

Title: Standard Language Ideology and the Potential for Bias in Middle School Classrooms

Courtney West

Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK

Abstract

In this study, I aimed to find in what ways teachers' were aware of the potential for bias against non-standard dialects in the classroom, and what ways this awareness or lack thereof displayed in teaching practices. Since the standard language ideology is so prevalent, there is potential for bias against non-standard dialects in the classroom. The PASS Standards for Oklahoma exhibit this ideology as well, encouraging teachers to use this ideology in instruction. The standard language ideology is a bias toward "standard English" over that of other dialects.

There were three different participants in this study, all middle school teachers in middle Oklahoma. They participated in an interview, allowed me to observe one class period, and provided documents (anonymized and coded graded papers, rubrics, assignment sheets) for analysis. The questions in the interview were meant to gauge teachers' attitudes towards language and grammar and attitudes toward non-standard dialects, as well as awareness of potential for bias. The observation was meant to observe grammar instruction or to see how teachers used language in the classroom. I was able to see how teachers corrected students and what kind of errors they corrected verbally. When analyzing graded papers, I looked for which errors teachers corrected and on which students' papers they emphasized correction. Since the papers were anonymized and coded for gender and ethnicity, I was able to see on what papers teachers graded differently.

The results of this study showed that each participant was unaware of the potential for bias against non-standards dialects, and this bias displayed, albeit in different ways for each

participant. Teachers generally believed that their students' language was lacking and that by being able to speak "standard" English, their students' prospects would improve. With this standard language ideology, teachers may sometimes display subtle biases against non-standard dialect speakers in instruction, correction, and assessment.

1 Introduction

Researchers have found that biases may be exhibited in teachers' pedagogy, and these biases affect student enthusiasm and dropout rates (Cooper 103, Wayman 34). Jeffrey Wayman found that Mexican-American students were more likely to perceive bias than other students, and students who perceive bias are more at risk of dropping out (31). The Conference on College Composition and Communication stated as far back as 1974, "As English teachers, we are responsible for what our teaching does to the self-image and the self-esteem of our students" ("Students' Rights" 4). Teachers' interactions with students have consequences. Teacher biases surrounding grammar and student language are particularly interesting because speakers are often unaware of the false ideologies they have surrounding the idea of a standard language. For example, at the time of this research, teachers are tasked by the state of Oklahoma with improving student grammar (see Oklahoma PASS standards), which is based on the idea that there is a "correct" and an "incorrect" English. The term "Standard English" is used 45 times in the PASS Standards; the first instance is in the standards for first grade (Grade 1, Standard 3). This assumption provides the opportunity for bias in grammar instruction. For example, if a student asks a content-related question using non-standard speech, a teacher may correct his grammar instead of answering his question. After this incident, the student may not be comfortable asking questions for fear of reprimand. The dialect correction becomes a knowledge

barrier. Teachers may not even realize this potential for bias exists, since the idea that there is a single standard language is so prevalent in our society, and the PASS standards explicitly rely on this ideology (Lippi-Green, “Language Ideology” 291).¹

Standard language is a myth. When asked to define Standard American English, the majority of Americans claim it is the language of the educated, or the language that an unnamed expert has deemed correct (Lippi-Green, *English With an Accent* 59). Though this belief is widespread, there is no authority given to an unnamed expert that allows them to dictate correct English usage. It is impossible given the immense regional, cultural, and social differences and shifts that occur in English constantly. Despite the “standard” English myth, the PASS standards (and the Common Core State Standards for that matter) are written in a way that does not acknowledge this. The PASS standards include two separate ideologies: that there is a standard English language at all and that spoken language should look exactly like written language. Teachers are immersed in the idea that using language one way, the “standard” way, is better than another way. This leaves the potential for bias against nonstandard dialects because teachers are encouraged to judge student language against the mythical “standard.” Teachers may unfairly judge student abilities, react poorly to student language, and discourage student participation because of inequitable treatment.

For every grade, the Oklahoma PASS standard dictates: “Standard English Usage - [Students will] demonstrate correct use of Standard English in speaking and writing as appropriate to [each] grade” (Oklahoma Pass Standard 3.1). This PASS standard assumes that there is a standard for both written and spoken English, but it does not say that they have to look exactly the same, leaving some interpretation in the standards for both. However, the oral

¹ This research was conducted when the PASS Standards for Oklahoma education were in effect. In 2016-2017 school year, Oklahoma will implement new standards. This did not affect my research, as participants were teaching to the PASS standards.

language section of the PASS standards states: “[the student will] use the same Standard English conventions for oral speech that are used in writing.” This explicitly aligns the standards of written English with that of spoken English. This is different than merely requiring a spoken standard. The idea that spoken language should reflect that of written language is unrealistic. Writing systems are used so that a reader will understand decontextualized information, and this information can be understood throughout time (Lippi-Green, *English With an Accent* 18). Spoken language is constantly changing and varies across both regional and social spaces; regulating it is impossible. If teachers believe, or are asked by the State to believe, that there is a single correct language for both written and spoken language, they may exhibit subtle biases against non-standard English speakers.

