All good wishes,
Katharina
Member, DREC

On 3 Mar 2021, at 09:17, Student CUREC
<student.curec@education.ox.ac.uk> wrote:

Dear Katharina

Please find attached CUREC application ED-CIA-21-159 for [REDACTED].

Best wishes
Sandra Montgomery
Temporary Admin Assistant

From: Student CUREC <student.curec@education.ox.ac.uk>
Date: Tuesday, 2 March 2021 at 17:00
To: Student CUREC <student.curec@education.ox.ac.uk>
Subject: MSc Applied Linguistics for Second Language Acquisition/Applied
Linguistics for Language Teaching CUREC application for [REDACTED]

A CUREC application has been submitted by [REDACTED] for [REDACTED].
<Curec 1a FORM - [REDACTED] - [REDACTED].docx>

Katharina Ereky-Stevens

Postdoctoral Researcher
University of Oxford | Department of Education
15 Norham Gardens, Oxford. OX2 6PY
☎: 07800986276
✉: katharina.ereky@education.ox.ac.uk
Web: www.education.ox.ac.uk



Appendix B – Participant Information Sheet

Department of Education
University of Oxford
15 Norham Gardens
Oxford
OX2 6PY



On the day of the interview, you will use the link to access the interview. I will interview you for no more than two hours. I will ask for your consent to record audio and video so that I can transcribe the interview for data analysis. These recordings and transcripts will be deleted at the end of the research project. You can ask to pause or end the interview at any time.

What are the advantages / disadvantages of taking part?

The research may give you the opportunity to reflect on your language learning experience and consider your future goals. I can offer advice regarding future language study in college or in a career if you indicate that you are interested. There is potential risk for the theft of confidential/personal data. Steps taken to minimize this risk are detailed below.

What happens to the data provided?

The information you provide during the study is the **research data**. Any research data from which you can be identified (name, school name, email address, ethnic identity, audio and video recordings) is known as **personal data**.

Personal / sensitive data will be stored in my password-protected computer in encrypted files. The data will also be backed up to the university's Nexus365 OneDrive for Business storage system. This information will be handled with the utmost care to protect your privacy and will be deleted at the end of the research project. Consent forms will be retained by the researchers for 3 years after publication of the work of the research, following university policy.

Other research data includes transcripts of the interview and reported data. Transcripts of the interview and reported data will be pseudonymized, meaning I will use fake names when referring to you. This data will be stored for 3 years after publication or public release of the work of the research, should the project be published or publicly released.

I, [REDACTED] will have access to the research data. Responsible members of the University of Oxford, such as my supervisor may be given access to data for monitoring and/or audit of the research.

Will the research be published?

The research may be published in the University archives.

The University of Oxford is committed to the dissemination of its research for the benefit of society and the economy and, in support of this commitment, has established an online archive of research materials. This archive includes digital copies of student theses successfully submitted as part of a University of Oxford postgraduate degree programme. Holding the archive online gives easy access for researchers to the full text of freely available theses, thereby increasing the likely impact and use of that research.

The research will be written up as a student's thesis. On successful submission of the thesis, it may be deposited both in print and online in the University archives to facilitate its use in future research. If so, the thesis will be openly accessible.

Participants can request a summary of the results or a copy of the thesis at the end of the study.

Who is conducting this research?

The research project is organized by [REDACTED] of Oxford University, who is a master's student. This study has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the University of Oxford's Central University Research Ethics Committee, ED-CIA-21-159.

What if there is a problem?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, please contact [REDACTED] (email: [REDACTED]) or [REDACTED] (email: [REDACTED]), and we will do our best to answer your query. I/we will acknowledge your concern within 10 working days and give you an indication of how it will be dealt with. If you remain unhappy or wish to make a formal complaint, please contact Dr. Liam Gearon, Chair of the Education Department Research Ethics Committee at the University of Oxford (email: liam.gearon@education.ox.ac.uk) who will seek to resolve the matter as soon as possible.

Data Protection

The University of Oxford is the data controller with respect to your personal data and, as such, will determine how your personal data is used in the study.

The University will process your personal data for the purpose of the research outlined above. Research is a task that we perform in the public interest.

Further information about your rights with respect to your personal data is available from <https://compliance.web.ox.ac.uk/individual-rights>.

What should I do next?

Please fill out the attached consent form and return it to the researcher via email ([REDACTED]) if you would like to take part in this study. Please remember that you may withdraw at any time, without penalty and without giving a reason, by notifying the researcher.

