THE EVALUATION OF A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COURSE TO INCREASE 
CRITICAL LANGUAGE AWARENESS AMONG 
SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS 

by 
Denise Osborne 

A dissertation submitted to Johns Hopkins University in conformity with the requirements 
for the degree of Doctor of Education 

Baltimore, Maryland 
April 2023 

© 2023 Denise Osborne 
All rights reserved
Abstract

The dissertation study explored the problem of high school special education teachers possessing limited knowledge of critical language awareness, or the relationship among Standard American English, African American English, and social power in the Common Core Language Standard (Sweetland, 2010). The literature review uncovered several studies investigating general education teachers’ attitudes toward African American English but very few studies investigating high school special education teachers’ attitudes toward African American English. The needs assessment addressed this gap by investigating high school special education teachers’ attitudes toward African American English. The needs assessment findings indicated most high school special education teachers held neutral attitudes toward African American English and accepted Standard American English as the norm. The findings guided the selection of an online professional development course designed by Godley, Reaser, and Moore (2015) to evaluate the course. The theoretical framework for the course evaluation was the transformative learning theory and the conceptual frameworks were critical discourse analysis and critical language awareness. The student researcher conducted a triangulation convergence mixed method design to evaluate the Godley et al. (2015) course. The six-week course improved the high school special education teachers’ attitude toward African American English. There were variations in their understanding of critical language awareness and minimal change in their understanding of language variation. The course evaluation findings suggest the Godley et al. (2015) course improves teachers’ attitudes toward African American English. However, teachers need more opportunities to experience changes in their understanding of critical language awareness and language variation.
Keywords: AAE, SAE, critical language awareness, transformative learning, critical discourse analysis, professional development, special education, high school

Primary Reader and Advisor: Cynthia M. Webb, Ed.D.

Secondary Reader: Khaliah Fleming, Ed.D.
Doctor of Education Program
Dissertation Approval Form

Student’s Name: Denise Osborne

Date: April 12, 2023

Dissertation Title:
THE EVALUATION OF A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COURSE TO INCREASE CRITICAL LANGUAGE AWARENESS AMONG SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

The student has made all necessary revisions, and we have read and approve this dissertation for submission to the Johns Hopkins Sheridan Libraries as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree.

Cynthia M. Webb, Ed.D.

Marcia Davis, Ph.D.

Wendy Osefo, Ph.D.

4/14/23

Digitally signed by Marcia Davis
Date: 2023.04.12 14:36:35 -04'00'

4/12/2023
Dedication

My dissertation is dedicated to my father, who has spent his entire life believing the ideology that his expression of African American English is terrible English and has been self-conscious about his speech his entire life. My research was completed to acknowledge and validate his voice and others who speak culturally valid dialects and language varieties in the United States.
Acknowledgments

First, I thank God for walking with me through this doctoral journey. I trust this was His appointed time for me to complete this dissertation, and I am pleased my research aligns with His will and purpose. I want to express my sincerest appreciation to my dissertation committee members: Dr. Cynthia M. Webb, Dr. Marcia Davis, and Dr. Wendy Osefo. Thank you so much for guiding me through this dissertation with your expertise, guidance, patience, and words of encouragement.

I want to thank my wonderful husband, Benjamin, for supporting me in accomplishing one of my personal and professional goals. I also want to thank my wonderful son, Xavier, for assigning his stuffed animals to help me with my homework and always giving me a reason to smile. I thank my parents, Leroy and Jacqueline Brundidge, my siblings, extended family, co-workers, and friends for their prayers, words of encouragement, and for being my band of cheerleaders.

I also want to thank my colleague, Dr. David Graham, for his prayers, words of encouragement, doctoral advice, and support. Finally, I must acknowledge my best friend, Dr. Khaliah Fleming. Thank you, Khaliah, for over 20 years of friendship, honesty, empathy, feedback, and emotional support as we completed our dissertations concurrently. From the International Baccalaureate program in high school to the Johns Hopkins University School of Education Ed.D. program . . . girl, we be DONE!
List of Tables

Table 1.1 Common AAE Features Spoken by African Americans ........................................... 20
Table 2.1 Needs Assessment Teacher Demographics ............................................................. 49
Table 2.2 Teachers’ Total Attitude Scores and Descriptors ..................................................... 53
Table 2.3 Teachers’ Needs Assessment Responses by Question .......................................... 56
Table 2.4 Codes of Teachers’ Open-Ended Responses ......................................................... 57
Table 2.5 Theme from the Second Coding Analysis ............................................................... 58
Table 2.6 Review of Teacher Scenarios and Responses ....................................................... 105
Table 2.7 Timetable of Data Collection ................................................................................. 108
Table 2.8 Rubric for the Transformative Learning Coding Category ..................................... 113
Table 2.9 Participants’ Rankings of the Most Useful Course Content ................................... 120
Table 2.10 Frequency Count of Submitted Paragraphs ......................................................... 122
Table 2.11 Frequency Count of Critical Language Awareness Positions ............................... 125
Table 2.12 Responses by Theme of Data Pertaining to Understanding CLA ....................... 128
Table 2.13 Ranking of Scenario 1 Teaching Strategies .......................................................... 132
Table 2.14 Ranking of Scenario 2 Teaching Strategies .......................................................... 135
Table 2.15 Frequency Count of Language Variation Codes .................................................. 139
Table 2.16 Responses by Theme of Their Understanding of Language Variation .................... 140
List of Figures

Figure 2.1 Percentage of AAE Features Spoken by Students……………………………………54
Figure 3.1 Components of the Transformative Learning Theory………………………………68
Figure 3.2 Concept Map…………………………………………………………………………72
Figure 5.1 Changes in Attitudes Towards AAE………………………………………………...124
# Table of Contents

Dedication ..................................................................................................................................................... v

Acknowledgments ........................................................................................................................................ vi

List of Tables .............................................................................................................................................. vii

List of Acronyms ....................................................................................................................................... xiii

Executive Summary ...................................................................................................................................... 1

Problem of Practice ....................................................................................................................................... 1

CHAPTER 1 ............................................................................................................................................... 12

Synthesis of Literature of the Problem of Practice ..................................................................................... 12

Chronosystem ............................................................................................................................................. 14

Macrosystem ............................................................................................................................................... 17

Exosystem ................................................................................................................................................... 26

Mesosystem ................................................................................................................................................ 35

Microsystem ................................................................................................................................................ 41

Implications and Gaps in Extant Literature ................................................................................................ 42

Summary ..................................................................................................................................................... 43

CHAPTER 2 ............................................................................................................................................... 45

Context of the Study ................................................................................................................................... 45

Purpose of the Study ................................................................................................................................... 47

Research Design .......................................................................................................................................... 47

Needs Assessment Findings ........................................................................................................................ 52

Discussion of Findings ................................................................................................................................ 60
## List of Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAE</td>
<td>African American English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAETAS</td>
<td>African American English Teacher Attitude Scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canvas LMS</td>
<td>Canvas Learning Management System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCSSO</td>
<td>Council of Chief State School Officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDA</td>
<td>Critical Discourse Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLA</td>
<td>Critical Language Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELA</td>
<td>English Language Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EST</td>
<td>Ecological Systems Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEP</td>
<td>Individualized Education Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAS</td>
<td>Language Attitude Scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NICHD</td>
<td>National Institute of Child Health and Human Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGA</td>
<td>National Governor’s Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRP</td>
<td>National Reading Panel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD</td>
<td>Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PWI</td>
<td>Predominantly White Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAE</td>
<td>Standardized American English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDE</td>
<td>State Department of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SET</td>
<td>Special Education Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLD</td>
<td>Specific Learning Disability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Executive Summary

Despite previous and current American education reform efforts, the reading achievement gap between African American and White students remains (Salih, 2019). The reading skills of African American high school male students with learning disabilities are more problematic despite receiving special education services to improve their reading skills. One factor included the lack of empirical reading and special education studies investigating the specific academic needs of African American students. Another factor was teachers’ general negative attitudes toward African American students speaking African American English. The dissertation study investigated the factors contributing to the special education teachers’ beliefs regarding African American English as an invalid dialect and Standard American English as the appropriate and formal language used in schools in the context of an urban school district in the eastern region of the United States. The research led to replicating and adapting an in-service online professional development course to change high school special education teachers’ attitudes toward African American English and Standard American English and changes in their understanding of critical language awareness and language variation.

Problem of Practice

The Problem of Practice is that high school special education teachers have limited knowledge of critical language awareness, or the relationship among Standard American English, African American English, and social power or control (van Dijk, 2015) in the Common Core English Language Arts Standards (Denham, 2015). The ideology that Standard American English is a normed dialect is a socially constructed myth (Bacon, 2017) embedded in the current system of racial discrimination (Bacon, 2017) and reinforced in school curricula (Wiese et al., 2017). The Common Core English Language Arts Standards requiring all K-12 students to only
demonstrate Standard American English in writing and speaking assignments reinforces discriminatory attitudes from high school special education teachers towards African American male high school students with learning disabilities speaking African American English (Denham, 2015; Godley, Carpenter, & Werner, 2007).

Factors Influencing the Problem of Practice

A literature review was conducted using the ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1994) to organize the multiple and systemic factors contributing to the Problem of Practice. The ecological systems theory explains how factors directly and indirectly influence special education teachers’ beliefs and attitudes toward African American English and Standard American English. The factors were organized according to their respective role among the five ecological systems: chronosystem, macrosystem, exosystem, mesosystem, and microsystem. The chronosystem focused on changes in the education of African American children, from segregation in the 19th century to the integration of public schools in the 20th century. The utilization of the special education process leads to a disproportionate number of African American students receiving special education services (Franklin, 2009; Proctor, Graves, Jr., & Esch, 2012; Skiba et al., 2008).

The macrosystem highlighted the juxtaposition between the misinformed general beliefs about African American English and the peer-reviewed research confirming the legitimacy and validity of African American English. This system also revealed how African American English could impact student reading skills and the legal decisions regarding African American English expression in schools. In the exosystem, attention was drawn to how the beliefs of Standard American English informed the development of the Common Core State Standards. Also, the small sample size of African American students participating in prior reading studies informed
federal efforts to improve African American students’ reading skills and the special education eligibility process.

Within the mesosystem, the strengths and limitations of the language gap study (Hart & Risley, 1995) were reviewed, along with the long-term harmful effects of negative teacher attitudes towards African American English on African American student achievement (Hotchkins, 2016; Sorhagen, 2013). The special education teachers’ developing standards-based individualized education plans for students with learning disabilities was reviewed at the classroom level of the microsystem. In summary, the mesosystemic factor of teachers’ negative attitudes towards African American English negatively influences African American students’ academic engagement and reading skills. However, there is a significant gap in research investigating special education teachers’ attitudes toward African American English. The needs assessment extended the dissertation study to investigate the high school special education teachers’ attitudes toward African American English, the frequency of the common African American English features spoken by African American adolescents (van Hofwegen & Wolfram, 2010), and their academic expectations of African American male high school students with learning disabilities.

**Context of the Study and Needs Assessment Findings**

The context of the need assessment study occurred in East School District (pseudonym), an urban school district located in the eastern region of the United States. The student demographics in the school district are 59% African American, 20% Latinx, 16% White, and 5% Asian, multiracial, or other (ESD, 2020). Approximately 49% of the teachers in the school district identified as African American, 32% White, 8% Latinx, 3.5% Asian, 0.40% American Indian or Alaska Native, and 7% did not disclose their ethnicity (ESD, 2020).
Quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed in the needs assessment study. The quantitative measure was the African American English Teacher Attitude Scale (Hoover, McNair, Lewis, & Politzer, 1997) to measure the high school special education teachers’ attitudes toward African American English. The frequency of the four common African American English features spoken by African American students (Van Hofwegen & Wolfram, 2010) was measured from four student researcher-constructed statements. The qualitative data was analyzed from the three student researcher open-ended questions regarding the teachers’ academic expectations of African American male high school students with learning disabilities.

The needs assessment findings from the African American English Teacher Attitude Scale revealed that 80% of the high school special education teachers ($n = 8$) had neutral attitudes and 20% ($n = 2$) had negative attitudes toward African American English. The participants indicated they often hear the four common African American English features spoken by African American adolescents, as observed by Van Hofwegen and Wolfram (2010). The high school special education teachers’ acceptance of the standard language ideology was evident in their understanding that Standard American English is the norm and the standard in school and employment. The theme of the qualitative data analysis was the participants’ academic expectations were based on the English Language Arts standard. Specifically, their expectations of Standard American English are based on the Common Core State Standards to demonstrate Standard American English in writing and speaking assignments. The findings highlighted the need for professional development to change the high school special education teachers’ understanding of the assumptions and realities concerning African American English and Standard American English in American schools.
The theoretical framework for the study was the transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1978). The conceptual frameworks were critical discourse analysis (Wodak & Meyer, 2016; van Dijk, 2015) and critical language awareness (Clark, Fairclough, Ivanic, & Martin-Jones, 1990; Zavala, 2015). The transformative learning theory is an adult learning theory to understand how ideologies inform the high school special education teachers’ beliefs about African American English and Standard American English and guide their instructional behaviors to prompt students to correct their writing and speech to Standard American English. The conceptual framework of critical discourse analysis confirmed the Problem of Practice by highlighting the powerful influence of the standard language ideology (Lippi-Green, 2012) as the generally accepted belief that Standard American English is more complex than African American English.

Critical language awareness informed the selection of a professional development training to educate high school special education teachers on how language ideologies and language upholds systems of privilege and discrimination in society (Chisholm & Godley, 2011; Clark, Fairclough, Ivanic, & Martin-Jones, 1991; Godley, Reaser, & Moore, 2015). Critical language awareness equips educators to encourage student voice, reverse the erroneous assumptions associated with African American English, educate students to change their incorrect assumptions related to African American English, learn how the socially- and economically elite groups in power standardize the English language, and integrate knowledge with practice (Clark et al., 1990). The theoretical and conceptual frameworks guided the intervention literature review of several professional development programs.
 Intervention Literature Review

The intervention literature review to address the Problem of Practice focused on professional development courses and trainings aimed to change teachers’ understanding of the validity of dialects and improve their attitudes toward African American English and other dialects. Most of the studies promoted the legitimacy of dialects, positive views and attitudes toward linguistic diversity, and awareness of one’s linguistic biases. The different professional development programs available to implement included critical language awareness courses, dialect awareness trainings, postsecondary courses, and a state-level in-service training. The online, asynchronous professional development course by Godley et al. (2015) was replicated and adapted to determine its effectiveness in increasing the high school special education teachers’ attitudes toward African American English, changing their understanding of critical language awareness, and changing their understanding of language variation.

Evaluation of a Professional Development Course

Purpose and Research Questions

The dissertation study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of a six-week, asynchronous professional development course designed by Godley et al. (2015). The three short-term outcomes of the course evaluation were to measure changes in the high school special education teachers’ attitudes toward African American English, their understanding of critical language awareness, and their understanding of language variation. Two high school special education teachers volunteered to complete the course evaluation. The following research questions guided the course evaluation:

1. To what extent were each of the online professional development module videos, articles, and activities uploaded and available for the special education teachers every week?
2. What were the special education teachers’ thoughts on the most useful and notable professional development content they learned through the online format?

3. To what extent were the special education teachers posting one complete paragraph (i.e., four to six sentences) in their initial and follow-up responses to the discussion questions in three of the four online professional development modules?

4. To what extent did the online asynchronous professional development course improve the special education teachers’ attitudes toward African American English?

5. How did the online professional development content change the special education teachers’ understanding of critical language awareness?

6. How did the online professional development change the special education teachers’ understanding of language variation?

7. What were the special education teachers’ experiences learning about critical language awareness during the online professional development?

8. What were the special education teachers’ experiences learning about language variation during the online professional development?

9. Which stages of the transformative learning process did the special education teachers experience during the online professional development?
   a. What stage(s) of transformative learning did the special education teachers experience during module 1?
   b. What stage(s) of transformative learning did the special education teachers experience during module 2?
   c. What stage(s) of transformative learning did the special education teachers experience during module 3?
d. What stage(s) of transformative learning did the special education teachers experience during module 4?

**Research Design**

**Quasi-experimental pretest-posttest method.** The course evaluation was a quasi-experimental mixed method design with pre- and postcourse data to measure changes in the high school special education teachers’ attitudes toward African American English and changes in their understanding of critical language awareness and language variation. The online course began with collecting data from the precourse measures in late February 2022 (week 1). The four learning modules offered the participants engaging online content replicated and adapted from Godley and Reaser (2018) and Godley et al. (2015) during weeks two through five. The online course ended with data collection from the postcourse measures during week six.

The three process evaluation measures were collected during the course. The participant evaluation questionnaire data was collected after the course. The two outcome evaluation measures were collected before and after the course, whereas the discussion post responses were collected after the course.

**Triangulation convergence mixed method design.** The triangulation convergence design was appropriate for the course evaluation as both datasets were collected simultaneously. Specifically, the discussion post responses, the attitude scale, and the teacher scenario items helped to understand how the participants’ weekly engagement in the online discussion posts and exposure to the content influenced any changes consistent with the short-term outcomes of the course evaluation.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

The quantitative and qualitative data collection process occurred from late February to
mid-April during the spring of 2022. The qualitative data was collected from the discussion post responses, the participant evaluation questionnaire open-ended responses, and the open-ended teacher scenario item responses. The quantitative data was collected from the Language Attitude Scale (Champion et al., 2012; Taylor, 1973), the closed-ended participant evaluation questionnaire questions, and the ranked responses from the two teacher scenario items.

**Participant evaluation questionnaire.** The participant evaluation questionnaire created by Godley et al. (2015) was administered once after the course. The questionnaire included six multiple-choice and two open-ended questions to measure the high school special education teachers’ satisfaction with the course content.

**Language Attitude Scale.** The Language Attitude Scale (Champion et al., 2012; Taylor, 1973) was administered before and after the course to measure the high school special education teachers’ attitudes toward African American English (Champion et al., 2012).

**Pre- and postcourse teaching scenario items.** The two teacher scenario items created by Godley et al. (2015) were administered before and after the course to identify shifts in their understanding of critical language awareness (Godley & Reaser, 2018). The three open-ended questions allowed the participants to explain their rationale for ranking each of the five teaching strategies (Godley & Reaser, 2018).

**Discussion post responses.** The discussion post responses were collected after the course. The responses were analyzed to ascertain the high school special education teachers’ understanding of critical language awareness, language variation, experiences learning about critical language awareness, experiences learning about language variation, and experiences moving through the transformative learning stages (Beer, 2019; Mezirow, 1994).
Findings

The findings from the course evaluation revealed modest improvement in the participants’ attitudes toward African American English. There were variations in their understanding of critical language awareness and minimal change in their understanding of language variation. In addition to their different levels of learning, the course content was ineffective in substantially changing their sociolinguistic habit of mind, or the assumption based on social norms of how an individual should express a language in a social context (Cranton, 2016). The professional development course increased the participants’ attitudes toward African American English after the course. The modest increase in their attitudes toward African American English was comparable to previous studies (Fogel & Ehri, 2006; Reaser, 2016; Sweetland, 2010; Wiese et al., 2017).

The participants demonstrated diverse understandings of effective classroom strategies to address critical language awareness, ranging from minimal to substantial. The central theme of their consistent knowledge of critical language awareness was to challenge the linguistic status quo (Godley & Reaser, 2018) with their students, or challenge the current linguistic norm to only write and speak Standard American English in schools. The variability of the participants’ understanding of critical language awareness was evident in the narrow to broad interpretations of the five main positions of critical language awareness (Clark et al., 1990) in the mixed method data analyses.

Both participants confirmed the knowledge and skills associated with code switching were essential in language variation to determine whether African American English or Standard American English was appropriate for a specific setting. However, there were differences in their knowledge of different settings and geographical factors contributing to language variations.
There was some evidence of the participants moving through the first three transformative learning stages (Beer, 2019; Mezirow, 2000), which was consistent with the findings from the Beer (2019) study. Overall, the course activities were effective in improving the high school special education teachers’ attitude toward African American English, inconsistent in changing their understanding of critical language awareness, and minimally effective in changing their understanding of language variation. Despite the limitations of a small sample size ($N = 2$) and the lack of dialogue occurring between the participants, the evaluation findings yielded valuable information regarding the course’s effectiveness in changing high school special education teachers’ attitudes toward African American English, which could support incremental changes to their assumptions about African American English. Specifically, the high school special education teachers’ positive attitudes toward African American English could direct changes in their teacher-student interactions to facilitate reading development (Banks & Gibson, 2019).
CHAPTER 1
Synthesis of Literature of the Problem of Practice

Despite the federal provision of special education services, state and local education agencies have yet to significantly improve the reading skills of African American male high school students with learning disabilities (King-Sears & Bowman-Kruhm, 2011). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2004) defines special education as specially designed instruction to address specific academic, behavioral, or functional needs of a child with a disability. There are 14 educational disability classifications in IDEIA (2004) in which children can receive special education services: autism, deaf-blindness, deafness, developmental delay, emotional disturbance, hearing impairment, intellectual disability (formerly known as mental retardation), multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, specific learning disability, speech or language impairment, traumatic brain injury, and visual impairment. In 2017, the State Department of Education (SDE; pseudonym) reported 21% of African American high school students with no learning disabilities in the East School District (ESD; pseudonym) scored proficient on the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) English Language Arts (ELA) assessment, indicating they are either on track for the next grade level or college and career-ready after high school (SDE, 2017). The PARCC assessment is an annual test to measure students’ knowledge in ELA, mathematics, and science (Pearson Access Next, n.d.). Conversely, 87% of White high school students with no learning disabilities scored proficient on the PARCC ELA assessment in the same academic year (SDE, 2017).

The percentage of African American male high school students with learning disabilities with proficient reading skills was substantially lower. During the 2015-2016 school year, only
2% of African American male high school students with learning disabilities demonstrated proficient reading skills on the PARCC ELA Assessment (School Performance Data Initiative, 2018). The percentage slightly increased to 3% with proficient reading skills during the 2016-2017 school year (School Performance Data Initiative, 2018). These statistics are noteworthy, considering most African American high school males with learning disabilities have been receiving special education services since elementary school (Banks, 2017). To understand the myriad of factors contributing to their low reading proficiency skills, the ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) was applied to organize the factors sustaining the low reading proficiency skills of African American high school males with learning disabilities.

The factors contributing to their low reading proficiency skills were organized through five of the six levels of the nested ecological system: (1) chronosystem, (2) macrosystem, (3) exosystem, (4) mesosystem, (5) and microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). The chronosystem focused on changes in the education of African American children from segregation in the 19th century to integration in the 20th century. The second factor was the special education process leading to a disproportionate number of African American students receiving special education services (Franklin, 2009; Proctor, Graves, Jr., & Esch, 2012; Skiba et al., 2008). The macrosystem highlighted the juxtaposition between misinformed social beliefs about African American English and peer-reviewed research supporting the legitimacy of African American English. This system also revealed how African American English could impact African American students’ reading skills and the legal decisions regarding African American English use in schools.

In the exosystem, attention was drawn to the Common Core State Standards development and the methodological limitations of prior reading studies informing federal education policies.
to improve students’ reading skills development and the special education eligibility process. Within the mesosystem, the strengths and limitations of the language gap study (Hart & Risley, 1995) were reviewed along with the long-term harmful effects of negative teacher attitudes toward African American English on African American student achievement (Hotchkins, 2016; Sorhagen, 2013). The development of standards-based individualized education plans was reviewed at the classroom level of the microsystem.

**Chronosystem**

**The Education of African American Students**

Events and social interactions which initiate changes and consistencies in an individual’s life and across historical time encompass the chronosystem in the ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1994). The education of African American students reflects two shifts on a continuum. The first shift was the exclusion of enslaved Africans from learning to read from the 17th to the 19th century (Mitchell, 2008). The second shift included African American students with full access to public education alongside their White peers in the 20th century (Danns & Purdy, 2015). Despite the integration of minority students in most schools, the special education testing process is a proxy to continue the segregation of African American students in schools (Proctor et al., 2012).

**African American Education in the 19th Century**

Historically, systemic racism could be contributing to the problem of low reading proficiency among African American male high school students with learning disabilities. A reason is due to the intention of ensuring most African Americans in the United States receive a subpar education and limited access to equitable social, economic, and political opportunities (Mitchell, 2008). Education inequality for African Americans began before the Civil War.
Teaching enslaved Africans to read and write was illegal in the Confederate states to continue exploiting free labor from them (Danns & Purdy, 2015; Mitchell, 2008). The restrictions of teaching enslaved Africans to read and write ensured they were docile, obedient, and cooperative to continue providing free labor (Mitchell, 2008). However, White southerners’ concerns of more slave revolts comparable to the Nat Turner Rebellion of 1831 and the increased distribution of abolitionist papers provoked states such as Missouri and North Carolina to enforce stricter antiliteracy laws in the South (Mitchell, 2008).

According to McPherson (2010), the ending of slavery prompted school districts to maintain the segregation of African Americans from White Americans in schools. The Plessy v. Ferguson (1896) legal decision mandating businesses and facilities become “separate but equal” also applied to schools. The Plessy v. Ferguson (1896) case legalized school segregation in the United States. The “separate” section of the court ruling took precedence over the equal section and was demonstrated in the limited resources African American schools acquired for a quality education (McPherson, 2010). Mitchell (2008) describes the early formal education of African American children in crowded schoolhouses with very few books, while most African American teachers possessed only a high school education. These school conditions equated to a significantly lower quality of instruction in reading and literacy. School segregation and subpar learning for African American children continued into the next century.

**African American Education in the 20th Century**

School segregation in the United States is unconstitutional based on the Supreme Court’s landmark Brown v. Board of Education (BOE; 1954) decision. The Brown v. BOE (1954) decision ended segregation in public schools. The Supreme Court decision stated African American children must have equal access to all schools because “separate is inherently
unequal” (Brown v. BOE, 1954). Although the landmark ruling mandated equal access to educational instruction and resources between schools, the legal decision did not remove the seed of institutional racism to maintain the “separate but equal” practices within schools from the previous Plessy v. Ferguson (1896) legal decision.

The Brown v. BOE (1954) decision failed to fully address the core problem of racism in education. The legal decision inadvertently maintained the system designed to exacerbate the subordination of African Americans in public schools (Danns & Purdy, 2015). Consequently, the Brown v. BOE (1954) decision was the turning point when segregation shifted between schools to within school buildings. After the Brown v. BOE (1954) decision, school officials sought to maintain segregation within the schools since the U.S. Supreme Court failed to develop a desegregation plan to achieve school integration, leaving schools to plan integration efforts at the district level (Connor & Ferri, 2005; McPherson, 2010). The integration efforts were problematic, as state and local education agencies employed strategies to undermine the Brown v. BOE (1954) decision through special education processes such as intelligence testing and special education classes in the mid-1970s (Skiba et al., 2008) to separate African American students from their White peers (Proctor et al., 2012). Intelligence tests are standardized, individually administered, normative-referenced measures to determine an individual’s learning strengths and weaknesses and eligibility for special education services (Proctor et al., 2012).

The administration of intelligence tests with African American students leads to a disproportionate number of African American students receiving special education services (Franklin, 2009; Proctor et al., 2012; Skiba et al., 2008). Testing bias contributes to the overidentification of African American students for special education services (Champion et al., 2010; Proctor et al., 2012). Testing bias occurs when the development of intelligence tests lacks
an adequate percentage of minority students in their normative samples, leading psychologists to estimate most minority students’ ability to learn as lower than expected (Scheiber, 2016). Graves and Mitchell (2011), Guthrie (2004), Newell et al. (2010), and Shealey, McHatton, and Wilson (2011) assert the interpretation of lower intelligence test scores as an indicator of student learning deficiencies justifies the placement of African American students in special education classrooms (as cited in Proctor et al., 2012). On the other hand, most White students remain in general education classes (Champion et al., 2010; Proctor et al., 2012).

The conclusions from Connor and Ferri (2005) and Skiba et al. (2008) agree the special education process unofficially serves as a tool to maintain segregation in schools along racial and ethnic lines, despite the Brown v. BOE (1954) legal ruling to end school segregation. The methods of intelligence testing and special education support the prevailing false narrative of the inferiority and unintelligence of African Americans (Proctor et al., 2012). Special education emphasizes more on the internal deficiencies of African American male students and less on pedagogical practices which directly influence their learning outcomes (Brown, 2011). In addition to intelligence testing data, teachers often believe African American students’ spoken dialect of African American English (AAE) is an indicator of low intellect and academic skills (Shepherd, 2011).

**Macrosystem**

**Language Norms and Truths**

The macrosystem comprises the accepted cultural norms of attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, and language within an individual’s social context (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The factors contributing to high school special education teachers’ (SETS) understanding of AAE and Standard American English include their lack of knowledge about the complex and rule-
governed nature of AAE as a dialect (Champion et al., 2012). Current research verifies the complex grammatical rules of AAE (Champion et al., 2012; Craig, Zhang, Hensel, & Quinn, 2009; Rickford, 2016; Stockman, 2010). The high school SETs lack of understanding AAE as a legitimate dialect guides their erroneous beliefs about the dialect as a disability (Banks & Gibson, 2019). Inaccurate assumptions about dialects are comparable to teachers and education systems in other countries. Attempts to integrate AAE into American education have led to litigation efforts to consider aligning pedagogy with African American students’ academic needs (Martin Luther King Junior Elementary School Children v. Ann Arbor School District, 1979; Tosky King & Scott, 2014). AAE spoken in schools indicates academic problems such as reading proficiency (Pearson, Conner, & Jackson, 2013) and often leads to teachers thinking the dialect is a learning disability than a language difference (Banks & Gibson, 2019).

