

VIOLATION OF STANDARD SYNTACTIC RULES IN BLACK ENGLISH AS USED IN LORRAINE HANSBERRY'S *A RAISIN IN THE SUN*

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ABSTRAK

Artikel ini membahas *Black English* yang digunakan dalam novel *A Raisin in the Sun* karangan Lorraine Hansberry. Di sini *Black English* dikaji untuk (1) mendeskripsikan fitur-fitur yang menyimpang dari aturan sintaksis baku dan (2) mencari padanan fitur-fitur tersebut dalam bahasa Inggris baku. Penelitian ini bersifat deskriptif-kualitatif. Pengumpulan data menggunakan metode observasi dengan teknik dokumentasi. Data dianalisis menggunakan metode distribusional dengan beberapa teknik, seperti delisi, substitusi, permutasi, dan insersi. Hasil analisis data menunjukkan bahwa konstruksi *Black English* yang menyimpang dari aturan-aturan sintaksis baku secara khas ditandai oleh fitur-fitur: (a) *specific tense and aspect markers*, (b) *the use of ain't as a general negative indicator*, (c) *the use of double/multiple negation*, (d) *copula deletion*, (e) *simplification of present continuous construction*, (f) *the use of invariant be*, (g) *misuse and missing of suffix -s or -es*, (h) *the use of it to replace the existential there*, dan (i) *the use of uninflected was*. Di antara fitur-fitur tersebut, penggunaan *ain't* sebagai *a general negative indicator* dan *double/multiple negation* merupakan ciri-ciri struktur *Black English* yang paling banyak menyimpang dari aturan sintaksis baku. Terkait padanannya dalam bahasa Inggris baku, semua fitur *Black English* tersebut memiliki bentuk yang sesuai baik secara gramatika maupun secara semantis.

Kata Kunci: Black English, syntactic rules, violation, typical features, equivalents

A. Introduction

1. Background of the Study

Black English, also called African American Vernacular English (AAVE) or Ebonics is now widely used among African-Americans in the United States. Besides, Black English becomes more popular in American literature. It is apparent from the fact that many famous writers make use of the language in their works. One of them is Lorraine Hansberry with her well known play *A Raisin in the Sun*.

In general, both Black English and Standard American English (SAE) mostly share similar grammatical features. Black English, however, has some uncommon structures which are quite different from Standard American English. It is in line with the statement of Jack Sidnell in *Language Varieties: African American Vernacular English (Ebonics)*, saying:

“While some features of AAVE are apparently unique to this variety, in its structure it also shows commonalities with other varieties including a number

of standard and nonstandard English varieties spoken in the US and Caribbean. Many sociolinguists would reserve the term AAVE for varieties which are marked by the occurrence of certain distinctive grammatical features. such grammatical features occur variably, that is, in alternation with standard features" (2015:1). (<http://www.hawaii.edu/satocenter/langnet/definitions/aave.html>).

Accessed on December 12, 2015.

Some previously conducted researches show that Black English sentences are commonly characterized by certain typical syntactic features which violate the rules of Standard English, such as copula/auxiliary deletion, invariant *be*, generic negative form *ain't*, *hain't* and *arn't*, double negation, uninflected verb and noun, stressed *been*, simplification of continuous tense, improper addition of suffix *-s* to verb, preterit usage to substitute past participle, etcetera.

2. Problem Formulation

Concerning the topic discussed in this study, two problems are proposed to solve. They are as formulated below:

- a. What are the typical features of Black English which violate standard syntactic rules as found in Lorraine Hansberry's play *A Raisin in the Sun*?
- b. What are the equivalents of those syntactic features in standard English?

3. Study Objectives

In order to meet the answers for the problems as stated above, this research accordingly tries:

- a. To describe the typical features of Black English which violate standard syntactic rules as found in the play *A Raisin in the Sun*,
- b. To find the equivalents of those features in standard English.

4. Study Significances

The findings in this study are expected to contribute something valuable for the readers who are eager to improve their understanding in English, especially the variants of sentence structures which are considered as non-standard English. The discussion in this research may also be beneficial for those who are interested in American literature, particularly the literary works written in Black English. It could help them to get easier in comprehending the language used in the works, which is quite distinct from common English grammar. As a result, the reading activity can be more enjoyable.

