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**African American Vernacular English Features in
Rap Lyrics: A Case of Study**

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DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation and final master thesis work to my faithful family, my dear father Fathi and my dear mother, Salama, my sister, Safa and my brothers, Muftah, Salheen who supported me and believed me that I could finish this dissertation. To my friends Fatna and Cristina for their positive and warm words and their support throughout the whole course. Also, I would like to thank my supervisor, prof. Laura Filardo-Llamas for her time in providing me with detailed, valuable and constructive feedback and comments in order to improve my thesis. Also, I dedicate it to prof. María Pilar Alonso Rodríguez and prof. Amanda Ellen Gerke and all my professor (of the University of Valladolid and the University of Salamanca for inspiring us in the field of linguistics.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this dissertation is to investigate African American Vernacular English's (AAVE) features represented in rap lyrics by African American and Caucasian American rappers. Sociolinguistics plays a vital role to demonstrate some socio-cultural and linguistic aspects of hip-hop language because it shows the relationship between the AAVE varieties and speech community given in a specific geographical area and a period of time. One of the most representative characteristics of this variety are the phonological feature (i.e., the realization of the voiced *-th* (which is pronounced as /ð/) replaced by the sounds *d* or *v* and deletion of word-final voiced stops after a vowel), some of the grammatical feature (such as the use of *gon'*, *ain't*, multiple negations and absence of copula or copula deletion, etc.) and lexical aspects (i.e., *Y'all*). Therefore, the aim of this paper is to explore the notion sociolinguistics and study of the language and culture of hip-hop, taking into consideration the origin, development of this field. Thus, this approach demonstrates how hip-hop language is used by the two groups of artists: the African American artists (D.O.C., Kendrick Lamar and Royce Da 5'9'') and Caucasian American artists (Vanilla Ice, G-Eazy and Eminem), describing the use of AAVE features. Therefore, by using the corpus tool of *Antconc*, this approach examines some similar and different AAVE elements used by African American and non-African American rappers based on (quantitative and qualitative) data results.

KEYWORDS: hip-hop music, rap genre, African American Vernacular English (AAVE), Sociolinguistics, dialect, variety.

RESUMEN

El propósito de este trabajo de fin de máster es investigar las características del inglés vernáculo africano americano (IVAA) en las letras de rap por raperos Afroamericanos y Americanos Caucásicos. Adicionalmente, el objetivo de este trabajo es demostrar la noción de sociolingüística, su impacto y su relación con la variedad de IVAA y comunidad de hablantes dadas en zonas geográficas concretas y un período de tiempo. Por consiguiente, las características más estudiadas and investigadas en el campo de sociolingüística de la variedad de IVAA son, por una parte el rasgo fonológico (p. ej., la realización de la consonante *th* /ð/ replaced by sounds /d / or /v / y la eliminación de la palabra final con voz se detiene después de una vocal). Por otra parte, el rasgo gramatical (p.ej., el uso de *gon'*, *ain't*, la doble negación o múltiple negación) y algunos rasgos léxicos entre otros. Por lo tanto, este enfoque se centra en analizar las diferencias y similitudes en el uso de los elementos de IVAA en letras de cantantes Afroamericanos y Americanos Caucásicos, todo lo cual analizado a través del uso de la herramienta de *Antconc* y se basa en resultados cuantitativos y cualitativos.

PALABRAS CLAVES: música hip hop, género rap, inglés vernáculo afroamericano (IVAA), sociolingüística, dialecto, variedad.

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1. Introduction

American quantitative and qualitative sociolinguistics has contributed to countless examples of the significance of some linguistic terminologies, hypotheses and grammatical structures represented in American English. These several attempts seem to provide an appropriate description of many elements such as defining certain terms related to the African American speech community, providing an exploration of some theoretical and cultural information concerning the process of development of the AAVE variety in hip-hop. There are some difficulties that scholars and linguists confront when it comes to providing a proper explanation of the use of the African American vernacular English by a non-African American speaking community. Thus, representing the reason why speakers tend to use certain aspects of this variety becomes entirely challenging to depict sociolinguistics aspects.

This paper attempts to provide an in-depth explanation and exploration of the differences and similarities in two distinctive ethnic groups: African American and Caucasian American. This division of each group of communities may allow some

predominant AAVE features to be clearly presented . Also, it might show other sociolinguistic terms and phenomena such as Appropriateness, Authenticity, Assimilation, Realness, all of which seem to be essential to explain the non-African American linguistic behavior and choice of AAVE. By analyzing the quantitative and qualitative data (in lyrics of African American Artists: The D.O.C, Royce da 5'9", Kendrick Lamar and Caucasian American artists: Vanilla Ice, Eminem and G-Eazy) belonging to both groups, I analyze the word and linguistic choice by each artist. Consequently, the analysis of AAVE features and language used by rappers in rap songs seems to be one of the most frequent, traditional and effective methods when it comes to demonstrating the African American vernacular is somehow related to the depiction of some spoken and written documents by two distinctive socio-cultural groups.

In addition, it is important to mention that the field of sociolinguistics appears to show the classification and interpretation of several characteristics of the African American and non-African American English (and the standard) varieties of English. Therefore, the sociolinguistic analysis independently and representing each group (who belong to two different social and ethnicities) separately, may in many ways provide an appropriate explanation of the linguistic choice and behavior of the rappers. This project will mainly rely on the spoken and written (transcriptions) data of each group and rappers who seem to choose using and adding this variety to their daily speech. Many critics and scholars consider this usage of language as a behavior of appropriation and belongingness to the black speech community without them (ethnically and racially) being part of the African American community and vice versa. For example, some of the Caucasian rappers in this project seem to appropriate features of the African American English (partially or entirely) to their daily speech and in their lyrics because

of their relationship and friendship with the African American community (as they may share neighborhoods, ghettos). Hence, this paper is an attempt to reflect the connection existing between sociolinguistics discipline and the (nonstandard) variety of English AAVE (African American Vernacular English, also known as black English, Ebonics, AAL) in the hip-hop genre in the US.

Therefore, the aim of this project is to demonstrate the differences and similarities between two different groups of rappers who belong to two different social groups and communities (black and white) of the American English. Thus, I discuss some of the African American Vernacular namely the phonological, grammatical and lexical features as I depict how the process of evolution of the African American Vernacular English and the genre of the hip-hop genre appears to have an impact on the African American community in the United States socially and linguistically. Therefore, the compiled data seem to illustrate many features in the artists' lyrics and language in a very clear and well-represented way. In this project, I study the so-called sociolinguistic notions of appropriateness, belongingness and language choice in the transcribed songs of each participated artist. Some participants somehow choose a variety (either the African American Vernacular English or Caucasian American) which does not belong to their race, ethnic and cultural group. Also, it is important to mention that in this project I have chosen the corpus tool *AntConc* which in many ways provide a broad examination of the well-known (socio)linguistic elements (i.e., collocations, words list, some pronouns) and most frequently appeared and used words and as it explores some lexical, phonological features and other types of phenomena it shows the quantitative and qualitative use of some elements depicted in the data in each group of rappers.