**African American English**

According to Champion et al. (2012), Godley and Reaser (2018), Rickford (2016), and Stockman (2010), AAE is a rule-governed dialect and is a variation of English. Most African American community members widely accept AAE as it is spoken by almost 80% of African Americans in the United States (Amberg & Vause, 2009). Synonyms of the dialect include Ebonics, African American Vernacular English, Black Vernacular English, and Black dialect (Mitri & Terry, 2014; Tosky King & Scott, 2014; Wheeler, Cartwright, & Swords, 2012). Hereafter, the term *language variety* will replace the term dialect when referencing AAE throughout the dissertation, as the term dialect has a negative connotation. In contrast, the term language variety is neutral (Clark et al., 1990). A nonstandardized language variety is a language variety which differs from Standard American English (SAE; Godley & Reaser, 2018; Johnson, Terry, McDonald Conner, & Thomas-Tate, 2017).
The seminal study of AAE by Labov (1966) with African American adolescents in Harlem, New York, confirms the language variety as a complex and rule-governed language system (Rickford, 2016; Stockman, 2010). Labov’s groundbreaking work influenced future research to investigate the possible influences of AAE on the development of African American students’ reading skills (Rickford, 2016; Seidenberg, 2013). His research countered previous studies investigating African American males’ academic deficiencies, such as living in single-parent households and low self-esteem, rather than exploring pedagogy and other curricular factors impacting their learning outcomes (Brown, 2011).

Labov’s (1969) article, *Logic of Nonstandard English*, discusses the phonological differences between AAE and SAE. SAE is also known as academic English, Mainstream American English, formal English, and Standard English (Charity Hudley & Mallinson, 2011; Godley & Reaser, 2018). Hereafter, the term *standardized* will replace the term *standard* because the standardization of a language counters the five linguistic truths or facts of all spoken languages (Godley & Reaser, 2018; Lippi-Green, 2012). The five linguistic facts are the following:

1. All spoken languages are patterned or have their own grammar
2. The difference between a language and a dialect is more political than linguistic in nature
3. All spoken languages have variations at any given time
4. All spoken languages change over time
5. All spoken languages have the same ability to convey ideas

The language standardization process attempts to stop language change or variation (Lippi-Green, 2012). The standardization of American English is generally accepted as better than AAE because the social and economic elites in the United States deem SAE as proper as they
speak SAE consistently (Charity Hudley & Mallinson, 2014; Godley & Reaser, 2018; Lippi-Green, 2012).

The AAE language variety consists of 40 systematic phonological and morphosyntactic contrastive features different from SAE (Craig et al., 2009; Mitri & Terry, 2014). Contrastive features are the systematic or rule-governed differences between SAE and AAE (Shollenbarger, Robinson, Taran, & Choi, 2017). Table 1.1 lists the nine common AAE features which differ from SAE. Examples of the common features in AAE include the word *ain’t*, multiple negations, and invariant or habitual *be* (Craig, 2016; Craig & Grogger, 2012; Mitri & Terry, 2014; Thompson, Craig, & Washington, 2004; Van Hofwegen & Wolfram, 2010). Current studies show that African American students who express more AAE variations demonstrate weaker reading skills (Gatlin & Wanzek, 2015; Gatlin & Wanzek, 2017; Terry et al., 2010). Despite the research confirming the legitimacy of AAE as a language variety, the verities about AAE are not taught in teacher education programs to change high school SETs negative beliefs about AAE, and the reinforcement of SAE continues in schools (Andrews & Gutwein, 2017).

Table 1.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common AAE Features Spoken by African Americans</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3rd person singular <em>-s</em> absence</td>
<td>Subject-verb difference</td>
<td>She go to work every day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ain’t</em></td>
<td>Substitute for <em>am not</em></td>
<td>I ain’t ready to go.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copula absence</td>
<td>Absence of <em>be</em>, <em>is</em>, or <em>are</em></td>
<td>He __ my neighbor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completive <em>done</em></td>
<td>A recently completed action</td>
<td>Uncle Robert <em>done</em> went to the store.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existential <em>it</em></td>
<td>Substitution for there with no meaning</td>
<td><em>It</em> was no more tickets for sale.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple negations or double negative</td>
<td>Two or more negatives in a statement</td>
<td>They <em>don’t</em> want <em>no</em> gifts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“-ing” fronting</td>
<td><em>-n’</em> in place of the “-ing” ending</td>
<td><em>Givin’</em> instead of giving</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Beliefs of African American English

Inquiry about AAE began with the publication of *Negro English* by James Harrison in 1884. Harrison (1884) describes the expression of AAE as deficient and lacking complexity compared to formal English. Nearly a century later, researchers in the 1960s, such as Bereiter and Engelmann (1966), maintain the inaccurate narrative by claiming AAE lacks complexity and the speech pattern reflects incomplete thoughts (as cited in Pearson et al., 2013; Charity Hudley & Mallinson, 2011; MacSwan, 2018). The following false belief regarding AAE claims a factor contributing to African American male underachievement is the misinterpretation of their communication style, or how they verbally express themselves when asking questions or making a statement (Brown, 2011). The challenge is most teachers lack the knowledge about AAE to accurately interpret what the African American male students are explaining or asking, which can lead to tension between the teachers and students (Brown, 2011). Specifically, Losen and Orfield (2002) and Miller-Jones (1989) posit teachers believe AAE speech patterns require remediation (as cited in Banks & Gibson, 2019). Teachers’ misinterpretations of students’ nonstandard language varieties, such as AAE, are not exclusive to the United States. The belief of
International beliefs of nonstandard language varieties. International qualitative studies have investigated teachers’ attitudes toward standardized and nonstandardized language varieties. Researchers discover that teachers’ differential attitudes toward standardized and nonstandardized language varieties are prevalent in developed countries (Fang, 2011; Strobbe et al., 2017). The preference for standardized languages is commonplace in China. Teachers in the Fang (2011) study believe Cantonese and English are more prestigious languages in Hong Kong primary schools. Another study in China by He and Li (2009) confirms teachers favor Standardized English over Chinese English.

Researchers in Belgium, Germany, and Greece have comparable findings in their language variety studies. Belgian teachers prefer Dutch-speaking students when the student population primarily speaks Dutch (Strobbe et al., 2017). The Belgian teachers of multilingual, minority-dominant students perceive other languages and language varieties less favorably (Strobbe et al., 2017). Likewise, primary and secondary teachers in Germany possess more positive attitudes toward the academic German language than regional German language varieties (Wiese et al., 2017). In Greece, teachers believe Standard Greek is appropriate for classroom instruction, whereas Cypriot Greek, their nonstandard language variety, is appropriate for informal instructional activities with students (Sophocleous & Wilks, 2010).

The ingrained preference for standardized languages is also evident in Middle Eastern countries. In Pakistan, Punjabi, the dominant language of Punjab, is not taught in Punjabi schools. The Punjabi community believes Punjabi is appropriate in informal contexts only, whereas Urdu is the national language for official communication (Zaidi, 2014). Additionally, in
Turkey, preservice teachers’ attitudes remain high toward British English compared to Russian, Turkish, and Arabic language varieties (Bozoglan and Gok, 2017).

Teachers in Australia prefer students to speak Standard Australian English in schools. They believe the Aboriginal English and Creole English language varieties spoken by indigenous Australians are deficient versions of Standard Australian English (Oliver, Rouchecouste, Vanderford, & Grote, 2011; Wigglesworth, 2013). Abrahams and Gay’s (1972) findings suggest White teachers’ negative perceptions and misunderstandings of AAE often lead to cultural conflicts in classrooms (as cited in Brown, 2011; Gupta, 2010; Shepherd, 2011). Specifically, these cultural conflicts may stem from ineffective instructional practices to improve students’ learning outcomes.

**African American English in Education**

Educators’ negative beliefs about AAE lead to inappropriate pedagogical practices. Teachers’ challenge with educating African American students speaking AAE prompted litigation and school district resolutions. *Martin Luther King Junior Elementary School Children v. Ann Arbor School District (MLK v. Ann Arbor; 1979)* was the first legal case in the United States to protect the “linguistic rights” (Tosky King & Scott, 2014, p. 229) of African American children. The parents of 11 African American students at the elementary school filed a lawsuit stating the school’s assessment, special education, and remediation procedures were unfair to their children (Rickford, 2016; Tosky King & Scott, 2014). Testimony from Labov (1982) supports the parents’ complaint that the school’s procedures do not account for students’ language varieties and cultural backgrounds (as cited in Harris & Schroeder, 2013).

The court notes the school district failed to consider the students’ linguistic and cultural backgrounds in instruction (Gadsden & Harris, 2009; Gatlin & Wanzek, 2017). The court’s ruling
also supports the research conducted by van Keulen, Weddington, and DeBose (1998) in that communication and culture are inseparable as children express their culture through their language variety and are essential in their learning (as cited in Ivy & Masterson, 2011; Pearson et al., 2013). The final court ruling required teachers to implement the following: utilize specific teaching strategies to address students’ language needs and ensure their pedagogy and assessments consider AAE in classroom teaching practices (MLK v. Ann Arbor, 1979). Despite the ruling, the fight to validate AAE in education continued almost 20 years later in California.

The Oakland Resolution of 1996 (The Black Scholar, 1997), also known as the Ebonics Resolution or the Ebonics Controversy, was a directive from the Oakland School Board to the superintendent to address the low reading proficiency of African American students. The school board validated AAE as a language and advocated for the best possible academic programs to provide appropriate instruction for African American students (Harris & Schroeder, 2013; The Black Scholar, 1997; Tosky King & Scott, 2014). The resolution also states classroom instruction should preserve the cultural significance of the language and help African American students learn English language skills (The Black Scholar, 1997). The Bilingual Education Act of 1968 (BEA) was cited in the resolution to support the need for appropriate academic programs to “build their capacities to establish, implement and sustain programs of instruction for children and youth of limited English proficiency” (as cited in The Black Scholar, 1997, p. 4). Despite the legal recognition of AAE, negative perceptions of AAE remain entrenched in educational practices and stagnate African American male high school students with learning disabilities’ reading skills.

**African American English and reading proficiency.** Researchers posit there is a negative relationship between AAE expression among African American students and reading
skill development (Gatlin & Wanzek, 2015; Terry et al., 2010). Specifically, elevated AAE expression directly affects phonological awareness and impacts overall reading skill development (Mitri & Terry, 2014; Terry et al., 2010). The National Reading Panel (2000) and Zipke (2011) define phonological awareness as the process of generating words that rhyme, decoding words, segmenting words into syllables, or deleting syllables from words (e.g., what is a cowboy without the word cow?). Within phonological awareness, AAE use negatively impacts the skills of rhyming and phoneme segmentation in consonant-vowel-consonant-consonant (CVCC) words such as with and send (Shollenbarger et al., 2017). Gatlin and Wanzek (2017) conducted a longitudinal study to investigate the relationship between children’s oral and written expression of AAE and their reading achievement two years later and whether the relationships differ for students with speech and language impairments or specific learning disabilities.

They found a significant negative relationship between the frequent use of AAE among African American students in second- and third-grade (Gatlin and Wanzek, 2017). They also found most African American students with learning disabilities speak AAE features more frequently than others in their sample (Gatlin & Wanzek, 2017). The findings from Gatlin and Wanzek (2017) are relevant to the Problem of Practice as high school SETs often attribute AAE expression as an indicator of a student’s learning disability and teach SAE as a strategy to correct the students’ learning challenges.

African American students continue to speak AAE as they matriculate to high school (Ivy & Masterson, 2011; Van Hofwegen & Wolfram, 2010). Van Hofwegen and Wolfram (2010) conducted a longitudinal study to examine the trajectory of AAE expression among 32 African American children through the first 17 years of their lives. The results of the study found variability in the different peak periods of AAE expression at each age and grade level,
especially in eighth- and 10th-grade (Van Hofwegen & Wolfram, 2010). The four common AAE features spoken among African American adolescents are -ing fronting, copula absence, third-person singular -s absence, and habitual be (see Table 1.1; Van Hofwegen & Wolfram, 2010).

Another finding is that AAE use plateaus in middle and high school (Van Hofwegen & Wolfram, 2010).

African American children matriculate from middle to high school and continue to speak AAE. Although there is a plethora of research on AAE among African Americans, the negligible inclusion of African American participants in empirical reading instruction and reading intervention studies reduces the external validity of those findings to African American adolescents (Joseph & Schisler, 2009). The limited external validity presents a challenge for high school SETs in the Problem of Practice as they lack appropriate instructional strategies to account for African American male high school students’ elevated AAE expression.

**Exosystem**

**Learning Standards, Education Research, and Federal Policies**

The exosystem is the environment in which the indirect involvement of factors affects a child’s well-being and education (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The exosystem includes the various levels of government, state and local education agencies, and schools (Stewart, 2007). The SAE conventions are the foundation of the Common Core State ELA Standards adopted by most states (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers; NGA & CCSSO, 2010g). Sampling bias is a significant factor in the Problem of Practice as empirical reading studies continue to have marginal percentages of African American students recruited for such studies and a negligible percentage of studies investigating best practices in pedagogy for African American students with learning disabilities. The empirical
studies with sampling bias were considered to guide federal initiatives to close the reading
achievement gap and improve the special education eligibility process to correctly determine if a
student meets the criteria for a specific learning disability.

**Common Core Learning Standards**

The Common Core State Standards (hereafter referred to as the Common Core) are
academic expectations among the content areas such as ELA, science, math, and social studies
for kindergarten to 12th-grade students to acquire for college and career readiness (NGA &
CCSSO, 2010a). Forty-one states, including the East School District, adopted the Common Core
(NGA & CCSSO, 2010g). The East School District adopted the Common Core in July 2010
(SDE, 2020). The first Common Core language standard reinforces the assumption that SAE is
more appropriate because the language standard requires teachers to teach students to
“demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing
or speaking” (NGA & CCSSO, 2010d, Conventions of Standard English section, para. 1).

The language standard assigns AAE and other nonstandard language varieties to informal
or figurative language learning in stories, dramas, or poems (NGA & CCSSO, 2010c). The
Common Core reinforces SAE in formal contexts to high school SETs with a language standard
for code switching to differentiate when SAE is appropriate. Morton (2014) defines code
switching as the ability to switch one’s language in response to a change in a linguistic context.
The code switching standard requires students to “adapt speech to a variety of contexts and
communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate”
(NGA & CCSSO, 2010e). The idea of code switching implies the social significance of SAE and
the relegation of AAE in schools. The expectation is for high school SETs to teach students with
learning disabilities that SAE is appropriate for formal speech and writing assignments and AAE
is only relevant in informal and creative writing assignments. A challenge with the Common Core and other learning standards is that there are a limited number of studies reviewed by education stakeholders accounting for language varieties and culture to better inform curriculum and instruction and the development of state learning standards.

**Research Informing Federal Education Initiatives**

An investigation was conducted to determine the number of refereed special education studies on minority students in 1997. Artiles, Trent, and Kuan (1997) conducted a seminal study analyzing the empirical education studies of ethnic minority students with learning disabilities from 1972 to 1994 among two learning disability and two special education journals. The mixed method analysis found that 58 (2.43%) of the 2,378 studies focus on ethnic minority students (Artiles et al., 1997). Further analysis notes the focus of the 58 empirical studies reviewed was assessment bias (35%), sensory-perceptual processing (14%), and placement issues (10%) rather than academic achievement and language issues (less than 10%; Artiles et al., 1997; Vasquez et al., 2011).

Vasquez et al. (2011) extended the Artiles et al. (1997) study to include peer-reviewed studies from 1995 to 2009 to determine any fluctuations in the percentage of studies focusing on minority students. Although the percentage of studies on ethnic minorities increased from 2.43% to 6.09%, the percentage of studies on ethnic minorities remains lower than expected (Vasquez et al., 2011). However, the percentage of studies including ethnic minorities found by Vasquez et al. (2011) supports the hypothesis of Artiles et al. (1997), expecting the percentage of empirical studies on minority students to range from 6% to 8%. The findings from both studies are problematic as there is a profoundly low percentage of evidence-based instructional practices to adequately improve the learning outcomes of minority students with learning disabilities.
The findings from Artilos et al. (1997) and Vasquez et al. (2011) confirm Labov’s (1970) advocacy for more education research to investigate better instructional practices for African American students.

The recruitment of minority students as participants in peer-reviewed reading intervention studies is also nominal. Lindo (2006) investigated the proportion of African American students in reading intervention studies and found no studies reporting different outcomes for African American students. The 971 reading intervention studies neither account for race as a factor nor include a substantial percentage of African American students as participants (Lindo, 2006). Two studies (3.17%) recruited a sample of 85% or more African American students and fourteen studies (22.2%) recruited 50% or more African American students in their samples (Lindo, 2006).

Overall, peer-reviewed studies in special education and learning disability journals exclude a substantial number of African American participants from their samples, which means “the need for empirically-based guidance on how to reduce reading problems among African American males in special education is critical” (Anderson & Sadler, 2009; p. 337). The current empirical studies do not account for culture or language varieties in education. Such findings confirm the underrepresentation of African American male high school students with learning disabilities in studies informing federal policies for general education and special education services (Connor & Ferri, 2005; Tatum, 2008).

National Reading Panel. The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHHD) and the United States Department of Education established the National Reading Panel (NRP) in 2000 to review current empirical reading studies and determine best practices in reading instruction and reading strategies for educators to implement across the
country (Anderson & Sadler, 2009; NICHHD, 2000; NRP, 2001; Tatum & Muhammad, 2012). The NRP report states reading achievement is attainable when reading instruction includes the five essential areas of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (Anderson & Sadler, 2009).

The NRP recommendations prompt the Department of Education to implement the Reading First initiative (Reading First; Anderson & Sadler, 2009). Reading First provides states funding to implement systematic reading instruction, including a core reading program to address the five essential components of reading (Anderson & Sadler, 2009; Johnson, Terry, Connor, & Tate, 2017). Although the NRP recommendations aim to improve reading outcomes for all students, the research confirming the five essential areas of reading lacks the external validity to effectively address minority students’ reading needs (Joseph & Schisler, 2009; Reed, McCray Sorrells, Cole, & Takakawa, 2013). Of the 418 peer-reviewed reading studies reviewed by the NRP (Shanahan, 2003), only seven (1.6%) report recruiting 50% or more African American participants (Lindo, 2006).

The Minority Report in Appendix C of the NRP report notes an initial request to include ethnographic research in the panels’ investigations was omitted from the final report to Congress (NRP, 2001). The report also notes the NRP report was “narrow and biased” (NRP, 2001, p. 6) as the panel failed to consider home culture in children’s literacy development (NRP, 2001).

The student researcher cross-referenced the list of reading intervention studies reviewed by Lindo (2006) with the reading studies reviewed by the NRP and discovered there were only five studies the NRP reviewed with up to 50% African American participants: Foorman, Francis, Winikates, Mehta, Schatschneider, and Fletcher (1997); McGuiness, McGuiness, and Donohue (1995); Murray (1998); Santa and Hoien (1999); and Torgesen, Wagner, and Rashotte (1997).
The Foorman et al. (1998) and Torgesen et al. (1999) studies were the only two studies with almost 85% African American participants. The omission of home culture factors by the NRP suggests the five reading components exclude how AAE could influence reading outcomes and misinforms high school SETs assumptions of the legitimacy and social importance of SAE in school and society. Integrating the five essential reading components in federal special education law increases the likelihood that African American male high school students with learning disabilities’ reading challenges will not be adequately addressed.

**Federal legislation on special education.** The federal government’s education policies influence how high school SETs provide specialized reading instruction to address African American male high school students with learning disabilities’ reading weaknesses. According to the IDEIA (2004), specialized instruction is specially designed teaching to modify the content or delivery of instruction for the unique academic needs of a student with a learning disability. IDEIA (2004) mandates school districts to provide students with disabilities a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment to the maximum extent appropriate to remediate their academic and behavioral difficulties (IDEIA, 2004). The least restrictive environment is defined as students with disabilities educated with their nondisabled peers, when deemed appropriate, in general education classrooms (IDEIA, 2004). The educational disability most prevalent is specific learning disabilities (Proctor et al., 2012). Fifteen percent of students in the East School District have a learning disability (ESD, 2020).

A specific learning disability (SLD) is one of 14 educational disability categories identified in IDEIA (2004) in which public school students can receive special education services. The definition of SLD is a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may affect the ability to
listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or perform mathematical calculations, including conditions
such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and
developmental aphasia. A specific learning disability shall not include learning problems
primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, intellectual disability, emotional
disability, environmental, cultural, economic disadvantage, or limited English proficiency
(IDEIA, 2004). Per IDEIA (2004), the State Department of Education finalized a worksheet
(SDE, 2022) for schools to complete with four criteria to determine if a student has SLD:

1. The student does not achieve adequately for the student’s age and/or does not meet state-
   approved grade-level standards in one or more of the following areas, when provided
   with learning experiences and instruction appropriate for the student’s age or state-
   approved grade-level standards: oral expression, listening comprehension, written
   expression, basic reading, reading fluency, reading comprehension, mathematics
   calculation, and mathematics problem-solving.

2. The student does not make sufficient progress to meet age or grade-level standards in one
   or more of the following areas when using a process based on the student’s response to
   scientific, research-based intervention, or a response-to-intervention model: oral
   expression, listening comprehension, written expression, basic reading, reading fluency,
   reading comprehension, mathematics calculation, and mathematics problem-solving.

3. The student exhibits a pattern of strengths and weaknesses in performance, achievement,
   or both, relative to age, state-approved grade-level standards, or intellectual development,
   that is determined by the team to be relevant to the identification of a specific learning
   disability and as demonstrated by student performance on appropriate assessments.
4. Is the impact on the student’s achievement level the result of the following factors (all of the following must be no for the student to be eligible for SLD):
   a. Lack of appropriate instruction in reading, including the essential components of reading instruction (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension)
   b. Lack of appropriate instruction in math
   c. Lack of appropriate instruction in writing
   d. A visual, hearing, or motor disability
   e. Intellectual disability
   f. Emotional disability
   g. Cultural factors
   h. Environmental or economic disadvantage
   i. Limited English proficiency

   The second and fourth criteria are pertinent to the Problem of Practice of high school SET acceptance of SAE over AAE. The second criterion requires states to employ a process based on the child’s response to research-based interventions to determine if a student meets the criteria for SLD (IDEIA, 2004). The requirement to document a student’s response to research-based interventions (IDEIA, 2004) may not be a best practice as no peer-reviewed reading intervention studies consider race as a factor in their findings (Lindo, 2006). Also, Artiles et al. (1997) and Vasquez et al. (2011) found very few empirical studies investigating best practices to improve the pedagogy of SETs for minority students with learning disabilities.

   The fourth criterion requires states to rule out a lack of appropriate instruction in reading and cultural factors when determining if a student has SLD (IDEIA, 2004). When African
American students undergo assessments for SLD in reading, the exclusionary factors in the fourth criterion place them at a disadvantage. The criterion specifies students should receive reading instruction aligned with the essential components of reading instruction from the NRP report (Anderson & Sadler, 2009; NRP, 2001). Teaching African American students reading skills according to the five essential components is counter-productive as the NRP omitted home culture as a factor contributing to children’s literacy development (NRP, 2001). Only 1.6% or five of the 418 refereed reading studies informing the NRP recommendations recruited 50% or more African American participants (Lindo, 2006). Cultural factors not being the primary cause of SLD are problematic as most teachers have limited knowledge of AAE and lack the pedagogical skills to address it appropriately during instruction (Bacon, 2017; Gupta, 2010). Teachers’ limited knowledge of the rules governing AAE often leads them to believe speaking AAE is an indicator of a learning disability than a language difference (Banks & Gibson, 2019). Consequently, the belief that AAE signals a learning disability leads to a disproportionate number of African American students being referred to the special education process (Ahram, Fergus, & Noguera, 2011; Skiba et al., 2008).

These findings are troubling because the NRP recommendations informing the current federal education policies are a significant factor in reinforcing the assumption of the legitimacy of SAE among high school SETs. The NRP not accounting for home or language as factors affecting reading skill development is a significant concern since 80% of African Americans speak AAE (Amberg & Vause, 2009; NRP, 2001). Consequently, issues with negative classroom interactions between high school SETs and African American male high school students with learning disabilities are inevitable.
Mesosystem

Interaction of Microsystems

The mesosystem refers to the processes between two or more microsystems (Lewis, 2008). The linguistic differences between African American households and schools promote academic challenges for some African American students (Brown, 2011). The language gap (Hart & Risley, 1995) claims a relationship exists between language development and SES. Educators adopting the language gap prompt challenging interactions among most teachers and African American male students speaking AAE (Thomas & Stevenson, 2009). Most teachers have biases toward AAE and generate false assumptions about African American students’ competency based on communication style rather than their mastery of academic skills.

The Language Gap

Researchers agree there are differences between a student’s home language and school language impacting their reading achievement (Champion et al., 2010; Johnson & Zentella, 2017; MacSwan, 2018). Some households' languages or language varieties differ from SAE, the expected and valued language variety in education (Garcia & Otheguy, 2017; Johnson, 2015; Ruiz, 1984). The socialization mismatch hypothesis (Faltis, 2005) confirms how children are likely to succeed in school when their home language is comparable to the valued school language. Faltis (2005) explains the socialization mismatch hypothesis is linguistic differences between home and school and how those differences influence the academic outcomes of minority students from low-SES households (as cited in Johnson, 2015). The socialization mismatch between African American and White students is evident in East School District’s current PARCC ELA test scores. The reading achievement gap between African American and White students increased from 60% in 2018 to 61% in 2019 (ESD, 2019f, slide 13). The school
district states the gap increase is due to a “stronger pace of growth among White students” (ESD, 2019f, slide 13). This statistic implies the SAE-based PARCC ELA state assessment places White students at an advantage to perform better on the assessment as they primarily speak SAE.

Some researchers describe the mismatch in communication between home and school as the language gap (Garcia & Otheguy, 2017; Hart & Risley, 1995). Garcia and Otheguy (2017) define the language gap as language and vocabulary delays expressed by young children residing in low-SES households. The classic language gap study of Hart and Risley (1995) found a relationship between language and the low educational achievement of African American children. Their three-year longitudinal study quantified the number of nouns, verb tenses, and techniques for asking and answering questions in high-, middle-, and low-income households (Johnson, 2015). They found a widening language gap between low-SES and high-SES families since African American children in low-SES households are exposed to 30 million fewer words than their peers living in high-SES homes (Hart & Risley, 1995). Hart and Risley (1995) coin the term and the general acceptance of their findings inform current education practices (Garcia & Otheguy, 2017).

Despite the general acceptance of the Hart and Risley (1995) study, some researchers refute the language gap due to the study’s limitations and other factors sustaining the academic challenges of low-SES African American students (Baugh, 2017; Garcia & Otheguy, 2017; Johnson, 2015). Despite their best intention to include African American families in all three SES groups, the authors do not account for AAE use in African American households (Johnson, 2015). The findings from Hart and Risley (1995) influence teachers’ attitudes about AAE and the intellectual ability of low-SES African American students (Johnson, Avineri, & Johnson, 2017).

The language gap orients AAE as a problem because AAE features differ from SAE as
the standardized language variety in education (Garcia & Otheguy, 2017; Hult & Hornberger, 2016; Ruiz, 1984). A language variety such as AAE is associated with poverty and a learning disability (Hult & Hornberger, 2016; Ruiz, 1984). Consequently, teachers often misinterpret AAE as an academic deficit rather than a resource and refer students speaking AAE for special education services (Garcia & Otheguy, 2017; Hult & Hornberger, 2016; Ruiz, 1984).

Teachers’ decisions to refer African American students to the special education referral process are mainly based on their perceptions of AAE as an illegitimate language variety and a disability (Hult & Hornberger, 2016; Ruiz, 1984). One reason for the bias is because some African American male students who speak AAE and reside in low-SES households are susceptible to a disproportionate number of referrals for special education services (Ahram, Fergus, & Noguera, 2011). In 2012, the State Department of Education reported the percentage of minority students inappropriately identified as having a learning disability is as high as 16.7% (SDE, 2018). The statistic is significant since 77% of students in the East School District are economically disadvantaged (ESD, 2018) or are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches. The bias of AAE as a problem language variety contributes to the Problem of Practice as high school SETs assume AAE is a less complex language variety than SAE. The teachers’ inaccurate assumptions about AAE lead to different academic interactions and expectations from teachers toward African American students speaking AAE.

Teacher and Student Interactions

Self-fulfilling prophecy and teacher expectancy effects. The theoretical frameworks of self-fulfilling prophecy (Merton, 1948) and teacher expectancy effects (Brophy & Good, 1970) highlight the negative mesosystemic interactions between high school SETs and African American male students with learning disabilities speaking AAE. Some teachers' negative
expectations of African American students with learning disabilities who speak AAE is a form of self-fulfilling prophecy (Merton, 1948). Merton (1948) describes a self-fulfilling prophecy as when an individual’s misperceptions and false expectations lead another person to behave and fulfill the initial person's erroneous belief. For example, when a teacher expresses high expectations for a student, the student achieves more in school; however, when a teacher has low expectations, the student may not perform well in school (Sorhagen, 2013).

Teacher attitudes toward African American males and AAE. There is extensive research supporting the validity of the complex, rule-governed AAE as a language variety (Champion et al., 2012; Craig et al., 2009; Stockman, 2010) and the benefit of speaking two language varieties (i.e., bidialectal; Boutte & Johnson, 2013; Craig et al., 2009; Garcia & Otheguy, 2017; Godley & Escher, 2012; Godley & Minnici; 2008; Lee-James & Washington, 2018; Mordaunt, 2011). Unfortunately, many teachers continue to express negative attitudes toward the language variety and believe speaking AAE is a marker of low intelligence (Godley & Escher, 2012).

Consequently, students who speak SAE are considered better learners than African American students who speak AAE. The intersection of the social stigmas associated with speaking AAE and having a learning disability indicates some African American high school male students with learning disabilities may have teachers whose effort in pedagogy is contingent on the social expectations to conform to speaking SAE and having no learning disability. The intersection of these oppressive labels may prompt teachers to minimize the students’ required level of instructional support and exposure to challenging academic experiences to maximize their academic potential (Banks, 2017).
A qualitative study by Banks (2017) investigated the intersectionality of race, gender, and disability status by interviewing seven African American males with learning disabilities about their kindergarten through 12th-grade academic experiences. The participants implied their teachers projected low academic expectations toward them. Two participants shared a similar high school experience of consistently proving to their teachers their mastery of the content (Banks, 2017). Six of the seven participants shared similar experiences of feeling frustrated from the perceived hostility from their teachers and would act out in response (Banks, 2017). The Brophy and Good (1970) model of teacher expectancy effects also explains the connection between teacher expectations of students who speak AAE and student performance.