With a standard ideology, the non-standard is perceived as less educated or sophisticated. Even with more linguistic training, teachers will still be required to tell their students to “use the same Standard English conventions for oral speech that are used in writing” (Oklahoma PASS Standard Grades 6-12). This requirement leaves the potential for bias undeniable, but the question remains as to in what ways teachers themselves are aware of this potential bias, or even view it as bias at all. Since teacher ideology has been found to manifest in pedagogy, how does this awareness (or lack thereof) of the potential for bias against non-standard dialects display in grammar instruction and other language practices? Since there are negative effects associated with teacher bias, it is important to understand teachers’ awareness of the potential for bias in language and how it may manifest in their practices.

2 Background

Children come to school with a variety of home languages and dialects. Martinsen cites Gribbin’s 3 types of grammar in her study. Grammar 1 is “knowing” a language and having the

ability to use it (123). Grammar 2 is “our conscious knowledge of language, including concepts, terminology, and analytic techniques for talking about language,” or metalanguage (123). Grammar 3 is “linguistic etiquette or usage” (123). These grammars have a place in the classroom because with these, teachers can teach students to look at language differently than through the lenses of good or bad, “standard” or nonstandard. They are also important because teachers may not understand the nuances of the different tiers of language or even recognize that they exist within non-standard dialects.

2.1 Students Have a Variety of Rule-Based Dialects

Without the basic Grammar 1, use of a language would be impossible. The grammar is inherent in any person that has the ability to speak and communicate. Grammar 1 sounds simple, but it is complicated when you recognize that different students have different Grammar 1s. Dialects have their own rules and vocabulary differing from that of the standard. For example, “standard” English and African American English have words in the same linguistic system that are identical but have different meanings (Green 76). If students grow up in an environment in which a nonstandard dialect is spoken, they will bring that dialect into the public school system. This nonstandard dialect could be African American English, Mexican American English, or Southern English. Coming into the public school system with a non-standard Grammar 1 may put students at a disadvantage, as a standard speaking teacher may not understand the descriptive rules that create meanings and constructions that “standard” English does not share.

2.2 Standard English Ideology

The standard language ideology is “a bias toward an abstracted, idealized, non-varying *spoken* language that is imposed and maintained by dominant institutions” (Lippi-Green, “Language Ideology,” 289). This standard is an impossibility in speech, but teachers are tasked

with teaching prescriptive rules of “standard” English in written form. Differences in student language have issued debates about the prioritization of minority dialects, particularly African American English, in schools. For example, the academic organization that hosts the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) argues that there are “negative attitudes toward the language, lack of information about the language, inefficient techniques for teaching language and literacy skills, and an unwillingness to adapt teaching styles to the need of Ebonics [African American English] speakers” (“CCCC Statement” 1). Though stated in regards to African American English, the same principles can be applied to other non-standard dialects. Teachers know of these dialectical differences, but there is still a question of whether this knowledge is affecting attitudes about grammar instruction and strategies for teaching grammar in middle schools.

2.3 Teacher Reality of Language vs. Actual Reality of Language

With the task of teaching so-called “standard” English, it is natural to wonder if the teachers themselves also have the standard language ideology. Basically, Gribbin’s Grammar 3 (explained earlier) is a set of table manners. If teachers believe that the standard usage is a tool for their students, it is of obvious importance. Though relevant, this outlook does not account for the student investment and identity within their own speech. For teachers, grammar is something that their students must acquire to succeed in life and have opportunities. This outlook has the opportunity of moving into the area of “bias” towards one spoken variety over another, especially since the most Americans believe that “standard” English is a reflection of education and intelligence (Lippi-Green, *English With an Accent* 58).

2.4 Gap and Research Question

While educational institutions have a position of language tolerance and inclusion (see

“Students’ Right to Their Own Language”, 1973), teachers may not know about these positions or agree with them because of the prevalence of standard language ideology. Research on pedagogy has found that teachers need to “encourage exploration and language play... without denying the very real value of the learners’ home languages and dialects” (Boyd et al. 345). In this study, I aim to answer two questions. Are middle school teachers aware of the potential for bias against nonstandard dialects, and how does their awareness (or lack thereof) manifest in their grammar teaching practices?

3 Methods

3.1 Participants

Three middle school English Language Arts teachers from a school located in the middle of Oklahoma participated in the study. The middle school has a student ethnic makeup of: 67% Caucasian, 4% African American, 4% Asian, 22% Hispanic, and 2% Native American. I collected all data.

3.2 Tools

Three types of data are included in this study. The first type is an open-ended one on one interview with the teachers. The interviews were recorded using a Marantz professional solid state recorder (PMD660) and a Hypercardioid Dynamic Headworn Microphone (PRO 8HEX) from the Oklahoma State Linguistics Lab. The interview questions were worded to gather information about teacher attitudes about grammar, the vernacular varieties of the students, and how the teachers approached grammar instruction in the classroom.