Thus, this paper will be divided into four parts which I have organized as follows. The first section of this project is mainly centered on providing some theoretical background and (socio)linguistic structures, showing the most relevant hypotheses demonstrated by well-known linguists and scholars (i.e., Labov, Romaine and Wardhaugh among others). In addition, I will demonstrate some cultural and historical contexts of AAVE, its origin, development, use and features. The theoretical exploration of both parts may not only provide the readers with a better comprehension of what (socio)linguistic means but it also might avoid any sort of ambiguity when it comes to analyzing the lyrics of the rap songs and the reason why each rapper uses a certain variety rather than the other. Also, I depict some theoretical and cultural information which may be directly or indirectly related to the next sections of this paper. The third section of this paper will investigate some definitions and some useful phenomena in the sociolinguistic area of study (such as ‘variety’, ‘accent vs. dialect’, ‘acts of identity’, ‘communicative competence’, ‘speech community’, etc.).¹ This may in many ways offer an in-depth description of each (phonological, grammatical, lexical) feature and provide some examples of the discussed data and the corpora’s outcomes. Accordingly, this project will research the most predominant characteristics of AAVE which are mainly phonological, grammatical features in that it depicts some lexical words and elements in the investigated lyrics. The third part of this paper examines the data of the lyrics and songs of both groups of rappers (African American and Caucasian

¹ The terms of ‘communicative competence’ and ‘speech community’ are used and mentioned in Romaine’s book *Language in Society: an Introduction to Sociolinguistics*, to describe the method of arranging and organizing “linguistic repertoires” by social communities or groups (23).

American). Also, it explains the methodology of the entire project, as it presents the whole outcomes and results of the compiled corpus of the data of the ongoing project. The fourth section of this paper will investigate the results of the data analyzed in previous sections due to the fact that it discusses the features of the AAVE.

All in all, I will analyze the lyrics based on the transcribed songs and vocabulary used that in many ways demonstrate the reason why artists utilize some characteristics of AAVE. Also, I will define some essential sociolinguistic terms, hypotheses, theories and some perspectives on the language choice used by rappers (artists) in the hip-hop genre. This will allow the readers a clear knowledge and appropriate understanding of artists' creation of identity, realness and belonging to a social group. Thus, I will analyze the lyrics and language choice and behavior presented in the albums and performed by each rapper in this ongoing dissertation.

2. Review of Literature

The purpose of this section is to explore the discipline of sociolinguistics since I will provide a definition and compare it to other well-known social fields. On the one hand, I will investigate the definition of the well-known notion of sociolinguistics, its purpose and aim in the field of linguistics. On the other hand, I will deal with its relationship with the language of rap songs as I will illustrate some of the most relevant (grammatical, phonological and lexical) characteristics of the African American Vernacular English dialect in the lyrics of rap. Lastly, I will identify sociolinguistics aspects that impact of

the language used on rap music on the communities by presenting some viewpoints of well represented scholars, critics and experts in the investigation of ideological behaviors, linguistic choices and resources that may stand for socio-cultural meanings and ethnographic factors. Also, I will examine the applications of sociolinguistic areas through an analysis of the use of language in the lyrics of African and non-African American rappers by the rappers in hip hop and rap culture. The field of sociolinguistics became of great importance in the study of different English varieties especially African American Vernacular English and hip-hop genre and culture. Additionally, Wardhaugh distinguishes between two different concepts, naming sociolinguistics and micro-sociolinguistics (or the sociology of language). On the one hand, sociolinguistics is the discipline that seems to be “concerned with investigating the relationships between language and society” with the aim of understanding the structure of language(s) and how they can be utilized and applicable in conversations (13). He further defines the notion of sociolinguistics as “the study of language in relation to society” (qtd. in Wardhaugh 13). Micro-sociolinguistics, on the other hand, is that branch that is focused on the exploration of the way “social structure can be better understood through the study of language” (Wardhaugh 13). That is, the analysis of the impact of social structures on the way in which people communicate and how “patterns of use” tie in social aspects of a speech community, whereas the notion of sociology of language (or macro-sociolinguistics) shows how speakers treat their languages (qtd. in Wardhaugh 13). Therefore, sociolinguistics is that part and discipline of linguistics that is concerned with investigating the relationships between language and society. According to Ronald Wardhaugh, sociolinguistics aims to provide a better understanding of the structure of language and its use in a community (11-13).

Sociolinguistics seems to focus on the field of language and society as it correlates with the social sciences, especially anthropology, sociology, human geography and psychology (Trudgill 21). It is essential to distinguish between both concepts due to their importance to clarify the relationship between language and society. Like sociologists, sociolinguists seem to be more interested in studying the language and society since it does not only focus on explaining the characteristics of speech varieties (and dialects) but it also seems to explain other factors that stand for socio-cultural (e.g., gender, class, age), linguistic significance (e.g., the use of personal pronouns and grammatical structures among others) and the ethnological context of the social groups (Wardhaugh 148-150). For instance, in his book *Dialect Diversity in America*, Labov illustrates the dynamics of AAVE variety and the way it correlates with the African American speech communities. He suggests that the African American community appears to utilize different kinds of pronunciation within the AAVE dialect. For example, in the case of African American pronunciation speakers in the southern US are depicted as “conservative in regard to the vowel shifts” in the variety and dialect of that territory, whereas in the North of the United States, African American speaker’s speech seems to be marked by “the merger of *pin* and *pen*, *him* and *hem*” to mark their African American origins (Labov 64). That is, one of the purposes of sociolinguistics is not only to differentiate between the style, aspects and speech patterns within the same language but also it is concerned with studying the use of language within the same dialect (and variety) and speech community. Labov illustrates some examples in order to differentiate the AAVE from the standard English. There are some elements in AAVE that seem to be absent in standard English and vice versa. Therefore, in AAVE, the use of the possessive -s to designate possession by a (pro)noun (77).

In addition, one of the most illustrative notions of sociolinguistics is the idea of variation, especially the so-called term of linguistic variation or change. Labov defines the notion of variation as the way in which “individual speakers vary from one style to another” (13). Labov further explains the investigation of variation as “the special province of sociolinguistics” and he shows an example of how the study of variety might be used to identify “the variability of *-ing*” (73). Therefore, it is normal to find a sort of diversity and linguistic change among groups of speakers and social groups who are separated from each other due to migration. Thus, the speaker's ways of communication tend to be diverse due to the variation of some grammatical structures, phonological elements, lexical aspects and vocabulary among others (41). It is worth noting that there are two main aspects of the study of language: establishing a socio-cultural relationship as it shows some information about the speakers of certain social groups and communities. In other words, the investigation of each language (and its dialects or varieties) may facilitate the exploration of each speaker’s vocabulary and “inter-group” or in-group communication or what Romaine called in her book *Language in Society: an Introduction to Sociolinguistics* “dual-lingualism” (22). That is, duality of a language or dual-lingualism is a term in linguistics that is used to describe the situation in which speakers (who may speak different languages) communicate among each other while each of them speaks their language (Romaine 22).