According to the Brophy and Good (1970) model, most teachers create negative expectations of African American students’ achievement based on the student’s home language variety and behaviors. Teachers behave differently toward African American students based on their inaccurate expectations through feedback and learning opportunities in school (Bae, Holloway, Li, & Bempechat, 2008). For example, teachers creating low morale or a hostile classroom environment and not offering assistance are signals of lower academic expectations to the students, which prompts them to decrease their motivation to excel in school (Bae et al., 2008; Banks, 2017; Pringle et al., 2010). When low teacher expectations and behaviors persist into high school, African American students do not perform at their highest potential (Bae et al., 2008; Sorhagen, 2013).

Before preservice teachers enter the classroom, most have negative attitudes about AAE (Gupta, 2010; Newkirk-Turner, Williams, Harris, & McDaniels, 2013). The negative beliefs about AAE remain because teacher education programs inadequately address the erroneous belief that SAE is superior to AAE (Andrews & Gutwein, 2017). Consequently, the preservice
teachers’ negative attitudes toward AAE and the students’ lower motivation to learn endures when the preservice teachers work in an in-service capacity (Tyler & Boelter, 2008). Newkirk-Turner et al. (2013) conducted a quantitative study surveying 38 African American preservice teachers about their perceptions of AAE and student academic expectations. Sixty-one percent of the respondents perceive AAE as an inadequate language system and 42% are likely to have lower expectations for those students (Newkirk-Turner et al., 2013). The Newkirk-Turner et al. (2013) study could generalize to the East School District, for approximately 50% of the teachers identify as African American (Boser, 2014; ESD, 2018). Some teachers have negative attitudes about AAE spoken in schools.

Another quantitative study by Shepherd (2011) extends the investigations of teacher expectations of language varieties. He investigated teachers’ evaluations of African American, White, and Latino second- and third-grade students' verbal responses. The teachers listened to the audio recordings of 40 African American, White, and Latino second- and third-grade students reading the scripts to three open-ended questions. Shepherd (2011) hypothesized the teachers would evaluate the minority students’ responses less favorably than the White students, the boys’ responses would be rated less favorably than the girls’ responses, and the White girls’ responses would receive the highest rating (Shepherd, 2011). Fifty-seven elementary, middle, and high school teachers participated in the study.

Overall, the teachers rate the African American and Latino students’ verbal responses less favorable than the White students (Shepherd, 2011). Shepherd (2011) found that African American and Latino teachers rate minority students’ voices much lower than White and Asian teachers. Most teachers have biases toward AAE and other language varieties because teachers, especially African American teachers, make false assumptions about students’ competency based
on communication style rather than students’ demonstration of academic skills. These negative attitudes can create contentious interactions between teachers and students (Shepherd, 2011). African American male high school students with learning disabilities must often prove their academic competence to their SETs due to the stigmas associated with speaking AAE and their learning disability status (Banks, 2017). African American and White teachers have negative attitudes toward AAE use because SAE is the language norm in teacher education programs (Bacon, 2017; Lynn, Bacon, Totten, Bridges, & Jennings, 2010). The validation of SETs beliefs regarding AAE and SAE is also evident when they develop special education plans according to the state’s learning standards.

Microsystem

Classroom and Instructional Factors

The microsystem includes families, schools, classrooms, neighborhoods, and other contexts in which a child is situated (Brofenbrenner, 1979; Lewis, 2008). The microsystem in the Problem of Practice focuses on the planning and implementing specialized instruction for African American students with learning disabilities. Specifically, high school SETs development and implementation of individualized education plans (IEPs) contribute to their assumptions about AAE as a less-developed language variety than SAE.

Development of Individualized Education Plans

One of the primary job responsibilities of every SET is to write IEPs and provide specialized academic instruction for students with learning disabilities. An IEP is a comprehensive, legal document noting the details of a student’s special education services, academic skill goals, modifications, and accommodations (Harvey, Farquarson, Schneider-Cline, Bush, & Yeager Pelatti, 2020). An IEP can include reading, writing, and math goals specific to a
student’s academic skill challenges. East School District requires all SETs to write academic goals aligned with the Common Core, or standards-based IEP goals. Standards-based IEP goals are measurable to address a student’s individualized academic needs and align with the Common Core (Caruana, 2015; Lynch & Adams, 2008).Aligning a student’s unique academic goals with the Common Core ensures compliance with IDEIA (2004) to meet the specific needs of students with learning disabilities and promote their access to the general education curriculum (i.e., the Common Core; IDEIA, 2004) to prepare students with learning disabilities for college and the workforce (Caruana, 2015).

One of the exosystem factors in the Problem of Practice is the Common Core is based on SAE conventions for speech and writing assignments (NGA& CCSSO, 2010d). An example of an academic goal aligned to a Common Core learning standard is for a 9th-grade African American male student with a learning disability in writing complex sentences and multiple paragraphs. A suitable writing goal for the student could be written as follows: the student will write an essay that includes an introduction that states a claim, evidence that supports the claim, and sentences that explain the evidence. A 9th-grade Common Core writing standard supporting this writing goal is to “establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing” (NGA & CCSSO, 2010f). In the example, the writing standard implies teaching the student SAE conventions in writing as the phrase’s formal style and objective tone requires a high school SET to provide specialized instruction for this student to improve his writing skills in SAE.

**Implications and Gaps in Extant Literature**

A significant implication of the multilevel factors contributing to the low reading skill of African American male high school students with learning disabilities is teachers' negative
attitudes toward AAE and how these factors interfere with student learning (Newkirk-Turner et al., 2013; Shepherd, 2011). Another implication is that most teachers’ negative attitudes toward AAE reflect insufficient training at the preservice and in-service levels to learn about AAE as a legitimate language variety and how it affects the reading skills of African American students (Bacon, 2017; Fogel & Ehri, 2006; Gupta, 2010; Hult & Hornberger 2016; Newkirk et al., 2013). The literature review revealed a gap in the research literature on SETs attitudes toward AAE. Most studies investigated general education teachers’ attitudes toward AAE (Champion, Cobb-Roberts, & Bland-Stewart, 2012; Fogel & Ehri, 2006). To the student researcher’s knowledge, Gupta (2010) is the only study found to recruit SETs in her sample ($n = 15$, 9.6%).

Researchers posit inquiries about the education of African American males should shift from focusing on student deficiencies to improving pedagogy (Brown, 2011; Labov, 1970; Lynn et al., 2010; Rickford, 2016). Artiles et al. (1997) and Vasquez et al. (2011) support the argument as only 6% of empirical studies on minority students investigate the quality of classroom instruction. An essential component in the shift to pedagogy is to change teachers’ attitudes and increase their knowledge of AAE (Labov, 1970). It is vital to support teachers’ knowledge about AAE to build a foundation of respect and appreciation of the complexities of AAE as a language variety. A better understanding of AAE could increase teachers’ academic expectations toward students and improve learning opportunities for African American male high school students with learning disabilities (Bae et al., 2008; Mordaunt, 2011).

**Summary**

The synthesis of the literature revealed multiple factors influencing the Problem of Practice. The historical, cultural, and social factors contributing to the high school SETs assumptions about AAE and SAE influence how they can effectively teach literacy to African
American male high school students with learning disabilities. The chronosystem factors showed how a disproportionate percentage of African American students receive special education services. The macrosystem factors included the inaccurate beliefs about AAE and SAE and how these incorrect beliefs overshadow the current research validating the legitimacy of AAE as a language variety. The development of the Common Core at the exosystem level was heavily influenced by the social beliefs of AAE and SAE at the macrosystem level.

Teachers’ general attitudes towards AAE and their instructional interactions with African American students can negatively impact student learning outcomes. The microsystem factor of SETs developing IEP reading and writing goals based on the Common Core further reinforces their inaccurate assumptions about AAE and SAE. The synthesis of the literature revealed the actionable factors for the needs assessment to investigate high school SETs attitudes toward AAE and how their attitude influences their academic expectations and providing special education services.
CHAPTER 2

Needs Assessment

The EST theoretical framework mentioned in Chapter One highlighted several factors contributing to the Problem of Practice, including teachers’ negative attitudes toward AAE. Labov (1970) suggests future researchers investigate the pedagogical needs of African American children by addressing teacher attitudes and increasing their knowledge about AAE. Hence, the Problem of Practice focused on high school SETs since a nominal percentage were recruited for teacher expectation effect studies (Gupta, 2010) and studies in high school contexts (Cukor-Avila, 1997; Van Hofwegen & Wolfram, 2010). Noting the actionable factors gleaned from the literature review, the purpose of the needs assessment within this context was to obtain information from East School District high school SETs about their attitudes towards African American male adolescents with learning disabilities who speak AAE and understand how their attitudes influence how they provide specialized reading instruction to the students.

Context of the Study

Description of School District

The needs assessment was conducted at three high schools in the East School District (ESD), an urban public school district in the eastern region of the United States. The participants were employed at the following high schools: MHS, AHS, and EHS (pseudonyms). East School District is a school system managing 115 schools (ESD, 2018). In 2018, the State Department of Education reported 52,164 students enrolled from pre-K to 12th-grade (SDE, 2019) and 11,272 high school students (ESD, 2019a). The student demographics were 60% African American, 20% Latinx, 15% White, and 4% Asian, multiracial, or other (ESD, 2018). The overall graduation rate in the school district was 69% (ESD, 2019b). Specifically, the graduation rate for African
American students was comparable to the school district’s average of 68% (ESD, 2019b). The rate for students with disabilities was lower at 46% compared to the school district’s overall average (ESD, 2019b).

**Teacher demographics.** There were 4,012 teachers employed in East School District (ESD, 2018). Seventy-six percent of the teachers identified as female and 24% as male (ESD, 2018). Approximately 49% of the teachers identified as African American, 32% as White, 8% as Latinx, 3.5% as Asian, 0.40% as American Indian or Alaska Native, and 7% did not disclose their race (ESD, 2020). The teacher demographics in the East School District are unique compared to other states because it is the only state education agency in the United States where the number of African American educators exceeds that of White educators (Boser, 2014).

**Student demographics.** The three high schools were Title 1 schools, indicating most students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunches. There were 620 students enrolled at MHS. The students' demographics were 84% African American, 11% Latinx, 2% White, 1% Asian, 1% Native/Alaskan, and 1% of multiple races. Three percent of the students were English Language Learners and 3% received special education services (ESD, 2019c). At AHS, there were 296 students enrolled during the needs assessment. Ninety-seven percent of the students were African American and 3% were Latinx. One percent of the students were English Language Learners and 36% received special education services. (ESD, 2019d). There were 744 students enrolled at EHS (ESD, 2019e). Ninety-eight percent of the students at EHS were African American, 1% were Latinx, and 1% were White. Three percent of the students were English Language Learners and 24% received special education services (ESD, 2019e).
Purpose of the Study

The goal of the needs assessment was to investigate high school SETs attitudes toward AAE to address the gap in the current literature on measuring SETs attitudes toward AAE. Extant literature revealed most studies investigating teachers’ attitudes toward AAE recruited primarily general education teachers (Champion et al., 2012; Fogel & Ehri, 2006; Gupta, 2010; Newkirk et al., 2013).

The investigation was expanded to focus on general education teachers to SETs to measure their attitudes toward AAE. The needs assessment also measured the prevalence of the common AAE features often heard among the students and explored how the SETs attitudes toward AAE related to their levels of academic expectations. For this study, AAE is a complex and rule-governed nonstandard language variety consisting of 40 features which differ from SAE (Champion et al., 2012; Craig et al., 2009; Mitri & Terry, 2014; Rickford, 2016; Stockman, 2010). The needs assessment findings informed the foundation of the professional development course evaluation detailed in the following chapters of this dissertation.

Research Design

The research design was a mixed method concurrent design (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). This research method includes the simultaneous collection of qualitative and quantitative data due to the administration of close-ended statements and open-ended questions (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), the mixed method approach provides a thorough understanding of the research problem since SETs attitudes toward AAE is an emerging area of research. Using this research design, the quantitative data of the teacher attitude survey and frequency of student expression of AAE data, along with qualitative data regarding how their attitudes influence specialized instruction, helped to understand the high
school SETs attitudes toward AAE and how their attitudes inform how they provide specialized instruction.

**Research Questions**

The three research questions to understand the high school SETs position on AAE in the Problem of Practice were the following:

1. What were the special education teachers’ attitudes toward African American male high school students with learning disabilities’ use of AAE in the classroom?
2. Which of the four common AAE dialect features used by African American male high school students with learning disabilities were frequently heard by special education teachers in the classroom?
3. How did the special education teacher’s attitudes toward AAE relate to their academic expectations of African American adolescent male high school students with learning disabilities?

**Methods**

**Participants.** Upon Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, 10 SETs completed the needs assessment survey. The participants provided specialized reading instruction in the general education classroom setting in ELA, humanities, and social science classes for ninth- to 12th-grade students with learning disabilities. The SETs had various years of teaching experience (see Table 2.1). Ten percent \( (n = 1) \) of the teachers were relatively new and had taught for nearly five years. Another 40% \( (n = 4) \) of the teachers have been teaching for six to ten years and 50% \( (n = 5) \) have been teaching for nearly 20 years. Eighty percent \( (n = 8) \) of the teachers identified as female and 20% \( (n = 2) \) identified as male. Ninety percent \( (n = 9) \) of the SETs identified as African American and 10% \( (n = 1) \) identified as White (see Table 2.1). The percentage of African
American SETs compared to White SETs was consistent with the school district’s teacher demographics; approximately 50% identified as African American and 32% identified as White (ESD, 2020).

Table 2.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Demographic</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of Teaching</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Measures.** The African American English Teacher Attitude Scale (AAETAS; Hoover et al., 1997) measures teachers’ attitudes toward AAE. The AAETAS is a valid measure as the test-retest reliability was .88 and Cronbach’s alpha for the entire scale was .92 (Hoover et al., 1997). The AAETAS consists of 23 positive and 23 negative statements (see Appendix A). The AAETAS total scores range from 46 to 184 (Hoover et al., 1997). Hoover et al. (1997) note a total attitude score at or above 160 is a positive attitude toward AAE, a score between 121 and 159 is a neutral attitude, and a score below 120 is a negative attitude. An example of a survey statement from the AAETAS is, *The use of African American English is a reflection of unclear thinking on the part of the speaker* (Hoover et al., 1997). The reporting system associated with the AAETAS is a four-point Likert scale.

The responses are:

A. Agree Strongly
The occurrence of common AAE features spoken by African American students was measured by four student researcher-constructed statements using a four-point rating system. Each question asked how often the participants heard one of the four common AAE features spoken by adolescents: habitual *be*, copula absence, *-ing* fronting, and third-person singular *-s* absence (Van Hofwegen & Wolfram, 2010). The answer map of the AAE features questions were: (a) rarely, (b) sometimes, (c) often, and (d) almost always.

The three open-ended questions allowed the teachers to describe their teaching experiences, academic expectations, and how their expectations influence their pedagogy toward African American male high school students with learning disabilities speaking AAE. The three open-ended questions were: *What is your pedagogical experience teaching African American male high school students with learning disabilities who speak AAE? What are your academic expectations of African American male high school students with learning disabilities who speak*
AAE? How do you think your academic expectations influence your teaching methods in English language arts with this group of students?

**Procedure**

Purposive sampling and convenience sampling procedures were conducted to select the participants. Purposive sampling was employed to recruit a specific sample of high school SETs in the East School District (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). The high school SETs certified in social studies, history, and ELA were intentionally recruited for the needs assessment as instruction in those content areas emphasizes SAE. Convenience sampling was utilized to recruit the teachers based on proximity to the student researcher (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017) as she is an employee of the East School District.

**Data collection.** Per the school district research policy, emails were sent to the high school principals (see Appendix C) to request permission to email the high school SETs to complete the needs assessment. The needs assessment measures were presented in an online survey using a password-secure university-issued account. When a high school principal granted permission, an email was sent to the participants (see Appendix D) by either the student researcher or the school’s administrative assistant. The high school SETs received the email to complete the needs assessment from the student researcher’s university-issued email address. The email message included the consent form explaining the purpose of the survey, the time to complete the survey, the voluntary nature of the study, the risks of participation, and the anonymity of their identity if they choose to participate (see Appendix E). The participants were identified as SET 1, SET 2, etc. The participants’ responses were collected and stored in the student researcher’s secure university-issued cloud account.
Needs Assessment Findings

Attitudes Toward African American English

The first research question of the needs assessment was: “What were the special education teachers’ attitudes toward African American male high school students with learning disabilities’ use of AAE in the classroom?”

Quantitative findings. The quantitative data of the AAETAS were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The AAETAS responses were analyzed according to the scoring procedures outlined by Hoover et al. (1997). Each of the 46 statements was assigned a numerical value based on whether a respondent’s response was positive or negative toward African American language or culture:

4 points for a strong agreement with a positive statement
3 points for a mild agreement with a positive statement
2 points for a mild disagreement with a positive statement
1 point for a strong disagreement with a positive statement
4 points for a strong disagreement with a negative statement
3 points for a mild disagreement with a negative statement
2 points for a mild agreement with a negative statement
1 point for a strong agreement with a negative statement

Each of the participant’s points was calculated for a total attitude score. The score range for AAETAS is from 46 to 184. According to Hoover et al. (1997), total attitude score ranges are the following:

1. Negative attitude: total score below 120
2. Neutral attitude: total score between 120 and 159
3. Positive attitude: total score of 160 or above

Table 2.2 displays the participants’ total attitude scores. The participants’ responses on the AAETAS indicated 80% \((n = 8)\) of the participants had neutral attitudes toward AAE and 20% \((n = 2)\) had negative attitudes toward AAE. Some of the participants’ responses to specific questions on the AAETAS reflected mixed attitudes toward AAE. For example, 50% of the participants disagreed and 30% agreed that replacing AAE with SAE would increase African American students’ learning capacity. Conversely, 50% agreed and 30% disagreed that African American students speaking AAE would have an advantage of being bidialectal (or speaking two language varieties) in the same manner some Latinx students are bilingual.

### Table 2.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Attitude Score</th>
<th>Descriptor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SET 1</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SET 2</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SET 3</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SET 4</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SET 5</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SET 6</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SET 7</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SET 8</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SET 9</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SET 10</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Four Common African American English Features

The second research question of the needs assessment was: “Which of the four common AAE dialect features used by African American male high school students with learning disabilities were frequently heard by special education teachers in the classroom?”

**Quantitative findings.** The student researcher-constructed AAE frequency questions were analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine the percentage of participants hearing
specific AAE features commonly expressed by African American adolescents, as Van Hofwegen and Wolfram (2010) found. For the copula absence feature, 40% of the participants almost always heard the feature, 50% heard it often, and only 10% heard it sometimes (see Figure 2.1). For the feature of -ing fronting, 30% of the participants almost always heard the feature, 50% often heard it from the students, and 20% heard the feature sometimes. Thirty percent reported almost always hearing their students express third-person singular -s absence. Fifty percent heard the third-person feature often and 20% heard the feature sometimes. The feature habitual be was always heard among the students by 20% of the participants, 50% heard the feature often, 20% heard it sometimes, and 10% rarely heard it (see Figure 2.1).

![Percentage of AAE Features Spoken by Students](image)

*Figure 2.1. This bar graph illustrates the percentages of the common AAE features heard by the high school SETs.*
African American English and Academic Expectations

The third research question of the needs assessment was: “How do the special education teacher’s attitudes toward AAE relate to their academic expectations of African American adolescent male high school students with learning disabilities?”

**Qualitative data analysis.** The high school SETs answered three open-ended questions about their experiences and academic expectations teaching African American male adolescents speaking AAE. A list of some of the teachers’ responses to each question is in Table 2.3. The first question about their pedagogical experiences teaching this group of students revealed mixed findings, and some participants either encouraged or did not promote AAE in class. The teachers’ responses to the second question indicated they expected students to use SAE to code switch for formal assignments and class assessments.

There were two different responses to the third question. Some participants noted their teaching methods mainly focused on providing differentiation of instruction to help students access the general education curriculum. Tomlinson and Jarvis (2009) define differentiation of instruction as a form of teaching wherein a teacher accounts for students’ different learning needs by planning instruction to help students learn at their individual skill levels (as cited in Dixon, Yssel, McConnell, & Hardin, 2014). Their responses about support and providing additional resources are consistent with the participants’ primary job responsibility to ensure students with learning disabilities access the general education curriculum (Caruana, 2015). Other participants emphasized the reinforcement of SAE in writing assignments, which is also consistent with their stated academic expectations in the second open-ended question.
Table 2.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. What is your pedagogical experience teaching African American male students with learning disabilities who speak AAE? | “do not promote AAE”  
Need to participate in the curriculum  
“to understand that their voice is important”  
“let them speak in AAE” |
| 2. What are your academic expectations of African American male students with learning disabilities who speak AAE? | “are capable of learning, using, and understanding SAE”  
“to adapt and apply grammar rules”  
“to be successful using SAE”  
“expect them to learn code switching”  
“use language appropriate for the setting”  
Can use AAE except in formal writing  
Expect them to code switch  
Accept work in AAE if they show mastery of a skill |
| 3. How do you think your academic expectations influence your teaching methods in English Language Arts with this group of students? | “I encourage academic language”  
Use of standard English in all subjects  
“Makes me stick to the fundamentals of reading”  
Differentiate class assignments  
Meet them where they are  
Provide additional resources |

**Coding process.** The responses to the three open-ended questions were analyzed using in vivo and descriptive codes (see Table 2.4). In vivo codes are the respondents' actual words using quotation marks (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). Descriptive codes describe similar responses in a word or a short phrase (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017).
Table 2.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Coding Type</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accept AAE</td>
<td>Teachers are comfortable allowing students to speak AAE in school</td>
<td>Descriptive; In vivo</td>
<td>“let them speak in AAE” Accept work in AAE if they show mastery of a skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expect SAE</td>
<td>Teachers expect students to use SAE in class</td>
<td>In vivo</td>
<td>“are capable of learning, using, and understanding SAE” “do not promote AAE”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expect SAE in writing assignments</td>
<td>Teachers expect students to apply SAE in writing assignments</td>
<td>In vivo</td>
<td>“except in more formal writing” “formal assignments (i.e., lab reports) require more formal writing”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expect code switching</td>
<td>Teachers expected students to use SAE to complete assignments</td>
<td>Descriptive; In vivo</td>
<td>Can use AAE except in writing assignments “to adapt and apply grammar rules”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same academic expectations</td>
<td>The teachers held the students to the same high standards as other students</td>
<td>In vivo</td>
<td>“expect the same out of them as I do all my students” “my expectations are the same”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The codes from the initial coding cycle were the following: *accept AAE, expect SAE, expect code switching, and same academic expectations*. The code of accept AAE described how some participants expressed no problem with the students using AAE in their speech and classwork. SET 10 explained the “verbal and written responses are accepted in the AAE format as long as they demonstrate mastery of the concepts.” The code, expect SAE, indicated some participants enforce SAE in class. SET 1 reported African American students should “use SAE in all content areas, no exceptions.”
Some participants also discussed the importance of code switching. SET 3 expected his students “to learn the skill and value of code switching,” and SET 6 agreed as she expected students to “… code switch and use more [Mainstream] American English …” The code, same academic expectations, explains how some of their expectations for African American male students with learning disabilities speaking AAE are comparable to African American male students with no learning disabilities. For instance, SET 2 noted she “expects the same out of them as she does all students.”

Another code emerged during the second coding cycle. In addition to the code of expecting SAE, the student researcher realized the participants referenced writing assignments when noting the importance of using SAE in formal class assignments. Consequently, the code expect SAE in writing assignments emerged from the data (see Table 2.4). The updated codes from the qualitative data analysis developed into the generated theme of academic standards based on ELA standards. The participants expected African American male high school students with learning disabilities to write in SAE according to the Common Core (see Table 2.5).

Table 2.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic standards-based on ELA standards</td>
<td>The teachers’ expectations of students using SAE are based on the Common Core State Standards of the use of Standard English in writing and speaking assignments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The language standard requires all high school students to “demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking” (NGA & CCSSO, 2010d, Conventions of Standard English section, para. 1). The Common Core explains why some participants allow students to use AAE only if they code switch to SAE for writing
assignments. Participant SET 10 explained how “students have access to rubrics to edit their writing for standard English grammar.”

Participant SET 9 expressed his expectation for students to apply SAE rules “when speaking and producing written documents.” Even participant SET 6, a proponent of AAE, explained the importance of SAE when she noted she allows them to “fully express their ideas except in more formal writing.” Overall, their academic expectations were based on the Common Core’s requirement for all students to learn and apply SAE grammar in their written assignments and speech rather than their attitudes and expectations.

**Mixed Method Findings**

The quantitative data of the AAETAS total scores were transformed into qualitative data so both datasets could be analyzed together (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). The AAETAS total attitude score descriptors (i.e., positive, negative, and neutral) were applied as themes for analysis with the interpreted theme from the qualitative data analysis. The total score qualitative descriptors from the AAETAS responses revealed most participants possessed neutral attitudes toward AAE expression among African American high school males with learning disabilities. The qualitative data interpretation revealed some of the participants either allowed African American students to use AAE periodically or emphasized SAE in class. They also expressed having high academic expectations of the students. Ultimately, the teachers agreed on the importance of the students learning to code switch from AAE to SAE in their assignments. Most of the participants’ neutral attitudes toward AAE did not support their high academic expectations, which contrasted with the previous research from Newkirk-Turner et al. (2013), when their participants expressed negative attitudes toward AAE and lower academic
expectations. Their attitudes and academic expectations may have reflected the Common Core requirement for students to demonstrate SAE when speaking and writing.

**Interpretation and Explanation of the Mixed Findings**

The open-ended responses explained the high school SETs neutral and negative attitudes toward AAE use among African American students. Although most of the participants expressed neutral attitudes toward AAE as measured by the AAETAS, the qualitative data reflected a partial acceptance of AAE expression in school. The Common Core was a mediating factor influencing the teachers’ neutral to negative attitudes toward AAE in school. Most participants agreed their students must learn to code switch to demonstrate SAE mastery in writing and speaking activities, as required in the Common Core.

**Discussion of Findings**

Research question 1: What were the special education teachers’ attitudes toward African American male high school students with learning disabilities’ use of AAE in the classroom? There were mixed findings in the current literature regarding teachers’ attitudes toward AAE. The participants’ neutral attitudes toward AAE were similar to the findings from Sweetland (2010) and Champion et al. (2012). Sweetland’s (2010) findings are comparable to the needs assessment results as her participants held neutral to negative attitudes toward AAE. Although 85% of the preservice teachers of the Champion et al. (2012) study report having negative attitudes toward AAE, the African American preservice teachers in her study were less likely to have negative attitudes toward AAE. Most of the neutral attitudes in the needs assessment supported the African American teachers’ attitudes in the Champion et al. (2012) study, as 90% of the needs assessment participants identified as African American. Conversely, the participants’ neutral attitudes did not support the findings from Gupta (2010) and Newkirk-Turner et al.
Research question 2: Which of the four common AAE dialect features used by African American male high school students with learning disabilities were frequently heard by special education teachers in the classroom? The high percentage of the common AAE features often heard among the participants supported the findings from Gatlin and Wanzek (2017) and Van Hofwegen and Wolfram (2010). The frequency data were consistent with current research as African American students with learning disabilities speak AAE features more often (Gatlin & Wanzek, 2017). The higher frequency of using the AAE features copula absence and the “-ing” fronting was consistent with the findings from Van Hofwegen and Wolfram (2010), as they found an increase in the expression of those two AAE features by grade 10. The lower frequency of the AAE feature habitual -be in the needs assessment was also consistent with Van Hofwegen and Wolfram’s (2010) findings, as they assert the acquisition of the grammar feature occurs in later childhood and continues in adolescence if AAE is spoken daily.

Research question 3: How did the special education teacher’s attitudes toward AAE relate to their academic expectations of African American male high school students with learning disabilities? The needs assessment finding of higher academic expectations countered the Newkirk-Turner et al. (2013) and Gupta (2010) findings. The participants in the Newkirk-Turner et al. (2013) study were likely to have lower expectations of students speaking AAE. The Gupta (2010) study found an uneven divide between those who agree and disagree on whether teachers have lower expectations of students speaking AAE. The qualitative data revealing the participants’ neutral attitudes toward AAE reflected their professional obligation to teach high
school students to demonstrate SAE when writing and speaking. Although the SETs base their preference for SAE on the Common Core and social expectations, they were unaware that SAE is a socially constructed myth (Bacon, 2017). The consensus among the participants was that SAE is the norm in schools and promotes social and economic mobility in American society. For example, a third of the participants believed adopting SAE could increase the learning capacity of African American students.

**Limitations**

There were threats to the internal and external validity of the needs assessment findings. A possible threat to the internal validity and reliability was the participants’ submission of socially desirable responses (Desimone & Le Floch, 2004). This threat could have influenced the participants’ responses regarding their attitudes toward AAE and their academic expectations of African American students. The participants submitting responses based on their perception of the student researcher’s expectations of how they should answer (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017) is another possible threat to the internal validity of the findings. For example, some of the AAETAS neutral attitude scores could have been lower within the negative range and their report of higher academic expectations may have been lower. The two factors of a small sample size and participant demographics may have contributed to the low external validity of the findings.

The first factor was the small sample size ($N = 10$). The second factor of most of the participants identifying as African American was not representative of the United States’ teacher population (Boser, 2014). According to Boser (2014), White teachers are the majority in the profession. Despite the threats to validity and reliability, the needs assessment findings were consistent with the current literature's mixed findings. Overall, the quantitative and qualitative
findings highlight most of the participants expressed high expectations for their African American male high school students with learning disabilities despite their neutral to negative attitudes toward AAE.

Credibility

The student researcher conducted an audit trail for other researchers to determine the acceptance of the emerging codes and themes from the qualitative data analysis (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Shenton, 2005). The audit trail provided a clear record of all the decisions and interpretive processes to generate or eliminate the codes and themes from qualitative data (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The descriptions of the first and second coding processes served as the audit trail for the coding process.