The second type of data is classroom observations. Each observation included one 50-minute class period for each participant teacher. Observations included note taking on teaching strategies and the focus of the teacher on grammar instruction, including how the teacher referred

to language and grammar, gauging if the teacher was using standard language ideology, and grammar related student-teacher interactions. Observations were not recorded.

The third type of data is a document analysis. Anonymous graded/marked papers or writing samples from students, the assignment directions, rubrics, and any handouts used while teaching were analyzed as available. Teachers anonymized the papers and coded them for student gender and ethnicity. The analysis of the papers included identifying significant errors that were noted and corrected by the teacher and those that were ignored.

3.3 Procedure

The interview was conducted first. Interviews occurred during planning periods in the participants' classrooms on a day agreed upon by the researcher and participant. Interview questions are provided in Appendix A, and were asked roughly in the same order. More open-ended questions were asked first to allow research themes to develop organically; however, more specific questions were used later in the interview if needed for clarification or to address additional research topics. Interviews lasted between 11:43 and 29:08 minutes.

Questions 1-11 were meant to gather information about how teachers approach grammar instruction and their beliefs in its importance in both writing and speaking. For example, the question: "What things should grammar teaching encompass?" was meant to elicit responses that highlight the teacher's opinion of which aspects of grammar are the most important. By having teachers explain their grammar instruction, I could see if there was any potential for bias within it. The potential for bias could exhibit in various ways, from their methods of correction and instruction to their opinions of students.

Questions 12-16 were meant to gather information about teachers' awareness of the potential for bias based on the "standard" language ideology. For example, the question: "What

are the most problematic errors you see in your students' language?" which has the possibility of finding their implicit knowledge of ethnic dialects.

Some questions, such as "What do you think Standard English is?" and "Have you noticed a connection between your students' ethnicity and their language?" had the potential to elicit both attitudes about grammar and awareness of potential biases due to a "standard" language ideology. By having teachers define "standard" English, I could see how much emphasis was placed upon it. Their knowledge and observations of the connections between ethnicity and language allowed me to gauge their attitudes toward non-standard dialects.

After the interviews, I observed one class per teacher. Each observation lasted the length of one 50-minute class period. The purpose of the observation was to focus on how the teachers interacted with students when writing and to notice what kinds of things were focused on in the classroom. Observation was important because teachers may not be aware of any potential for bias that may come across in their instruction or verbal correction.

Finally, document analysis involved rubrics, instructions for writing assignments, and graded assignments. To analyze the papers, I and another OSU Language Arts Education major who had previously taken an upper-level grammar course individually re-graded the papers. The second grader insures the validity of my grading. We only disagreed one time; she changed all verb tenses to present (as is typical of literary analysis). These corrections were not considered in analysis because the errors were not against "standard" English. When grading the papers, we aimed to mark every grammar mistake against "standard" English. The difference in each grader's marks was noted, along with what kinds of mistakes were marked and which were ignored. With this method, I saw which errors received comments and the consistency of the comments across the papers as a whole. By looking at graded papers and rubrics, I saw how

much value is placed on “standard” English grammar usage in terms of assessments. Document analysis was important because teachers may not be aware of any potential for bias that may come across in their grading and assessment of student work.

4 Results

4.1 Ms. Mortenson²

Ms. Mortenson has been teaching for 16 years. She has taught 6th, 7th, and 8th grade Language Arts and Reading.

4.1.1 Interview

Ms. Mortenson’s interview revealed some ideologies: (i) a conflation of oral and written language, (ii) a belief that dialect reflects level of education, and (iii) a conflation of grammar and register.

Ms. Mortenson primarily believes that grammar is within the written realm. For example, she says that “writing is grammar, because they have to do it correctly. Nouns, pronouns, and punctuation, and those types of things are grammar as well.” However, she at times conflated written and oral “standard” language when defining “standard” language as “what is spoken and written.” Ms. Mortenson believes that her students’ errors in speech are reflected in their writing. She stated, “They write the way they speak, which is incorrect most of the time.” She believes a “standard” language ideology that considers non-standard dialects to be incorrect.

Ms. Mortenson believes that grammar “can make you sound educated or not.”

When the class encountered a non-standard dialect in a novel (e.g. Revolutionary War era speech in *The Woods Runner* by Gary Paulson), the students commented on how the character’s speech

² Pseudonyms are used for all participant and school names.

is “not how you say it.” Ms. Mortenson explained the use of non-standard language by telling her students, “These are uneducated people.” These quotes show her belief that dialect speech reflects level of education. She transfers the idea presented by the literary dialect to her students. Ms. Mortenson believes that grammar “can make you sound educated or not.”

To Ms. Mortenson, her students’ most problematic errors are “Slang. I mean they say stuff that’s not words or we talk like we text, we write like we text.” When explaining the corrections she makes to students speech, she gave an example: “Wait a minute, just think about how you said that, and who you’re talking to. I’m not your friend, you can’t say, ‘What’s up, bro?’ It doesn’t work that way.” This conflates grammar and register. Ms. Mortenson considers the informality of her students’ speech incorrect.