Furthermore, there are other (socio)linguistic aspects that may be correlated with the notion of linguistic change or variation. Trudgill shows some factors (such as cultural and political) which he considers more important than other linguistic criteria (such as the so-called concept of mutual intelligibility) (4). Therefore, language is a phenomenon that is almost related to some socio-cultural and linguistic structures of a certain group of a

society (Trudgill 8). That is, in the case of African American speakers, they seem not only to present distinctive values, traditions of their own speech community but also they might present different pronunciation, use of language and lexical and phonological features among others.

Amongst sociolinguistic studies of different varieties of English, one can find scholars that focus on identifying the describing features of African American Vernacular English (AAVE), also known as Ebonics. This is an ethnic (and a non-standard) English variety not only spoken by African Americans but also by other speech communities in the US (Labov 74). It is a dialect that consists of “a complex set of systematic rules” and structures required to obtain “logical expression and learning.” (75). That is, AAVE is a dialect of the English language that seems to depict many structures and aspects that speakers need to achieve a logical and well-organized manner of communication.

There are two different hypotheses and groups that in many ways lead to providing a better understanding of the history, development and evolution of AAVE in the US. On the one hand, the Creolist who are a group of linguists who believe that the African American Vernacular English “had its origin in an earlier” and a pre-existing Creole. On the other hand, in his article “Third-person singular zero: African-American English” Trudgill claims that there is another group called the Dialectologists who claim that AAVE “was not necessary to postulate a creole history” (139). That is, they focus their attention on the fact that there are some AAVE features (e.g., 3rd person sg. Zero present-tense) rooted to certain dialects of British Isles (140). Despite all the previously mentioned hypotheses, Trudgill shows that it might be insufficient to conclude whether AAVE is part of the creole or non-creole history (140).

Besides reflecting about the origin of the African American English, scholars (such as Labov, Erik R. Thomas and Mufwene among others) have also tried to identify some of the characteristics of African American vernacular English as a variety. It is worth explaining some phonological and grammatical features as well as lexical choices, all of which are associated with African American speech. Also, in terms of the phonological features of AAVE, mutations of interdental fricatives (e.g., the substitutions of the voiced dental fricative /ð/ with the sound /d/) is considered the most presented aspect of AAVE (Erik Thomas 454); for example, the pronunciation of *-th* in the article *the* as /d/ or [v] instead of the voiced dental fricative /ð/ (454). Similarly, it seems that AAVE speakers tend to delete or replace the use of the voiceless fictive dental /θ/ with /t/, /tθ/, or /f/, as in the verb *think* (454). However, Erik Thomas clarifies that the use of the voiced dental fricative /ð/ is more common than voiceless fictive dental /θ/, especially in New York, and that might be related to the individual's speaking style and social class among others (455). Additionally, Erik Thomas discusses the feature of consonant cluster simplification (the second consonant is a stop such as *pas'* instead of *past*) and the fact that devoicing is usually accompanied by glottalization (455). Erik Thomas further illustrates an example of cluster simplification which is usually more present among AAVE speakers, as it can be noticed in the verbs *slept* and *kept* which tend to be characterized by “a vowel change and the final stop, than for preterits” (455-456).

Furthermore, some other outstanding grammatical characteristic of AAVE are copula auxiliary absence (or the absence of the third-person singular -s), invariant *be* and Multiple (double) negation. For example, copula absence is among the most described

characteristics of AAVE, as in “she nice” instead of “she’s nice” (Wolfram 117). In addition, the invariant *be* (also known as non-finite *be*, habitual *be*) seems to be used in the language of hip-hop, as it is considered as one of the most frequent AAVE grammatical structures (e.g., they be playing games) (118-119). Another well-known verb phrase structure used in AAVE dialect is multiple negations (123). For example, in the sentence “Don’t nobody like him” meaning that “Nobody likes him” (124). Other examples illustrated by Wolfram are the lexical characteristics of AAVE such as the use of the second person plural *y’all* (mainly used by African American speakers) which consists of the combination of *you* and *all* in order to mark their cultural and ethnographic background (125). It is worth mentioning that the relationship between the notion of sociolinguistics and the culture of Hip-hop culture and music appear to be deeply rooted to the African American community. Hip-hop was created by Black and African Americans due to the fact its lyrics are connected to the artists’ autobiography and somehow narrates their “struggles against systemic racism” (Hess 374). That is, many African American speakers (and artists) do not only seem to utilize this music genre to identify their culture and traditions but also to mark their identity as well, enforcing a sort of belongingness and realness in hip-hop culture (375).

Despite the fact that the language of rap music and hip-hop genre is mainly associated with African American community, this variety is also used by non-African American (Caucasian) artists (such as vanilla ice and Eminem) and that may lead them to constructing their hip-hop authenticity” (373-375). The reason why white rappers choose to appropriate some features of AAVE to their lyrics (and speech) is because of a socio-cultural background linked to the African American community (374). For instance, in the case of white artists, both Eminem and Ice Vanilla choose to use AAVE because they

seem to belong to the African American community (both of them grew up in the black neighborhood). Therefore, they somehow construct authentic and real hip-hop (374-375). Also, it is important to acknowledge that “whites can be excluded and disenfranchised in much the same way as non-White communities and groups” (qtd. in Cutler 12). In other words, the language might not only affect the African American community but also the Caucasian community as well, especially when it comes to using this variety in hip-hop culture and US society. Hence, some scholars (such as Culter and Skitolsky) consider the language used by African American and European American artists a controversial topic since it seems to show its speakers’ ethnological contexts and their socio-cultural background as it may stand for some ideological ideas.

To conclude, this section has been divided into three main sections. In the first part of this literature review, I have investigated the notion of sociolinguistics and its relationship with the AAVE speech community. In the second part of this section, I have explored to which extent the sociolinguistics field and AAVE dialect are connected, showing some examples of well-known scholars such as Trudgill and Romaine among others. Also, I have identified the most frequent and characteristic (phonological, grammatical and lexical) features of AAVE. On the one hand, I have shown the use of some phonological characteristics used by African American speakers (such as the substitutions of the voiced dental fricative /ð/ with the sound /d/ and consonant cluster simplification among others) all of which appear to be commonly utilized by black American and white American speakers as well. On the other hand, I have demonstrated the use of AAVE grammatical structures (e.g., copula auxiliary absence and multiple negations among others) that tend to be frequently used by the black American artists and social group and used by white

American artists. I further have explored some lexical aspects in AAVE dialect (such as *y'all*) that seem to enforce African Americans speakers' identity directly or indirectly.