Summary

A mixed method needs assessment was conducted at three high schools in East School District to determine the high school SETs attitudes toward AAE and how their attitudes influence their academic expectations toward African American males with learning disabilities. The needs assessment consisted of the administration of the AAETAS (Hoover et al., 1997), four student researcher-constructed questions about the frequency of four AAE features from Van Hofwegen and Wolfram (2010), and three open-ended questions about academic expectations. The high school SETs held neutral or negative attitudes toward AAE. The participants often heard the common AAE feature of copula absence, -ing fronting, third-person singular -s absence, and habitual be. However, the qualitative data analysis revealed the participants have high academic expectations of African American male high school students with learning disabilities who speak AAE. The teachers’ neutral to negative attitudes reflect their professional
obligation to adhere to the Common Core to teach students SAE for writing assignments and speech presentations.
CHAPTER 3

Theoretical Framework and Intervention Literature Review

The synthesis of the literature in Chapter One revealed within the mesosystem level most teachers hold negative attitudes and behaviors toward African American male high school students with learning disabilities speaking AAE. Teachers’ negative attitudes reflected their insufficient knowledge about AAE as a legitimate language variety (Bacon, 2017; Fogel & Ehri, 2006; Gupta, 2010; Hult & Hornberger, 2016; Newkirk et al., 2013). According to Brown (2011) and Labov (1970), research investigating African American students should shift from correcting students to speak and write from AAE to SAE to improving pedagogy. Labov (1970) defines pedagogy in this context as teachers’ attitudes. Specifically, he advocates increasing teachers’ attitudes and knowledge about AAE (Labov, 1970).

The needs assessment findings in Chapter Two revealed the participants held mixed attitudes toward AAE. Most of the participants had no objections to African American male high school students with learning disabilities speaking AAE. Professionally, they understood SAE is socially acceptable and students should produce formal written and speech assignments in SAE according to the Common Core (NGA & CCSSO, 2010d). The high school SETs limited knowledge of AAE supported the need for an in-service professional development (PD) course to evaluate its effectiveness in changing the high school SETs attitudes toward AAE.

The transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1997) is the theoretical framework to understand the Problem of Practice of why high school SETs believe the assumption that AAE is appropriate for informal settings and SAE is appropriate for formal and academic settings. The conceptual frameworks of the course evaluation were critical discourse analysis (Wodak & Meyer, 2016) and critical language awareness (Clark et al., 1990; Zavala, 2015). Critical
discourse analysis highlighted how an ideology or people’s general belief about their world guided the high school SETs uncontested assumption of SAE as more complex than AAE. Critical language awareness suggested the need for an in-service PD course (hereafter referred to as course) to increase the high school SETs attitudes toward AAE, their knowledge of all spoken languages inherently vary over time and their knowledge of how SAE preference upholds discriminatory practices against students speaking AAE.

**Transformative Learning Theory**

The theoretical framework for the course evaluation was the transformative learning theory. Developed by Jack Mezirow (1978), the adult learning theory explains how an adult’s frame of reference, or current cultural or psychological assumptions and beliefs about their world, changes or remains the same based on learning information contradicting their current assumptions and beliefs (Cranton, 2016; Taylor, 2017). Another explanation of the theory is to change how adults interpret and understand their world (Laros, 2017; Taylor, 2017). According to Christie, Carey, Robertson, and Grainger (2015) and Mezirow (1994), transformative learning begins when adult learners critically reflect on their current assumptions and dialogue with others to achieve perspective transformation.

Perspective transformation is an adult learner’s awareness of how their current assumptions limit the interpretations of themselves and others and change their assumptions to be more inclusive (Kitchenham, 2008; Mezirow, 2000). Perspective transformation is possible when adults critically reflect and become aware of the source(s) and nature of their current frame of reference (Mezirow, 2000), specifically their habit of mind. Perspective transformation would be evident when high school SETs change their current assumptions about AAE. Specifically, they would critically reflect on the reality of no empirical evidence confirming the social
significance of SAE (Charity Hudley & Mallinson, 2011) and AAE is a legitimate language variety with its own grammatical rules (Champion et al., 2012; Taylor, 1973). There are 10 stages of transformative learning to support perspective transformation (Kitchenham, 2008; Mezirow, 1994, 2000):

1. Disorienting dilemma
2. Self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame
3. Critical assessment of assumptions
4. Relating the recognition of discontent to others who are negotiating a similar change
5. Exploring options for new roles, relationships, and actions
6. Planning a course of action
7. Acquiring knowledge and skills to implement plans
8. Provisional attempts at new roles
9. Build competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
10. Reintegration into one’s life based on the condition of one's perspective

   Perspective transformation leads to transformative learning when adults engage in autonomous thinking or critically evaluating and possibly changing their current frame of reference (Christie et al., 2015; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). Although autonomous thinking is the goal of transformative learning, an adult learner can experience any one of four types of learning after engaging in dialogue and critical reflection: changes in their point of view, changes in their habit of mind, changes in their frame of reference, or maintain their existing frame of reference (Kitchenham, 2008; Mezirow, 2000).

   According to Eschenbacher (2017), a dialogue is a process wherein two adults engage in a conversation which prompts one of the listeners to reflect on their currently-accepted
assumptions to understand the meaning of an experience more thoroughly. Mezirow (2000) asserts a dialogue can include interactions within a group or between two adults. Critical reflection is the process of an adult learner deciding to consciously reassess the origins and consequences of maintaining their current frame of reference (Mezirow, 2000; Taylor, 2017). The critical reflection process of a frame of reference does not occur immediately; the process is life-long and requires time (Cranton, 2010; Taylor, 2017).

According to Mezirow (2000) and Taylor (2017), a frame of reference is a meaning structure which sustains the assumptions and beliefs adults employ to interpret their experiences and directly influences their thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors. Mezirow (2000) explains how the frame of reference reflects cultural norms from society and our caregivers. The two components of a frame of reference are the habit of mind and point of view (see Figure 3.1; Cranton, 2016; Mezirow, 2000).

![Frame of reference diagram]

*Figure 3.1.* This is a visual representation of the components of the transformative learning theory.

According to Cranton (2016), a habit of mind is a series of general and uncontested assumptions and beliefs understood to be correct and require no justification. The broad
assumptions of a habit of mind filter our interpretations of an experience (Mezirow, 2000). Adults often assume their cultural or psychological assumptions and beliefs about their world are accurate. Most sources of the assumptions governing a habit of mind are social, cultural, psychological, or ideological in nature (Mezirow, 2000). Habits of mind, independent of transformative learning, remain unchanged because these assumptions and beliefs originate from past experiences, cultural backgrounds, and knowledge of one’s world (Cranton, 2013).

According to Cranton (2013) and Mezirow (2000), there are six types of habits of mind: sociolinguistic (i.e., ideologies and social norms of language), moral-ethical (i.e., conscience), epistemic (i.e., learning styles and sensory preferences), philosophical (i.e., religion and doctrines), psychological (i.e., response patterns, self-concept, and personality), and aesthetic (i.e., standards and judgments about beauty).

The habit of mind relevant to the Problem of Practice is the sociolinguistic habit of mind (see Figure 3.1). The sociolinguistic habit of mind is an assumption based on social norms of how an individual expresses language in a social context (Cranton, 2016, Mezirow, 2000). The sociolinguistic habit of mind originates from an individual’s cultural and family background and formal education (Cranton, 2013). The central assumption underlying the sociolinguistic habit of mind among most high school SETs is their undisputed acceptance of SAE as the linguistic status quo. The linguistic status quo is the current language norm that AAE is appropriate for informal settings and SAE is appropriate for formal and academic settings. The sociolinguistic habit of mind is the most challenging assumption to dispute for it is ingrained in our social world and difficult for adults to critique externally (Cranton, 2016). Consequently, the sociolinguistic habit of mind is the most formidable in education because schools teach students about the linguistic status quo of SAE as the norm in American society (Alim, 2005; McGroarty, 2010).
The sociolinguistic habit of mind explains why the participants in the needs assessment in Chapter Two believed SAE is the norm and appropriate in educational and formal settings, whereas AAE is appropriate for informal settings. The participants’ previous experiences in formal education and professional expectations informed their sociolinguistic habit of mind. They learned SAE conventions in formal education since SAE is the designated language for formal, academic, and employment contexts. It is essential for the high school SETs in the Problem of Practice to understand the source and nature of their sociolinguistic habit of mind about AAE and SAE to improve their instructional behaviors toward African American male high school students with learning disabilities.

The point of view consists of specific behaviors, expectations, beliefs, attitudes, and feelings influencing an adult’s behavior in a particular context (Mezirow, 2000; Taylor, 2017). Cranton (2016) describes the point of view as the expression of one’s habit of mind. Point of view and habit of mind have a bidirectional relationship (see Figure 3.1). The assumptions in one’s habit of mind direct the specific behavior(s), or point of view, toward a particular group of people. During transformative learning, gradual changes in one’s point of view can lead to changes in one’s habit of mind and behaviors (Mezirow, 2000).

The high school SETs point of view was evident in the needs assessment findings. They often prompted students to code switch from AAE to SAE in their oral and writing assignments because they understood SAE was required in the Common Core. However, one should raise the following questions about SAE in education: Who wrote and approved the ELA learning standards? Who has the authority to assert SAE is appropriate for formal and academic contexts? Who exercises the authority to relegate AAE to informal contexts? Such questions can be addressed through the conceptual framework of critical discourse analysis (Wodak & Meyer,
2016). Critical discourse analysis connects the standard language ideology (Lippi-Green, 2012) as a sustainable source of the sociolinguistic habit of mind, which maintains the linguistic status quo in schools.

**Conceptual Frameworks**

The conceptual frameworks for the study are critical discourse analysis and critical language awareness. Both frameworks illustrate the factors influencing the Problem of Practice and the need for an in-service course. Both frameworks connect the Problem of Practice and in-service course to the transformative learning theory as illustrated in the concept map (see Figure 3.2). Specifically, critical discourse analysis confirmed the Problem of Practice as the framework highlighted the significance of how the acceptance of the standard language ideology informed the high school SETs sociolinguistic habit of mind about AAE and SAE use in schools. Critical language awareness confirmed the need for an in-service course due to the anticipated relationship between language ideologies and discourse, which focused on changing the high school SETs inaccurate assumptions about AAE and SAE use in schools. Specifically, the goals of the in-service course were to change the high school SETs attitudes toward AAE, have a better understanding of critical language awareness, and have a better understanding of language variation (see Figure 3.2).
Figure 3.2. This is the concept map of the theoretical framework of the transformative learning theory and conceptual frameworks of critical discourse analysis and critical language awareness.

**Critical Discourse Analysis**

The influence of a social situation on the reception and production of word choices was explored through critical discourse analysis (CDA; Janks, 2010). CDA is an analytical approach to understanding the reproduction, re-enactment, and resistance of social power (i.e., control) in
speech and writing activities (van Dijk, 2015). Specifically, social power reveals how some “groups have (more or less) power if they can (more or less) control the acts and minds of (members of) other groups (van Dijk, 2015, p. 469).” CDA elaborates on the three factors contributing to our word choices according to a social situation. Power, discourse, and ideology are three factors influencing the high school SETs assumptions to use words in a specific context (Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

**Power.** According to Wodak and Meyer (2016), power is the relation of difference. In CDA, a dominant group maintains control of dominated groups by reproducing language ideologies to their benefit (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). Specifically, the maintenance of power depends on the social criteria of those in power (van Dijk, 2006). Since the dominant group in the United States are upper-class White Americans (Lippi-Green, 2012), their privileged access to the learning goals of education indicates they have social power or control (van Dijk, 2015) to reinforce the standard language ideology from elementary school to postsecondary institutions. Control over language use in education influences people's knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about AAE and SAE and indirectly controls their actions or point of view (Cranton, 2016; Mezirow, 2000). The exercise of power was evident in the development of the Common Core. In the Problem of Practice, the Common Core development process was led by the NGA and CCSSO and drafted by teachers from across the country serving in work groups (NGA & CCSSO, 2010b). A significant power factor in the Common Core development is that most teachers in the United States identify as White (Boser, 2014) and most likely served in the work groups charged to assist in developing the Common Core.

The indirect control of other people’s actions manifests as manipulation when the dominant group exercises covert power abuse over discourse to shape a dominated group’s
beliefs, values, and assumptions (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). Discourse is language expression in speech and writing tasks (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). The reinforcement of SAE in writing and speech in the Common Core solidifies the high school SETs sociolinguistic habit of mind that SAE is the language norm. A dominated group’s acceptance of the ideology of SAE as the norm is a form of hegemony (van Dijk, 2015). In the Problem of Practice, the high school SETs accepted the linguistic status quo as established in the Common Core. Consequently, their sociolinguistic habit of mind directs their point of view, or instructional behaviors, to prompt African American students speaking AAE to code switch (see Figure 3.1). The teachers’ instructional behaviors toward African American students include teaching SAE and directing students to code switch from AAE to SAE in discourse activities in class.

**Discourse.** Discourse is a social practice guided by ideologies for language expression based on the significance of a social context (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). A dominant group controls discourse by utilizing different communication modes (e.g., media, television, education, etc.) to transmit their dominant language ideology and attitudes across society (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2015). Participation in discourse involves internalizing the beliefs, values, and ways of thinking which align with the standard language ideology (Cahill Paugh & Dudley-Marling, 2011; Lippi-Green, 2012). The standard language ideology is a generally accepted belief that SAE, the language variety of the socio-economic elites, is inherently more complex and appropriate than AAE and other language varieties (Lippi-Green, 2012; MacSwan, 2018; Weaver, 2019).

The upper-class White dominant group in the United States reproduces the linguistic status quo through the Common Core and other state-approved learning standards. Consequently, schools are a conduit to reinforce the ideology that SAE is only appropriate for discourse in
formal and prestigious settings than AAE. The high school SETs internalized the standard language ideology from their formal education, and their acceptance of the ideology guides their beliefs and understanding of AAE. Cahill Paugh and Dudley-Marling (2011) explain most teachers struggle to interrogate the dominant academic discourse of SAE which contextualizes student success and failure. If teachers challenge the ideology of AAE as a deficit language variety, their identity as good, caring teachers would be in jeopardy (Cahill Paugh & Dudley-Marling, 2011).

Ideology. An ideology is the widespread acceptance of a stable belief, assumption, or value by most groups (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). According to Mezirow (2000), ideologies form the foundation of an adult’s habit of mind (Mezirow, 2000). In the Problem of Practice, the high school SETs undoubtedly accept the assumption of SAE as a better-developed language variety than AAE. A language ideology is the social construction of beliefs and assumptions about a language and the speakers of a language (Weaver, 2019) in a dominant group’s best interest (Kroskrity, 2010). In this case, the language ideology of SAE for formal settings and AAE for informal settings originate from the politically dominant groups of the NGA and CCSSO and the predominantly White teacher work groups. The teachers helped develop the Common Core (NGA & CCSSO, 2010b) to maintain the assumption of the importance of SAE for formal discourse (NGA & CCSSO, 2010e) and the relegation of AAE and other language varieties to poetry (NGA & CCSSO, 2010c).

The concept map (see Figure 3.2) illustrates how the social context of word choices reinforces the teachers’ acceptance of the standard language ideology in their sociolinguistic habit of mind (see Figure 3). The tendency to differentiate members of groups based on one’s beliefs or attitudes about a language variety leads an individual to evaluate or judge the
behaviors of the speakers (Lippi-Green, 2012; van Dijk, 2007). Mullens (1972) confirms the
evaluative characteristic of ideologies as the stable assumptions guiding individuals’ evaluations
of others (as cited in Wodak & Meyer, 2016). In the Problem of Practice, the Common Core
ELA learning standard reproduces the standard language ideology of the superiority of SAE by
excluding AAE as a viable language option for college acceptance, career endeavors, and social
advancement. Their unwavering acceptance of the standard language ideology is evident in the
needs assessment in Chapter Two. One participant noted the need to help students learn SAE
since it is “the expectation for students to use when they enter the workforce and interact with
individuals in society” (Participant SET 9, 2018).

Given the bidirectional relationship between the sociolinguistic habit of mind and
instructional behaviors (see Figure 3.1), high school SETs should understand the standard
language ideology which guides their uncontested assumptions about SAE and AAE and their
instructional practice for students to code switch to an appropriate language variety. Finally, they
need to understand how their assessment of students with learning disabilities’ ELA skills as data
(Clark et al., 1991) conceals their role in reproducing the standard language ideology in special
education. For example, SETs must assess students with learning disabilities reading skills
quarterly and analyze the assessment data to determine if the students are making progress or not
toward specific reading or writing goals. An in-service course to increase the high school SETs
awareness of the standard language ideology informing their assumptions and instructional
behaviors around AAE and SAE is paramount.

Critical Language Awareness

Critical language awareness (CLA) as a conceptual framework reveals the association
between power and ideology with language expression (Zavala, 2015). Another explanation of
CLA is awareness of current language ideologies and how a language upholds systems of privilege and discrimination in society (Chisholm & Godley, 2011; Clark et al., 1991; Godley et al., 2015). According to Zavala (2015), Clark et al. (1990) were the seminal researchers who developed this conceptual framework.

There are five positions in CLA (Clark et al., 1990):

1. **Objective**: social emancipation or the dominated people voice their own experience in official or elitist public institutions
2. **Motivation**: to critique and change the linguistic status quo
3. **Schooling**: empower students with the knowledge to take action against the linguistic status quo
4. **Language**: understand that those in power standardize a language, as opposed to assuming a language has always been standardized
5. **Learning**: knowledge integrated with practice

The antithesis of CLA is language awareness or the linguistic status quo. Language awareness is a form of language education which focuses on the nature and features of a language and language use (Clark et al., 1990; Pompfrey & Burley, 2009). The objective of language awareness is social integration, or for schools to improve children’s communication skills to participate in the community and prepare for employment (Clark et al., 1990). Common Core’s goal aligns with the objective of language awareness, which is to prepare students for college and career opportunities (NGA & CCSSO, 2010a).

Language awareness requires schools to conform children to the linguistic status quo to speak and write in SAE. Language awareness reproduces the assumption that a standardized language has always been the expectation (Clark et al., 1990). Language awareness also
highlights how knowledge about the nature and features of a language and a language expression is independent of practice and experience (Clark et al., 1990). Specifically, learning about a language will increase one’s performance when the learning process is independent of the purpose of the language and the student’s discourse needs and experience (Clark et al., 1990).

The conceptual framework of CLA interrogates the linguistic status quo that SAE is the only socially acceptable language in academic and other formal settings and AAE is only appropriate for home and informal settings. CLA reveals the undisputed acceptance of the language norms around SAE (Alim, 2005; Clark et al., 1990). The lack of dispute about SAE as the norm is mainly because SAE is taken for granted as *just there* rather than being *put there* (Clark et al., 1991). The qualitative data analysis in Chapter Two revealed the unwavering acceptance of SAE as the linguistic status quo. Participants reported SAE is the norm and the expectation of student discourse. When people do not question the linguistic and social norm of SAE in education, the implication is to devalue AAE since African Americans' social status is lower as a nondominant group in American society (Clark et al., 1991; Lippi-Green, 2012).

The emphasis on teaching students the grammar, syntax, spelling, and punctuation rules of SAE restricts ELA pedagogy to an activity independent of the social practices of linguistic privilege and discrimination. Most high school SETs focus on literacy's technical components of ELA when providing specialized reading and writing instruction according to students’ annual IEP reading and writing goals. In the Problem of Practice, measuring students’ ELA skills based on predetermined goals becomes a data collection process. An important responsibility of high school SETs is to measure student progress toward mastery of their annual IEP goals. Typically, high schools review student state assessment data (e.g., the PARCC assessment), class tests and quizzes, student work samples, and other data to determine student progress toward achieving
their IEP goals.

The high school SETs’ obligation to measure students’ ELA skills limits their awareness of language as a social practice to conform students to the linguistic status quo (Clark et al., 1990; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). Also, perceiving the students’ ELA skills as data disguises the teachers’ role in the social production of linguistic discrimination among African American students. The high school SETs need more knowledge to increase their awareness and understanding of their role in the social practice of SAE in their pedagogy. An in-service PD could change their understanding of reproducing AAE and SAE's social hierarchy in school and society.

**Professional Development Programs**

The following summaries of refereed studies focused on CLA, dialect awareness, postsecondary courses, and a foreign department of education PD program. Appendix F summarizes the procedures and the outcomes of each intervention. These interventions aimed to implement programs or workshops to change teachers’ attitudes toward nonstandard language varieties and bring awareness of the ideologies guiding one’s beliefs about standard and nonstandard language varieties.

**Critical Language Awareness Programs**

The findings from some CLA programs revealed variations in teachers’ responses to the program content. The participants’ reactions to CLA ranged from positive changes in attitudes to an unwillingness to adjust one’s language ideology about SAE and other language varieties. An anti-bias program was evaluated by Wiese et al. (2017) in Germany on its effectiveness in changing negative attitudes towards linguistic varieties, underprivileged speakers, and speech communities among a sample of primary and secondary school teachers. The program increased
the positive attitude changes toward language varieties and persisted directly after and several months after the program (Wiese et al., 2017). CLA programs are encouraging with enduring effects of sustaining improvements in teachers’ attitude changes when they learn the language structures of nonstandard language varieties. The limitations of the study were not reported in the article.

A mixed method study by Godley et al. (2015) investigated the preservice English teachers’ development of CLA through an online course focused on language variation. The participants completed an online course over four weeks, with one module completed per week. Each module focused on a specific CLA theme and aligned with the Common Core ELA language standard. After reviewing a module’s content for the week, the participants responded to two or three discussion post questions, submitting at least four required comments per week (Godley et al., 2015). The data was collected from the weekly online discussion posts and the questionnaires were administered before and after the PD. The participants’ responses indicated some avoidance of acknowledging their White privilege by overgeneralizing discrimination claims (Godley et al., 2015). Another finding was that there was no association between the participants’ perspectives on language judgments with systems of privilege and power in American society (Godley et al., 2015). Another intervention was reviewed for its effectiveness in increasing CLA among postsecondary writing instructors.

A case study was conducted by Weaver (2019, 2020) from a year-long study to investigate a writing workshop’s influence on postsecondary writing instructors’ language ideologies and CLA. Teresa (a pseudonym) was one of the four instructors who initially participated in the year-long study and volunteered as the case study participant. One significant finding was that Teresa experienced difficulties supporting CLA despite what she learned in the
workshop. The conclusions of the case study are relevant as some high school SETs could decide not to change their inaccurate assumptions about AAE and SAE despite the new information learned in a PD workshop. The limitations of the case study were not reported in the article.

**Dialect Awareness Trainings**

Dialect awareness trainings improved teachers’ attitudes and perceptions toward AAE and other nonstandard language varieties. Bozoglan and Gok (2017) investigated how the administration of a mobile-assisted dialect awareness program influenced the dialect attitudes of preservice English language teachers in Turkey. The researchers found a significant increase in the participants’ perception of their local Turkish accent and their perception of Russian, Turkish, American, and Arabic dialects of English after the training (Bozoglan & Gok, 2017).

However, the participants continued to rate the British accent with the highest score before and after the training, indicating the participants' perceptions and attitudes toward standardized language reflected the best speech quality. In reference to the transformative learning theory, dialect awareness trainings could support teachers in changing their assumptions about individuals speaking different language varieties. The training also suggested online applications such as WhatsApp can empower social learning environments. According to Bozoglan and Gok (2017), some limitations in their study included a small sample size ($N = 58$) and the selection of five speakers for the verbal guise test may have influenced the results as gender could have affected the attitudes of the listeners.

Another dialect awareness training was conducted by Fogel and Ehri (2006). The quantitative study investigated increasing SAE-speaking teachers’ familiarity with seven syntactic features of AAE (Fogel & Ehri, 2006). The training modestly improved the participants’ attitudes toward AAE from negative to neutral (Fogel & Ehri, 2006). The study
highlighted that teachers’ learning AAE features can improve their attitudes toward AAE. There were two limitations in the study. First, the study was completed in one session which is inadequate for teachers’ professional development (Avalos, 2011). Second, the random assignment procedure of the participants was not feasible for recruiting participants for the dissertation study.

A qualitative study reviewed by Reaser (2016) investigated the benefits of implementing a synchronous webinar for teachers to learn about the patterns in all language varieties, how everyone speaks a language variety, and “dialects reflect history and culture rather than ignorance or intelligence.” (Reaser, 2016, p. 238). The participants improved their understanding of their personal linguistic biases, the role of linguistic discrimination in schools, the connection between language varieties and culture, and the misalignment between language varieties and intelligence (Reaser, 2016). Ultimately, the participants’ demonstrated incremental changes in their knowledge and attitudes by the end of the course (Reaser, 2016). The Reaser (2016) study was implemented over four consecutive months and the semester-long timeframe was not feasible in the student researcher’s professional context. Despite the limitation, the Reaser (2016) study would be an appropriate intervention due to the webinar format of the program.

Postsecondary Courses

A review of postsecondary courses highlights how changing educators’ attitudes toward linguistic diversity and bias is a gradual process. A mixed method study by Bacon (2017) investigated how teacher education programs can disrupt linguistic discrimination associated with SAE. The intervention was drawn from a larger study following four cohorts of preservice teachers enrolled in different sections of an English immersion course to teach multilingual learners (Bacon, 2017). The findings provide insight into how standard language ideologies
operate, fluctuate, or remain stable among adult learners (Bacon, 2017). The participants retained their foundational language ideologies (Bacon, 2017). The findings confirm how language ideologies are difficult to change immediately. The limitation of the study was the data collection process occurred in one three-hour session.

A qualitative study by Baily and Katradis (2016) investigated how teacher educators participating in an online discussion activity within a graduate school program helped them to understand social justice issues in education. The participants were often in a position of conflict between their ingrained beliefs and reality based on their exposure to the assigned content of the online discussion activity (Baily & Katradis, 2016). The findings supported the teacher educators’ need to continue dialogue with other teachers when acknowledging social justice issues. Such dialogue activities confirm the disorienting dilemma phase of the transformative learning theory (Beer, 2019; Cranton, 2002; MacKeracher, 2012; Mezirow, 2000) as an adult learner experiences a conflict between the new knowledge countering their current assumptions. The limitations of the qualitative study were the influence of researcher positionality in the data analysis and the participants’ reactions during the dialogue may have yielded different findings than what the authors expected (Baily & Katradis, 2016).

A mixed method study conducted by Endo (2015) investigated how preservice teachers developed critical self-awareness about the factors and consequences of linguistic discrimination in schools in a diversity course taught by the researcher. After completing the diversity course, all the participants made moderately positive shifts in their views toward linguistic diversity. The findings from Endo (2015) supported one conclusion from Reaser (2016) in that reducing linguistic bias and changing teachers’ attitudes toward nonstandard language varieties is a gradual process. One study limitation included relying on self-report data with a relatively small
sample size \( n = 20; \) Endo, 2015). Endo (2015) acknowledged that recruiting mostly White preservice teachers excludes the unique perspective of teachers of color in discussions about language diversity.

**Foreign State Department of Education Initiative**

Western Australia took action to increase language awareness among its teachers on a broader scale. The department of education of Western Australia developed the ABC of Two-Way Literacy and Learning Professional Development Program (ABC PD) program in 1998, aimed to increase their teachers' understanding of Aboriginal English, which was socially devalued compared to Standard Australian English. Overall, the program increases the teachers’ understanding of Aboriginal English, their knowledge about language variation in general, and their acceptance of Aboriginal English in the classroom (Oliver et al., 2011). The ABC PD Program helped teachers understand the legitimacy of nonstandard language varieties. The program’s findings also highlighted the different attitudes toward nonstandard language varieties based on the region the teachers teach (i.e., rural or urban) and the gradual process of eventually accepting other language varieties. The authors concluded learning about language awareness should be an ongoing process (Oliver et al., 2011), which is also consistent with the conclusions of Baily and Katradis (2016) and Reaser (2016).

A benefit of the program was the participation of high school teachers in the program. However, implementing the ABC PD program would be a significant challenge due to the extensive financial, human, and other resources needed to implement the program across the East School District. Another challenge to implementing the ABC PD program would be the high probability of recruiting a small sample size because the East School District research protocol only permitted the student researcher to recruit teachers with their school principal’s approval.
Summary of the Selected Professional Development Course

The intervention for the dissertation study was then replicated and adapted asynchronous online PD course from Godley et al. (2015) and was extended to high school SETs. The recruitment of high school SETs contributes to the body of knowledge as co-author Jeffery Reaser reported SETs were not recruited in previous investigations for differences in reactions to the intervention (J. Reaser, personal communication, January 27, 2020). The intervention was also extended to an urban school district as previous replications were conducted at postsecondary institutions (A. Godley, personal communication, January 27, 2020). The PD course was adapted to include an AAE attitude scale as a pre- and postmeasure to measure the high school SETs attitudes toward AAE. The publishing company granted the student researcher permission to republish the intervention (see Appendix G).

The course aimed to change the high school SETs point of view by increasing their understanding of the relationship between ideology, power, and language (see Figure 3.2). The course would inform the participants about the linguistic facts of life (Charity Hudley & Mallinson, 2011; Lippi-Green, 2012), or the five statements about the reality and nature of all spoken languages supported by linguists. The five linguistic facts are (1) all language varieties are patterned (or grammatical), (2) the distinction between language and dialect is more political than linguistic in nature, (3) all languages have variation at any given time, (4) all living languages change over time, and (5) all language varieties have roughly the same ability to convey ideas (Charity Hudley, & Mallinson, 2011; Godley & Reaser, 2018; Lippi-Green, 2012). The intervention focused on the following linguistic facts: AAE is a grammatical language variety, the political influence on the difference between SAE and AAE usage, the idea of standardizing a language counters the natural changes in a language, and AAE is equal in terms
of the ability to express ideas (Lippi-Green, 2012). The linguistic fact that all spoken languages change over time and are not permanent addresses one of the intervention goals: to expose the myth about SAE as an actual language variety.

**Benefits**

An advantage of replicating the Godley et al. (2015) intervention is the six-week timeframe aligned with the teacher’s union timeframe of their other PD courses. The duration of their courses varied from four to six weeks. The intervention's online modality reduced the threat of history to the internal validity of the study (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017; Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). The recent COVID-19 pandemic made some individuals reluctant to be in proximity to others and the online modality would increase participants’ willingness to participate in the course.