Ms. Mortenson believes that her students’ don’t value “standard” speech as much as they should. Ms. Mortenson believes that “standard” English is “proper English,” but she believes that for her students “it is merely what is accepted.” She disagrees with her students’ sentiment, saying that a lack of oral “standard” English will “hinder them as they get older and try to become professionals.” Since she believes that speaking “standard” English will benefit them, she “correct[s] them as much as [she] can when they say something to [her].” She actively counters non-standard speech usage in her classroom, including ethnic dialects. Ms. Mortenson corrects ethnic dialects verbally in class and will “stop and talk about it.” She said, “When I see someone doing something, I’ll.. ‘Hey you know, what’s the right way to do this.’” By using the word “right” she has shown a consideration that ethnic dialects are incorrect.

4.1.2 Observation

I observed students work on a practice sheet about writing three-point expository paragraphs. There were 25 students in the class. Sixteen were Caucasian, seven were

Hispanic, one was African American, and one was Marshallese. During the 50-minute class period, Ms. Mortenson made nine corrections as she walked around looking at her students' work. She corrected six errors made by Hispanic students and five made by Caucasian students. There was overlap in the types of mistakes that were made and then corrected. The corrections included indentation at the beginning of a paragraph, spelling, annotations, and capitalization. The annotations assigned were circling the capitalized letter at the beginning of the sentence and the end mark. In one instance, a Hispanic student did not capitalize the first person pronoun "I" on his paper. After the correction, Ms. Mortenson reminded the whole class of the rule and wrote the capital "I" on the board. This was the only instance of classroom announcement.

4.1.3 Documents

The only document I have from Ms. Mortenson is the essay prompt she used in class that day (Appendix B). The prompt included examples of each sentence in an expository paragraph and instructions for the students. Ms. Mortenson provided no other documents for analysis.

4.2 Ms. Hancock

Ms. Hancock has been teaching for 25 years. She was previously a science teacher, but transitioned to remedial English four years ago due to budget cuts. In her remedial classes, she has more than one grade-level. Many of her students are English Language Learners.

4.2.1 Interview

Ms. Hancock's interview revealed some ideologies: (i) a conflation of oral and written language, (ii) a belief that grammar is a tool, and (iii) dialect differs regarding situation.

Ms. Hancock believes that grammar is within both the written and spoken realm

equally. When asked about grammar in her classroom in general, Ms. Hancock alternates answers between written and spoken grammar instruction. When asked, “What are the most problematic errors you see in your students’ language?” Ms. Hancock listed commonly written errors such as not capitalizing “I” and fragments. When given the broad concept of “language,” Ms. Hancock gravitated toward the written aspects of grammar instead of the spoken errors that she mentions earlier. This shows that she believes her students have more grammatical problems in writing than in speech.

Ms. Hancock considers grammar “a tool of academics” that “our kids, by and large, struggle with.” She tells them, “If you want to be respected, then you need to be able to speak properly.” For Ms. Hancock, the ability to use correct grammar is directly tied to student abilities and their opportunities for success in the future. This is evidence of a belief that “standard” English is that used in “an academic setting,” or the English that educated people use.

Ms. Hancock acknowledges the different uses of dialect or switching between communication codes. The grammar that she teaches “is the language that we speak in school. It is our code.” Ms. Hancock believes that language changes within different contexts: “When I’m at home, I don’t always speak like I do here. But when we’re at school, I expect for them to speak my language as far as the grammar goes.” Ms. Hancock noted that students will “shut down” when faced with spoken grammar instruction or correction. She tells kids “translate that into school” and “put that into school language” when they are speaking or presenting in front of the class. This correction places importance on “standard” English, and she notes negative reactions from students when corrected.

Having English Language Learners in her class has boosted the importance of “standard” English usage to her non-ELL students. She said, “They know that [this student] can’t speak, so

when they're trying to go through his presentation and tell him how to say things correctly, it has helped them, they're more cognizant of the way they sound." She believes that her non-ELL students find "standard" English usage important in everyday speech because of the contrast with the ELL students.

4.2.2 Observation

I observed students composing a paragraph on computers in a lab. There were fifteen students in the class. Eight were Hispanic, six were Caucasian, and one was African American. Ms. Hancock made eight corrections as she walked around while students were working. The errors she corrected were punctuation and adverb usage (e.g., *He walked quick* vs. *He walked quickly*).

Out of all my observations, only Ms. Hancock corrected oral communication, even though there was an opportunity to correct students across the classes I observed. In spoken language, she chose not to correct students directly, but modified her speech in order to model prescriptive speech. For example, a student asked, "Who did bad on this?" And she later used the adverb *badly*.

4.2.3 Documents

Ms. Hancock provided a rubric she uses to evaluate essays (see Appendix C). Before she gives the final grade, there are several rounds of peer evaluation. The rubric has three equally weighted components by which the papers are evaluated: position statement, evidence and examples, and grammar & spelling. Grammar and spelling are given a position of importance, as they are worth one-third of the final paragraph grade. To get the highest mark, the student must "make no errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content." There are no

examples of distracting errors, but Ms. Hancock emphasized that she wants the papers to be well-corrected when she receives them.