Overall, I have discussed some applications of sociolinguistics in the hip hop genre since it may provide a broad understanding of the language use and ideological aspects in rap lyrics. Also, I have analyzed some of the most descriptive terms and concepts used in the field of sociolinguistics to describe the linguistic choice and behavior of (African American and Caucasian American rappers who seem to enforce their language to mark their identity and to be more authentic in rap culture.

2.1. Sociolinguistic: Theoretical Hypotheses and Framework

Throughout the study of the relationship between language and society and the field of linguistics, there have been some linguists who discussed theoretical linguistics and the fundamental basis about sociolinguistics (such as Labov, Chomsky). For example, in terms of the relationship between language and society, Chomsky discusses that the main issue of language seems to be fundamentally a question of power, although these problems should not necessarily be the main concern of linguists (Romaine 1) Romaine further introduces her book by explaining some fundamental concepts (i.e., Dialect and language, variety and accents among others) due to its importance in order to provide a better understanding of the main concerns of sociolinguistics, representing some aspects of a language speech community (such as the language behavior and individuals' linguistic choice of certain varieties). Other concerns discussed in Romaine's *Language in Society: An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*, seem to be associated with the question

of grammatical and linguistic divisions as it may depict the relationship between variation and change in a language. In addition, Romaine shows that one of the main roles of language is that it may play “as an agent for the transmission of culture” (26). In other words, the study of a language does not only seem to depict some socio-cultural aspects but it may provide an appropriate representation of the linguistic characteristics of members of the same speech community. Therefore, it may explain the language’s linguistic change, its development, the linguistic behavior and choices of using a specific variety and thus belonging to its speaking community.²

Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that sociolinguistics is that field of linguistics which studies and is concerned with those possessions of language and languages which seem to require some references to social (and contextual) components (Romaine 241). Wardhaugh further defines the term sociolinguistics as the field that studies a specific language within a social group and speech community (119). In other words, AAVE structures seem not only to be studied and investigated from a linguistic perspective but also, it is investigated as a social one. Additionally, the notion of sociolinguistics is considered as a crucial field which aims to study the usage of language in a specific

² Labov in his book *Dialect Diversity in America: The Politics of Language Change* mentions that there are some grammatical rules that African American people use when they interact and communicate with white Americans. Similarly, some artists (mainly white American) choose to use the grammatical, phonological and other features of the AAVE variety not because they want to be assimilated to the black community nor they reject their own identity but rather to constructing a sort of social ties and relationship with other African American speakers (133-139).

society as it may determine as “the social evaluation of linguistic variants” (qtd. in Wardhaugh 11). That is, it is concerned with the use of linguistic and social aspects that in many ways seems to explain the functionality and applicability of languages in a certain environment and socio- cultural communities.

Therefore, the main purpose of the field of sociolinguistics is centered on investigating the relationship between the individuals of a specific society and the language shared in a society with the aim to provide a more appropriate comprehension of the language’s structure, function, and usage among others. Thus, sociolinguistics appears to investigate social and linguistic aspects of a group of speakers within a specific community (rather than focusing on only individuals).

2.1.1. Key Terms

a. Variety

Variety is a term that can be defined as “a set of linguistic items” which may share “similar distributions” (qtd. in Wardhaugh 25). Therefore, it is a term that is associated with human patterns of speech such as sounds, grammatical aspects, vocabulary, all of which appear to be related to some outer factors such as geographical regions, socio-cultural groups, etc. Besides, any variety of a language appears to be considered as “part of a continuum in social and geographical space and time” (Romaine 1). That is, a variety must exist within a specific social group who does not only seem to share the same language but they may share the same geographical area, time.

However, it is important to mention the fact that language varieties somehow tend to present different terms and words, despite belonging to the same language. In the case of the AAVE variety, it appears to demonstrate some characteristics and characteristics that are not presented in the SAE (standard English). For example, speakers of AAVE seem to use some vocabulary, lexicon and words differently from SAE speakers. This might be connected to the history of AAVE which may be seen in the way in which black people speak to each other, using a concrete concept in order for them to communicate easily among each other without the captures being able to understand while they work as slaves in the plantations.

Additionally, both the British English and American English seem to present two different kinds of varieties of American English. Speakers of both languages appear to use distinctive linguistic aspects such as utilizing different expressions, pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary among others. Similarly, there are some different structures, features such as grammatical, lexical and phonological (i.e., the pronunciation of certain words and the qualitative and quantitative use of certain elements among others) depicted in AAVE and standard English variety (SAE) and American English.³ For instance, unlike in SAE, African American speech community appear to use the well-known structure of multiple negation (i.e., The Last Poets in their lyrics mention that

³ The difference between AAVE and SAE has been a debatable and broadly investigated topic in sociolinguistics. Lisa Green explains the major difference among both varieties which is mainly centered on the different use of verbal elements. Also, in terms of the structure, Green affirms that AAVE is not dependent on the verbal form of SAE but rather on its sequences of verbs (42-44).

“there ain't no white thighs to play with”) which is a crucial feature to their day-by-day speech and hip-hop lyrics and rap words.

b. Dialect vs. Accent

One of the most debatable topics in the field of linguistics is attempting to define and differentiate between the concepts of dialect and the variety of a language. The word dialect seems to be used to refer to the differences in relation to the speech among a specific group of speakers in a society (Wardhaugh 19). Also, the word “dialect” is usually used to refer to “a subordinate variety” (Romaine 2). For instance, African American Vernacular English (AAVE) is a dialect which can be found mainly in regions and cities such as New York, Detroit and more. Whereas the term “accents” makes a reference to the way in which a person speaks a certain language, Romaine defines accent as “a way of pronouncing a variety” (19). For instance, speakers of British English (i.e., Oxford, Birmingham, Glasgow, etc.) which may involve a sort of accent in their variety of language (19). Therefore, it is almost impossible to find any variety of English (or of any other language) without pronunciation and accent.

c. Acts of Identity

In sociolinguistics, the term “Acts identity” is normally used to describe “the selection of any language over another or one variety of the same language over another speaker” (Romaine 35). In other words, is the linguistic choice by which the individual decides to use one language or language variety rather than the other because they seek to be identified with the language speech community. This expression seems to be

firstly mentioned by Robert LePage in his work *Acts of Identity: Creole-Based Approaches to Language and Ethnicity*. In this book, he uses this term to question some concepts such as language and dialect which he perceived as the outcomes of non-revealed processes of “reification” (Mair 195). In other words, the speaker(s) seems to (either consciously or unconsciously) use the most predominant characteristics of a specific variety (or dialect) of language which is considered as an act of identity. Therefore, the speakers may create a sort of his/her proper “pattern of linguistic behaviour” so as to “resemble those of the group or groups with which from time to time he wishes to be identified” (qtd. in Mair 195-196). In other words, it is the linguistic choice of an individual who may use some features of specific language and/or variety of language that do not belong to his or her social and cultural group.

d. Language Crossing

The phenomenon of language crossing is a sociolinguistic term that refers to the use of language variety that is associated with social, cultural and ethnic groups that the speaker does not usually belong to (qtd. in Ohlson). For instance, in the case of hip-hop genre and rap songs, white rappers in the US (i.e., Eminem, Vanilla Ice and other) seem to use linguistic aspects in that they appropriate some AAVE features to their manner of speech. Additionally, this term might be connected to other linguistic terminologies such as “hybridity”, “authenticity”, “linguistic accommodation”, all of which I will discuss in the following sections.