The intervention was relevant to the high school SETs pedagogy as each session's goals aligned with the Common Core (Godley & Reaser, 2018; Godley et al., 2015) which guides their specialized instruction goals. Another benefit of the intervention was eliminating the need for costly resources such as paper copies of materials, technology to view videos, and reserving a meeting space to conduct the course (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

**Professional Development Course Components**

Effective in-service PD for educators includes the following elements to improve instructional practices: content focus, active learning opportunities, coherence, collective participation, and consistent feedback (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017; Desimone & Garet, 2015). The replicated course by Godley et al. (2015) included the PD elements to improve the instructional practices of the high school SETs. Content focus emphasizes linking specific teaching strategies to teachers’ content areas, such as mathematics or literacy (Darling-
Hammond et al., 2017). The PD course connected specific instructional strategies and aligned with the Common Core. Active learning occurs when teachers actively evaluate and reflect on feedback to improve their pedagogy instead of transmitting the information to them (Desimone & Garet, 2015). The course participants engaged in active learning as they answered at least two discussion post questions per week and critically reflected on their personal and professional experiences based on their exposure to the course content.

Coherence is the alignment of the PD content and goals with the curriculum, teacher knowledge and beliefs, students’ needs, and a school district or state’s education policy (Desimone & Garet, 2015; Fisher & Frey, 2014). The PD course's four objectives align with the Common Core adopted by the State Department of Education in July 2010 (SDE, 2020). Finally, collective participation is teachers grouped in comparable grade levels and content areas to foster an engaging learning community (Desimone & Garet, 2015). The student researcher recruited high school SETs who provided specialized reading instruction to increase participation and engagement during implementation. Adult learners, such as in-service teachers, require consistent feedback and opportunities to reflect on their current instructional practices to improve their pedagogy (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). The weekly discussion post dialogues provided the teacher opportunities to receive consistent feedback about their pedagogy from other teachers.

Professional Development for High School Teachers

According to Fisher and Frey (2014), the PD needs of high school teachers differ from elementary school teachers. High school teachers are more receptive to a PD based on a needs assessment or classroom observations to determine their pedagogical needs (Fisher & Frey, 2014). The Godley et al. (2015) PD course for the evaluation was selected according to the needs
assessment findings in Chapter Two. According to Fisher and Frey (2014), the three goals of a PD for high school teachers are to either change their attitudes, improve their skills, increase their knowledge, or any combination of the goals. The selected Godley et al. (2015) PD course addressed all three goals.

The objectives of the PD course were threefold: to improve the high school SETs attitudes toward AAE, to increase their knowledge about the standard language ideology regarding AAE and SAE, and to acquire skills to take action on this problem. Some studies were conducted to increase CLA among general education teachers and high school teachers (Godley et al., 2015; Wiese et al., 2017). However, there is a gap in the literature examining CLA among SETs. An extensive search of refereed articles and studies was conducted to find studies investigating CLA with SETs and no empirical studies were found investigating CLA and SETs. To the student researcher’s knowledge, replicating the Godley et al. (2015) PD course would be the first study to evaluate the effectiveness of a CLA in-service course with high school SETs in an urban school district.

**Transformative Learning in an Online Learning Environment**

Researchers recently questioned whether transformative learning could occur in an online learning context than in an in-person setting. Typically, transformative learning processes occur during in-person focus groups or surveys (Beer, 2019). Extant research supports how transformative learning can occur in an online learning environment. Cranton (2010) confirmed an online learning environment encourages transformative learning through meaningful dialogue to either support or challenge their assumptions. Four extant studies provided evidence of how an online learning context comparable to the Godley et al. (2015) course supports dialogue in transformative learning.
The first study was a mixed method study conducted by Beer (2019) investigating postsecondary nursing students’ level of transformative learning based on their discussion post responses using a rubric. Fifty-six percent of the participants experienced some level of transformative learning and 55% of the responses reflected the first stage of change of transformative learning (Beer, 2019). Beer (2019) also found the online learning environment's activities of reading, watching, listening, and discussions can lead to some form of transformative learning among adult learners.

A second qualitative study by Choi et al. (2016) found online discussions in a teacher education course promote dialogue. Engaging in dialogue helps the participants understand different assumptions and perspectives from others because it is essential for perspective transformation (Mezirow, 2000). The third qualitative study by Rudge (2015) compared the impact of college students’ transformative learning in a multicultural teacher education course presented online or in person. She found no significant difference in the college students’ transformative learning process in either format, as changes in their frames of reference were similar (Rudge, 2015).

The fourth study was a qualitative study by Lee and Brett (2015) examining how open-ended dialogues can promote transformative learning by understanding online teacher-to-teacher discussions' effectiveness. The in-service teachers in the study experience transformative learning through the online, open-ended dialogues as change by the end of the online course (Lee & Brett, 2015). To experience perspective transformation, teachers must engage in dialogue to begin critically reflecting and assessing their current assumptions (Cranton, 2016). The online learning studies reviewed supported the online modality for dialogue and critical reflection to occur as the modality does not interfere with the transformative learning process.
Summary

The transformative learning theory was the theoretical framework (see Figure 3.1) to understand how the sociolinguistic habit of mind maintains the assumption among the high school SETs assumptions of SAE as the norm and expectation in formal contexts. The conceptual framework of CDA revealed how language ideologies directly control teachers’ instructional behaviors by prompting them to remind African American students to code switch. CLA brings awareness of how the CDA factors of power and language ideologies inform teachers’ assumptions about AAE and SAE in schools. The Godley et al. (2015) online course included the effective elements of PDs for teachers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Desimone & Garet, 2015) and aligned with the specific PD needs of high school teachers (Fisher & Frey, 2014) to improve their point of view or instructional behaviors toward African American male high school students with learning disabilities speaking AAE.
CHAPTER 4

Course Procedure and Program Evaluation Methodology

A gap in the initial literature review in Chapter One revealed a negligible percentage of studies recruiting SETs to investigate their attitudes toward AAE. In Chapter Two, the needs assessment addressed the gap and the findings revealed most high school SETs held neutral to negative attitudes toward AAE as their rationale was based on the Common Core. In Chapter Three, a literature review of current PD programs to address the Problem of Practice included CLA programs, dialect awareness trainings, postsecondary courses, and a foreign department of education PD program. A review of the feasibility of current preservice and in-service teacher PDs in the United States and abroad led to the replication of the Godley et al. (2015) online PD course and was extended to high school SETs in an urban school district. For reference, the Godley et al. (2015) citation is the published article of the study, whereas the Godley and Reaser (2018) citation is the published book of the study with course content details. The book was written so other educators and researchers could implement the curriculum (A. Godley, personal communication, January 27, 2020).

The asynchronous PD course by Godley et al. (2015) is a four-module course designed to develop preservice and in-service teachers’ understanding of CLA focused on language variation. Language variation is the patterned grammar, sound, and vocabulary differences which vary by region, personal history, SES, race, ethnicity, and other characteristics (Charity Hudley & Mallinson, 2014). The purpose of this dissertation study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the replicated Godley et al. (2015) PD course (i.e., course evaluation) with high school SETs. Each learning module was completed in approximately three and a half hours in one week (see Appendix J). The approximate time for the participants to complete each learning module is an
input or a needed resource (Cooksy, Gill, & Kelly, 2001) for the intended short-term outcomes of the course evaluation in the logic model (see Appendix J).

**Logic Model**

The logic model of the course evaluation centered on the idea that by participating in the asynchronous course, the high school SETs would improve their attitudes toward AAE, increase their understanding of CLA, and increase their awareness of language variation. The intermediate outcomes of the course evaluation were to increase positive attitudes toward African American students speaking AAE on their special education services caseload and increase the application of CLA and language variation in their pedagogy. The preferred long-term outcomes were to increase positive attitudes toward African American students speaking AAE school-wide and increase the integration of CLA when lesson planning with ELA general education teachers.

One of the inputs of the asynchronous course required the participants to designate approximately three and a half hours per week to complete each learning module. Other inputs included selecting a learning management system or software application to host and administer the course, access to technology (e.g., desktop or laptop computer, tablet, or smartphone), and adequate internet access. The activities of the evaluation were participation in the four learning modules and the completion of the pre- and postcourse measures. Each module included readings, videos, activities, and discussion post questions specific to a module’s theme (Godley et al., 2015). The learning modules’ themes are 1) teaching about dialects in literature, 2) responding to vernacular dialects in student writing and speech, 3) leading discussions and investigations of identity and language variation, and 4) teaching about linguistic discrimination and power (Godley & Reaser, 2018; Godley et al., 2015). Two high school SETs completed the
course evaluation. No registration fee was required to sign up for the course and the participants earned 15 free continuing education units from the teacher’s union for completing the course evaluation.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the effectiveness of an asynchronous in-service course in changing high school SETs attitudes toward AAE, changing their understanding of CLA, and improving their awareness of language variation. The course evaluation also investigated the participants’ experiences undergoing the transformative learning stages.

**Research Questions**

The following process evaluation research questions guided the course evaluation:

RQ1- To what extent were each of the online professional development module videos, articles, and activities uploaded and available for the special education teachers every week?

RQ2- What did the special education teachers consider to be the most useful and notable online PD content they learned?

RQ3- To what extent were the special education teachers posting one complete paragraph (i.e., four to six sentences) in their initial and follow-up responses to the discussion questions in three of the four online professional development modules?

The following outcome evaluation research questions guided the course evaluation:

RQ4- To what extent did the online asynchronous PD course improve the special education teachers’ attitudes toward AAE?

RQ5- How did the online PD content change the special education teachers’ understanding of CLA?

RQ6- How did the online PD change the special education teachers’ understanding of language variation?
RQ7- What were the special education teachers’ experiences learning about CLA during the online PD?
RQ8- What were the special education teachers’ experiences learning about language variation during the online PD?
RQ9- Which stages of the transformative learning process did the special education teachers experience during the online PD?
RQ9a- What stage(s) of transformative learning did the special education teachers experience during module 1?
RQ9b- What stage(s) of transformative learning did the special education teachers experience during module 2?
RQ9c- What stage(s) of transformative learning did the special education teachers experience during module 3?
RQ9d- What stage(s) of transformative learning did the special education teachers experience during module 4?

Research Design

The purpose of the intervention was to evaluate the effectiveness of a six-week asynchronous PD course designed by Godley et al. (2015). A quasi-experimental triangulation convergence mixed method design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007) directed the procedures for the course evaluation as quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently. The triangulation convergence mixed method design helped to analyze changes in the participants’ attitudes toward AAE, knowledge of CLA and language variation from the discussion post responses, responses to the pre- and postcourse teaching scenario items, and a language attitude
survey. Specifically, the discussion post responses, the attitude scale, and the teacher scenario items helped to show how the participants’ weekly engagement in the online discussions and exposure to the content influenced any changes consistent with the short-term outcomes in the theory of treatment (see Appendix I) and the logic model (see Appendix J).

The triangulation convergence design captured quantitative and qualitative data on the high school SETs knowledge of the course content, changes in their knowledge, and experiences during the course. The method included the pre- and postcourse measurements of the participants’ attitudes toward AAE and their understanding of CLA. Postcourse quantitative and qualitative data were collected from the evaluation questionnaire created by Godley et al. (2015).

The mixed method research design ascertains information about complex phenomena such as attitudes, experiences, and behaviors (Smith, Canata, & Taylor Haynes, 2016). A benefit of conducting a mixed methods research design is that one research design complements the weakness of the other (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). In this design, the quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed separately on the same phenomenon. The datasets were converged to compare and contrast the interpretation of the findings.

Although researchers cannot infer causation from qualitative data (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017), a theory of treatment assesses how an intervention could affect a specified target population (Leviton & Lipsey, 2007). The theory of treatment for the course evaluation illustrated how the asynchronous course was expected to have an effect on high school SETs understanding of CLA (see Appendix I). As noted in the logic model (see Appendix J), the proximal outcomes were to increase the teachers’ attitudes toward AAE from neutral-negative to positive, improve their understanding of CLA, and increase their awareness of language variation in the classroom. The intermediate outcomes were to increase the teachers’ positive attitudes
toward African American students with reading disabilities and their application of CLA and language variation in their pedagogy. The distal outcomes were to increase their positive attitudes toward African American students speaking AAE school-wide and to increase the integration of CLA when lesson planning with ELA general education teachers.

Purposive and convenience sampling procedures (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017) were used to recruit participants to evaluate the course. Purposive sampling was implemented as a practical method to recruit participants and determine the course content's main effect despite the sample's heterogeneity (Shadish et al., 2002). There were three criteria for the high school SETs to participate in the course evaluation: maintained a current state certification, taught in a high school, and provided specialized ELA instruction in a general education inclusion setting.

Per IDEIA (2004), specialized instruction is the adaptation of the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction to meet the specific needs of a child with a disability. The teacher’s union spring PD course catalog script noted the criteria to participate in the course evaluation (see Appendix K). The convenience sampling technique was utilized by recruiting the participants through their membership with the local teacher’s union and their voluntary decision to permit the analysis of their survey data and discussion post responses to evaluate the course. The course was advertised in the teacher’s union PD catalog from January 23, 2022 until the course began on February 28, 2022. The teachers registered for the course using the link the teacher’s union provided and the registrant list was forwarded to the student researcher.

**Process Evaluation**

The process evaluation assesses the implementation of a program or intervention (Dusenbury, Brannigan, Falco, & Hansen, 2003). The three process evaluation indicators for the course were participant responsiveness, project implementation, and context. The process
evaluation questions focus on the participants’ consistent access to the online content, satisfaction levels of learning in an online format, and the submission of full paragraphs for the weekly discussion post responses. The research summary matrix (see Appendix H) outlined the process evaluation indicators, data collection, and data analysis procedures.

**Participant responsiveness.** Participant responsiveness is the participants’ consistent interaction and engagement in the activities and content of a program (Dusenbury et al., 2003). For this component, the participants posted a complete paragraph in their initial discussion posts in each learning module every week. They also submitted one-paragraph comments on four other teachers’ comments throughout the week. Participant responsiveness was essential for the course evaluation since the participants wrote reflections on their understanding of CLA, language variation, and the influences of these factors in high school ELA instruction and specialized ELA instruction.

The quantitative component was a frequency count of the number of complete paragraphs each teacher submitted in their initial discussion and follow-up posts. Participant responsiveness aligned with the logic model's activities (see Appendix J) because the expectation was for the teachers to consistently respond to the discussion questions in each learning module and respond to four other teachers’ responses weekly. The quantitative component of participant responsiveness aligned with the logic model as the outcomes depended on the participants allocating at most three and a half hours per week engaging with the content to increase the likelihood of the expected short-term outcomes.

**Project implementation.** Project implementation is the operation of a program's specific activities and whether adjustments are warranted (Zhang et al., 2011). Project implementation for the course focused on uploading the original and modified course content in the Canvas Learning
Management System (Canvas LMS), an online learning platform. The operation of the activities included ensuring the participants could access the learning modules’ content with no technical issues. This process evaluation indicator was necessary since the internal validity of the course evaluation was contingent on ensuring the learning modules' technical features were functioning correctly and easily accessible.

The quantitative aspect of the project implementation was the total number of technical issues the participants experienced accessing the content or posting a written response. The qualitative component was the participants’ experiences accessing the course content and posting their responses. Canvas LMS was selected as the host platform because the participants utilized the platform in East School District and were familiar with navigating the platform.

Project implementation aligned with the inputs and outputs of the logic model (see Appendix J). Within the logic model's space inputs, the participants would have no challenges accessing Canvas LMS to complete the course. Project implementation aligned with the logic model's outputs because the activities' success was contingent upon the participants’ access to each learning module’s content to answer the discussion post questions.

**Context.** According to Baranowski and Stables (2000), context is the details of an intervention's environment. The context of the course evaluation was the online learning setting within East School District. The context was demonstrated in the participants’ satisfaction level with interacting with the digital content in each learning module. This component was necessary because the participants were online weekly to complete the assigned online activities and respond to the discussion post questions.

The quantitative component was an evaluation questionnaire at the end of the course to measure the teachers’ satisfaction levels with the various videos, readings, and activities after the
course. Context aligned with the logic model's inputs as Canvas LMS was a critical resource for the course. The component also aligned with the theory of treatment because the teachers’ comfort level in completing the online course may reduce the treatment delivery system from interfering with the intervention goals (Leviton & Lipsey, 2007).

**Outcome Evaluation**

An outcome evaluation measures a target population's observed characteristics based on the effects of a program (Rossi, Lipsey, & Henry, 2019). A randomized control trial is the best method to determine if a treatment caused the effects among randomly assigned participants. A comparison design was appropriate for the course evaluation since purposive and convenience sampling procedures were implemented to recruit participants.

According to Henry (2010), a comparison design is a nonexperimental research design used when the random assignment of participants is not feasible or when there is a comparison of a group of participants amongst themselves. One type of comparison design appropriate for the course evaluation was the fixed-effect design of longitudinal evaluations (Henry, 2010). The fixed-effect design of longitudinal evaluations is the process of each participant serving as their comparison (Henry, 2010). Each participant was compared against themselves by comparing their data from the pre- and postcourse teaching scenario items and the LAS. Appendix H lists the outcome evaluation indicators.

**Method**

The method section reviews the instruments and procedures of the quasi-experimental mixed method design of the course evaluation. The inclusion and exclusion criteria of the participants for the course evaluation were reviewed. The LAS as the self-report instrument was selected as the instrument measures one of the proximal outcomes of the course evaluation. The
procedures of participant recruitment, anonymity, the course, data collection, and data analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data were also reviewed.

Participants

Upon IRB approval, purposive and convenience sampling procedures (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017) were implemented to recruit participants to evaluate the course. Purposive sampling was implemented as a practical method to recruit participants and determine the course content's main effect despite the sample's heterogeneity (Shadish et al., 2002). The three criteria for the high school SETs to participate in the course evaluation were to have a current state certification, taught in a high school, and provided specialized ELA instruction in an inclusion setting. Convenience sampling was employed because the student researcher was an employee of the East School District.

After the participants registered for the course, the student researcher scheduled a virtual orientation using video conference software to present and explain the purpose of the course, informed consent (see Appendix N), and the request to collect and analyze the participants’ discussion post responses and questionnaire data to evaluate the course. Time was allocated at the end of the orientation to present the course evaluation, answer questions, and review the consent form (see Appendix N). Informed consent was obtained after the student investigator answered all the teachers' questions. The link to the informed consent form was posted on the last presentation slide of the virtual orientation and emailed to the participants. The participants selected their consent decision and electronically signed the document. The participants were informed that they could remain in the course to earn the free continuing education units regardless of their decision to participate in the course evaluation process. The participants had seven calendar days from the date of the virtual orientation presentation to note and sign their
The student researcher was unaware of who gave informed consent for their course data in the course evaluation for the dissertation study. Informed consent signatures were collected electronically and sent directly to the primary investigator, an advisor on the student researcher’s dissertation committee, to mitigate undue influence from the student researcher. The student researcher’s knowledge of the participants’ identities who gave consent could have influenced her critical reflection responses during the facilitation of the course. The primary investigator forwarded the consent decisions to the student researcher at the end of the course.

Seven participants registered initially through the teacher’s union and provided consent for their data to be analyzed to evaluate the course. However, only two participants completed the course evaluation and received 15 free continuing education units. None of the other five participants completed the course to earn continuing education credits independent of the course evaluation process. The background history survey collected information about the participants’ personal and professional experiences (Godley & Reaser, 2018) to understand how their prior personal and professional experiences informed their sociolinguistic habit of mind (Cranton, 2013, Mezirow, 2000). Such information provided the student researcher with context for their written responses and the qualitative data analysis.

Marva (pseudonym) identified as an African American female and a native English speaker who has taught for approximately 11 to 15 years. Although she was raised in North Carolina in her early childhood, she identified as a Jersey girl as she was raised and educated in the New York and New Jersey metropolitan areas. She acknowledged that her language expression included code switching and her spoken language varied differently in professional and informal settings. Kenneth (pseudonym) identified as an African American male who has
taught for approximately 16 to 20 years. Kenneth’s linguistic exposure was expansive as he previously resided in five states (i.e., Illinois, Iowa, Nevada, North Carolina, and Virginia) and lived abroad in Germany, Japan, and Portugal. He was a native English speaker and spoke conversational German. Kenneth acknowledged that his language use included code switching and that his spoken language varied differently in professional and informal settings.

**Measurements and Instrumentation**

There were several measures administered in the course evaluation. The measures included participant emails, participant evaluation questionnaire (Godley & Reaser, 2018), discussion post submissions, discussion post responses, student researcher involvement in critical reflections, the modified LAS (Champion et al., 2012; Taylor, 1973), and the teaching scenario items (Godley & Reaser, 2018).

**Participant emails.** The student researcher monitored the receipt of emails from the participants daily during the course to promptly address any technical issues accessing the videos, articles, and activities in each learning module.

**Participant evaluation questionnaire.** The evaluation questionnaire was part of the original design of the Godley and Reaser (2018) study with six multiple-choice and two open-ended questions to measure the teacher’s satisfaction with the course content (Godley & Reaser, 2018). The evaluation questionnaire was administered to preservice and in-service teachers in prior administrations. A sample question and response scale was:

*How useful were the teaching scenarios (videos/blogs)?*

*Not useful*

*Somewhat useful*

*Very useful*
Extremely useful

One of the open-ended questions was:

Thinking back over all parts of the curriculum, is there one part or theme that stood out as the most useful to you? (If nothing comes to mind, simply write "N/A.")

Discussion post submissions. The discussion post submissions were a measure of participant responsiveness, or their interaction and engagement in the activities and content of the course (Dusenbury et al., 2003).

Discussion post responses. The participants’ discussion post responses were utilized to explore changes in their understanding of CLA and language variation, experiences learning about CLA, experiences learning about language variation, and experiences through the transformative learning stages (Beer, 2019; Mezirow, 1994).

Student researcher involvement in critical reflections. The student researcher’s involvement was to submit probing questions and responses weekly to measure the number of times probing questions were warranted to encourage the participants to engage in critical thinking with the course content and discussion post responses. The original authors of the course suggested future researchers be involved in the online discussions to reduce overgeneralizations and participants’ tendencies to avoid sensitive critical language and discriminatory practices in the participants’ responses (Godley & Reaser, 2018).

Language Attitude Scale. The modified version of the Language Attitude Scale (LAS; Champion et al., 2012; Taylor, 1973) measures teachers’ attitudes and perceptions toward AAE. The LAS has high internal reliability with a Cronbach’s alpha value of .93 (Champion et al., 2012). The LAS is a 25-item, self-report survey with statements rated on a four-point scale: strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), agree (3), and strongly agree (4) (see Appendix L;
Champion et al., 2012). The LAS included 15 questions measuring teachers’ attitudes toward AAE. The remaining 10 questions measured the teachers’ perceptions of AAE as a legitimate dialect for schools (Champion et al., 2012). A statement from the LAS measuring the teachers’ general attitudes toward AAE was *AAE sounds as good as SAE*. A statement from the LAS measuring the teachers’ perceptions of AAE in schools was *One of the goals of the American school system should be the standardization of the English language.*

The modified LAS included three open-ended questions about a teacher’s previous training about the legitimacy of AAE. The three open-ended questions were omitted for the course evaluation as the questions were duplicated in the background history form created by Godley et al. (2015). The student researcher was granted permission to reprint and adapt the attitude scale (see Appendix M) with no open-ended questions. The LAS was selected as it was previously administered as a pre- and postmeasure of teachers’ attitudes toward AAE in two prior studies. Sweetland (2010) administered the LAS in a sociolinguistic diversity training with elementary school teachers to measure changes in their attitudes toward AAE before and after the training. The LAS was also administered in a dialect awareness training study by Fogel and Ehri (2006) to measure changes in the teachers’ attitudes toward AAE before and after a one-hour training.

**Pre- and postcourse teaching scenario items.** The teaching scenario items were in the original design of the course and measured changes in the participants’ understanding of CLA (Godley & Reaser, 2018). The participants read a teaching scenario and ranked the five given instructional strategies of each scenario based on the strategy they would be (1) most likely to use to (5) least likely to use and explained their reasons for ranking the strategies for each scenario (Godley & Reaser, 2018). Table 4.1 lists each teaching scenario and the five
instructional strategies to rank. The three open-ended questions to explain their rationale for ranking each of the five strategies (Godley & Reaser, 2018) were:

1. Please explain your choice for teacher response #1 (the one you’d be most likely to use).

2. Explain your choice for teacher response #5.

3. Explain your ordering of the teacher responses you ranked #2, #3, and #4. Why did you put them in this order?

Table 4.1

Review of Teacher Scenarios and Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher scenario #1</th>
<th>Strategies to rank</th>
<th>Teacher scenario #2</th>
<th>Strategies to rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You are teaching 7th grade ELA in a diverse urban high school and you notice that</td>
<td>Since you’ve already reviewed subject-verb agreement in Standardized English, you</td>
<td>Your White suburban students are reading <em>The Color Purple</em> by Alice Walker, a novel</td>
<td>You ask the students to pull out their phones and consider whether their parents or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>your students regularly use features of their vernacular dialect in their academic</td>
<td>circle the errors on students’ papers and tell students that they can earn back</td>
<td>are written from the perspective of Celie, a poor, uneducated, Black woman</td>
<td>grandparents would understand the language of their texts. You ask students, “Does</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>essays, the most common of which is the subject-verb agreement pattern seen here:</td>
<td>grammar points by independently correcting the errors.</td>
<td>living in rural Georgia who is abused by her father and later her husband, but who</td>
<td>this mean your language isn’t valid? Should you have to use Standardized English in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Esperanza wish she have different hair.” You give students substantial written</td>
<td>You take 15 minutes of class time to conduct a short lesson about the grammatical</td>
<td>ultimately becomes empowered through her relationship with a female jazz singer, Shug.</td>
<td>your texts and with your friends?” End by explaining that language is constantly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feedback on their ideas and organization in their papers.</td>
<td>patterns of verb endings in Standardized and vernacular varieties of English. You</td>
<td>You have planned a class discussion related to the scene in which Celie is writing a</td>
<td>and used differently by different people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>end by explaining to students that they can use grammatical patterns of vernacular</td>
<td>letter to her sister that says, I feel a little peculiar around the children. For one</td>
<td>You note that the author is not trying to have her characters use “correct English.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dialects in their journals, but they must use Standardized English in their formal</td>
<td>thing, they grown. And I see they think me and Nettie and Shug and Albert and</td>
<td>Instead, the dialect used in the book is an accurate representation of the way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>essays.</td>
<td>Samuel and Harpo and Sofia and Jack and Odessa real old and don’t know much what</td>
<td>uneducated Blacks spoke at the time, and it is an important aspect of making the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You take 15 minutes of class time to lead a discussion about Standardized English,</td>
<td>going on. But I don’t think we feel old at all. And us so happy. Matter of fact, I</td>
<td>text feel authentic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>asking students to think about who decides what “Standard” is and the rationales</td>
<td>think this the youngest us ever felt.</td>
<td>You have students translate the language into Standardized English and discuss the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>for using vernacular dialects in school and writing. You conduct a short lesson</td>
<td>After you point students to this section for discussion, a student says, “I can’t</td>
<td>effect it has on the feel of the text. You then use this activity to launch a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>about the grammatical patterns of verb endings in Standardized and vernacular</td>
<td>even understand what is happening in this book. It doesn’t make any sense. It’s</td>
<td>discussion about code-switching and the contexts in which it's valuable to use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dialects, concluding by telling students to be deliberate about their language</td>
<td>not even written in correct English.” “Yeah,” agree other students. In response . .</td>
<td>vernacular dialects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>choices.</td>
<td></td>
<td>You ask students to unpack what the term “correct English” means and why they think</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You ignore these grammatical patterns in your students’ academic writing.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Walker’s use of “correct English” for her characters’ voices would have been a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You share your observations of the subject/verb patterns with your students, saying,</td>
<td></td>
<td>better choice. You engage them in a discussion about the author’s choice to have some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“It’s fine</td>
<td></td>
<td>characters use vernacular dialects and others use Standardized English and in a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>discussion of Celie’s</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Course Procedure

Course Implementation

Upon IRB approval, the evaluation was the replication of a six-week, online asynchronous course on CLA and language variation with four learning modules (Godley & Reaser, 2018; Godley et al., 2015). Each learning module had a specific theme and learning goals aligned with the Common Core (Godley & Reaser, 2018; Godley et al., 2015). Each learning module began with a realistic teaching scenario connected to language variation. After reading a classroom scenario, the participants read digital texts, listened to audio recordings, and watched brief videos (Godley et al., 2015). The participants engaged in an online discussion by answering two or three questions based on the content and posted their responses on a discussion board, making at least four required comments per week (Godley et al., 2015).

The precourse questionnaires included the completion of the background history survey (Godley & Reaser, 2018), the two teaching scenario items (Godley & Reaser, 2018), and the LAS (Champion et al., 2012; Taylor, 1973). After reading each scenario, the participants ranked the five strategies for each scenario from (1) most likely to use to (5) least likely to use (Godley & Reaser, 2018). The participants then explained their rationale for ranking the five strategies of
each teaching scenario (Godley & Reaser, 2018).

Module 1 centered on teaching dialects in literature (Godley & Reaser, 2018; Godley et al., 2015). The learning goals were to learn about the different dialects in the United States, understand peoples’ attitudes toward different dialects, and learn how to lead discussions in the classroom about different vernacular dialects in literature (Godley & Reaser, 2018; Godley et al., 2015). The materials and activities were two readings about the myth of SAE and regional accents, two videos about general and American regional dialects, and two discussion questions.

Module 2 focused on responding to vernacular dialects in student writing and speech (Godley & Reaser, 2018; Godley et al., 2015). The learning goals were to understand grammatical patterns in different dialects, learn helpful ways to talk with students about the dialects they speak, and help students recognize dialect patterns in different dialects and code switching in different situations (Godley & Reaser, 2018; Godley et al., 2015). The materials and activities were two readings about discussing language variation with students and features of AAE, two activities based on two AAE features, two videos about the language of text messages, a story about an Academic English program in a southern California school district, and three discussion questions.