4.3 Mr. Johnson

Mr. Johnson has been teaching middle-level English classes for seven years. He has taught Reading and Language Arts, Yearbook, Leadership, Speech and Drama, and Enriched English Language Arts classes for all three grades throughout his career. He was originally hired to teach Excel, which was an enriched elective for all middle school grades. This class was removed due to budget cuts four years ago.

4.3.1 Interview

Mr. Johnson's interview revealed some ideologies: (i) the belief that grammar affects future prospects (ii) the belief that language is part of identity (iii) the belief that "standard" language is impermanent.

Mr. Johnson places high value on both written and spoken language. He defines grammar as "being able to write and communicate correctly or appropriately." It includes vocabulary, sentence structure, figurative language, and expression. While he believes that "communicating effectively" is the essence of grammar, his grammar instruction does not focus on speech at all. Highview Middle School encourages teachers to place importance on spoken language. In a professional development workshop, Mr. Johnson was told "how the spoken word can make or break jobs, how people view you, and how intelligent you sound, how you're able to discuss with clients and customers... And if you don't use proper grammar, then it's going to hurt you, and it counts against you."

Mr. Johnson has only shared the importance of spoken language with a particular group of students. Mr. Johnson has "had the discussion, especially with my AP class, on how they

speak shows people what kind of person that you are.” Here, he directly aligns spoken language with his students’ identity, yet he also uses it as a warning. Students’ backgrounds affect how Mr. Johnson explains language. Mr. Johnson has “had that discussion with my enriched class because they kind of already understand that, and they have parents at home that speak correctly and encourage them to speak correctly.” He acknowledges that ELLs are in a different situation, because he “want[s] to teach them vocabulary, the words, not necessarily how to put them together to speak properly.”

Mr. Johnson believes that students place a higher importance on “standard” English in speech than they do in writing because they “communicate more that way.” He also explains a “sense of entitlement.” He explains their beliefs: “I can talk they way I want to talk. Just because you’re an adult doesn’t mean that you can tell me what I’m saying is not correct.” He places the blame for this attitude on TV and media because, “they see so many iconic figures who don’t speak well, and here there are millionaires, so ‘Why should we?’” He sees this pride in their non-standard language as a fault.

He stated that the increase of Spanish speakers from Mexico and South America will “affect our language. Not just dialects, but what is proper.” Here, he acknowledges the impermanence of language and its ability to change. Although here he seems to focus on how what is considered “proper” is changing, when asked what he thinks “standard” English is, he said, “I think the word ‘standard’ is outdated. I don’t think there is really much of a standard anymore. There’s proper and improper, and even that’s subjective to who you’re talking to... Standard doesn’t really apply because it does change so much so quick.” So, he believes that even though there is not a permanent “standard,” there is a way to speak it “properly.”

4.3.2 Observation

I observed Mr. Johnson's class read the novel *Cinder* by Marissa Meyer. There were 27 students in the class. Eighteen were Caucasian, seven were Hispanic, one was African American, and one was Marshallese. For the first ten minutes of class, the class read silently, then Mr. Johnson called for volunteers to read out loud. Two students volunteered, and the reading continued for the rest of the hour. The only correctable verbal mistake during the class period was a student's mispronunciation in the reading ([pioni] vs. [pijani]), and Mr. Johnson chose not to correct it.

4.3.3 Documents

Mr. Johnson provided a prompt and ten short essays written by students in response to the prompt (Appendix D). He coded the student essays for gender and ethnicity. All had marks made by Mr. Johnson, but only four received a letter grade. I re-marked the papers, identifying all grammar errors. The second grader then repeated the process. For minority students, Mr. Johnson marked between 4%-20% of total errors, and for White students he marked between 5%-75%. Typically, Mr. Johnson marked fewer errors on minority students' papers than he did on Caucasian students' papers. Table 1 shows the errors that Mr. Johnson corrected alongside the additional errors that I identified. In the table, the students are oriented by percentage of errors not marked by Mr. Johnson. So, Student 10 had the most errors marked, and Student 1 had the least errors marked. The "% Error Not Marked" was found by dividing the number of errors Mr. Johnson missed by the total number of errors. Students 5, 6, and 10 also had written feedback from Mr. Johnson. Mr. Johnson never completely marked a paper, but he marked more on papers with White authors than minority authors. Mr. Johnson most commonly corrected errors like spelling, commas, and capitalization. He only focused on repetitive words and phrases, more of a style preference, in papers with White authors.