2.1.2. AAVE:

a. The Origin, History and Development of AAVE:

For decades now, linguists have struggled and faced many difficulties when it comes to finding a proper and suitable name for the language spoken by the Black community across the country. Accordingly, some scholars, academics and critics (such as Mufwene and Sonja Lanehart) dedicated a major part of their research to describe the origin and history of the African American Vernacular English in the US. In "The English origins of African American Vernacular English: Edgar W. Schneider has taught us", Mufwene explains some traditional hypotheses in relation to the origin, development of the AAVE (and the purpose of the African American Vernacular English naming). Mufwene further shows some historical points of view concerning the structure, use, features (phonology and grammar among others) of the African American variety of English since he explores the history of African Americans and the "institutionalized segregation" in the United States. For instance, Mufwene discussed the well-known "Anglicist" hypothesis which basically focuses on the idea that AAVE is perceived as American as any other American English language and varieties (350). Thus, AAVE may not only involve its own structure, grammar, use but also it may describe some aspects that tend to be shared by the African American English speakers.

Moreover, despite all the studies, research and efforts dedicated to representing the quality and quantity of English used and spoken by the different ethnic groups, AAVE seems to be considered one of the most researched English varieties. Hence, many linguists (i.e., Saussure, Labov, Chomsky) dedicated a huge part of their research to explore, define and describe AAVE, its phonetic features, grammatical characteristics,

lexical description, the structure. Additionally, one of the most illustrative descriptions of African American Vernacular English is the one represented by the sociolinguist Labov. In his book, *Dialect Diversity in America*, Labov provides an in-depth exploration of what is the meaning of African American English as he explains the politics and history of AAVE showing its development, origins, roots, etc. Contrary to the popular belief that there are many old dialects starting to disappear in American English, Labov demonstrates that this is simply a misconception since there are numerous dialects and English variations across the United States (10-14). That is, AAVE is not only perceived as one of the oldest varieties of English studied in the sociolinguistics and English varieties in the United States, but it seems to be used by the African American community in many areas (such as Chicago, Detroit, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, all of which seem to be the homeland of the AAVE) (Labov 86-88). It is important to mention that these regions appear to be the source of hip-hop culture probably because of the presence of the notion of the ghetto and the culture of the African American neighborhood that I will explore in-depth in the next sections.

Furthermore, Labov states that African American Vernacular English is the name that some linguists give to the English variety spoken by the African American population and community, also largely known as “Black English”, “Ebonics”, AAL (74). In addition, in terms of the English origin, AAVE shows some features of creole. However, Labov explains that AAVE is a variety of white US English rather than an independent language of creole (87). Historically, AAVE seems to be considered as one of the most studied varieties in the linguistics field because of its connection with “the long history of African Americans” in the US (87). Labov represents two hypotheses of the origin of AAVE. On the one hand, AAVE appears to be influenced by some West African languages as it is developed between the slave population who seem to live in the rural

areas, the west of the United States in the 1793 (Labov 87). On the other hand, one of the reasons why AAVE appears to be rapidly transformed and expanded in the US, especially in the western side seems to be associated with the expansion of the well-known movement the “Great Migration” (which is a population movement that took place before WWI) (Labov 88). This process of migration of many black people is somehow one of the main factors that caused this linguistics and the emergence of different dialects, accents, varieties and languages to the US. Although the current AAVE is somehow different from the language used by the African American population (before 20th century), the progress of the language used by African slaves and migrants appear to be fundamental to explore the development of AAVE.

a. African American Vernacular English Features

This section will discuss AAVE's most prominent aspects. I will first focus on the phonological features, grammatical characteristics and some lexical choices used in the hip-hop language and culture. Some linguists, and scholars provide an in-depth exploration of the most frequent and common aspects and features in AAVE (i.e., Labov, Mufwene, Wolfram, Kohn and Erik R. Thomas among others). On the one hand, regarding the phonological feature, I will focus on mutations of interdental fricatives the simplification of consonant cluster and devoicing among others.⁴ The inflectional

⁴ In “Phonological and phonetic characteristics of African American Vernacular English”, Erik Thomas discusses some common phonological AAVE features such as interdentalfricatives mutation (i.e., the substitutions of the voiced dental fricative /ð/ with the sound /d/ or replacement of /θ/ and /ð/, with /t/, /tθ/, /f/ or is deleted) and

ending - *ing* is perceived as one of the most used characteristics of AAVE and usually presented as *-in'*. In terms of the structure, Labov explains AAVE is normally characterized by variable, constant elements and features all of which seem to be absent in other varieties of American English (89-91). Labov distinguishes among two types of grammatical elements and endings that tend to be present in AAVE and absent in other English dialects and varieties. There are some grammatical structures and elements that prove the uniqueness of AAVE since it involves features that do not appear in the standard English, including: “the habitual *be*, preterit *had*, intensive perfective *done*, past perfective *been done*, resultative *be done*, remote perfect *BIN*, perseverative *steady*, indignative *come*” (92). Consequently, in *African-American English: Structure, History, and Use*, Labov explains some aspects concerning the development of some characteristics which are shown exclusively AAVE. He further states that “habitual *be*” or “non-finite *be*” appears to be created and established by sociolinguists in the second half of the 20th century (134). Labov further defines the “habitual *be*” element as follows: “The particle *be* is the most frequent and the most salient of AA elements in AAVE. Its morphology is clear: it always appears as /biy/ (and occasionally with an /s/ suffix)” (130-134). In addition, in *African American Vernacular English: Phonological and Grammatical Features of African American Vernacular English (AAVE)*, Rickford clarifies some of the most frequent and widely accepted phonological characteristics of AAVE by many linguists, such as the reduction of the constant cluster of the of the word-final (especially the constants that end in *t* or *d*). For instance, the suffix *-ed* in the

devoicing (which might be accompanied by “glottalization of morpheme-final /d/, /g/ and /b/” among others (454-456).

word “talked” is pronounced as /t/. Moreover, Rickford highlights some other phonological features such as realization of final *-ing* (i.e., waiting is pronounced as waitin’), realization of voiceless *th* /ð/ (which is pronounced as d or v) and realization of “*-ing* as *-ang* and *-ink* as *-ank*” (4-5). For example, some phonological features are:

- a) Amongst the phonological characteristics, the following features can be highlighted: on the one hand, the substitutions of the voiced dental fricative /ð/ with the sound /d/ (i.e., *-th* in “the” is usually pronounced as /d/ by most of the AAVE speakers). The change of /θ/ and /ð/, with /t/, /tθ/, /f/ or is deleted).
- b) Consonant cluster reduction (or simplification) (the second consonant is a stop such as pas’ instead of past).
- c) Devoicing (which normally goes in line with glottalization) is a well- known feature among AAVE speakers in Detroit (Thomas 454-456).