Module 3 centered on strategies to lead discussions of identity and language variation (Godley & Reaser, 2018; Godley et al., 2015). The learning goals were to understand language variation and their identity in a language and plan ways for students to investigate language variation and identity associated with their language use (Godley et al., 2015). The materials included a teacher-created blog, an article about code switching and code meshing, a video presentation about students being judged by their language variety, and three discussion questions.
Module 4 reviewed teaching about linguistic discrimination (Godley & Reaser, 2018; Godley et al., 2015). The learning goals focused on linguistic discrimination, strategies to reduce linguistic discrimination, and ways to design lessons about linguistic discrimination (Godley & Reaser, 2018). The materials and activities were about evaluating a speaker by their spoken language variety, two readings on linguistic profiling, a poem spoken by a British-Guyanese poet, one video presentation about the poem and linguistic profiling, and three discussion questions.

The postcourse questionnaires included the completion of the participant evaluation questionnaire (Godley & Reaser, 2018), the two teaching scenario items (Godley & Reaser, 2018), and the modified LAS (Champion et al., 2012; Taylor, 1973). After reading each scenario, the participants ranked the five strategies of each scenario from (1) most likely to use to (5) least likely to use (Godley & Reaser, 2018). The participants then explained their rationale for ranking the five strategies for each teaching scenario (Godley & Reaser, 2018). Table 4.2 outlines the course dates and the assigned activities, including the data measures.

Table 4.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timetable of Data Collection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recruitment

The participants were notified of the opportunity to participate in the online course in January and February of 2022 in the digital version of the PD catalog posted on the teacher’s union website. The course advertisement reached approximately 140 high school SETs. The goal was to recruit 20 high school SETs in East School District. The teacher’s union PD coordinator posted the course in their semester catalog as one of the free continuing education courses offered during the spring semester. The teacher’s union provided 15 free continuing education units to incentivize teachers to complete the course. The course catalog script (see Appendix K) described the goals of the course and timeline. The course catalog script also noted the course evaluation was part of a dissertation study and the participants’ decisions to permit the analysis of their survey and discussion post responses for dissertation data was 100% voluntary. As noted in the catalog script, the teachers could only complete the course for continuing education credits and not participate in the research.

Data Collection

This section describes the course evaluation data collection processes. Data collection for the course evaluation began with the administration of the precourse questionnaires on February 28, 2022. The research summary matrix in Appendix H includes the process and outcome evaluation research questions, constructs, measures, and the data collection procedures for each construct. The section also reviewed the sampling methods and procedures to establish and maintain participant anonymity.
**Participant emails.** The student researcher reviewed and collected the participants’ emails regarding technical issues with accessing the content once a day during the course because of the small sample size (N = 2).

**Participant evaluation questionnaire.** The evaluation questionnaire data was collected the week after the course (see Table 4.2).

**Discussion post submissions.** The student researcher reviewed the number of complete paragraphs each participant submitted for their initial and follow-up discussion post responses twice a week. The data was collected at the end of the course.

**Student researcher involvement in critical reflections.** The student researcher responded to generalized post submissions with follow-up questions twice weekly as needed. The follow-up questions reiterated a point from a respective discussion post question not addressed by a participant’s initial response to prompt a participant to submit a complete paragraph. The critical reflections were collected at the end of the course.

**Language Attitude Scale.** The scale was administered during weeks one and six (see Table 4.2) and the data was collected at the end of the course.

**Pre- and postcourse teaching scenario items.** The participants’ responses to the teaching scenario items were collected during weeks one and six of the course. The participants’ responses to the three open-ended questions were collected during weeks one and six of the course.

**Discussion post responses.** The discussion post responses were collected at the end of the course to analyze the participants’ understanding of CLA, understanding of language variation, reflections of their experiences learning about CLA, reflections of their experiences learning about language variation, and their experiences progressing through the transformative
learning theory stages (Beer, 2019; Kitchenham, 2008; Mezirow, 1994, 2000).

**Data Analysis**

This section describes the data analysis processes for the process and outcome evaluation research questions. The research matrix in Appendix H provides an overview of the data analysis of the qualitative, quantitative, and mixed datasets for the course evaluation.

**Participant emails.** Descriptive statistics were utilized to analyze the number of emails the student researcher received regarding technical issues during the course. Frequency counts were appropriate to quantify the most complex technical components of the course the participants experienced during the course.

**Participant evaluation questionnaire.** The evaluation questionnaire data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and conventional content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the responses to the close-ended questions to measure the course content the participants ranked from the most beneficial to least beneficial. Conventional content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) was conducted to analyze the participants’ responses to the two open-ended questions about their thoughts on the salient information they learned throughout the course. The student researcher employed in vivo coding to analyze the open-ended responses.

**Discussion post submissions.** The number of paragraphs each participant submitted during the course was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The student researcher tallied the number of submitted initial and follow-up discussion post responses. The total number of discussion posts each participant submitted was counted at the end of the course.

**Student researcher involvement in critical reflections.** The number of follow-up questions the student researcher submitted was analyzed using descriptive statistics due to the
small sample size \( (N = 2) \). The student researcher counted the number of follow-up questions submitted weekly during the course.

**Language Attitude Scale.** The data from the LAS was analyzed using descriptive statistics due to the small sample size \( (N = 2) \) in the course evaluation. Each participant’s total score was calculated to measure changes in their attitude toward AAE. The LAS was administered the week before and after the course (see Table 4.2).

**Pre- and postcourse teaching scenario items.** The teaching scenario data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and conventional content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The student researcher used a descriptive approach to determine if the participants’ rankings of the teaching strategies matched the correct rankings provided by Godley and Reaser (2018). Godley and Reaser (2018) ran a linear mixed effects regression model for their data analysis to analyze changes in rankings. However, a descriptive approach (J. Reaser, personal communication, September 12, 2022) was deemed appropriate due to the small sample size \( (N = 2) \) in the course evaluation. The student researcher used conventional content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) to analyze the open-ended responses. Conventional content analysis is a qualitative data analysis process wherein the codes derive from textual data as opposed to a theory or relevant research findings (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). In vivo coding was conducted for the qualitative data analysis.

**Discussion post responses.** The participants’ understanding of CLA was analyzed using directed content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) and descriptive statistics. Directed content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) was selected because Clark et al. (1990) and Godley et al. (2015) provided a priori codes to determine the initial codes for CLA in the discussion post responses. The student researcher employed in vivo coding in the qualitative data analysis.
Frequency counting was employed to quantify the number of a priori codes from the data analysis because of the small sample size \((N = 2)\).

The participants’ understanding of language variation was also analyzed using directed content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). A priori codes from Godley et al. (2015) and Godley and Reaser (2018) were applied to analyze the discussion post responses. In vivo coding was conducted to provide example responses in the qualitative data analysis.

The participants’ responses about their experience learning about CLA and language variation were analyzed using conventional content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) and in vivo coding. Conventional content analysis was appropriate as the participants disclosed their personal and professional experiences in the discussion post responses. In vivo coding was implemented due to the small sample size of participants \((N = 2)\) in the course evaluation.

Discussion post responses mentioning the transformative learning stages were analyzed using directed content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Beer (2019) created a rubric to identify responses comparable to the stages of transformative learning (see Table 4.3). These a priori codes were applied as the source for the initial coding category. In vivo coding was also used in the qualitative data analysis.

Table 4.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rubric for the Transformative Learning Coding Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. A disorienting dilemma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An experience that does not fit with a person’s expectations. This cannot be resolved without the person changing their view of the world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples of Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I thought that…but…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“My experience has been different…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“This happened and now…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Self-examination of affect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realization of one’s feelings about the dilemma (usually feelings of shame or guilt).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples of Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I feel [emotion] that I thought this”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Critical assessment of assumptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification and analysis of limiting assumption (e.g., what does it mean to you to feel this?).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples of Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“As a teacher working in this country, I need to think in a certain way.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Exploration of new roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Planning a course of action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Acquiring knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Trying out new roles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Anonymity**

Each participant who gave consent was assigned a pseudonym for the course evaluation. The pseudonyms were based on a participant’s gender identification, which served as identifiers to match the pre- and postcourse data and protect their identities during the data analysis. The pre- and postcourse data and the discussion post responses were stored on the secure and password-protected Canvas LMS website. After the end of the course, the student researcher downloaded the data into a secure, password-protected university digital storage site.

**Summary**

The transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1991) was the theoretical framework explaining the cultural and social factors contributing to the Problem of Practice. CDA was the conceptual framework justifying how the powerful influence of the standard language ideology influences the high school SETs sociolinguistic habit of mind. CLA was the conceptual framework supporting the need for an in-service course to interrogate the standard language ideology and the linguistic status quo in schools. The course evaluation replicated the Godley et
al. (2015) course and was extended to high school SETs in an urban school district. The research design was a mixed method triangulation convergence design as the quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed to evaluate the course. The logic model illustrates the course’s processes and the intended short-term outcomes (see Appendix J). The outputs differed from the original course with the addition of the LAS (Champion et al., 2012; Taylor, 1973) to measure changes in the participants’ attitudes toward AAE before and after the course.
CHAPTER 5

Findings and Discussion

This chapter is a review of the findings from the course evaluation of the replicated Godley and Reaser (2018) and Godley et al. (2015) study conducted from February to April 2022. The evaluation, grounded in the transformative learning theory and CLA, explored the changes in attitudes toward AAE and in understanding CLA and language variation between two East School District high school SETs. The analysis included data from the course, including pre- and postcourse questionnaires, the modified LAS (Champion et al., 2012; Taylor, 1973), online discussion responses, and an evaluation questionnaire.

Process of Implementation

The original implementation of the course occurred over six weeks from February 28, 2022 to April 8, 2022. The following precourse surveys were completed during week one of the course: background history survey, two teacher scenario items, and the LAS. The high school SETs participated in the course during weeks two through five, completing the assigned activities of one learning module per week. The participants viewed the posted videos, readings, activities, and answered two or three discussion questions based on the content in a learning module. The specific content the participants viewed and completed are noted in Godley and Reaser (2018) and Godley et al. (2015).

Module 1 (week two) included three readings, three videos, and two discussion questions. Module 2 (week three) activities included two readings, two brief online quizzes, two videos, and three discussion post questions. In Module 3 (week four), the participants completed two readings, watched one video, and answered three discussion post questions. Module 4 (week 5) included one activity, three videos, one reading activity, and three discussion post questions. On
week six, the participants completed the following postcourse surveys: participant evaluation questionnaire, two teaching scenario items, and the LAS. The course totaled 15 hours of asynchronous learning. The implementation of the course activities aligned with the logic model’s short-term outcomes (see Appendix J). The goals of the asynchronous course activities were to improve the high school SETs attitude toward AAE, increase their understanding of CLA in ELA, and increase their awareness of language variation.

**Findings**

The process evaluation questions were:

RQ1- To what extent were each of the online professional development module videos, articles, and activities uploaded and available for the special education teachers every week?

RQ2- What did the special education teachers consider to be the most useful and notable online PD content they learned?

RQ3- To what extent were the special education teachers posting one complete paragraph (i.e., four to six sentences) in their initial and follow-up responses to the discussion questions in three of the four online professional development modules?

The outcome evaluation research questions were:

RQ4- To what extent did the online asynchronous PD course improve the special education teachers’ attitudes toward AAE?

RQ5- How did the online PD content change the special education teachers’ understanding of CLA?

RQ6- How did the online PD change the special education teachers’ understanding of language variation?

RQ7- What were the special education teachers’ experiences learning about CLA during the
online PD?
RQ8- What were the special education teachers’ experiences learning about language variation during the online PD?
RQ9- Which stages of the transformative learning process did the special education teachers experience during the online PD?
RQ9a- What stage(s) of transformative learning did the special education teachers experience during module 1?
RQ9b- What stage(s) of transformative learning did the special education teachers experience during module 2?
RQ9c- What stage(s) of transformative learning did the special education teachers experience during module 3?
RQ9d- What stage(s) of transformative learning did the special education teachers experience during module 4?

Process Evaluation Findings

Accessibility of the online content to participants (RQ1). The first research question of the evaluation was: “To what extent were each of the online professional development module videos, articles, and activities uploaded and available for the special education teachers every week?” The original course videos, articles, and activities were copied into the Canvas LMS from the Godley and Reaser (2018) book. The precourse instruments of the background history survey, the LAS, and the two teacher scenario items were uploaded to the platform. The content for the four learning modules (i.e., summary, goals, Common Core learning standards, opening scenario, videos, activities, and discussion post questions) was uploaded. The postcourse content of the participant evaluation questionnaire, the LAS, and the two teacher scenario items were
uploaded to the platform. All the content uploads were verified by comparing the Canvas LMS course modules’ information with the Godley and Reaser (2018) book.

During the course, the student researcher received one email and one text message for a total of two correspondences related to technical issues accessing the course content. One participant (who participated in Modules 1 and 2 activities but not the course evaluation) sent an email noting she could not access the Module 2 discussion questions because the section was locked in error. Kenneth, one of the two participants, sent one text message: he could not open the following section after the Module 4 opening scenario because it was listed as a quiz. Marva, the other participant, did not communicate any technical issues to the student researcher.

**Considered the most useful and notable PD content (RQ2).** The second research question of the evaluation was: “What did the special education teachers consider to be the most useful and notable online PD content they learned?” The data was collected from the participant evaluation questionnaire at the end of the course. The questionnaire included five multiple-choice questions and three open-ended questions about the usefulness of the readings, videos, and activities to their work.

**Quantitative findings for RQ2.** Table 5.1 displays their ratings of the content deemed least to most useful (Godley & Reaser, 2018). Marva and Kenneth rated the readings and media (i.e., video and blog teaching scenarios) as the most useful content. However, there were discrepant ratings of the course content between them. Marva rated the written teaching scenarios and the readings about language and language variation as somewhat useful and the online discussions as not useful. Conversely, Kenneth rated the written teaching scenarios, readings and media content, the readings about language and language variation, and the online discussions extremely useful.
Table 5.1

*Participants’ Rankings of the Most Useful Course Content*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Marva</th>
<th>Kenneth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Usefulness of the written teaching scenarios</td>
<td>Not useful: X</td>
<td>Very useful: X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat useful: X</td>
<td>Extremely useful: X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usefulness of the video/blog teaching scenarios</td>
<td>Not useful: X</td>
<td>Very useful: X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat useful: X</td>
<td>Extremely useful: X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usefulness of the readings about language and language variation</td>
<td>Not useful: X</td>
<td>Very useful: X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat useful: X</td>
<td>Extremely useful: X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usefulness of the online discussions</td>
<td>Not useful: X</td>
<td>Extremely useful: X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Qualitative findings for RQ2.* Marva and Kenneth explained why they believed the readings and media (i.e., video and blog teaching scenarios) contained the most useful information. Marva explained the benefit of “using both written [scenarios] and videos to help students understand different language variations” and utilizing the videos and blogs to “help with explaining language variations” to students. Marva did not explain why she thought the teacher scenario items were somewhat useful nor why the online discussions were not useful.

Kenneth reported the readings and media were the most useful because “the PBS articles were good.” He explained learning the information about language variation “was really good,” and the strategy of “Being able to analyze language variation using their native dialect is also an idea I want to utilize more. Providing that level of comfort and familiarity when analyzing
[literacy] can pay large dividends.” Kenneth did not provide explanations for his higher ratings of the written teaching scenarios and online discussions.

**Mixed method findings for RQ2.** The quantitative and qualitative datasets supported the participants’ agreement about the readings and media, or the video and blog teaching scenarios, as the most useful content. However, there was a discrepant finding between Marva’s rating of the usefulness of the language variation readings and her open-ended responses. Although Marva rated the usefulness of the language variation readings as somewhat useful, she included the significance of the language variation content for students in her explanation of the usefulness of the course readings and media.

**Submission of one complete paragraph in an initial and follow-up response (RQ3).** The third research question of the evaluation was: “To what extent were the special education teachers posting one complete paragraph (i.e., four to six sentences) in their initial and follow-up responses to the discussion questions in three of the four online professional development modules?” The participants answered a total of seven discussion post questions from Modules 1 through 3. Marva submitted 11 complete paragraphs and no paragraphs for the follow-up responses (see Table 5.2). The student researcher submitted two critical reflection questions to Marva’s initial discussion posts to prompt Marva to provide further explanations of her initial responses. The first critical reflection question was posted based on her response to the *Dialects in Literature* discussion question in Module 1. The second critical reflection question was posted to her answer to the *American English Mastery* question in Module 2. Kenneth submitted 12 complete paragraphs and no paragraphs for follow-up responses. The student researcher submitted no critical reflection questions to Kenneth as he submitted responses indicating his critical reflections on the modules’ content.
Table 5.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency Count of Submitted Paragraphs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenneth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What was learned in the process evaluation to help modify the course later?

Neither Marva nor Kenneth expressed concerns about navigating Canvas LMS due to their familiarity with using the platform in East School District. However, a pilot study before implementation could reduce the technical issues that transpired during the course. There was the challenge of increasing the maintenance of participant involvement (Baranowski & Stables, 2000) in the course. Of the seven initial participants, only two (i.e., Marva and Kenneth) maintained their participation in the course. Three participants answered the discussion questions in Module 1, two participants answered the discussion questions in Module 2, and Marva was the only participant to answer the discussion questions in Module 3.

To remediate the problem of low participant engagement in Modules 1 through 3, the student researcher made several attempts to communicate by email, Canvas LMS announcements, and text messages to increase participant responsiveness (Dusenbury et al., 2003) in the course. Fourteen group text messages and 15 Canvas LMS announcements (the announcements were forwarded to the emails the participants provided during course registration) were sent with reminders of the weekly deadlines and the incentive of 15 free continuing education units for completing the course.

One of the Canvas LMS course announcements included an affirmative message from the student researcher to increase engagement: Greetings all! Today is Day 2 of Module 2. I first
want to note that you all are doing a great job and the discussion post responses from Module 1 are very insightful. The lack of communication from most of the participants was an indication of their lack of engagement with the course. The teacher’s union PD coordinator approved extending the course end date from April 8th to April 22\textsuperscript{nd} (and later to April 24\textsuperscript{th}) to provide the participants more time to complete the course and earn their free incentive. The participants were notified on March 29\textsuperscript{th} that the course end date was extended to April 22\textsuperscript{nd} and later to April 24\textsuperscript{th}.

The student researcher’s reflection on the process evaluation of the course yielded five modifications to increase participant responsiveness, engagement, maintenance, and reduce attrition. The first modification would be to schedule weekly synchronous meetings to encourage participant responsiveness (Dusenbury et al., 2003) in the weekly dialogues and increase the number of follow-up discussion responses and critical reflections. The second modification would be to schedule virtual office hours to provide consistent support to the participants during the course. The third modification would be to contact participants who are not actively engaged to understand the factors hindering them from fully participating in the course. The fourth modification would be facilitating the course in person so the participants can engage in dialogue and critical reflections in a small group or larger social context (Cranton, 2010). The fifth modification would be to expand the language variation content with more strategies for teachers to integrate into their pedagogy.

Outcome Evaluation Findings

**Improvement in attitudes toward AAE (RQ4).** The fourth research question of the evaluation was: “To what extent did the online asynchronous course improve the special education teachers’ attitudes toward AAE?” The changes in the participants’ attitudes toward AAE were measured using the modified LAS before and after the course. The total score of each
administration was summed as detailed in Taylor (1973). Total scores of 74 or lower indicate negative attitudes, while total scores of 75 and higher indicate positive attitudes (Salih, 2019). Marva’s total attitude score increased by four points from 72 (negative) before the course began to 76 (positive) by the end of the course (see Figure 5.1). Kenneth’s total attitude score increased by nine points from 78 (positive) before the course began to 87 (positive) by the end of the course. Overall, the course improved Marva’s attitude toward AAE and increased Kenneth’s initial positive attitude score.

**Figure 5.1.** This graph shows the LAS total attitude scores before and after the course.

**Changes in the participants’ understanding of CLA (RQ5).** The fifth research question of the evaluation was: “How did the online PD content change the special education teachers’ understanding of CLA?” CLA is an awareness of the existing language ideologies and how a language upholds systems of privilege and discrimination (Chisholm & Godley, 2011; Clark et al., 1991; Godley et al., 2015).
**Quantitative findings for RQ5.** Changes in the participants’ understanding of CLA were measured by conducting a frequency count of the number of responses aligning with the five CLA positions (Clark et al., 1990) in the discussion post responses (see Table 5.3). The CLA positions were utilized as a priori codes for the data analysis to detect any changes in their understanding of CLA during and after the course. The five CLA positions by Clark et al. (1990) were utilized as the a priori codes below:

1. Objective: social emancipation or for dominated people to voice their own experience in official or elitist public institutions
2. Motivation: to critique and change the linguistic status quo
3. Schooling: empower students with the knowledge to take action against the linguistic status quo
4. Language: understand how those in power standardized a language, as opposed to assuming a language has always been standardized
5. Learning: knowledge integrated with practice

Table 5.3 displays the number of CLA positions Marva and Kenneth referenced in their discussion post responses in each learning module.

Table 5.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency Count of Critical Language Awareness Positions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participant</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Module 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Module 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Module 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Module 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenneth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Module 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Module 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Module 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Module 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Marva demonstrated a limited understanding of CLA, as evidenced by the reduced number of CLA positions she mentioned in her responses by the end of the course. In Module 1, she made three comments regarding the motivation position. In Module 2, she made two comments referencing the motivation position. In Module 3, she wrote one statement consistent with the motivation position of CLA. Marva made no reference to any of the five CLA positions in Module 4. Overall, the change in Marva’s understanding of CLA was limited to the motivation position of CLA by the end of the course. There were a total of six remarks about the motivation position in her discussion post responses.

Conversely, Kenneth demonstrated substantial changes in his understanding of CLA, as evidenced by the breadth of CLA positions he referenced in his discussion post responses. In Module 1, he mentioned two comments referencing the learning position. In Module 2, Kenneth mentioned one comment about the motivation position. In Module 3, he mentioned one comment about the objective position. In Module 4, he made four comments referencing the motivation position and two comments referencing the schooling position. Overall, the change in his understanding of CLA was evident in his comments referencing the objective, motivation, schooling, and learning positions based on what he learned from the course. There were a total of 10 CLA comments mentioned in his discussion post responses.

In summary, both participants demonstrated a better understanding of the motivation position of CLA, or knowledge of the importance of challenging the linguistic status quo with their students. However, Kenneth showed an extensive change in his understanding of CLA than Marva by referencing the CLA positions of motivation, objective, schooling, and learning in his responses. Specifically, Kenneth’s understanding of CLA extended to promoting student voice (objective position), teaching students about linguistic discrimination and taking action against it
(schooling position), and teachers learning and using AAE in their pedagogy (learning position).

Marva’s understanding of CLA was limited to the motivation position only. The differences in their total number of CLA comments and the specific CLA positions mentioned in their responses suggest various changes in their understanding of CLA from the course. The qualitative data analysis further explored how the course changed their understanding of CLA.

**Qualitative findings for RQ5.** The discussion post responses of Modules 1 through 4 were analyzed to explore their changes in understanding CLA. The qualitative data was analyzed using in vivo coding and thematic analysis. The Clark et al. (1990) CLA positions were applied as a priori codes to detect patterns in their responses consistent with the five positions of CLA. The a priori codes from Clark et al. (1990) were: social emancipation (i.e., students’ voice), motivation (i.e., critique and change the linguistic status quo), schooling (i.e., equip students with the knowledge to take action against the linguistic status quo), language (i.e., understand that those in power standardize a language), and learning (i.e., knowledge integrated with practice).

The qualitative findings revealed similar and different changes in the participants’ understanding of CLA. The various changes in their understanding were evidenced by the themes of *critique linguistic assumptions*, *empower students*, and *teacher learning*. The theme critique linguistic assumptions aligned with the motivation position of CLA (Clark et al., 1990). The associated codes were education level, correctness, intelligence, and judgment. The theme of empowering students aligned with the schooling position of CLA (Clark et al., 1990). The associated codes were dismantle, prevent, and self-expression. The theme of teacher practice was consistent with the learning position of CLA (Clark et al., 1990) and the codes were knowledge and application. Table 5.4 presents the themes and the codes from the qualitative data analysis. The themes from Marva and Kenneth’s responses reflected their awareness to learn more about
the AAE conventions, validate AAE and other language varieties, and empower students to counter the linguistic status quo that SAE is better developed than AAE. However, the themes highlighted the common and diverse understandings of CLA between Marva and Kenneth.

Table 5.4

Responses by Theme of Data Pertaining to Understanding CLA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critique linguistic assumptions</td>
<td>Educational</td>
<td>Acknowledgment of the legitimacy of language varieties</td>
<td>“just because people talk differently and maybe not all the time speak and standard language it doesn't make them [less] educated” (Marva)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>level</td>
<td></td>
<td>“I would first have the students understand that their language is not wrong” (Marva)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correctness</td>
<td></td>
<td>“I would first commend the scholar on composing the letter. It's important that it is acknowledged and celebrated.” (Kenneth)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intelligence</td>
<td></td>
<td>“Students should know that people who have a southern dialect are just as intelligent as people who may have a Standard English dialect” (Marva)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Judgment</td>
<td></td>
<td>“I should not judge your intellect” (Marva)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empower students</td>
<td>Dismantle</td>
<td>Comments indicating students learn to take action against the linguistic status quo</td>
<td>“Scholars should learn the causes and harm of this in order to better understand how to identify and dismantle linguistic profiling” (Kenneth)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prevent</td>
<td></td>
<td>“By teaching all of the scholars about how certain people are profiled, it aids in the prevention of such by the scholars” (Kenneth)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-expression</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Critique linguistic assumptions. Marva and Kenneth understood the importance of challenging the false assumptions people often make about students speaking AAE and other language varieties. Specifically, they discussed challenging false assumptions by not associating AAE with a student’s education level, correctness or articulation of words, intelligence, or ability to learn. Marva and Kenneth emphasized challenging the assumption that speaking in AAE is wrong. Marva noted the importance to “have the students understand that their language is not wrong.” Kenneth also confirmed the correctness of AAE in his response to
a student writing sample written in AAE. He noted “it’s important [for their writing] to be acknowledged.” Marva and Kenneth learned the different types of assumptions people generally make about AAE and SAE are erroneous and are willing to contest those assumptions when teaching.

*Empower students.* Kenneth’s responses reflected his understanding of student action from the course content. Specifically, students can take action by dismantling and preventing linguistic discrimination and self-expression (see Table 5.4). He reported educators should be responsible for educating students about the linguistic status quo and empowering them to undo the negative linguistic assumptions. For example, his understanding of the schooling position of CLA was evident in Module 4 when he expressed “teaching all of the scholars about how certain people are profiled, it aids in the prevention of such by the scholars.” The findings suggested Kenneth gained a better understanding of the schooling position of CLA from the course.

*Teacher learning.* Kenneth believed teachers should learn about the validity of AAE and implement the knowledge in their pedagogy. He confirmed this thought in Module 1 when he discussed “educators who can accept, understand, and utilize [their learning of the social positioning of dialects] can unlock and tap into [the] potential that will benefit both educator and scholar alike.” Teachers learning about the complexities and rules of AAE (Champion et al., 2012) could improve student learning outcomes. He reflected this understanding about improving students’ learning outcomes in Module 1 when he discussed integrating AAE in a lesson “allows for more extensive learning [than] simply teaching literacy based on Standard English principles” and “could enhance what is taught in the school setting if appropriately understood and used by educators.” Overall, Kenneth’s responses suggested the course improved his understanding of the learning position of CLA to integrate knowledge about AAE.
in lesson planning and teaching.

**Data analysis of teacher scenario items.** Changes in the participants’ understanding of CLA were also measured by analyzing their responses to the two teaching scenario items’ ranked strategies and open-ended questions. The first scenario was about students writing vernacular features in their essays. The second scenario was about a student’s negative reaction to the vernacular features written in a classic novel. Detailed information on the scenarios and the strategies are listed in Table 4.1. After reading a scenario, the participants ranked five teaching strategies and decided which one they would (1) most likely use to (5) least likely use as solutions in the scenario.

The purpose of the scenario activities was for the participants to rank each strategy according to how effectively each one challenged the linguistic status quo, or the motivation position of CLA (Clark et al., 1990). According to Godley and Reaser (2018), the first-ranked strategies challenge the idea of standardized languages like SAE as the norm. The second- and third-ranked strategies empower students but do not thoroughly interrogate the linguistic status quo (Godley & Reaser, 2018). The fifth-ranked strategies reinforce the linguistic status quo of SAE as only appropriate for school and employment settings. The pre- and postcourse rankings of the strategies of the two scenario items were compared with the correct rankings provided by Godley and Reaser (2018) to determine changes in their understanding of the strategies that either dismantle or support the linguistic status quo.

The qualitative data was analyzed from the open-ended scenario item questions. In the open-ended questions, the participants explained their rationale for ranking the teaching strategies in their respective order. The data was analyzed using in vivo coding.
Quantitative findings of scenario 1. The first teaching scenario was about several students using the common features of a language variety in their essays, and as the teacher, you give feedback on their papers (Godley & Reaser, 2018). Godley and Reaser (2018) ranked the most to least productive strategies for scenario 1:

1. 15-minute discussion challenging assumptions about standardized English
2. 15-minute mini-lesson on grammatical patterns of verb endings
3. Circling the errors and allowing students to independently correct them
4. Ignoring the dialect features in student writing
5. Sharing observations about the vernacular features and explaining those features are appropriate when talking to friends but not in school

Table 5.5 displays Marva and Kenneth’s rankings of the teaching strategies for scenario 1 before and after the course. The first column in Table 5.5 is the answer key for the correct rankings of the strategies. The words in parentheses are the underlined keywords of each strategy listed above.

Table 5.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correct Rankings</th>
<th>Marva</th>
<th>Kenneth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Precourse</td>
<td>Postcourse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 (discussion)</td>
<td>5 (observe)</td>
<td>2 (minilesson)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (minilesson)</td>
<td>1 (discussion)</td>
<td>3 (errors)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (errors)</td>
<td>2 (minilesson)</td>
<td>5 (observe)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 (ignore)</td>
<td>3 (errors)</td>
<td>1 (discussion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (observe)</td>
<td>4 (ignore)</td>
<td>4 (ignore)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Correct rankings are in boldface.