B. Theoretical Review

The theories concerning the topic of the research elaborated in this part comprise English syntax, syntactic rules, grammaticality, and Black English.

1. English Syntax

Syntax is a study of phrases, clauses, and sentences. It discusses them in terms of the ways how they are constructed and how their constituents are interrelated to one another. It is in line with the opinion of Akmajian, saying "syntax is a branch of linguistics that studies the internal structure of sentences and the interrelationships

among their component parts" (1988: 530). The quotation implies that syntax is dealt with syntactical structures and the grammatical relations among their elements.

2. Syntactic Rules

As a study of grammar, syntax focuses on the rules how linguistic units are arranged in order to form sentences with certain meanings. This statement is supported by Crystal, pointing out that syntax is the study of the rules governing the arrangement of sentence in sequences (1980: 346). Meanwhile, syntactic rules are defined as the rules in one's grammar that determine how morphemes and words must be combined to express a particular meaning. Syntactic rules constitute part of a speaker's linguistic knowledge (Fromkin and Rodman, 1983: 201). It can be said that syntactic rules are the rules of which a construction is syntactically bound. The rules serve as a guidance to determine the grammaticality of sentences.

As a matter of fact, Black English possesses its own standard syntactic rules which skew those of American English. To avoid confusion, the term "standard syntactic rules" applied in this research is the ones belonging to American English.

3. Grammaticality

Whether a sentence is said to be grammatical or ungrammatical has to do with the syntactic rules in a language. Concerning the grammaticality of a sentence, Fromkin and Rodman asserted as the following:

"When you know a language, then, you know which combinations or strings of morphemes are permitted by the syntactic rules and which are not. Those that conform to the syntactic rules are called the sentences or grammatical sentences of the language, and strings of morphemes that do not are called ungrammatical" (1983: 201).

Basically, grammaticality does not depend on sentence meaningfulness. A sentence which violates semantic aspect may be grammatical. In this case, Noam Chomsky's *Colorless green ideas sleep furiously* may exemplify the sentence intended. In terms of meaning, the sentence is unacceptable, but it does obey English grammar strictly. It is clear that "grammaticality judgements are not quixotic but are rule-governed" (1983:201).

4. Black English

There are a lot of varieties of the English language spoken all over the world. One of them is Black English. "Black English", as asserted by Sidnell, " is also called Black Vernacular, Black English Vernacular, African American English, or African American Vernacular English" (2015: 1). Further, it is stated that "Black English is not a corrupted form of Standard American English" (Available: <https://www15.uta.fi/FAST/US1/REF/blackeng.html>. Accessed on December 12, 2015). Black English is a language variety which has its own features considered to be unique for standard English speakers. Besides sharing a lot of commonalties, both Black English and Standard American English are quite distinct in their spelling, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar.

Unlike Standard American English grammar, Black English often drops a verb *be* in a sentence where Standard American English requires its usage obligatorily. In

addition, Black English usually applies some uncommon sentence elements, such as an unnecessary suffix *-s/-es* added to a verb. On the other hand, Black English frequently omits the suffix *-s/-es* when it is really needed to make the verb agree with its subject. The use of double or multiple negation is also so common in Black English that speakers of standard English may confuse it to mean the opposite. Some other unique features which specify Black English sentences are the application of the invariant words *be, been, done*, and, *gonna* to indicate various different kinds of tense and aspect. Above all, the most striking characteristic of the non-standard language variety is the repeatedly used form of *ain't* instead of *isn't, aren't, wasn't, weren't, don't, doesn't, didn't, hasn't, haven't, and hadn't*.

C. Research Method

This research is descriptive-qualitative in nature. Descriptive study, according to Nazir, aims to describe systematically, factually, and accurately the facts, the nature, and the relation in which the phenomena are analyzed (1988: 99). The data here are qualitatively described without verifying any hypotheses.

1. Data of the Research

The data of this study are all the syntactically violated English sentences found in the novel *A Raisin in the Sun*, written by Lorraine Hansberry. The data intended belong to non-standard English usually spoken by African-Americans in the United States. They are categorized as ungrammatical sentences because they do not conform to syntactic rules of standard English.