Additionally, regarding grammatical feature of AAVE, the next aspects are considered amongst the most outstanding grammatical features:

- a) Copula deletion (auxiliary absence): it is described as the absence of the third- person singular-s and auxiliary “for contractible forms of is and are” (Wolfram 117). For instance, in AAVE, speakers say “He nice” instead of “He’s nice”.
- b) *Be done*: Be done is that AAVE feature which is the union of *be* and *done* as *be done* which can be translated to “will have done” (*African American-English: Structure, History, and Use* 141).

c) *Ain't*: This feature might be used in two different forms: as a “negative concord” which is considered as one type of “cross-clausal negations” and the most evocative aspects that might be uniquely used by AAVE speakers and normally used to mean “not able to”. Also, it can be used as a negative preverbal to replace present tense be (isn't, am not, aren't) or to substitute the perfect auxiliary “haven't” (wolfram 124).

Furthermore, amongst the most predominant and significant lexical features of AAVE, the following characteristics can be represented as follows:

a) Sexist and misogynist terminologies: on the one hand, as mentioned previously, the language of hip-hop genre (and rap lyrics) tends to involve a sort of sexist and misogynist terminology and vocabulary towards females (i.e., “b*tch”) which may lead to some providing some socio-cultural and linguistic problems. That is, some scholars believe that the language or the vocabulary used to describe females are mainly perceived as inappropriate and offend many of the audience (Cutler 12).

b) Racism-related terms (towards African American men): it appears that this topic is considered one of the most controversial when investigating the lexical features of AAVE. Words such as the N-word (or “ni**a”) is highly studied as an offensive word and somehow connected to the identity of African American rappers because it is concerned a taboo term, especially if it is used by non-African American speakers (Harkness 39). Culturally, the use of this term (or other racist terminologies) by non-African American speakers might be regarded as disrespectful and biased towards this ethnic group if it is utilized by white Americans in the United States (40-41). Overall, many critics and scholars

consider rap as a genre that shows a sort of offensive language and involves a sort of “excessive amounts of misogyny in their lyrics in a very violent and inappropriate way. According to Mackey, “The ever-changing music industry has always profited from the marginalization of certain groups of people, including women” (47). I will discuss all the previously mentioned aspects in-depth in the subsequent sections.

c) Other lexical terms: *Y'all* is the well-known word and common expression and the short form of “you all”. Thus, this element and lexical feature seems to be represented through the frequently utilized words in the lyrics of both rappers.

3. Context: Hip-hop in the US

For many years, the study of hip-hop has been the topic of investigating the way rap lyrics, music and language became of great importance in the field of linguistics. This genre of music seemed to play a crucial role that led to explaining socio-cultural issues and political disapproval all of which appeared to begin in the 1980s. Therefore, hip-hop music continues to play a vital role concerning the (propagandistic) due to the fact that the media and some politicians seem to demonize and criminalize some rappers. In this section of the paper, I explore the main terms represented in hip-hop and its relationship to AAVE as I depict the evolution and history of hip-hop and the influence of its rappers to diminish anti-black racism and violence in the US. The language of hip-hop and its lyrics seems to “provide examples of habitual be before noun phrases (i.e., “Dr. Dre be the name”) – an environment in which most

conversation-based AAVE studies did not note it” (qtd. in Cutler 3). One of the main purposes of hip-hop is to demonstrate the reality of some incidents of social injustice, the United States politics and the implications of violence and social prejudices against black people in society.

Furthermore, it is important to note that hip-hop is considered an essential tool and an interesting area to study and investigate its political, social and cultural impact on the general American public; thus, many academics and scholars find the language of hip-hop somehow complicated to be studied and investigated appropriately and in a clear way as it poorly establishes conclusions of some (socio)linguistic points of view and terminology (such as “crossing”, “appropriation” and “accommodation” theories and hypotheses). These terms seem to contribute to providing a better comprehension of the nature of certain English varieties, especially about studying and exploring rap’s language and culture. It is worth mentioning the fact that representing the hip-hop genre and rap music some topics are described in the rappers’ lyrics and songs since they mention well-known events and movements of anti-black racism (such as Black Lives Matter) and other activist movements throughout the country.

4. Methodology and Data Examined and Represented in the Rap Lyrics

In this section, I will focus on the methodology followed for achieving the main aim and purpose of this dissertation. I explain the process of compiling the corpus and data analyzed . Likewise, I will show the steps that I follow to investigate the language and the elements presented by each group (African American group and Caucasian

American group) of the participants. Also, this part of the paper attempts to illustrate the most frequent aspect of AAVE utilized by one group of the selected rappers, representing the less used depicted in the lyrics of other groups (and subgroups) of artists (black and/or white American rappers). By analyzing the data of the lyrics of both groups of rappers, I have used a sort of qualitative and quantitative approach in order to precisely depict the main characteristics and results of the corpus. Taking into consideration the previously indicated features of AAVE, in this section, I analyze how each group of the selected rappers use these characteristics, elements and expressions in a similar and/or different way. Additionally, this analysis was mainly based on three main criteria which I took into consideration when I selected the groups of artists: country, age and gender. All the rappers selected in this thesis were males. Thus, this process of analyzing the data may appear effective and precise especially when it comes to providing an in-depth observation and investigation of the language used in the rap lyrics and American English in general. Also, in terms of the tools used in this dissertation, I have chosen to use the well-known *Antconc* corpus tool because of its practicality and preciseness since it seemed easy to manage and control and that led to evaluating the discussed data's outcomes appropriately and clearly. Also, the reference of the corpus that I depended on when analyzing and compiling the data was the reference corpus of *Am06* (which involves 1017879 Tokens as it includes 500 files).