Marva demonstrated limited change in her understanding of CLA after the course, as her rankings were different from the correct order of the teaching strategies. In the precourse, she selected the fifth-ranked observation strategy as her first, indicating her adherence to the
linguistic status quo as the observation strategy perpetuates inequality (Godley & Reaser, 2018) between AAE and SAE. However, Marva was close to matching the correct order of the strategies listed by Godley and Reaser (2018) had she not ranked the least-useful observation strategy in first place. Instead, she ranked the discussion strategy, the best strategy to challenge SAE, in second place. In the postcourse, Marva moved the fifth-ranked observation strategy to third place. Marva initially ranked the preferred discussion strategy in second place but later shifted the strategy to fourth place. Kenneth improved his understanding of CLA in teaching scenario 1 before and after the course (see Table 5.5). He correctly ranked the discussion and minilesson strategies as the first and second best, respectively. He demonstrated a change in his understanding of the motivation position of CLA, or challenging the linguistic status quo, by selecting the discussion strategy first and the minilesson strategy in second place before and after the course.

Qualitative findings of scenario 1. Marva’s explanations of her rankings of the teaching strategies confirm the limited change in her understanding of how to challenge the linguistic status quo effectively. She emphasized code switching in her responses instead of challenging the norm of writing in SAE only. In the precourse, she explained her selection of the observation strategy as the best strategy as it reinforced teaching students the difference between formal and informal language expressions and settings. She ranked the discussion, minilesson, and errors strategies second through fourth, respectively, as those strategies addressed the writing errors “but [teachers should] take the time to explain differences and to use them.” Marva ranked the ignore strategy in fifth place since “we don't want students not feeling like they don't belong.”
At the end of the course, Marva selected the minilesson strategy as her first to implement because she wanted to reduce students’ feelings of exclusion but reiterated the students must “learn about different types of language and when to use it.” She ranked the error, observe, and discussion strategies second through fourth, respectively, based on their “order of the most explanation of when to use corrections” when editing the writing assignment.

On the other hand, Kenneth demonstrated a gradual change in his understanding of challenging the linguistic status quo. In the precourse, he correctly selected the discussion and minilesson strategies as the first- and second-best, respectively (see Table 5.5). Kenneth explained the discussion strategy encouraged teachers to “explain perceptions associated with using vernacular and reiterate how society views this [in] a formal setting.” He submitted no response explaining his rationale for ranking the minilesson, observe, and errors strategies as second- through fourth-best, respectively. He ranked the ignore strategy as the least useful since ignoring the grammar patterns was not a best practice.

In the postcourse, Kenneth explained the discussion strategy offered students “the opportunity to express themselves using their vernacular.” He explained the minilesson (second), observe (third), and errors (fourth) strategies “placed an undue emphasis on using [SAE] primarily.” Kenneth maintained the ignore strategy in fifth place in his pre- and postcourse rankings because it was better to address the errors and “situations that may affect the scholar negatively.”

**Quantitative findings of scenario 2.** The second teaching scenario was about a student’s negative reaction to the AAE features written in an excerpt from the novel *The Color Purple*. Godley and Reaser (2018) listed the correct ranking of the strategies for scenario 2:
1. **Unpacking** the term *correct English*

2. Using the *language* of students’ texts to discuss language variation

3. **Translating** the text and talk about the value of code switching

4. Noting that the vernacular language use makes the text feel more *authentic*

5. Noting that the vernacular language is important to the *setting* but that standardized English is required in school contexts

Table 5.6 displays Marva and Kenneth’s rankings of the teaching strategies for scenario 2 before and after the course. The first column in Table 5.6 is the answer key of the correct order of the ranked strategies. The words in parentheses are the underlined keywords of each strategy listed above.

Table 5.6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correct Rankings</th>
<th>Marva Precourse</th>
<th>Marva Postcourse</th>
<th>Kenneth Precourse</th>
<th>Kenneth Postcourse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (unpack)</td>
<td>4 (authentic)</td>
<td>5 (setting)</td>
<td>1 (unpack)</td>
<td>1 (unpack)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (language)</td>
<td>5 (setting)</td>
<td>4 (authentic)</td>
<td>2 (language)</td>
<td>2 (language)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (translate)</td>
<td>1 (unpack)</td>
<td>1 (unpack)</td>
<td>4 (authentic)</td>
<td>3 (translate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 (authentic)</td>
<td>3 (translate)</td>
<td>2 (language)</td>
<td>3 (translate)</td>
<td>4 (authentic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (setting)</td>
<td>2 (language)</td>
<td>3 (translate)</td>
<td>5 (setting)</td>
<td>5 (setting)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Correct rankings are in boldface.

In teacher scenario item 2, Marva’s rankings did not match the correct order before or after the course. In the precourse, she ranked the authentic strategy as the first strategy to implement most likely. She ranked the setting strategy in second place as it reinforced the inequality of SAE in formal settings and AAE in informal settings. She ranked the unpack strategy in third place in investigating the definition of correct English. In the postcourse, Marva shifted the setting strategy, or code switching strategy, to first place and the authentic strategy to second place (see Table 5.6).
Kenneth demonstrated a significant change in his understanding of challenging the linguistic status quo. In the precourse, he matched the first (unpack), second (language), and fifth (setting) strategies correctly. He realized how a discussion to understand the social definition of correct English, or SAE, and language variation with students were strategies which interrogate the linguistic status quo. He understood the setting strategy only emphasized code switching. In the postcourse, his rankings matched all five of the correct rankings. Kenneth was better able to detect the teaching strategies that reinforce the linguistic status quo to speak and write in SAE and rank them correctly.

*Qualitative findings of scenario 2.* Marva showed limited change in understanding CLA in the second teaching scenario item. The explanations of her rankings reflected the application of the ELA curriculum rather than exposing the assumption of the expectation of correct English. In the precourse, she ranked the authentic teaching strategy as the best because “students should understand why the book is written in the way it is instead of trying to correct the writing.” She did not explain ranking the setting, unpack, translate, and language strategies in second through fifth place, respectively.

In the postcourse, Marva ranked the setting strategy as the best strategy to implement after the course since it was important to “explain to the students why the author’s purpose of the book and how [it] is setting up a visual of what the character sounds like based on their time period.” She ranked the authentic, unpack, and language strategies second- through fourth-place because “you want the student to understand the text and if translating to [SAE] it can help with a little explanation.” After the course, Marva ranked the translate strategy as the least useful teaching strategy. Her rationale for ranking the translate strategy was because teachers should not create a learning environment where “students feel a certain dialect is not correct.”
Kenneth showed changes in his understanding of CLA. His open-ended explanations of his rankings highlighted his understanding of acknowledging the inaccurate assumptions associated with SAE and the validity of AAE. He selected the unpack teaching strategy as the best strategy for encouraging a “healthy dialogue to dispel any myths or preconceived notions.” He ranked the language, translate, and authentic teaching strategies as second through fourth, respectively, since the strategies emphasized vernacular language related to SAE when he noted the focus should be “placed on understanding the vernacular.” His rationale for ranking the setting strategy as the fifth strategy was because the strategy prioritized SAE only.

**Mixed method findings for RQ5.** The quantitative and qualitative datasets verified the differences in understanding CLA between Marva and Kenneth. The frequency count of the CLA positions mentioned in the discussion post responses supported Marva and Kenneth’s respective changes in their learning. Marva and Kenneth indicated differences in what they learned about CLA from the course. Marva’s learning was limited to the CLA motivation position, as evidenced by the six comments about the motivation position of CLA in her discussion responses. Despite the change in her knowledge about the motivation position of CLA, Marva had difficulty identifying the teaching strategies that best interrogate the linguistic status quo in the two scenario items. Marva’s rationale for ranking the teaching scenarios reflected a negligible change in her knowledge of how to interrogate the linguistic status quo after the course.

On the other hand, Kenneth’s exhibited a significant change in learning CLA, as evidenced by the 10 comments he made referencing four of the five CLA positions in his discussion responses: motivation, objective, schooling, and learning. The breadth of his understanding of CLA was confirmed in the various remarks referencing the aforementioned CLA positions and the themes of student empowerment and teacher practice in his discussion.
responses. Kenneth demonstrated progress in applying his learning as he correctly matched the two best teaching strategies in scenario 1 and all the teaching strategies in scenario 2 at the end of the course.

**Changes in the participants’ understanding of language variation (RQ6).** The sixth research question of the evaluation was: “How did the online PD change the special education teachers’ understanding of language variation?” Language variation is the patterned grammar, sound, and vocabulary differences which vary by region, personal history, SES, race, ethnicity, and other characteristics (Charity Hudley & Mallinson, 2014).

**Quantitative findings for RQ6.** The changes in the participants’ understanding of language variation were measured by conducting a frequency count of the number of responses aligned with the contextual and community factors of language variation used as a priori codes from the discussion post responses (see Table 5.7). Adger, Wolfram, and Christian (2014), Charity Hudley and Mallinson (2011), Godley et al. (2015), and Lippi-Green (2012) define the contextual and community factors of language variation as the following:

1. **Context**
   a. Geography: Northeast, South, Midwest, Southern California, and natural barriers (e.g., mountains and rivers)
   b. History: early settlers, slavery, migration, and immigration
   c. Purpose: education, business, and social activities

2. **Community**
   a. Social group: peers, co-workers, supervisors, customers, family elders
   b. Race: identity as African American, a person of color, or White
   c. SES: income status
Table 5.7 displays the number of language variation codes Marva and Kenneth noted in their discussion post responses. Marva demonstrated a better understanding of the purpose of language variation, as evidenced by the 12 codes she mentioned by the end of the course. She mentioned two social group codes, one geography code, and one race code. Overall, Marva’s understanding of the purpose of language variation was better developed than Kenneth’s. There was a total of 17 language variation codes in her discussion post responses.

Conversely, Kenneth demonstrated a limited understanding of language variation. He mentioned five geography codes and three purpose codes. However, there was an improvement in his knowledge of the geographical differences in language varieties compared to Marva. There were a total of 10 language variation codes in his discussion post responses.

Table 5.7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency Count of Language Variation Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participant</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Module 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Module 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Module 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Module 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenneth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Module 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Module 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Module 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Module 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Qualitative findings for RQ6. A priori codes for language variation from Adger et al. (2014), Charity Hudley and Mallinson (2011), Godley et al. (2015), and Lippi-Green (2012) were applied to analyze the qualitative dataset. The a priori codes were the language variations by context (i.e., geography, history, and purpose) and community (i.e., social group, race, and SES) as listed in the quantitative findings section. Table 5.8 summarizes the participants’ understanding of language variation. The generated themes from their responses were code switching, appropriateness, and geography.

Table 5.8

Responses by Theme of Their Understanding of Language Variation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Code and subcode</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Code switching</td>
<td>Knowledge Skills</td>
<td>Comments referring to changing one’s writing or speech to align with the contextual and community factors of a situation</td>
<td>“I will want a student to understand that different situation[s] requires different forms of language.” (Marva)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“One of the strengths of this program would be for students to be able to know when to code-switch” (Marva)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“In class I often ask scholars to provide examples of their text messages and how they write in school. They always recognize the different patterns associated with each and often have no issues acknowledging such.” (Kenneth)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“African Americans have to think about what they are saying in different situations” (Marva)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“they were looking for people who were able to have a subject-verb agreement when they” (Marva)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Talks since the students are in an Elementary School” (Marva)

“I would commend the scholar on composing the letter . . . I would simply emphasize a few elements that are essential in relation to [SAE] such as helping verbs, subject-verb agreement, and the use of possession” (Kenneth)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appropriateness</th>
<th>Formal Adults Education White Americans Affluence</th>
<th>Comments referring to a language variety based status of a situation and group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Informal Youth Urban</td>
<td>“Just like you would use certain language when you're around in church or if you're around an adult who is not your friend.” (Marva)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Oftentimes, when I went to school teachers would correct my speech” (Marva)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Now when I am around wealthy Caucasians I often don't talk as much or I speak in a way where I know everything I am saying is grammatically correct.” (Marva)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I think comfortability and conformity are the biggest factors in relation to distinguishing between written and oral language patterns.” (Kenneth)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Much of the dialect spoken by urban youth in the . . . area . . .” (Kenneth)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geography</th>
<th>Region South Neighborhood Urban Suburban</th>
<th>Comments indicating different locations express different language variations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“My family is from North Carolina with a thick country accent . . . I also adapted that accent at a very young age.” (Marva)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|                 |                                               | “In a recent visit to my hometown (Portsmouth, VA), I went to my old “
Code switch: knowledge and skills. To code switch, one must know the audience, setting, location, and purpose before speaking in AAE or SAE. For example, Marva recalled interviewing for an elementary school teacher position in New Jersey. She spoke in a thick, southern accent and had limited knowledge of code switching to SAE for the interview. She was not considered for the position since she did not speak with the SAE subject-verb agreement to model the grammar to elementary school students (see Table 5.8). Kenneth also explained the importance of code switching in writing as students must know about “subject-verb agreement.”

The skills component is the ability to speak or write in the language variety specific to a situation or location. Marva elaborated on the writing skill in AAE and SAE in Module 3. Upon answering a question regarding learning goals to teach students about language variation, she explained that an appropriate learning goal would be to “translate the informal language into Standard English and vice-versa where they will take Standard English and convert it into another dialect.” Kenneth also reiterated the importance of code switching to SAE. He reported he would “emphasize” a few conventions of SAE in student writing, such as “helping verbs” and “subject-verb agreement.”
**Appropriateness.** The theme of appropriateness revealed the participants’ awareness of the need to determine the correct language variety to express themselves, according to a group’s status and situation. Specifically, Marva and Kenneth noted either the formal or informal status of a situation or group guided the selection of AAE or SAE. Marva’s responses emphasized the significance of factors such as institutional status, age group, racial status, and SES when speaking SAE. Marva explained how she would access students’ prior knowledge to realize when to express a specific language variety. She provided an example in Module 2 she would use with students regarding speaking an appropriate language variety based on a group’s social status, such as “grandparents versus how you would talk with your friends.” Kenneth referenced the dichotomy of “comfortability and conformity” as important factors to consider when deciding whether AAE or SAE is appropriate to speak or write for a group or situation.

**Geography.** The theme of geography reflected the participants’ understanding of the expression of different language varieties in regional and local communities. In Module 1, Marva described her experience acquiring her southern language variety when she was raised in North Carolina before moving to the New York/New Jersey metropolitan area. Kenneth discussed the differences in language varieties between urban and suburban neighborhoods. He reported how most African American youth residing in the East School District area speak AAE and implied suburban residents may associate AAE expression with undesirable characteristics.

**Mixed method findings for RQ6.** Marva’s discussion post responses emphasizing the themes of code switching and appropriateness were consistent with her 12 comments referencing the context or purpose of language variation (see Table 5.7). Marva explained the importance of “teach[ing] students professional (formal) vs. friend (informal) usages and setting[s] and have the student learn about the different types of language and when to use it.” She also mentioned
the need to correct or give students feedback on their writing assignments to revise from AAE to SAE, stating teachers “have to still address the errors.” Her emphasis on students understanding code switching and the differences between formal and informal situations was supported by her 12 purpose codes and her reiteration to express SAE in formal contexts and community members within the appropriateness theme.

The frequency of Kenneth’s comments referencing the geographical and purpose (i.e., context) factors supported his discussions about geographical and neighborhood differences and code switching with language varieties. For example, in Module 2, he elaborated on students editing the grammar patterns from AAE to conform to SAE. Kenneth stated “I would make sure to inform the scholar that I don't see the changes necessary for [SAE] as errors or mistakes, simply an adjustment to conform to [SAE].”

**Experience learning about CLA during the online PD (RQ7).** The seventh research question of the evaluation was: “What were the special education teachers’ experiences learning about CLA during the online PD?” The discussion post responses were analyzed to explore their experiences using in vivo coding. Marva felt more secure in learning the CLA motivation position or challenging the linguistic status quo with her students. In her final course reflection, she noted the most important assumption she unlearned was “teaching different dialects does not determine [intellect].” Kenneth felt prepared to implement the objective position of CLA, or to empower the students to voice their own experiences. In his final course reflection, he reported he felt equipped to support students’ expression of their identity “in different voices.”

**Experience learning about language variation during the online PD (RQ8).** The eighth research question of the evaluation was: “What were the special education teachers’ experiences learning about language variation during the online PD?” The discussion post
responses were analyzed to explore their experiences learning about language variation. The data was analyzed using in vivo coding. Marva felt equipped to apply instructional strategies to teach language variation, as she “learned to use concepts, skills, strategies, activities, and models to help with explaining language variations and [perspective].” Kenneth reported his preference for more opportunities to analyze language variations with students. In his final reflection in Module 4, he stated “being able to analyze language variation using their native dialect is also an idea I want to utilize more.”

**Transformative learning stages during the online PD (RQ9).** The ninth research question of the evaluation was: “Which stages of the transformative learning process did the special education teachers experience during the online PD?” The discussion post responses were analyzed to explore their movement through the transformative learning stages. Marva progressed through the first three stages of transformative learning during the course: (1) disorienting dilemma, (2) self-examination of affect, (3) and critical assessment of assumptions (see Table 4.3). However, Kenneth experienced the self-examination of affect stage. A description of each transformative learning stage is provided for the data analysis.

A disorienting dilemma occurs when there is a discrepancy between one’s current assumption and information which challenges or contradicts the current assumption (Beer, 2019; Cranton, 2002; MacKeracher, 2012). The self-examination of affect is when one experiences shame or guilt once they realize they initially accepted an assumption with no contestation (Beer, 2019; MacKeracher, 2012). The critical assessment of assumptions stage occurs when an adult learner questions the origins and the consequences of maintaining their currently-held assumptions (Beer, 2019; Cranton, 2002).
Transformative Learning Stages in Module 1: RQ9(a). The research question of the evaluation was: “What stage(s) of transformative learning did the special education teachers experience during module 1?” The discussion post responses were analyzed using in vivo coding. Kenneth experienced none of the transformative learning stages in Module 1. Marva experienced a disorienting dilemma and a critical assessment of her assumptions in the first module. She reflected on a personal experience living through the myth that people speaking an accent or language variety are uneducated. She recalled experiencing the myth in her early formal education. She was originally from North Carolina and spoke a thick, Southern accent and later moved to the New Jersey and New York metropolitan areas, where she attended elementary school.

Marva described how the teachers often corrected her speech and received speech-language therapy to improve her word articulation. Her previous educational experience made her “feel dumb in class.” Despite learning the validity of her language variety in Module 1, she continued to express feelings of insecurity and self-consciousness about speaking her language variety in specific settings, especially at work among her colleagues. Marva explained how she must either think about what to say or not speak for “fear that I may say a certain word incorrectly.” Even though Marva continued to feel self-conscious about her language use, she did not want her students to experience the same feelings. She took a step to critically evaluate her assumption by acknowledging her initial belief that speaking AAE was an indicator of low intelligence and lack of education. Marva explained she wants her students to “not feel [they] are ‘dumb’ or ‘not educated.’”

Transformative Learning Stages in Module 2: RQ9(b). The research question of the evaluation was: “What stage(s) of transformative learning did the special education teachers
experience during module 2?" The discussion post responses were analyzed using in vivo coding. Kenneth did not experience any of the transformative learning stages in Module 2. Marva experienced the self-examination of affect and critical assessment of assumptions stages. Marva expressed feeling guilty about her students possibly feeling subordinate about expressing their language variety in school when she stated “I don’t want to see [them] feeling like they are disrespected or in a lower class.” She began critically evaluating the assumption that speaking AAE was wrong when she discussed how she wanted “the students to understand that their language is not wrong.”

**Transformative Learning Stages in Module 3: RQ9(c).** The research question of the evaluation was: “What stage(s) of transformative learning did the special education teachers experience during module 3?” The discussion post responses were analyzed using in vivo coding. Marva experienced none of the transformative learning stages in Module 3. Kenneth experienced the self-assessment of affect stage upon learning how others react when a person does not speak the appropriate language variety according to the community and contextual factors (Adger et al., 2014; Charity Hudley & Mallinson, 2011; Lippi-Green, 2012). He expressed his desire not to change his speech regardless of the group or context. He reported how “It never affects how I converse . . . I always speak similar, even when code-switching.” Kenneth repressed his feelings of frustration as opposed to Marva expressing shame. He stated when he was younger, he would have been bothered by his friends teasing him about talking “White.” However, at this point in his life, “I'm used to it since I went far away to a PWI for college, so it doesn't bother me now. It did for a while during college, but I understood.”

**Transformative learning stages during module 4: RQ9(d).** The research question of the evaluation was: “What stage(s) of transformative learning did the special education teachers
experience during module 4?” The discussion post responses were analyzed using in vivo coding. Neither Marva nor Kenneth experienced any of the transformative learning stages in Module 4.

What was learned in the outcome evaluation to help modify the course later?

Co-authors Godley and Reaser (2018) suggest future researchers should continually update the content, such as the videos and articles, to reflect current issues at the time of implementation. The student researcher suggests maintaining the original North Carolina dialects YouTube video, especially if the course will be replicated within the eastern and southern regions of the United States as participants may have personal or professional connections in North Carolina. The student researcher became aware of the video’s relevance during the data analysis when Marva and Kenneth disclosed living in North Carolina previously. Maintaining the North Carolina dialects video in Module 1 could have prompted deeper discussions and critical reflections among the participants about their experiences regarding the myths and realities of language varieties.

The factor of work fatigue transitioning from virtual learning to in-person learning may have negatively influenced the participants’ motivation to participate in the course evaluation. The competing demands of PARCC testing scheduled in the spring semester and other work obligations may have limited the participants’ motivation to engage in dialogue and critical reflections after work hours. A possible solution moving forward would be to implement the course in the fall semester as most teachers would have been refreshed from the summer break and could increase participant responsiveness in future implementations.
Discussion of Findings

Accessibility of the online content to participants (RQ1)

The original content from the Godley and Reaser (2018) study was copied and uploaded into the Canvas LMS course module. The sequence of the course content was implemented as outlined in Godley et al. (2015) and Godley and Reaser (2018). The accessibility problem involving the locked access to the Module 2 discussion post questions and the student researcher mistakenly labeled the Module 4 opening scenario reading as a quiz caused a slight delay in the participants’ progress in the course. The participants experiencing problems accessing the course content could have threatened the internal validity of the findings, as the findings could be attributed to technical issues than the expectation of the content having an effect on the participants (Leviton & Lipsey, 2007).

Participants’ thoughts on the most useful and notable PD content (RQ2)

Marva and Kenneth agreed the readings and media (i.e., video and blog teaching scenarios) were very useful to watch during the course which was consistent with the participants’ ratings in the Godley and Reaser (2018) findings. Kenneth’s higher rating of the language variation content also supported the findings from Godley and Reaser (2018). Marva’s lower rating of the online discussions aligned with the lower ratings found in Godley and Reaser (2018). Her lower rating of the online discussions may be attributed to the time required to communicate one’s thoughts and comment on others’ responses (Godley & Reaser, 2018).

The utility of the videos, readings, and language variation information would make the information easy to implement in their classrooms. The participants accessing the media and language variation content in their pedagogy is a benefit since teachers prefer to learn information and strategies readily applicable to their professional practice (Desimone & Garet,
More participants completing the course evaluation would have provided more data to determine which other course content was least and most useful for pedagogy.

Submission of one complete paragraph in an initial and follow-up response (RQ3)

The participants interacted with the course content to submit cogent full paragraphs. However, neither Marva nor Kenneth submitted follow-up responses to initiate and maintain an ongoing dialogue during the course. A reason for the lack of follow-up responses was because they waited until the last two days of the course to answer the discussion post questions which left little to no time to engage in dialogue. Dialogue is a critical process to promote transformative learning. In transformative learning, dialogue supports a space for adult learners to disclose experiences and values to initiate critical questions about their uncontested assumptions (Cranton, 2016), in this case, regarding AAE and SAE.

Improvement in attitudes toward AAE (RQ4)

The participants’ positive attitudes toward AAE supported the short-term outcome of improving the high school SETs attitudes toward AAE in the logic model (see Appendix J). The participants’ positive attitudes were also consistent with the findings of Fogel and Ehri (2006), Sweetland (2010), and Wiese et al. (2017). Sweetland (2010) found a statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest LAS total attitude scores. Wiese et al. (2017) found a significant difference in the positive attitude changes in their pre- and posttest measure.

According to Fogel and Ehri (2006), the mere process of exposing teachers to information about AAE and other language varieties is sufficient to change their attitudes. The small increase in their attitudes toward AAE supports current research as Reaser (2016) found incremental changes in the teachers’ attitudes about sociolinguistic knowledge. Also, their positive attitudes toward AAE are evidence of changes in their point of view (Mezirow, 2000;

The high school SETs positive attitudes toward AAE after the course could lead them to have positive perceptions toward African American males with learning disabilities and support improvements in their academic outcomes (Banks & Gibson, 2019). Specifically, the high school SETs positive attitudes toward AAE could direct changes in their point of view, or instructional behaviors. The changes in their instructional behaviors include teacher-student interactions facilitating reading development (Banks & Gibson, 2019).

Changes in the participants’ understanding of CLA (RQ5)

Marva and Kenneth demonstrated different changes in their understanding of CLA. Both participants developed a better understanding of the motivation position of CLA, or critique the linguistic status quo that SAE is more complex than AAE. Banks and Gibson (2019) posit that with the appropriate training, SETs can disrupt the negative assumptions connected to AAE and other language varieties. However, Marva demonstrated limited changes in her understanding of CLA. Her knowledge of CLA from the course was limited to the motivation position of CLA or the position to challenge the linguistic status quo. Research asserts Marva’s limited understanding of CLA was attributed to the lack of dialogue during the course (Clark et al., 1991, Weaver, 2019). Clark et al. (1991) assert CLA is impossible without dialogue. Weaver (2019) agrees the development of CLA requires ongoing challenges and support to shift from theory to praxis in education. Engaging in an ongoing dialogue with the other participants could have prompted Marva to critically reflect on her narrow understanding and possibly expand her learning during the course.

Conversely, Kenneth presented a broader understanding of CLA. He indicated an
understanding of the following positions of CLA: objective, motivation, schooling, and learning. The increase in his understanding of CLA was consistent with the findings from Godley et al. (2015) and Godley and Reaser’s (2018) original study. Student action is only possible when teachers are knowledgeable and teach about the validity of AAE and other language varieties. His responses of teaching students about linguistic discrimination and teachers learning about AAE to integrate into the curriculum aligned with Clark et al. (1990), as they advocate to help students to disregard SAE to disrupt the linguistic status quo. His responses referencing teaching students about linguistic discrimination were also evident in the Godley et al. (2015) findings. Godley et al. (2015) found their participants learned the importance of raising students’ awareness of language discrimination. Kenneth’s learning could have extended further with the support of ongoing dialogue (Clark et al., 1991; Cranton, 2016; Mezirow, 2000; Weaver, 2019) to initiate critical reflections on his accepted language assumptions.

Despite their different levels of understanding CLA, Marva and Kenneth continued reiterating the linguistic status quo to teach SAE. Their adherence to the linguistic status quo was evidence of minimal transformation in their sociolinguistic habit of mind (Cranton, 2016; Mezirow, 2000). Neither Marva nor Kenneth’s responses noted how CLA could directly apply to their role as SETs or providing specialized instruction with African American high school males with learning disabilities. A significant amount of SETs work involves measuring students’ reading skills to determine if African American high school males with learning disabilities are progressing toward their reading goals.

However, Clark et al. (1991) caution that viewing language as data can reduce one’s ability to be aware of the social production of the language. The findings revealed Marva and Kenneth could continue to view African American male high school students with learning
disabilities’ reading skills as data to measure per the Common Core (i.e., linguistic status quo) as opposed to their reading skills a manifestation of a language difference.

**Changes in the participants’ understanding of language variation (RQ6)**

By the end of the course, there were no significant changes in their understanding of language variation. Marva demonstrated a limited change in her understanding of language variation. She continued to advocate for the linguistic status quo due to the lack of dialogue to challenge her current sociolinguistic habit of mind (Cranton, 2013; Mezirow, 2000). Despite what she learned in the course, she reported the need to teach students SAE to code switch in their writing. The emphasis on the purpose factor of language variation (i.e., code switching) in her responses is common knowledge in education and reflected her reinforcement of the Common Core. Kenneth’s responses also emphasized the purpose factor of language variation (i.e., code switching). On the contrary, Kenneth showed a better understanding of the geographical factors contributing to language variation than Marva.

Marva and Kenneth’s understanding of code switching was comparable to the evidence of the strong understanding of code switching in the Godley and Reaser (2018) and Godley et al. (2015) study. The African American teacher participants in their study also discuss the need to teach code switching (Godley & Reaser, 2018). Their emphasis on code switching also confirmed the inflexibility of their sociolinguistic habit of mind (Cranton, 2013, 2016; Kitchenham, 2008; Mezirow, 2000) about AAE and SAE in school. Marva and Kenneth maintained the expectation to teach SAE for formal assignments even though they learned in Module 1 about the myths and realities of language varieties, language variation, and code meshing in Module 3.

For example, in Module 1, they read an online PBS article explaining the myths and facts
of language varieties from Wolfram and Schilling-Estes (1998) and Wolfram and Schilling (2016). One noted language variety reality they read was “Dialects, like all language systems, are systematic and regular; furthermore, socially disfavored dialects can be described with the same kind of precision as standard language varieties” (Wolfram & Schilling, 2016, p. 8). Also, the emphasis on the appropriateness of standardized languages in a specific context devalues language varieties such as AAE. The idea of equal but different languages continues to implicitly validate SAE (Clark et al., 1990). Clark et al. (1990) explain the social demotion of AAE and other language varieties is “inequality dressed up as variety” (p. 255).

A reading in Module 3 introduced the concept of code meshing. Code meshing is the process of expressing AAE, SAE, or another language variety simultaneously in discourse (Godley & Reaser, 2018). Marva and Kenneth omitted integrating code meshing in their teaching, as Gatlin and Wanzek (2017) suggest AAE is spoken more frequently among African American students with learning disabilities. The limited change in their understanding of language variation indicates the high school SETs could continue to require African American male high students with learning disabilities to translate written work to SAE. According to Clark et al. (1990), the students would interpret their SETs directive as “correcting” (p. 259) their language variety.