2. Sampling Technique

The population of this research is the sentences which violate syntactic rules of standard English. The number of the population is 400 sentences. Since they are too large in number to become the analysis units, some sample is used. In order to obtain the sample, this research employs purposive sampling method.

3. Data Collecting Technique

The data are collected using observation-documentation technique as proposed by Mahsun (2005: 112). The data collecting is done by reading the novel three times in order to discover non-standard sentences used in the literary work. The ungrammatical constructions are, then, observed to make sure that they violate certain syntactic rules of standard English. Next, they are documented in the data cards provided. After that, they are classified on the basis of the kinds of syntactic violations. Finally, the syntactically violated sentences are prepared to be analyzed.

4. Data Analysis Technique

After the data are collected, the next activity is to analyze them in order to answer the questions as stated previously. The data here are analyzed making use of intra-lingual matching method. It is a method of analysis that connects-compares the elements which are lingual in nature, either within one language or in some languages.

The steps conducted in the data analysis are as follows. Firstly, the syntactically violated sentences are examined to find the aspects which cause them to

be ungrammatical. Secondly, those aspects are elaborated by comprehensively explaining how the syntactic rules are violated. Thirdly, the ungrammatical sentences are manipulated in order to judge their equivalents in standard English.

D. Result and Discussion

The Black English constructions which violate standard syntactic rules in the play are typically characterized by (i) specific tense and aspect markers, (ii) the use of *ain't* as a general negative indicator, (iii) the use of double/multiple negation, (iv) copula deletion, (v) simplification of present continuous construction, (vi) the use of invariant *be*, (vii) misuse and missing of suffix *-s* or *-es*, (viii) the use of *it* to replace the existential *there*, and (ix) the use of uninflected *was*.

1. Specific Tense and Aspect Markers

Among those typical syntactic features of Black English found in the play *A Raisin in the Sun*, tense and aspect markers are the ones frequently used. The tense and aspect markers are commonly characterized by the application of *verb -ing*, *be + verb -ing*, *been + verb -ing*, *done + verb of past participle*, *been*, and *gonna*.

a. The Form "Verb -ing" Representing Simple Progressive Tense

Some of the sentences applying the verb *-ing* found in the play are as follows.

- 1) All you have to do is just sit down with her when you *drinking* your coffee one morning and *talking* 'bout things like you do. (16/TM/32)
- 2) How you *feeling* this morning, Ruth? (103/TM/89)

In Black English, a sentence with the pattern "subject + the verb *-ing*" indicates that something is taking place currently. Based on this fact, the Standard American English of the forms above are *All you have to do is just sit down with her when you are drinking [currently] your coffee one morning and are talking about things like you do* for (1) and *How are you feeling [currently] this morning, Ruth?* for (2).

b. The Form "be + Verb -ing" Representing Habitual/Continuative Aspect

Black English commonly makes use of the form *be + verb -ing* to show habitual/continuative aspect. The only two Black English sentences with this typical characteristic found in the drama are as discussed below.

- 3) And the next thing you know, she *be listening* good and asking you questions and when I come home - I can tell her the details. (18/TM/33)
- 4) Look out there, girl, before you *be spilling* some of that stuff on that child! (70/TM/55)

It is clear that the Standard American English of the forms above are *And the next thing you know, she listens good and asks you questions [frequently or habitually] and when I come home - I can tell her the details* for (3) and *Look out there, girl, before you spill [frequently or habitually] some of that stuff on that child!* for (4).

c. The Form "been + Verb -ing" Representing Present Perfect Progressive Tense

To indicate a sentence of present perfect progressive tense, Black English often applies the pattern "subject + *been + verb -ing*". There are only two sentences applying this pattern, as elaborated below.

5) You just sip your coffee, see, and say easy like that you *been working* 'bout that deal Walter Lee is interested in, like what you saying ain't really that important to you. (17/TM/33)

6) The past few years I *been watching* it happen to you. (89/TM/72)

The Standard American English of the forms above are *You just sip your coffee, see, and say easy like that you have been working about that deal Walter Lee is interested in, like what you really say that is not important to you* for (5) and *The past few years I have been watching it happen to you* for (6).

d. The Form "done + Verb of Past Participle" Representing Emphasized Perfective Aspect

It is in common practice for Black English to indicate emphasized perfective aspect, using a sentence with the pattern "done + verb of past participle", such as evidenced through the following data.

