

## Google: The Correct Portrayal of Ebonics?

### Introduction

Many people in the world today are influenced by Ebonics. Most people do not even know that Ebonics is present in nearly every home in America. However, there are many different ways that Ebonics is portrayed in our society today. More specifically, how is Ebonics portrayed in the top ten results for Ebonics on Google?

There has always been a debate over whether or not Ebonics is a dialect of English, or whether Ebonics is a language of its own. Ebonics was vaulted to the forefront of the media as recently as 1997 during the Oakland School District Debate. Most researchers propose that Ebonics is a dialect of English, which points us towards one of the ways that Ebonics is portrayed in today's society: as a logical and systematic language. Another way that Ebonics is portrayed is that it is a lazy dialect and that African Americans who speak Ebonics are less knowledgeable than the rest of society.

Ebonics has recently been thought of as a logical and systematic language because of the research that has recently been done. According to Rickford, "Ebonics is not just slang.....Ebonics is an English dialect" (Rickford, 1997, par. 4). Since Ebonics is an English dialect, that means that Ebonics shares many words with English. The argument here is that since English is logical, then Ebonics must also be logical.

Ebonics is also thought of as slang. "Members of the academic community in the early twentieth century thought that Africans did not bring any language systems with

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them from Africa” (Taylor, 1998, p. 36). Unfortunately, many Americans still hold this belief in the early twenty-first century. Many Americans, including many African-Americans, believe that Ebonics is only the slang words that are used by the African-American rappers on television. There are many people in America who believe that Ebonics is spoken by people who are too stupid to comprehend Standard English.

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By most educated people in America, Ebonics is viewed as a logical dialect of English. According to Margaret G. Lee (1999), Ebonics and English have many common words. Taylor puts it best when he says, “The type of speech referred to as ‘Ebonics’ is rule-governed, logical, and conforms to the universal principles of human language systems” (Taylor, 1998, p. 37). This proves that Ebonics is a logical dialect, which is how all Americans should view Ebonics.

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This current study of how Ebonics is portrayed on Google helps us to understand the effects that Google and the Internet are having on Ebonics and its image in the minds of Americans. Specifically, the top ten results for Ebonics on Google were expected to yield an inaccurate picture of Ebonics.

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### Methods

The problem of how Ebonics is portrayed on the internet was closely examined through a specific examination of the top ten results for Ebonics on Google. In order to accomplish the study, Internet Explorer was opened. Second, [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) was typed into the address bar. Once [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) was reached, “Ebonics” was entered in the search bar. Google returned hundreds of thousands of results for Ebonics, and the experiment needed to be narrowed. The top ten websites that Google returned for the search of Ebonics were selected for closer examination. The websites were meticulously

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examined and it was determined whether or not the websites portrayed Ebonics positively or negatively.

### Results

I had originally predicted that Ebonics would be portrayed negatively more than it would be portrayed positively in the top ten results for Ebonics on Google. However, in my experiment, through **close** examination, Ebonics was generally portrayed positively on the websites. In fact, seven out of the ten websites portrayed Ebonics positively. In other words, seventy percent of the time Ebonics was portrayed positively and for what it really is. However, it is good to note that the top two websites portrayed Ebonics negatively. The three websites that portray Ebonics negatively all view the dialect of Ebonics as slang.

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### Discussion

Throughout the many results that were obtained by searching for Ebonics on [www.google.com](http://www.google.com), there were two major results that I found. The most important result was that a majority of these websites portray Ebonics positively and for what it truly is: a systematic and logical dialect of English.

However, it is very important to take a look at the fact that the top two results for Ebonics on Google portray Ebonics as a “made-up” language and show Ebonics to just be slang. It is also important to note that these two sites are run by the same person. There is a section on both sites that allows you to view this guy’s translations of normal English phrases or poems into his idea of what Ebonics really is. One example is when he translates the poem of Three Blind Mice into Ebonics.

Ebonics:  
Tree blin mice,  
tree blin mice.

Dim suckers be runnin!  
Dim suckers be runnin!

Da all run atta dis white man wife,  
She done whacked dare tail wid a fuckin knif.  
Whassup, you eva see anythang dat bad in yo life,  
As three blind mice? (Joel).

At the bottom of this site, Joel says, “This site is mostly slang and what people perceive as Ebonics.” This is an absolutely false statement because my study shows that 70% of people perceive Ebonics to be the dialect of English that it really is and not to be just slang.

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It is also important to note that results three through nine are mostly scholarly sources and portray Ebonics for what it really is: a logical dialect of English that is based on Standard English and West African languages. This is important because it shows that not all people think that Ebonics is slang. It also shows that quite a few people understand Ebonics for what it really is. According to the Center for Applied Linguistics, Ebonics is a “regular, systematic language variety that contrasts with other dialects in term of its grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary.” According to *Wikipedia*, Ebonics is spoken by many African-Americans as well as by some non-African-Americans who have been raised in an African-American community. It also says that Ebonics is structured around West African languages. Almost all of these seven websites share one thing in common: they say that Ebonics is not slang.

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