Demographics	Teacher Corrections	Error Type	My Additional Corrections	Correction Differential	% Error Not Corrected			
1. White Male	1	Spelling	4	Total: 21 Originally Corrected: 1	95.2%			
	0	Comma	7					
	0	Citation	2					
	0	Capitalization	4					
	0	Word Insertion	3					
2. Hispanic Male	0	Spelling	4	Total: 15 Originally Corrected: 1	93.3%			
	0	Commas	3					
	0	Capitalization	8					
	1	Sentence Re-organization	0					
	0	Ethnicity Error	1					
3. Marshallese Male	1	Spelling	9	Total: 25 Originally Corrected: 2	92.0%			
	1	Comma	0					
	0	Capitalization	3					
	0	Word Insertion	3					
	0	Period	3					
	0	Subj./Verb Agr.	5					
4. Black Male	0	Spelling	2	Total: 11 Originally Corrected: 1	90.9%			
	0	Comma	3					
	0	Capitalization	4					
	0	Word Deletion	1					
	1	Sentence Separation	0					
	0	Draws Brackets	0					
5. Black Female	5	Spelling	15	Total : 78 Originally Corrected: 14	82.1%			
	2	Commas	14					
	1	Word insertion	2					
	3	Capitalization	10					
	2	Verb Tense	0					
	1	Word Insertion	2					
	0	Word Deletion	3					
	0	Subj./Verb Agr.	10					
	6. White Male	1	Spelling			2	Total: 16 Originally Corrected: 6	62.5%
		3	Commas			7		
2		Sentence End Punctuation	0					
0		Apostrophe	1					
7. White Female	4	Spelling	4	Total: 16 Originally Corrected: 7	56.3%			
	0	Comma	2					
	2	Capitalization	1					
	1	Period	1					
	0	Word Insertion	1					
8. White Female	1	Spelling	0	Total: 11 Originally Corrected: 5	54.5%			
	2	Commas	3					
	1	Verb tense	0					
	1	Word Insertion	2					
	0	Apostrophe	1					
9. White Female	2	Citation	3	Total: 23 Originally Corrected: 14	39.1%			
	7	Commas	6					
	5	Circles Repetitive Phrase	0					
10. White Male	1	Spelling	4	Total: 16 Originally Corrected: 12	25.0%			
	1	Comma	0					
	10	Circles repetitive word	0					

Table 1: Graded Paper Demographics and Statistics

5 Discussion

This study aimed to find teachers' awareness of the potential for bias against non-standard dialects and how the potential for bias may manifest in instruction and assessment. The answer is complicated, because teachers seem to be aware of the potential for bias in other areas but are largely unaware of their own biases. These biases manifested in different ways for all

participants: Ms. Mortenson's exhibited through the observation, Ms. Hancock's exhibited through interview, and Mr. Johnson's exhibited through document analysis.

All three teachers were aware of the potential for bias against students' non-standard dialect as they aged and become professionals. The evidence for potential bias occurred in their interviews. At some point, every teacher made the claim that students would need to speak proper grammar to sound "educated" or be "respected." For the teachers, bias against dialect was something that their students would encounter after education, but not necessarily during. Teachers thought that students' speech would prevent them from getting jobs or sounding respected in an academic setting. They considered it their job to prepare their students for this potential bias in the future.

There is a tension between what teachers are required to do by the State, by the school district, and their own grammar teaching practices. It is significant that all teachers focused on one error across the board: capitalization. Both Mr. Johnson and Ms. Hancock mentioned capitalization in interviews, and Ms. Mortenson corrected it in class. I suggest that this is because capitalization is an easily taught and easily fixable error. It is possible that teachers seem to focus on this one because of the ease of correction and lack of time to focus on other aspects of grammar. The teachers mentioned the lack of support from the administration for the teaching of grammar in school. Mr. Johnson and Ms. Mortenson both talk about the little time they have to teach grammar. Ms. Hancock notes that the books they are given do not even have grammar sections. Yet, the PASS standards have stringent measures for both spoken and written grammar. There is not enough time to accommodate the entire curriculum prescribed for the teachers by the State and administration, so it is significant that they gravitate towards the same types of student error.

Another theme that carried across all three teachers was the condemnation of technology as one of the reasons that students' grammar is poor. For all teachers, student use of technology did not benefit their language, but hindered it. This is a possible reason that the teachers are so annoyed by the capitalization errors their students make. In texting, students most likely either rely on autocorrect or ignore capitalization altogether (Wood et al. 417). Teachers may be aware of this, and so the error becomes even more bothersome because of its reflection on student technology use.

The potential for bias against non-standard dialects manifested in a different way for each teacher. The evidence of bias in Ms. Hancock's class occurred mostly during her interview. When describing her grammar instruction, she speaks of class presentation, peer correction, and teacher correction. She encourages her non-ELL students to continually correct ELL students during practice presentations, and Ms. Hancock corrects verbally during the actual presentations. This has the potential for bias because ELL students will feel less comfortable speaking their minds or asking questions when their language is continually being corrected. The corrections form a barrier that has the potential to make an ELL shut down. It is a potential barrier to knowledge. The focus on the importance of "standard" English could prevent students from feeling comfortable in the classroom because of their language use. This focus on what is 'correct' or 'standard' could be discouraging some students from being engaged. Ms. Hancock's continual correction of English Language Learners could influence her students to correct more than they need to, assuming that this student just doesn't know how to speak.