7) Girl, you *done lost* your natural mind? (97/TM/80)

8) Make sure you *done taken* into account what hills and valleys he come through before he got to wherever he is. (148/TM/145)

The Standard American English of the sentence (7) is *Girl, you have lost your natural mind?* and that for the sentence (8) is *Make sure you have taken into account what hills and valleys he come through before he got to wherever he is.*

e. The Form "been" Representing Past Events

The sentence with the pattern "subject + *been* to represent past events is also frequently used in Black English. In connection with this phenomenon, the following sentence as found in the play may become the fact.

9) I'm thirty-five years old; I *been* married eleven years and I got a boy who sleeps in the living room. (25/TM/34)

The Standard American English of the form above is *I'm thirty-five years old; I was married eleven years ago and I got a boy who sleeps in the living room.*

f. The Form "gonna" Representing Future Events

To convey the sense of indefinite future, Black English usually uses the form *gonna*, which is equivalent to *will* or *be going to* in Standard American English. The following data may clarify the statement.

10) Eat your eggs, they *gonna* be cold. (22/TM/33)

11) After what daddy *gonna* do tonight, there's going to be offices. (125/TM/108)

The Standard American English of the form (10) is *Eat your eggs, they will be cold*, while the Standard American English of the form (11) is *After what daddy will do tonight, there's going to be offices.*

2. The Use of AIN'T as a General Negative Indicator

As a matter of fact, AAVE has a number of ways of marking negation. Like a number of other varieties of English, AAVE uses *ain't* to negate the verb in a simple sentence. An inversion also occurs in AAVE. Therefore, "Nobody is home" would be rearranged into *Ain't nobody home.*

The form *ain't* as a general negative indicator found in the play *A Raisin in the Sun* may represent various types of negation in Standard American English, such as *is not*, *are not*, *am not*, *was not*, *does not*, *have not*, and *has not*.

a. The Form "ain't" Representing "is not"

12) No – there *ain't* no woman! (91/UA/73)

13) Oh, he *ain't* going to be getting up no earlier no such thing! (7/UA/26)

The form *ain't* in the sentence (12) agrees with the singular noun *woman* as its real subject, and the tense of the sentence is simple present. It is clear that *ain't* here represents *isn't*. So, the Standard American English of the sentence (12) is *No – there is no woman!*. Likewise, the form *ain't* in the sentence (13) depends on the subject *he*, which is a third person singular pronoun. Besides, the sentence is in present continuous tense. It means that *ain't*, in this case, represents *isn't*. That's why, the Standard American English sentence of the form is *Oh, he isn't going to be getting up earlier in such thing!*.

b. The Form "ain't" Representing "are not"

14) Walter Lee say colored people *ain't* never going to start getting ahead till they start gambling on some different kinds of things in the world – investments and things. (48/UA/42)

15) We *ain't* no business people, Ruth. (45/UA/42)

The use of *ain't* as shown above indicates that the form *ain't* in the sentence (14) follows its subject *people*, which is a plural noun, and the tense of the sentence is a present (future) tense. It means that *ain't* here represents *aren't*. Accordingly, *ain't* here represents *aren't*, and the Standard American English of the sentence (14) is, of course, *Walter Lee said colored people are never going to start getting ahead till they start gambling on some different kinds of things in the world – investments and things*. Then, the form *ain't* in the sentence (15) agrees with the first person plural pronoun *we*. Besides, the sentence is in simple present tense. Automatically, *ain't*, in this case, also represents *aren't*. It is clear that the Standard American English of the sentence (15) is *We aren't business people, Ruth*.

c. The Form "ain't" Representing "am not"

16) I *ain't* meddling. (39/UA/41)

17) I *ain't* Christian. (43/UA/41)

The form *ain't* in the two sentences agrees with its subject *I*, which is a first person singular pronoun. And, the tense of the sentences is a simple present. Consequently, *ain't* here represents *am not*, which, in turn, determines that the Standard American English of the sentences (16) and (17) are *I am not meddling* and *I am not Christian* respectively.