In addition, in order for this dissertation to provide adequate data outcomes, showing the development of the use of AAVE features in the rappers' lyrics and language use and choice, I chose to divide the artists into two groups of artists (African American and Caucasian rappers and each group was divided into three subgroups and subdivisions. In the first subgroup, I decided to choose two rappers (who belong to the

same country (or state) and share the same age). For instance, in the case of Vanilla Ice (Caucasian American rapper) was born and raised in South Dallas, Texas and D.O.C (African American artist) was born in West Dallas and from Texas (and both artists are in their fifties). In the case of the second subdivision, both Eminem (white American artist) and Royce da 5'9", (black American rapper) belong to the same state which is Detroit (Michigan) and in the same age (both rappers are in their forties). The third subgroup includes G-Eazy (Caucasian American artist) and Kendrick Lamar (African American rapper), both of whom were born in California (and are in their thirties). Moreover, the album and songs selected were mainly released on the same date in each subgroup. On the one hand, Vanilla Ice's album "Hooked" consists of 11 songs and D.O.C's "No One Can Do It Better" includes 13 songs (both albums were released in 1989). Whereas G-Eazy's album "When "It's Dark Out" which entails 17 tracks, Kendrick Lamar's "To Pimp a Butterfly" contains 16 songs (both of which were released in 2015). Lastly, Eminem's album "The Revival" contains 19 singles and Royce Da 5'9"'s album includes 22 tunes (the release date of both of which was in 2017).

Additionally, in relation to the analysis of AAVE characteristics, I focus on the AAVE phonological features, grammatical features and lexical features. More specifically, in terms of the criteria and corpus questions of this research are primarily centered on the artist linguistic behavior and choices of appropriating AAVE aspects (either phonological, grammatical or lexical among others) which I will discuss in the next section. Lastly, from a methodological point of view, it is important to explain the fact that the analysis of this project is mainly based on three main characteristics namely: phonological aspects, grammatical features and lexical features. In terms of the analysis of the represented, I have focused on the lyrics and speech patterns of each artist. Also,

I took into consideration the pronunciation of each group as I have compared between phonological elements, lexical aspects and grammatical structures used by black American rapper and white American rappers.

On the one hand, I examined the usage of some phonological AAVE elements, including, the pronunciation of the voiced dental fricative /ð/ with the sound /d/ (i.e., -th in “this” is usually pronounced as /d/ among the AAVE speakers). Also, the simplification of the constant cluster and devoicing among others (which might happen with glottalization). Therefore, after observing and listening to the songs (with subtitles and transcribed lyrics) of both groups of rappers, it seems that the African Rappers use the voiced dental fricative /ð/ more frequently than the European American rappers. Thus, I have not only analyzed the music and lyrics of each rapper) but also I analyzed some interviews in order to ensure their pronunciation and each phonological AAVE feature. On the other hand, I have analyzed the grammatical aspects and more specifically the use of *copula deletion*, *Be done* and *Ain't* the results of which I show in *Table 1*.

Group	Ain't Feature	Percentage
African Americans	Yes	48%
Caucasian Americans	Yes	50%

Table 1: The Representation and Percentage of the Grammatical Feature *Ain't* in the African American artists' and Caucasian American rappers' lyrics.

As we can notice in *Table 1*, the percentage of the number of times the grammatical AAVE aspect *Ain't* appears in the lyrics of the White rappers exceeds the percentage of the black Americans. Although it is a well-known feature to be used by African American rappers, it is somehow clear the fact that European American rappers choose to utilize this characteristic to mark their identity. Moreover, there are some similar data that coincide with other information shown in both groups. For example, both groups, the African American rappers and European American rappers use the AAVE grammatical feature *Be done*, *Ain't* and copula deletion (with only few exceptions) in some of the white American rappers' lyrics.

In addition, it is quite clear that the African American artists appear to use these AAVE grammatical characteristics more frequently in their lyrics. In addition, in terms of AAVE lexical features, I have explored the usage of racist terms and the female-related terminologies. Also, I have explored the use of the expression *Y'all* (which is an

expression that stands for “you all”). The frequency of the use of *Y'all* in the African American group is around 92 hits. Whereas the Caucasian American group shows a frequency of 8 hits. Additionally, in terms of the use of copula deletion in the lyrics, in the first subgroup, both the white American rapper (Vanilla Ice) and the African American artist (D.O.C.) never utilize any sort of copula deletion structure in the whole album. Also, it is relevant to mention that the white American artist (Vanilla Ice) utilize the grammatical characteristics *Be done* only once. For example, in the album of in his album *Hooked* (and song “I Love You”), Vanilla Ice mentions “I've done. So, no matter what goes on, no matter what happens”. The black American use of *Be done* seems to overweight the white American artist in that the frequency of *Be done* in his lyrics is 6 times (hits).

Moreover, in the second subgroup, both rappers (G-Eazy and Kendrick Lamar) use the copula deletion feature only a couple of times. For example, in his album *To Pimp a Butterfly*, Lamar uses this feature as “they ready to close”. In addition, it is important to note that the African American artists appear to use some of the grammatical structures such *Be done* more frequently than the other (white American) rappers. However, in the case of Lamar lyrics, it appears that he uses this structure only once in his entire album. For example, in his album *To Pimp a Butterfly*, Lamar uses the structure of *Be done* such as “I'm done, to be honest” and so on. Lastly, the third subgroup, the use of *Ain't* appears to be presented in both the white American and black American rappers' lyrics, the frequency of which is clearly illustrated below in *Table 2*.

<i>No.</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>Freq.</i>
1	African American Rapper	65
2	European American Rapper	32

Table 2: The Representation of *Ain't* in the Black and White American rappers' lyrics

Thus, in this section I have analyzed and evaluated information and lyrics in six different albums by black American and European American rappers. It is important to mention that I thoroughly select the evaluated and investigated information in that I decide to choose the albums' songs depending on their release date independently in each subgroup rather than in other kind of criteria in order to provide a more in-depth observation and precise conclusions of the previously discussed outcomes.

5. Results and Discussion

As demonstrated in the previous section, it seemed that the AAVE characteristics presented by both groups of artists showed well-represented and valuable outcomes to be discussed in this part of the paper. In this section of the paper, I will discuss the results represented in the previous part of this project. Therefore, by analysing the white American rapper's choice of using AAVE characteristics less than the other group I will describe how some African American artists tend to strengthen their AAVE features of their speech community in order to mark their authenticity and identity and/or vice versa. This part of the project is divided into two sections. On the one hand, I explore the African American rappers' use of the main (phonological, lexical and grammatical

features) AAVE as I explain their language choice and some other aspects of this variety. Therefore, it is important to mention that exploring the previously discussed (socio)linguistic terms and concepts may provide a better understanding of highlighting the choice of white American rappers to use this variety as an “act of identity”, authenticity and belongingness to the hip-hop music and AAVE social communities.

5.1. The Use of AAVE Features in the Black American Artists’ Lyrics.

In terms of the use of the features of this variety, it seems that the majority of African rappers selected in this dissertation choose to use the most predominant and well-known characteristics of AAVE such as the phonological features (i.e., the exchange of the voiced dental fricative /ð/ with the sound /d/ and devoicing among others). The voiced dental fricative /ð/ is clearly presented in the majority of African American artists’ songs. For instance, in his song “It’s Funky Enough”, D.O.C repeatedly pronounces fricative /ð/ as a /d/ (i.e., Drop the funk into the mix so the place will never fade) throughout the whole album. Also, it is well-represented in the group of white American rappers (i.e., Eminem pronounces the *-th* in the demonstrative pronoun “this” as a /d/). For instance, in his album *The Revival*, Eminem marks this phonological AAVE feature (i.e., “Ever let this mic”) throughout his entire album.