The more pronounced evidence of bias in Ms. Mortenson's class occurred during my observation. While the students were working, she corrected a disproportionate amount of Hispanic students vs. Caucasian students. Though there were only seven Hispanic students in a

class of 25, Ms. Mortenson corrected six of their mistakes. Even though there are sixteen Caucasian students, Ms. Mortenson only corrected five of their mistakes. Also, Ms. Mortenson only talked to the whole class about an issue (capitalization) after speaking with a Hispanic student about the issue on his paper. This is evidence of bias because Ms. Mortenson may subconsciously treat her Hispanic students differently than her Caucasian students. The student whose correction led to an in-class discussion of the error is somewhat identified by the teacher as being someone who does not write well, potentially leading to a decrease in self-confidence.

Mr. Johnson is maybe the most interesting participant of this study, as he is the only teacher that did not acknowledge that there is a “standard” English and his interview occurred after a professional development workshop on language (the other teachers were interviewed before the workshop). The reasons for his denial of a “standard” are very nuanced and, at this point, speculative. Mr. Johnson described in his interview that he recently went to a professional development workshop on the importance of spoken language for English Language Learners, and their need for spoken English in the future. It is unclear whether the professional development influenced his beliefs, but he is the only teacher interviewed after the PD, and he is the only one that disclaimed a “standard” English. There is also a difference in Mr. Johnson’s range of students. While Ms. Mortenson only has on-level classes and Ms. Hancock has remedial students, Mr. Johnson sees both on-level and advanced students. So, his classes have a wider range of learners than those in Ms. Hancock’s and Ms. Mortenson’s classes. This may affect his views of language and grammar instruction.

Though Mr. Johnson denies the existence of a “standard” English, there is evidence of bias in his graded papers. Mr. Johnson disproportionately marked minority students vs. Caucasian students (see Table 1). He marks them less, implying that he may not expect as much

from his minority students. Students respond to teacher expectations, so this could be detrimental for his minority students' learning experience. The differences in his treatment of different groups of students could lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy in which the students do not succeed academically because they are not expected to (Brophy 469).

6 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to gauge teacher awareness of the potential for bias against non-standard dialects and how this awareness (or lack thereof) could display in grammar instruction and other language practices. The study found bias against non-standard dialects and that it likely affects teaching. The data in this study is very nuanced, and the answer to the question proposed is complicated. All of the teachers truly want what is best for their students and try to provide that to the best of their abilities, yet there are subtle biases against speakers of non-standard dialects that manifest in their classrooms. It is significant to note that I had to have three different methods of data collection for bias to emerge in this study, meaning that simply doing interviews is not enough to get an accurate picture of teaching beliefs and practices. I do not have enough data for a finite conclusion, but some relevant themes emerged from this study. Teachers do not have very time to focus on grammar because of school administration, but the PASS standard have strict requirements. Teachers believe grammar to be very important for their students, yet all teachers focused on simple capitalization in one form or another. All of the teachers had a negative attitude toward student use of technology and blamed it for their students' lack of "standard" English.

Since Mr. Johnson is the only participant who disclaimed a "standard" English and attended the professional development workshop about English language learners, there is an implication that such workshops could help raise teacher awareness of the potential for bias. By encouraging

teachers to look at language use critically, they will be more open-minded when teaching grammar and language. Teachers should encourage students to look at language critically as well. It is important for classes to examine language standards and why “standard” English is such a common ideology. By engaging all dialects equally and teaching students to look at language critically, students will feel more welcomed and understood for their language use. Future professional development workshops about looking at language critically can encourage teachers to use this technique when speaking about language use in class.

The limitations of this study include the brevity of observations and the lack of sufficient documentation of grading practices. A future study may work in the fall semester and observe a wide range of classes. Only observing one class was limiting and did not allow for a full picture of the teachers’ practices. I recommend that in a future study closer relationships be formed with the teacher to provide a more casual and trusting relationship to ensure the validity of all data gathered.

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1. Tell me about your students...
2. Tell me about your students' academic performance...

Questions about instruction:

3. To different people, the word "grammar" can mean different things. What is grammar to you? What things should grammar teaching encompass

a. (follow-up) Tell me about your grammar instruction

4. What influences your grammar instruction?
5. How do you present English grammar in your classroom?
6. How is your grammar curriculum created?
7. How did you decide how much time to spend on grammar instruction?
8. Does your grammar instruction also look at speech? If so, how?
9. How important do you think grammar is in writing? In speech?
10. How does the time spent on grammar instruction affect your students' grammar? (written and spoken)
11. What do you think is most helpful for your students re: grammar instruction?

Questions about awareness:

12. What are the most problematic errors you see in your students' language?
13. How important is Standard American English usage to your students in everyday writing (email, cover letters, papers, texts)?
14. How important is Standard English usage to your students in everyday speech?
 - a. Are student errors in speech reflective of their errors in writing?
15. Linguists have written about how ethnicity and language use are often connected, and we have ethnic dialects in the US such as so-called "Mexican-English" and "African American English." Have you noticed a connection between your students' ethnicity and their language?

- a. Are these connections also evident in student writing?
16. Do you take your students' ethnicity into consideration when preparing grammar instruction?
17. What do you think Standard English is?