d. The Form "ain't" Representing "was not"

18) Some of it got to be put away for Beneatha and her schoolin' – and *ain't* nothing going to touch that part of it. (56/UA/44)

19) My son said we was going to move and there *ain't* nothing left for me to say. (172//UA148-149)

The two sentences above make use of *ain't* as a general negative indicator. In this case, *ain't* agrees with the indefinite pronoun *nothing*. Since the sentences are in past tense and their subjects are singular, *ain't* here certainly represents *wasn't*. Accordingly, their Standard American English forms are *Some of it got to be put away for Beneatha and her schooling – and nothing was going to touch that part of it* and *My son said we were going to move and there was nothing left for me to say* respectively.

e. The Form “ain't” Representing “does not”

20) I let him go out earlier and he *ain't* come back yet. (104/UA/89)

The form *ain't* in the sentence (20) agrees with its subject *he*, which is a third person singular pronoun. Besides, the tense of the sentence is a simple present. As a result, *ain't*, in this case, represents *doesn't*, and the Standard American English sentence of the form above is *I let him go out earlier and he doesn't come back yet*.

f. The Form “ain't” Representing “have not”

21) I *ain't* seen you doing much. (68/UA/54)

22) You *ain't* never done nothing with all that camera equipment you brought home. (61/UA/47)

The form *ain't* in the sentence (21) is in agreement with its subject *I*, which is a first person singular pronoun. The sentence is in present perfect tense. Consequently, *ain't* here represents *haven't*, and the Standard American English of the sentence (21) is *I haven't seen you doing much*. Meanwhile, the form *ain't* in the sentence (22) agrees with its subject *you*, which is a second person singular pronoun. The tense of the sentence is a present perfect. That's why, *ain't* here represents *haven't*, and the Standard American English of the sentence (22) is *You have never done anything with all that camera equipment you brought home*.

g. The Form “ain't” Representing “has not”

23) He *ain't* hardly got in there good yet (1/UA/25)

24) They got to go talk about something *ain't* nobody never heard of! (102/UA/86)

The form *ain't* in the sentence (23) obeys its subject *he*, which is a third person singular pronoun, and is followed by a past participle verb *got*. It means that *ain't* here represents *hasn't*, and the sentence is in present perfect tense. So, the Standard American English of the sentence (23) *He has hardly got in there good yet*. Likewise, the form *ain't* in the sentence (24) is in agreement with its subject *nobody*, which is an indefinite pronoun, and is followed by a past participle verb *heard*. It shows that *ain't*, in this case, represents *hasn't*, and the tense of the sentence is present perfect. So, the Standard American English of the sentence (24) is *They got to go to talk about something nobody has ever heard of!*

3. The Use of Double/Multiple Negation

To show sentences of negative meaning, Black English frequently makes use of double or multiple negative signs. No matter how many negative signs are used, the sentences intended always have single negative meanings.

a. The Use of Double Negation

A sentence is said to be in double negation when it applies two forms of negative sense within it, such as *no*, *not*, *never*, and *hardly*. The following sentences which exist in the play may clarify the statement.

25) They *don't* think *nothing* of packing up they suitcases and piling on one of the big steamships. (53/DN/44)

26) We *ain't no* business people, Ruth. (45/DN/42)

The forms *don't* and *nothing* in the sentence (25) are the words indicating double negation. The word *don't* is the shortened form of *do not*, while the word *nothing* means the same as *not anything*. So, the Standard American English of the sentence (25) is *They do not think anything of packing up their suitcases and piling on one of the big steamships*. Next, the words showing double negation in the sentence (26) are *ain't* and *no*. The word *ain't* here represents *aren't*. It is clear that the Standard American English of the sentence (26) is *We aren't business people, Ruth*.

b. The Use of Multiple Negation

When a sentence has multiple negative senses, it contains more than two negative forms within it. In other words, it may use three, four, or five words of negative meaning. Take a look at the following data.