If you would like to discuss the research with someone beforehand (or if you have questions afterwards), please contact [REDACTED] using the contact details provided at the top of this information sheet.

Appendix C – Participant Consent Form

Department of Education
University of Oxford
15 Norham Gardens
Oxford
OX2 6PY



[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

CUREC Approval Reference: ED-CIA-21-159

Ideas of identity and investment in language communities among AAVE speakers learning foreign languages

- You have been invited to take part in a study run by Oxford University looking at the language learning experiences and future language learning goals of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) speakers learning foreign languages.
- If you choose to take part, a researcher will conduct a one-time interview with you via Microsoft Teams.
- If you are happy to take part, please fill in the form below and email it to the researcher ([Redacted]) as soon as possible.
- To find out more about the study, please read the attached information sheet.

Please initial each box if you agree with each statement.

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| 1) I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above research. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2) I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any point without giving any reason. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3) I understand how to raise a concern or make a complaint. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4) I understand that the project has received ethics clearance through the University of Oxford's ethical approval process for research involving human participants. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5) I understand who will have access to the data, how it will be stored and what will happen to the data at the end of the study. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6) I consent to being audio recorded. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7) I consent to being video recorded. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8) I understand how audio recordings / videos will be used in research outputs. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9) I consent to the use of quotations in research outputs if I am not identifiable. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10) I agree to take part in the above study. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

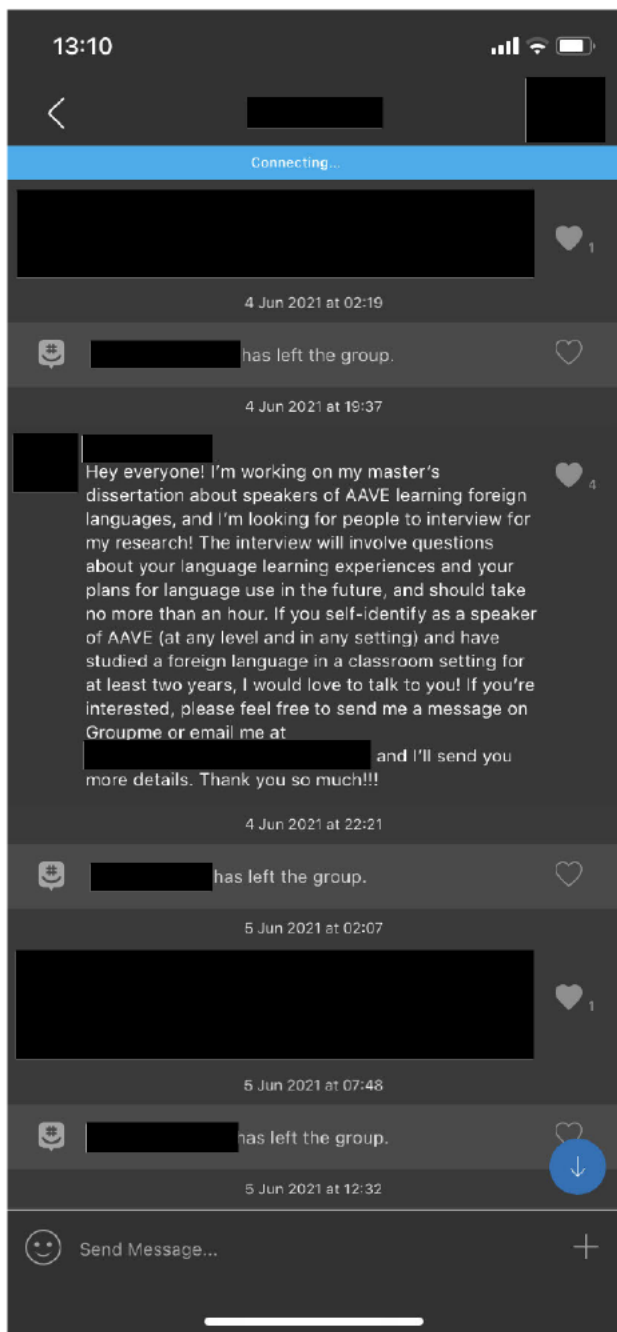
Name of participant: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name of researcher: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

If you would like to receive a summary of the research results, please check this box. A summary will be sent to the email address provided in September.



Appendix E– Interview Schedule