Appendix B

Steps in writing the Three-Point Expository Paragraph

The purpose of Expository writing is to inform, give facts, to give directions, to explain, or to define.

Topic: **Why I like My Hobby of Photography**

1. Sentence #1- Topic/Thesis Sentence:

Write the topic sentence by using the words in your topic and adding either an exact number word(three, four, etc) or a general number word(several, many, some, etc.) that tells how many points you will mention. This must be a complete sentence, and it should also be indented.

(There are several reasons why I like my hobby of photography.)

2. Sentence #2 Three-point sentence:

Write a complete sentence listing your three points in the order you will present them in your paragraph. **(I like it because it is fun, it is an interesting art form, and it is a possible future job.)**

3. Sentence #3- First point:

Write a sentence stating your first point **(My first reason for liking photography is that it is fun.)**

4. Sentence #4 Supporting Sentence:

Write a sentence that give more information about your 1st point. **(Since I got my first camera at the age of six, I have enjoyed taking pictures of people, places, and things.)**

5. Sentence #5 Second point:

Write a sentence stating your second point. **(My next reason for liking photography is that it is an interesting art form.)**

6. Sentence #6 Supporting Sentence:

Write a sentence that gives more information about your second point. **(After reading on the subject, I have learned how to follow the "rules of the thirds" and make my shots artistically pleasing.)**

7. Sentence #7 Third Point:

Write a sentence stating your third point. (**My final reason for liking photography is that it is a possible future job for me.**)

8. Sentence #8 Supporting Sentence:

Write a sentence that gives more information about your third point. (**Today there are many exciting career opportunities open to photographers.**)

9. Sentence #9 concluding sentence:

Write a concluding (final) sentence that summarizes your paragraph. Read the topic sentence and the rewrite it, using some of the same words to say the same thing in a different way. (adding an extra thought about the topic will make it easier to restate the topic sentence. (**I like my hobby of photography better than any of my other pastimes.**)

Sample paragraph:

There are several reasons why I like my hobby of photography. I like it because it is fun, it is an interesting art form, and it is a possible future job. My first reason for liking photography is that it is fun. Since I got my first camera at the age of six, I have enjoyed taking pictures of people, places, and things. My next reason for liking photography is that it is an interesting art form. After reading up on the subject, I have learned how to follow the "rule of the thirds" and make my shots artistically pleasing. My final reason for liking photography is that it is a possible future job for me. Today there are many exciting career opportunities open to photographers. I like my hobby of photography better than any of my other pastimes.

Assignment:

Use the Expository steps in this lesson to do the writing assignment below. After you finish writing your paragraph underline the topic sentence, the first point sentence, second point sentence, third point sentence, and concluding sentence. Circle the capital letter and end mark at the beginning and end of each sentence.

Writing Assignment #1 Three point Expository Paragraph in First Person (remember first person is the point of view in writing that uses the personal pronouns I, me, my, mine, or we, us, our, and ours.

Topic: Reasons Why I Like _____ As a Hobby

Persuasive Paragraph Rubric

CATEGORY	4 - Above Standards	3 - Meets Standards	2 - Approaching Standards	1 - Below Standards
Position Statement	The position statement provides a clear, strong statement of the author's position on the topic.	The position statement provides a clear statement of the author's position on the topic.	A position statement is present, but does not make the author's position clear.	There is no position statement.
Evidence and Examples	All of the evidence and examples are specific, relevant and explanations are given that show how each piece of evidence supports the author's position.	Most of the evidence and examples are specific, relevant and explanations are given that show how each piece of evidence supports the author's position.	At least one of the pieces of evidence and examples is relevant and has an explanation that shows how that piece of evidence supports the author's position.	Evidence and examples are NOT relevant AND/OR are not explained.
Grammar & Spelling	Author makes no errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Author makes 1-2 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Author makes 3-4 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Author makes more than 4 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.

Appendix D

Your question to answer: **How did the character of Brian Robeson change in the novel *Hatchet*?**

(Remember our theme discussion!)

Thesis statement: (This is a statement of your belief; your answer to the question restated.)

Example: The character of Brian Robeson changed in many ways throughout the novel *Hatchet*.

Support statement #1: (Provide support to your thesis statement and your belief.)

One way that Brian changed was that he became more independent. Before the plane crash, Brian was dependent upon his mother to provide food and cook for him.

Text example: (Use information from the text to further support)

After the crash, Brian had to learn to fish and even had to make a bow and arrow to kill food to eat so that he wouldn't starve.

Support statement #2:

Another way Brian changed was that he...

Text example: (Use at least one citation)

On page 24, Gary Paulson writes, "....." This shows that Brian.....

Support statement #3:

Text example:

Closing remarks: (Restate your thesis statement. Try to use personal thoughts, mention the author, share lessons you learned from Brian's journey, etc.)

Example:

As I have shared in this paragraph, Gary Paulson did a wonderful job showing how Brian changed so very much from the beginning of the story to the end. It makes me appreciate what I have and makes me think about how I would change if something tragic happened to me.