

Audience: Speakers of Ebonics.

Comment [B M B1]: I added what my audience is to the top of my paper because it was required and I did not have it before.

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ENG 101-01

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Taking a Stand on Ebonics Logic

“That car is **bad**.”

“Would you get a load of that **chick**?”

“Hey man, **chill out**, act **cool**.”

These are all phrases that contain Ebonics words that have slowly worked themselves into “Standard English” as we know it today. Today, Ebonics has worked its way into nearly every African American household. Along with that, it has worked its way into almost every school system in the U.S.A. The **dialect** of Ebonics is not only logical, but it is systematic and is rule-governed. Ebonics and Standard English have many common words between the two of them. Ebonics is also based on two logical languages, English and West African.

Comment [B M B2]: This was changed from Dialect to dialect.

“Ebonics is an English dialect....Ebonics is not just slang. Slang refers to the vocabulary of a language or dialect and Ebonics includes non-slang words such as ash” (Rickford, 1997, **par. 4**). This means that Ebonics is not a separate language from Standard English but rather it is a Dialect of **“Standard English.”** Because Ebonics is a dialect of “Standard English,” “Standard English” and Ebonics both use some common phrases and words. According to Margaret G. Lee, there are many words that speakers of “Standard English” borrow from Ebonics. Some examples of these words are: “chick,” “cool,” “brother,” (referring to another man who is not your literal brother) “gangsta” and

Comment [B M B3]: This was changed from two separate quotes to a single, continued quote.

Comment [B M B4]: Throughout this writing, I had to insert the page number or paragraph number for quotes.

Comment [B M B5]: I moved the period inside of the quotation marks. I had to do this throughout this piece of writing. I also had to make sure that every time I wrote Standard English, it had quotation marks around it.

“gig.” Speakers of Standard English would not use words from another dialect unless they were logical. Since speakers of “Standard English” use many Ebonics words and “Standard English” is logical, all the evidence is pointing towards Ebonics and its legitimacy.

Comment [B M B6]: I changed these two sentences from questions to statements in order to strengthen them.

Another argument for Ebonics is that it is a systematic and rule-governed dialect of “Standard English.” Because Ebonics is a dialect of English, and not slang, it is subsequently systematic and rule governed. According to the Linguistic Society of America, “Ebonics is systematic and rule-governed like all natural speech varieties” (Rickford, 1997, par. 2). Rickford described one of these rules in his article, “Suite for Ebony and Phonics,” “Ebonics has a tendency to omit word-final consonants. This is most evident when word-final consonants come after another consonant in words like “tes(t)” and “han(d).” However, one might think that all words with word-final consonants should leave the consonants silent in Ebonics. This is not allowed in the rule-governed dialect of Ebonics. . . . Ebonics does not allow the deletion of the second consonant in a word-final sequence unless both consonants are either voiceless, as with “st,” or voiced, as with “nd.” In the case of “pant,” the final “t” is voiceless, but the preceding “n” is voiced” (Rickford, 1997, par. 11).

Despite all of the above evidence that has been given, there are many opposing arguments to my point that the language of Ebonics has a legitimate, logical, and linguistic basis. Early on, the opposing argument that Ebonics did not have legitimate, logical and linguistic basis was the generally accepted view by the public. This continued until 1949, when Turner proposed his ideas about Gullah in South Carolina. In 1884, Harrison, who wrote “Negro English,” he believed that the language he was

analyzing [Ebonics] was a "...childlike and inferior version of English" (Tamura, 2002). This statement made by Harrison in 1884 really shows the stereotype that existed about Ebonics before Turner's work was published in 1949. Krapp's works in 1924 and 1925 mirrored the thoughts of Harrison about the inferiority of Ebonics (Tamura, 2002). "Members of the academic community in the early twentieth century thought that Africans did not bring any language systems with them from Africa" (Taylor, 1998, p. 36). Therefore, they thought Africans had certain language deficiencies because of their lack of communication and language skills. They concluded that because Africans did not speak a language before, Ebonics must be a completely made-up language with no logical backing. This is of course absurd to think that Africans did not communicate before they came to America. This was soon proven wrong when Turner's ideas were presented in 1949. "Africans spoke Ebonics rather than English because of these deficiencies" (Taylor, 1998). This is just illogical to think that Africans would not speak English because of deficiencies. It almost seems like what is being said here is that English is a far superior language to Ebonics, and in order to get around their early language deficiencies, Africans made up the language of Ebonics.

Comment [B M B7]: I inserted they thought because these two words were missing from the sentence.

The strongest argument is that Ebonics has a logical basis. This means that the language of Ebonics could be used by a wide number of people to communicate effectively. If a language is not logically based, then hardly anyone would be able to communicate with the language. Since a majority of the slaves (80%) communicated with Ebonics, this shows that Ebonics is a logically based language that can be used by many different people to communicate effectively (Lee, 1999). Taylor puts this 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). The language of Ebonics also has legitimate basis. One of the main points that Ebonics holds in its hands is that Ebonics is linked with West African languages. West African Languages are legitimate because they, “...conform to the universal principles of human language systems” (Taylor, 1998). The link with West African languages was not discovered until 1949, by Turner. In his book, *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect*, he says that Gullah, the language spoken on the Sea Islands outside of South Carolina, is linked with West African languages. Turner was the first African American linguist (Taylor, 1998). The language of Ebonics also has a linguistic basis. Because of Turner’s work in 1949, Ebonics was linked to West African languages. What gives the language of Ebonics its’ linguistic basis is the fact that it is based on these West African languages (Taylor, 1998). One of the best examples of West African language evident in Ebonics was the example given by Turner in his 1949 book, *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect*. He found that roughly four thousand words in the South Carolina language of Gullah, also referred to as the earliest form of Ebonics, and were West African words (Taylor, 1998). “Turner also indicated that there could be links between African American speech outside the Gullah area” (Tamura, 2002). Turner also found that a few songs in the state of Georgia contained nothing but African words (Taylor, 1998). This once again shows the link between West African languages and Ebonics.

In conclusion, there are many ways that Ebonics and Standard English coincide. This not only proves the fact that Ebonics is logical, but also brings up the possibility that speakers of Standard English approve of Ebonics and may even like to speak it. Overall, Ebonics is one of the most logically driven dialects of Standard English that exists today.

Works Cited

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