Therefore, In order to explain the previously represented outcomes and data of the African American artists, it is important to note that *Ain’t* which was consistently used by the African American rapper (65 hits), while it appeared only a few cases (32 hits) in the analyzed data of white American artists. In addition, he uses one of the most

noticeable features which is the pronunciation and simplification of the sound /ð/ and that either he makes the sound into a stop” and turned into the dental plosive sound /d/, (such as ‘that’ /ðat/ > /dat/, ‘this’ /ði:s/ > /di:s/) or simply omitting this element as in “them” which might be pronounced and written as ’em. For example, in G-Eazy album, *When It’s Dark Out*, he pronounces this word (i.e., Haters, I don’t understand ’em) throughout his album.

Additionally, it is worth noting that “act of identity” is seen as a significant factor in understanding the linguistic choice and behavior that characterizes African-Americans’ and non-African American speakers. Thus, the use of AAVE may in many ways prove their in-group community and establish social relationships and multi-ethnic contexts. Accordingly, Walt explains this sort of language choice and linguistic behavior as “the possible persistence of long-term ethnolinguistic distinctiveness is a fundamental issue in reconstructing the history of African American speech.” (“Reexamining the Development of African American English: Evidence from Isolated Communities” 283). In other words, the black American rappers’ social ties and friendship with the white American artists appear not only to show the relationship among both artists, but also it may demonstrate how different the linguistic choices each rapper might seem depending on their cultural and social background. Thus, the use of AAVE structures in the African American rappers’ lyrics is primarily to strengthen the prestige of African American variety in rap, especially to establish social relationships between different ethnic groups in hip-hop and rap industry (Álvarez-Mosquera 70).

5.2. The Aspects of AAVE in the White American Artists' Lyrics

Despite being “socially considered a low-status language variety, AAVE not only allows “[white] American rappers to be more authentic” but also to make themselves distinguishable from other white Americans and those who are not rappers. (Álvarez-Mosquera, 60). Some European Americans seem to represent a sort of limitless and wide knowledge of the most AAVE aspects owing to the fact that most of those artists belong to the states, the majority of which includes a higher population of the African American community. For instance, in the case of Eminem, he grew up in the black community. This seems to allow the European American rappers to build a sort of social connections and relationships with the “black neighborhood”, Álvarez-Mosquera affirms (“Constructing Identity: The Representation of Male Rappers as a Source of Masculinity.” 68). Taking into consideration the analyzed data and the structures and elements used by the White American rappers, there are some different AAVE features that appear to be utilized distinctively in their (transcribed) lyrics compared to the African American rappers. For instance, the use of copula deletion which is considered as one of the most remarkable grammatical AAVE aspects used by the African American community appears only few times in the Caucasian lyrics. Hence, it is important to mention that this characteristic appears more frequently in Caucasian American artists' lyrics. Whereas the other selected white rappers seem to utilize this feature less often. On the one hand, the use of *ain't* appears to be represented many times in the evaluated lyrics and data of the European American rappers.

Also, in terms of the use of the simplification of the sound /ð/, It is used very low since I observed and listened to the albums of white American artists and interviews and the way in which they pronounce each feature of AAVE phonological elements. Thus, the white American rapper's choice of appropriating features of this variety rather than any other (standard) variety is not to be perceived as "black" but rather seen to express their ethnic identity though reinforcing their social connection with the African American community. Also, the Caucasian American rappers appear to somehow show their act of identity in the black-hood community since they use almost the same pronunciation of the AAVE (grammatical structures and some lexical among others). In his article, "Eminem's construction of authenticity", Armstrong states that Caucasian American rappers' authenticity is well represented because they illustrate and prove the notions of "the white-black" and "violent misogynist axes while rejecting a key element of gangsta rap's oppositional nature" (336). In other words, white American rappers seem to show not only social aspects but also linguistic behavior associated with African American society and the rap culture irrespective of the fact that they are simply white rappers. In addition, it is essential to explain the so-called theory of "language" accommodation which is basically a process in which an individual seeks "social approval" (Giles and Powesland 232-233). Thus, this speech style and linguistic behavior (of choosing AAVE features) may not only lead the Caucasian American rappers to "identity-change" as they "desire for social approval", but also it might allow their of identity in a specific social group (233).

6. Conclusion

To sum up, this final thesis has investigated the features of AAVE language in the rap lyrics represented by two different groups: African American and Caucasian American rappers. Also, I demonstrated the relationship between rap music and the field of sociolinguistics which investigates the usage of some (phonological, grammatical and lexical) AAVE features. Additionally, I have shown the difference between the use of AAVE features presented by both non-African American and African American rappers who chose this variety as an “act of identity” and language “accommodation” in the hip-hop culture. Also, I have demonstrated the reason why white rappers tended to choose to use these (socio)linguistic elements which seemed to be connected to the well-known notion of appropriateness and belongingness. Thus, this act of creating identity and appropriating AAVE aspects to their rap music and speech seem to strengthen their relationship with the African American community. Hence, the linguistic choice and behavior of (both the black American artists and white American) rappers may be considered as “authentic since it reinforces the identity of each rapper.

Moreover, I have explored the lyrics of both groups (black American and white American) rappers. The corpus that I used to evaluate the data and lyrics was *Antconc*. I have explored the lyrics of both groups separately. That is, I divided the rappers into three subgroups in order to ensure the adequacy and guarantee accuracy of the outcomes. Furthermore, I have discussed the main terms of sociolinguistics and described the evolution of AAVE variety in the US which on many ways provide a better comprehension of the aim of this dissertation. On the other hand, the African American

rappers' choice to use these structures seems to be associated with the fact that AAVE is not only to mark a sort of uniqueness to its group community but also it can be used to strengthen their ethnic and personal ties as it enforces their identity and authenticity.

All in all, this dissertation work has explored the most predominant and used AAVE (grammatical and phonological) characteristics presented in the language represented by each artist. Also, I have depicted the use of violent terms, gender expressions, personal pronouns in African- American and non- African American rappers (transcribed) songs, all of which tend to be present in the hip-hop language and culture. Hence, I have provided a kind of comparison of the data presented by European American artists and African American rappers. Thus, the findings of this analysis was focused on the use of the AAVE and that led to providing some important notions. For instance, the so-called notion of language crossing, and appropriateness and an act of identity in social and speech communities and hip-hop culture. Lastly, in terms of the limitations of this thesis, it is important to mention that it is somehow a complex process to identify the pronunciation of each artist due to the fact that AAVE variety is on many occasions changeable throughout time. Thus, further research is needed to provide an impactful and highly efficient explanation of the development, progress and use of AAVE phonological features so as to identify and demonstrate the pronunciation throughout hip-hop culture.

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