27) You *ain't never* done *nothing* with all that camera equipment you brought home. (61/DN/47)

28) We *ain't never* been *no* people to act silly 'bout *no* money. (83/DN/68)

The sentence (27) contains three words which have negative meaning, namely *ain't*, *never*, and *nothing*. The three words represent *haven't*, *not ever*, and *not anything* respectively. The Standard American English of the sentence is *You have never done anything with all that camera equipment you brought home*. Meanwhile, in the sentence (28) there are four words which have negative meaning. They are *ain't*, *never*, *no*, and *no*, each of which represents *haven't*, *not ever*, *not any*, and *no* respectively. So, the Standard American English of the sentence is *We have never been any people to act silly about money*.

4. Copula Deletion

Copula is another term used instead of linking verb. In Black English a linking verb is often deleted. The deletion of copula found in the play may take place before a noun (phrase), an adjective (phrase), or a prepositional phrase.

a. Copula Deletion before Noun (Phrase)

The copula omitted before a noun (phrase) usually links the noun (phrase) to the subject which it describes, identifies, or names. To be more comprehensible, let's refer to the following sentences.

29) You *a horrible-looking chick* at this hour. (27/CD/35)

30) We *just plain working folks*. (46/CD/42)

The noun phrase *a horrible-looking chick* in the sentence (29) identifies the subject *you*. The tense of the sentence is a simple present. So, the copula deleted from the sentence is *are*, and the Standard American English of the sentence is *You are a horrible-looking chick at this hour*. Likewise, the noun phrase *just plain working folks* in

the sentence (30) identifies the subject *we*. The sentence is in simple present tense. Consequently, the copula deleted from the sentence is *are*, and the Standard American English of the sentence is *We are just plain working folks*.

b. Copula Deletion before Adjective (Phrase)

In Black English a subject is frequently followed by an adjective (phrase) without a linking verb to connect them. The adjective (phrase) usually describes the subject or adds some information to it. The following sentences may make the statement clearer.

31) You *pregnant*? (74/CD/57)

32) Well, now, I guess if you think we *so ignorant* 'round here maybe you shouldn't bring your friends here. (73/CD/57)

The adjective *pregnant* in the sentence (31) adds some information to the subject *you*, while the adjective phrase *so ignorant* the sentence (32) does the same thing to the subject *we*. Since the sentences are in simple present tense, the copula absent from the two sentences is *are*. Hence, the Standard American English of the sentences are *Are you pregnant?* for (31) and *Well, now, I guess if you think we are so ignorant around here maybe you shouldn't bring your friends here* for (32).

c. Copula Deletion before Prepositional Phrase

It may also happen that a copula is deleted between a subject and a prepositional phrase. In this case, the prepositional phrase completes the predication and/or tells something about time, place, manner, and so forth. Pay attention to the sentence below.

33) But you *still in my house* and my presence. (87/CD/71)

The prepositional phrase *still in my house* in the sentence above tells something about the place where the subject *you* is. The tense of the sentence is a simple present. It is clear that the linking verb omitted from the sentence is *are*, and the Standard American English of the sentence *But you are still in my house and my presence*.

5. Simplification of Present Continuous Construction

Standard American English follows the pattern "subject + be + verb -ing" to reveal a present continuous construction. The verb *be* is realized as *am*, *is*, or *are*. Unlike Standard American English, Black English usually simplifies the pattern by omitting the constituent *be*, leaving the pattern "subject + verb -ing." The following sentences used in the play may support the statement.

34) I know what you *thinking* 'bout. (12/SC/32)

35) Brother still *worrying* hisself sick about that money? (41/SC/41)

Both the subjects *you* and *brother* in the sentences (34) and (35) are followed by verbs + suffix *-ing*, namely *thinking* and *worrying*. Since the tense of the sentences is present continuous, the verbs *-ing*, should be preceded by *be* forms. The *be* forms here are certainly *are* for the subject *you* and *is* for the subject *brother*. In other words, the verb phrases showing continuous aspect in the two sentences are simplified by dropping the auxiliaries *are* and *is*, leaving *you* and *brother* alone. So, the Standard American English of the sentences are *I know what you are thinking about* and *Brother is still worrying himself sick about that money* respectively.

6. The Use of Invariant *BE*

Invariant *be* which characterizes Black English is rarely applied in the play. It is found in three sentences only, as displayed in the following.

- 36) And the next thing you know, she *be* listening good and asking you questions and when I come home – I can tell her the details. (18/IB/33)
- 37) Look out there, girl, before you *be* spilling some of that stuff on that child! (70/IB/55)

The verb *be* in the two sentences above is invariantly used for the pronoun *she* in (36) and the pronoun *you* in (37). As a matter of fact, the two sentences are in present tense. To make the verb *be* agree with each of the subjects, it should be in the forms *is* and *are* respectively. Consequently, the Standard American English of the sentences are *And the next thing you know, she is listening good and asking you questions and when I come home – I can tell her the details* for (36) and *Look out there, girl, before you are spilling some of that stuff on that child* for (37).

7. Misuse and Missing of Suffix *-S* or *-ES*

Suffix *-s* or *-es* is frequently misused or missing in Black English. This also happens to some sentences in the play *A Raisin in the Sun*. Take the following samples into consideration.

- 38) She *think* more of you. (15/MS/32)
- 39) I'll excuse myself when I *needs* to be excused (99/MS/83)

The word *think* in the sentence (38) agrees with its subject *she*, which is a third person singular pronoun. Since the tense of the sentence is a simple present, the verb *think* should get a suffix *-s*, which is missing in the sentence. That's why, the Standard American English of the sentence (38) is *She thinks more of you*. On the contrary, the word *needs* in the sentence (39) ends in *-s*, which must be absent from that verb. So, the Standard American English of the sentence (39) is *I'll excuse myself when I need to be excused*.

8. The Use of *IT* to Replace the Existential *THERE*

Instead of expletive *it*, few sentences in the play use *there* to show existence. Some of the sentences having this characteristic are as follows.

- 40) *It* ain't that nobody expects you to get on your knees and say thank you, Brother. (174/IT/37)
- 41) Well – ain't *it* a mess in here, though. (177/IT/139)

The word *it* in the two sentences shows an existence rather than a pronoun. It is due to the fact that the use of pronoun *it* does not suit their meaning. Instead, the use of *there* is more appropriate than *it* to make the sentences acceptable semantically. Hence, the Standard American English of the sentences are *There isn't anybody who expects you to get on your knees and say thank you, Brother* for (40) and *Well – isn't there a mess in here, though* for (41).

9. The Use of Uninflected *WAS*

Grammatically, the verb *be* in past tense is inflected as *was* or *were* to agree with its subject. In fact, some of sentences used in the play ignore this rule. In other

words, the verb *was* is used for both singular and plural subject, such as presented below.

- 42) What *was* they fighting about? (40/UW/41)
- 43) There *wasn't* many people on the streets. (166/UW/112)
- 44) We *was* going backwards 'stead of forwards. (173/UW/94)
- 45) Things *was* closed up. (165/UW/112)

Each of the sentences above makes use of *was* even though their subjects require *were*. Because the subjects of the four sentences are in plural form – *they*, *people*, *we* and *things*, the word *were* should be used instead of *was* to make it agree with those subjects in number and person. Consequently, the Standard American English of the sentences are *What were they fighting about?*, *There weren't many people on the streets*, *We were going backwards instead of forwards*, and *Things were closed up* respectively.

E. Conclusion and Suggestion

1. Conclusion

The data analysis previously conducted showed that the Black English constructions which violate standard syntactic rules in the play *A Raisin in the Sun* are typically characterized by the following features: (a) specific tense and aspect markers, (b) the use of *ain't* as a general negative indicator, (c) the use of double/multiple negation, (d) copula deletion, (e) simplification of present continuous construction, (f) the use of invariant *be*, (g) misuse and missing of suffix – *s* or –*es*, (h) the use of *it* to replace the existential *there*, and (i) the use of uninflected *was*. Among those features, the use of *ain't* as a general negative indicator and the use of double/multiple negation mostly characterize the Black English constructions which violate standard syntactic rules in the play. Due to their equivalents in standard American English, all of them have the appropriate forms which make the sentences acceptable both grammatically and semantically.

2. Suggestion

It is suggested that those who are interested in variants of English usage could benefit from this study. Besides, the discussion may also help them to comprehend American literary works making use of Black English.

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