Experience learning about CLA during the online PD (RQ7)

Marva underwent different experiences while learning CLA in the course, ranging from security to insecurity. She felt secure in her understanding of the motivation position of CLA to challenge the linguistic status quo with her students. However, she experienced feelings of insecurity in her conflict between implementing the motivation position of CLA to improve her students’ academic experience and not improving her current personal experience. She felt
insecure about speaking to other adults, primarily White people, for fear of mispronouncing certain words. The lack of personal empowerment she experienced from the course was attributed to the lack of dialogue between her and Kenneth during the course. Clark et al. (1991) posit the absence of dialogue in CLA activities leads to feelings of despondency.

On the other hand, Kenneth felt equipped to implement the social emancipation position of CLA or elevate the students’ language variety in school. Marva and Kenneth’s comfort with implementing specific CLA positions in school was evidence of possible changes in their point of view (Mezirow, 2000; Taylor, 2017) or their instructional behaviors. The integration of challenging the linguistic status quo and elevating students’ language varieties in their instructional practices can lead to gradual changes in their sociolinguistic habit of mind (Cranton, 2013, 2016; Mezirow, 2000).

**Experience learning about language variation during the online PD (RQ8)**

Marva and Kenneth expressed motivation to apply the language variation content in their pedagogy. Their enthusiasm to use the language variation strategies was evidence of the effectiveness of the course in improving their instructional practices. The course effectively connected the course strategies to literacy (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017) and aligned with the Common Core implemented in the East School District.

**Transformative learning stages during the online PD (RQ9)**

There was evidence of Marva and Kenneth experiencing some of the transformative learning stages during the course. Marva moved through the first three stages of transformative learning: disorienting dilemma, self-examination of affect, and critical assessment of assumptions. Kenneth experienced the self-examination of affect. Marva’s progression through the first three stages was consistent with the findings in the Beer (2019) study. The lack of
evidence of the transformative learning stages in Modules 3 and 4 may be due to the participants choosing from multiple discussion questions to answer in each learning module. The option of selecting the questions to answer in each learning module may have contributed to Marva’s responses indicating more evidence of the transformative learning stages than in Kenneth’s responses.

For example, in Module 1, Marva and Kenneth selected different questions to answer. Marva selected the question, *When have you personally experienced or heard someone espouse this myth?* Kenneth selected a different question to answer: *In what ways would knowing the reality of the "myth" would make a teacher more effective at teaching literacy than a teacher who believed the "myth?" In other words, what pedagogical choices might differ between teachers who know the reality versus those who believe the myth?* Marva’s selection of a personal experience question prompted a reflective response, whereas the question Kenneth selected focused more on teaching than personal experience.

**Transformative learning stages during module 1 (RQ9a)**

Marva experienced a disorienting dilemma (Stage 1) and a critical assessment of assumptions (Stage 3) in Module 1. Marva acknowledged believing the assumption about people speaking an accent or language variety was an indicator of an uneducated individual. However, she did not take the next step to analyze the initially accepted assumption. A significant reason for the absence of critical reflection in her responses was the insufficient dialogue between her and the other participants to challenge her sociolinguistic habit of mind (Cranton, 2013; Mezirow, 2000) about the misleading assumption that SAE is more prestigious than AAE.

Participating in dialogue could have changed her feelings of insecurity about her Southern language variety. An unforeseen outcome from the course evaluation was Marva
learning the validity and significance of her language variety. She reflected on her personal experiences with her linguistic identity and discrimination, which was consistent with the African American preservice teachers’ responses in the Godley and Reaser (2018) study.

**Transformative learning stages during module 2 (RQ9b)**

Marva underwent the self-examination of her affect (Stage 2) and the critical assessment of assumptions (Stage 3). Marva identified and critiqued her current assumption that AAE and other language varieties are inappropriate. She wanted her students to “understand their language is not wrong.” However, she did not analyze the assumption due to the insufficient dialogue between her and the other participants to support further analysis of her initial acceptance of AAE and other language varieties being wrong.

**Transformative learning stages during module 3 (RQ9c)**

Kenneth’s learning experience was comparable to the self-assessment of affect stage. His response to the learned information was repressing his feelings instead of identifying feelings of frustration. His decision to repress his feelings countered the typical expectation of guilt or shame in the second stage (Beer, 2019; Mezirow, 2000). Another contributing factor was his experience with linguistic privilege as an international traveler. He did not need to change how he spoke to his friends as he could speak other languages. Fluent in conversational German, Kenneth knew he can “go into any region in the world and be able to converse and relate linguistically. I always find commonalities in language and how people communicate.”

Dialogue and critical reflections could have extended his transformative learning in this module. More dialogue is needed to support critical reflections and challenges to his assumptions. According to Lee and Brett (2015), perspective transformation most likely occurs across time in discussion threads when adults actively interact with different perspectives and
transformative learning stages during module 4 (RQ9d)

Neither Marva nor Kenneth indicated experiencing the transformative learning stages during Module 4 due to insufficient dialogue between the participants to support critical reflections and challenge their assumptions. Critical reflections mainly occur over time in online discussion threads when adults actively interact with different perspectives and experiences from other adults (Lee & Brett, 2015).

Limitations to the Study

Several factors threatened the internal, construct, and external validity of the findings. History, attrition, testing, and technical issues were threats to the internal validity. Reactivity to the experimental situation was a threat to the construct validity. The low sample size threatened the external validity of the findings. The threat of history (Shadish et al., 2002) of returning to in-person teaching from teaching virtually the previous academic school year may have negatively influenced participant responsiveness (Dusenbury et al., 2003). One prospective participant expressed fatigue influenced her decision not to participate in the course. The prospective participant withdrew before the course began because she was “. . . burnt out and overbooked . . . during these tumultuous times” (Prospective participant 1, personal communication, February 26, 2022). Prospective participant 1 withdrawing from the course also contributed to the threat of attrition (Shadish et al., 2002).

Attrition was an inevitable limitation of the course evaluation and was an external factor influencing the course evaluation (see Appendix J). Three of the seven participants who initially registered for the course withdrew from the course evaluation. In addition to the first prospective participant who withdrew from the course due to fatigue, the other two prospective participants
explained how competing demands limited their availability to participate in the course evaluation. The second prospective participant noted he withdrew from the course “because it was conflicting with the current class that I am in” (Prospective participant 2, personal communication, March 31, 2022). The third prospective participant reported “my schedule does not permit me to participate at this time” (Prospective participant 3, personal communication, March 31, 2022). The 15 free continuing education units were the incentive to recruit and motivate the participants to complete the course evaluation (see Appendices J and K), as most of the PD courses offered by the teacher’s union required a $150.00 registration fee.

The threat of testing (Shadish et al., 2002) with administering the pre- and postcourse surveys could have influenced the findings. Exposure to the same questions can interfere with the effects of an intervention (Shadish et al., 2002). The qualitative data analysis of the participants' understanding of CLA and language variation reduced the threat to the internal validity of the course evaluation. However, the quantitative data analysis revealed the threat of testing was minimal due to the small increase in the participants’ total attitude scores on the LAS (see Figure 5.1) and the discrepant rankings of the two teacher scenario items (see Tables 5.5 and 5.6).

The few technical issues the participants experienced accessing the course content may have impacted the internal validity of the findings. The locked access to the Module 2 discussion questions and the designation of the Module 4 opening scenario as a quiz in error may have delayed their opportunity to complete some course sections within the weekly due dates. Project implementation is an important evaluation component as the successful implementation of a program increases the findings' internal validity (Baranowski & Stables, 2000; Zhang et al., 2011). Participants’ access to the course content and learning modules was accounted for as a
construct in the research matrix (see Appendix H). The student researcher monitored communication from the participants daily to troubleshoot technical issues promptly.

The threat of reactivity to the experimental situation (Shadish et al., 2002) could reduce the construct validity of the findings, for the participants may have attempted to provide responses they believed the student researcher expected to review. The student researcher’s involvement in critical reflections (Godley & Reaser, 2018) mitigated the threat by ensuring the discussion post responses reflected their analysis of the course content.

The sampling procedures and sample size limited the external validity of the course evaluation findings. The utilization of convenience and purposive sampling procedures may have reduced the external validity of the findings. The small sample size \( (N = 2) \) of African American SETs in the evaluation indicated a low external validity of the quantitative findings to the general population of mostly White teachers in the United States (Boser, 2014). The small sample size was also an external factor in the logic model (see Appendix J). The small sample size limited the quantitative data analyses of the participant evaluation questionnaire for the process evaluation and the LAS and the teaching scenario items for the outcome evaluation. Despite the limitation, the small sample size was sufficient for the qualitative data analyses as an objective of qualitative research is to study the experiences of smaller groups of people (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017).

**Trustworthiness and Researcher Positionality**

The student researcher’s positionality statement was complex because the credibility of the findings included the critical and constructivist paradigms. The course evaluation aligned with the critical paradigm to acknowledge the student researcher’s assumptions and biases (Creswell & Miller, 2000) which could have influenced the qualitative data analyses. The course
evaluation also aligned with the constructivist paradigm since the participants were high school SETs whose professional experiences differed from general education teachers who were mainly recruited in previous replications of the Godley and Reaser (2018) and Godley et al. (2015) study. The student researcher increased the credibility of the findings within the critical paradigm with a reflexivity statement. Disconfirming evidence was applied to increase the credibility of the findings within the constructivist paradigm.

For her reflexivity statement, the student researcher identified as an African American female raised in the southern region of the United States. Being raised in a household where AAE and SAE were consistently spoken, the student researcher could code switch between AAE and SAE based on the context. Also, the student researcher has worked in special education for 15 years with students with learning disabilities speaking AAE or SAE. The student researcher’s assumptions about language varieties were susceptible to the sociolinguistic habit of mind since her formal education and professional experiences were comparable to the participants.

She also learned the linguistic status quo in education: SAE is appropriate for formal settings and AAE is appropriate for informal and home settings. Consequently, her personal and professional experiences may have influenced the qualitative and mixed method data analyses. The student researcher also increased the credibility of the qualitative findings by using the disconfirming evidence technique.

Disconfirming evidence was applied to identify response patterns varying from the typical responses. The technique was necessary since the participants’ identities as African American SETs would provide discussion responses which could differ from previous replications with primarily White general education teachers. Godley and Reaser (2018) disclosed none of the participants in prior replications of the course were predominantly African American.
American or people of color. In addition, SETs were not considered for recruitment in previous investigations for differences in reactions to the intervention (J. Reaser, personal communication, January 27, 2020).

Researcher positionality was included to increase the trustworthiness of the qualitative and mixed method findings. The student researcher was a school psychologist in East School District and held an equal school-level position with the participants. The student researcher was not responsible for the participants' pay, evaluations, or job retention. The student researcher assured the participants that neither the school district leaders nor school administrators would have access to their course data.

The teacher’s union, not the student researcher, was the only entity authorized to provide the continuing education credits to the participants who completed the course evaluation. The participants read the informed consent form (see Appendix N) and the course catalog summary (see Appendix K), noting their participation in the course evaluation was 100% voluntary. The principal investigator was the only person to access the electronically signed consent forms before and during the course. The principal investigator was an advisor on the student researcher’s dissertation committee. The rationale for the advisor’s involvement in the course evaluation was to avoid undue influence from the student researcher during weeks 2 through 5 of the course (see Table 4.2) to maintain the anonymity of the participants who noted their decisions on the consent form. The student researcher’s knowledge of the participants’ identities who gave consent could influence her responses toward those participants during the facilitation of the course. The principal investigator released the consent forms to the student researcher when the course ended in week 6.
Implications of the Findings

Specialized Instruction

The course evaluation provided valuable information regarding high school SETs and their provision of services to African American male high school students with learning disabilities. The course can improve their attitudes toward African American students with learning disabilities as they speak more AAE features than typically developing students (Gatlin & Wanzek, 2017). The findings are also promising to improve high school SETs academic expectations toward African American students with learning disabilities as they would least likely assume AAE expression is an indicator of low intelligence (Banks & Gibson, 2019; Fogel & Ehri, 2006; Godley et al., 2015). The high school SETs positive perception toward AAE could also lead to less punitive teacher-student interactions.

High school SETs have a significant role in promoting equitable educational outcomes for African American male high school students with learning disabilities (Banks & Gibson, 2019). They could benefit from instructional strategies to bridge the gap between AAE and SAE to improve reading acquisition (Banks & Gibson, 2019) for African American male high school students with learning disabilities. More information is needed to understand how CLA and language variation influences specialized instruction.

Different Levels of Professional Learning

The course evaluation disclosed the different levels of learning between the participants. The various levels of learning implied the teachers would have different changes in their point of view or instructional behaviors. Some teachers could demonstrate more immediate changes in their attitudes, behaviors, and judgments toward students than others. The different levels of learning in the teacher scenario items were confirmed in the Oliver et al. (2011) study as they
found different levels of teacher knowledge in their findings. Consequently, the unyielding nature of the sociolinguistic habit of mind and the diverse levels of professional learning revealed the need to differentiate professional learning opportunities (Covay Minor, Desimone, Caines Lee, & Hochberg, 2016). Differentiating PD for teachers is tailoring to the needs and learning levels of groups of teachers (Covay Minor et al., 2016). Given that the participants reported different language experiences and knowledge of a language, Covay Minor et al. (2016) suggest PD coordinators focus on the interaction between the teachers’ prior experiences and PD content.

More Time for Professional Development. The evidence of positive changes in their point of view, or attitudes toward AAE, is promising as such changes could eventually lead to changes in their sociolinguistic habit of mind over time (Mezirow, 2000; Taylor, 2017). Consequently, changing their point of view and understanding of CLA and language variation should be an ongoing process (Oliver et al., 2011; Reaser, 2016). The high school SETs would benefit from more opportunities to engage in dialogue with other SETs to critically reflect on the cultural, political, and social factors in the standardization of the English language and their uncontested acceptance of the linguistic status quo.

African American Teachers and Literacy

One of the significant findings of the course evaluation was the minor changes in the participants’ sociolinguistic habit of mind. The participants emphasized the linguistic status quo that students must continue to learn SAE. The recurrence of the linguistic status quo throughout their responses supported current literature on the obstinate nature of the sociolinguistic habit of mind and is least likely to change (Cranton, 2016; McGroarty, 2010). The course evaluation also revealed African American teachers are susceptible to the stronghold of the standard language
ideology, which informs their sociolinguistic habit of mind.

Hiring African American teachers to improve the educational outcomes of African American male high school students with learning disabilities in urban school districts may be counterproductive. African American teachers likely have the same sociolinguistic habit of mind as their White colleagues and can negatively impact the educational outcomes of African American male high school students with learning disabilities. African American students’ reading achievement is influenced by teachers’ negative attitudes toward AAE (Lewis, 2008).

The adverse influence of more African American teachers in an urban school district on literacy is evident in the East School District. Although almost half of the teachers in the East School District identify as African American (Boser, 2014; ESD, 2020), the reading-achievement gap increased between African American and White students from 60% in 2018 to 61% in 2019 (ESD, 2019f, slide 14). The school district explained the gap increase was due to a “stronger pace of growth among White students” (ESD, 2019f, slide 14).

**Policy Implications**

The impact of the findings is relevant to the civil rights of African Americans and other Americans speaking language varieties different from SAE. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 “prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance” (Civil Rights Act, 1964). Given that SAE is the only language variety deemed acceptable in the formal and academic settings, the exclusion of AAE and other language varieties is discriminatory because Bacon (2017) asserts “language diversity is used as a proxy for talking about race without talking about race” (p. 354). Thus, the implicit reinforcement of discriminatory attitudes toward AAE in the Common Core appears to counter the Title VI prohibition of discrimination in schools based on race. State and federal
lawmakers should seriously consider amending Title VI to include prohibiting discrimination based on different languages and language varieties, such as AAE, to reduce instances of discriminatory practices in education and other institutions receiving federal financial assistance.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

There is an imperative need to develop and sustain PD opportunities regarding language varieties and linguistic bias (Baily & Katradis, 2016; Oliver et al., 2011; Reaser, 2016) to afford high school SETs more time to change their instructional behaviors, which could modify their current assumptions about AAE and SAE. In addition to more time, teachers’ access to program materials can support lasting changes in the teachers’ attitudes toward nonstandard language varieties (Wiese et al., 2017). Future researchers should consider developing either a fifth learning module or embedding within the four learning modules strategies and resources teachers could easily apply in the classroom, as Godley and Reaser (2018) did not include classroom-based resources as content.

Future researchers could also extend the course to in-service elementary SETs, reading or literacy instructional coaches, and general education teachers in a school district. Knowledge about language varieties such as AAE, language variation, and CLA would be most beneficial at the preservice level of teacher education. The need for SETs to learn about AAE and other language varieties should be integrated into teacher education programs. Sixty-seven percent of the participants in the Gupta (2010) study disagreed teacher education programs equipped them to address the linguistic needs of AAE-speaking students. Newkirk-Turner et al. (2013) advocate for teacher education programs to train preservice SETs on language variation and learn the appropriate instructional strategies to teach linguistically diverse students effectively.
Conclusions

High school SETs have limited knowledge of critical language awareness, or the relationship among Standard American English, African American English, and social power in the Common Core Language Standard (Denham, 2015). The course evaluation was the replicated and adapted PD course designed by Godley and Reaser (2018) and Godley et al. (2015). This course replication contributed to the body of knowledge with the recruitment of high school SETs in an urban school district. The findings from the course evaluation revealed the participants improved their attitudes toward AAE yet demonstrated different learning outcomes of CLA and language variation. In addition, the course was ineffective in suddenly changing the participants’ sociolinguistic habit of mind.

The participants struggled with disputing their sociolinguistic habit of mind throughout the course. The inflexibility of their sociolinguistic habit of mind (Mezirow, 2000; Taylor, 2017) may have been a major factor contributing to the teachers’ different levels of learning at different times during the course. The present study was informed by the theoretical framework of the transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1978) and the conceptual frameworks of critical discourse analysis (Janks, 2010; van Dijk, 2015) and critical language awareness (Clark et al., 1990).

The intersection of the transformative learning theory and CDA supported the teachers’ understanding of the standard language ideology, which drives their unwavering acceptance of SAE as the norm. The intersection of these frameworks also revealed the course content was unsuccessful in changing the teachers’ understanding of the social and political motives of designating SAE with social clout (Clark et al., 1990) than AAE and other language varieties as they reiterated code switching as an effective strategy to support student writing. The intersection
of the transformative learning theory and CLA supported their learning to improve their attitudes toward AAE and change their point of view to acknowledge and challenge the incorrect linguistic assumptions about AAE and SAE with their students.

The course produced encouraging findings for improving high school SETs attitudes toward AAE and equipping them to interrogate the negative linguistic assumptions that afflict the educational institution. The course evaluation findings indicated there is the potential to begin the gradual process of changing educators’ point of view or attitudes toward AAE, SAE, and other American language varieties. Such progress can improve classroom social climates and the reading outcomes for African American male high school students with learning disabilities.
References


175


Guthrie, R. V. (2004). *Even the rat was white* (2nd ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.


doi:10.1017/S0047404500009192


doi:10.1097/TLD.0000000000000142


doi:10.1002/ev.224


of a school’s pupil composition. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 64*(1), 93–104.
doi:10.1016/j.tate.2017.01.023


doi:10.1016/j.linged.2015.01.009

Appendix A

African American English Teacher Attitude Survey

Greetings, and thank you for participating in this survey. This survey is about African American English (AAE), Black English, or Ebonics and its influence on reading skill development. You will be asked questions on your beliefs about AAE in education and its use among African American male adolescent students with disabilities in your high school. This information may help in identifying how often AAE is expressed among African American male students with disabilities during specialized reading instruction. This survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete, and you are free to skip any questions you prefer not to answer or end your participation at any time. If you do not choose to complete the survey, there will be no negative consequences on your employment or job evaluation.

Please read each statement/question carefully and answer as accurately as you can. Again, the survey will measure your beliefs about AAE and the use of AAE among students with disabilities in reading-based content classes in your high school.

Your responses will be confidential, and data will be aggregated such that no individual response or respondent can be identified. All your answers will be kept confidential.

African American English Teacher Attitude Scale

Directions: Please indicate your opinion by circling your response.

1. African Americans need to know both standard and Black English in the school in order to survive in America.
   Agree Strongly  Agree Mildly  Neutral  Disagree Mildly  Disagree Strongly  I Don’t Know

2. African American English is a unique speech form influenced in its structure by West African languages.
   Agree Strongly  Agree Mildly  Neutral  Disagree Mildly  Disagree Strongly  I Don’t Know

3. African American English is a systematic, rule-governed language variety.
   Agree Strongly  Agree Mildly  Neutral  Disagree Mildly  Disagree Strongly  I Don’t Know

4. African American English should be eliminated.
   Agree Strongly  Agree Mildly  Neutral  Disagree Mildly  Disagree Strongly  I Don’t Know
5. African American English should be preserved to maintain oral understanding and communication among Black people of all ages and from all regions.

Agree Strongly  Agree Mildly  Neutral  Disagree Mildly  Disagree Strongly  I Don’t Know

6. It is racist to demand that African American children take reading tests because their culture is so varied that reading is an insignificant skill.

Agree Strongly  Agree Mildly  Neutral  Disagree Mildly  Disagree Strongly  I Don’t Know

7. African American English should be promoted in the school as part of African American children’s culture.

Agree Strongly  Agree Mildly  Neutral  Disagree Mildly  Disagree Strongly  I Don’t Know

8. Standard English is needed to replace African American English to help with worldwide communication.

Agree Strongly  Agree Mildly  Neutral  Disagree Mildly  Disagree Strongly  I Don’t Know

9. It is not necessary for Black children to learn anything other than their own dialect of African American English in school.

Agree Strongly  Agree Mildly  Neutral  Disagree Mildly  Disagree Strongly  I Don’t Know

10. There is no such thing as African American English.

Agree Strongly  Agree Mildly  Neutral  Disagree Mildly  Disagree Strongly  I Don’t Know

11. The use of African American English is a reflection of unclear thinking on the part of the speaker.

Agree Strongly  Agree Mildly  Neutral  Disagree Mildly  Disagree Strongly  I Don’t Know

12. African American children’s language is so broken as to be virtually no language at all.

Agree Strongly  Agree Mildly  Neutral  Disagree Mildly  Disagree Strongly  I Don’t Know
13. African Americans should talk the way everybody else does in this country.
Agree Strongly   Agree Mildly   Neutral   Disagree Mildly   Disagree Strongly   I Don’t Know

Agree Strongly   Agree Mildly   Neutral   Disagree Mildly   Disagree Strongly   I Don’t Know

15. The African American community concept of discipline involves not letting children “do their own thing” and “hang loose.”
Agree Strongly   Agree Mildly   Neutral   Disagree Mildly   Disagree Strongly   I Don’t Know

16. African American kids have trouble learning because their parents won’t help them at home.
Agree Strongly   Agree Mildly   Neutral   Disagree Mildly   Disagree Strongly   I Don’t Know

17. When a child’s native African American English is replaced by Standard English, she or he is introduced to concepts which will increase his learning capacity.
Agree Strongly   Agree Mildly   Neutral   Disagree Mildly   Disagree Strongly   I Don’t Know

18. The home life of African American children offers such limited cultural experiences that the school must fill in gaps.
Agree Strongly   Agree Mildly   Neutral   Disagree Mildly   Disagree Strongly   I Don’t Know

19. African and African American hair and dress styles are very attractive. Agree Strongly
Agree Strongly   Agree Mildly   Neutral   Disagree Mildly   Disagree Strongly   I Don’t Know

20. African American kids would advance further in school without African American English.
Agree Strongly   Agree Mildly   Neutral   Disagree Mildly   Disagree Strongly   I Don’t Know

21. African American English has a logic of its own, equal to that of any other language.
Agree Strongly   Agree Mildly   Neutral   Disagree Mildly   Disagree Strongly   I Don’t Know
22. African American children can’t learn to read unless African American Vernacular English is used as the medium of instruction in the schools.

Agree Strongly  Agree Mildly  Neutral  Disagree Mildly  Disagree Strongly  I Don’t Know

23. African American people have their own distinctive pattern of speech which other people in this country should accept.

Agree Strongly  Agree Mildly  Neutral  Disagree Mildly  Disagree Strongly  I Don’t Know

24. African American English was produced by its history in Africa and this country and not by any physical characteristics.

Agree Strongly  Agree Mildly  Neutral  Disagree Mildly  Disagree Strongly  I Don’t Know

25. African American English can be expanded to fit any concept or idea imaginable.

Agree Strongly  Agree Mildly  Neutral  Disagree Mildly  Disagree Strongly  I Don’t Know

26. Most African American people’s major potential is in music, art, and dance.

Agree Strongly  Agree Mildly  Neutral  Disagree Mildly  Disagree Strongly  I Don’t Know

27. African Americans should try to look like everybody else in this country rather than wearing cultural styles.

Agree Strongly  Agree Mildly  Neutral  Disagree Mildly  Disagree Strongly  I Don’t Know

28. The home life of African American people provides a rich cultural experience directly connected to African origins.

Agree Strongly  Agree Mildly  Neutral  Disagree Mildly  Disagree Strongly  I Don’t Know

29. The reason African American children have trouble learning in school is that they are not taught properly.

Agree Strongly  Agree Mildly  Neutral  Disagree Mildly  Disagree Strongly  I Don’t Know
30. African American English is basically talking lazy.
Agree Strongly    Agree Mildly    Neutral    Disagree Mildly    Disagree Strongly    I Don’t Know

31. African American children can be trained to pass any test written.
Agree Strongly    Agree Mildly    Neutral    Disagree Mildly    Disagree Strongly    I Don’t Know

32. African American children can read in spite of the fact that most Basal readers are written in Standard English.
Agree Strongly    Agree Mildly    Neutral    Disagree Mildly    Disagree Strongly    I Don’t Know

33. African American children have the same potential for achievement in math and science as any other people.
Agree Strongly    Agree Mildly    Neutral    Disagree Mildly    Disagree Strongly    I Don’t Know

34. African American children are advantaged through African American English; it makes them bidialectal just as some Hispanics are bilingual.
Agree Strongly    Agree Mildly    Neutral    Disagree Mildly    Disagree Strongly    I Don’t Know

35. African American English is misuse of standard language. Agree Strongly
Agree Strongly    Agree Mildly    Neutral    Disagree Mildly    Disagree Strongly    I Don’t Know

36. African American children should be allowed to choose their own course of study and behavior in school from an early age and should not be directed by the teacher.
Agree Strongly    Agree Mildly    Neutral    Disagree Mildly    Disagree Strongly    I Don’t Know

37. Standard English is superior to nonstandard English in terms of grammatical structure. Agree Strongly
Agree Strongly    Agree Mildly    Neutral    Disagree Mildly    Disagree Strongly    I Don’t Know
38. African American English should be preserved because it creates a bond of solidarity among the people who speak it.

Agree Strongly  Agree Mildly  Neutral  Disagree Mildly  Disagree Strongly  I Don’t Know

39. Acceptance of nonstandard dialects of English by teachers would lead to a lowering of standards in school.

Agree Strongly  Agree Mildly  Neutral  Disagree Mildly  Disagree Strongly  I Don’t Know

40. African American English should be preserved because it helps African Americans feel at ease in informal situations.

Agree Strongly  Agree Mildly  Neutral  Disagree Mildly  Disagree Strongly  I Don’t Know

41. African American English enhances the curriculum by enriching the language background of the children.

Agree Strongly  Agree Mildly  Neutral  Disagree Mildly  Disagree Strongly  I Don’t Know

42. African American English expresses some things better than Standard English.

Agree Strongly  Agree Mildly  Neutral  Disagree Mildly  Disagree Strongly  I Don’t Know

43. The reason African American people aren’t moving as fast as they could is that they’re not as industrious as they should be.

Agree Strongly  Agree Mildly  Neutral  Disagree Mildly  Disagree Strongly  I Don’t Know

44. Since only Standard English is useful in getting a job, it should always be preferred over African American English.

Agree Strongly  Agree Mildly  Neutral  Disagree Mildly  Disagree Strongly  I Don’t Know

45. African American English should be abandoned because it does not provide any benefits to anybody. Agree Strongly

Agree Strongly  Agree Mildly  Neutral  Disagree Mildly  Disagree Strongly  I Don’t Know
46. The reason African Americans aren’t moving as fast as they could is that the system discriminates against them.

Agree Strongly   Agree Mildly   Neutral   Disagree Mildly   Disagree Strongly   I Don’t Know


**African American English (AAE) Features & Frequency**

Listed below are the definitions and examples of the AAE features frequently used by African American adolescents:

1. **Copula Absence:** *is, am, are, was, and were* are missing.
   
   a. Examples: “She good,” “They tired this morning”

2. **-ing fronting:** present progressive “-ing” is not included.
   
   a. Examples: “What are you *talkin’ about?*” “They *runnin’ fast*”

3. **3rd person singular -s absence:** subject-verb difference.
   
   a. Examples: “She *live down the street*” “He *like me*”

4. **Habitual or invariant “be”:** a recurring action.
   
   a. Examples: “they *be gettin’ on my nerves*” or “My mom *be at home*”

**Directions:** Please indicate the occurrence of specific AAE features regularly expressed by African American male adolescents with disabilities during specialized instruction by selecting your response.

1. How often do you hear *copula absence* in your classroom among African American male students with disabilities?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

2. How often do you hear *-ing fronting* in your classroom among African American male students with disabilities?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

3. How often do you hear *3rd person singular -s absence* in your classroom among African American male students with disabilities?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
4. How often do you hear habitual “be” in your classroom among African American male students with disabilities?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Open-ended Questions**

1. What is your pedagogical experience teaching African American male students with learning disabilities who African American English?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

2. What are your academic expectations of African American male students with learning disabilities who speak African American English?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

3. How do you think your academic expectations influence your teaching methods with this group of students?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

The needs assessment online survey is accessible through the following Google link:
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1TIY5OSbr0HJNEgEJmKkVnpygIM1yFKgU5HUK4rSuK8c
Appendix B

Letter to Request Permission for Use of Instrument

Denise R. Osborne
January 14, 2021

Shirley A. R. Lewis, Ph.D.
Montclair, NJ 07042

Dear Dr. Lewis:

My name is Denise Osborne, and I am a doctoral student at Johns Hopkins University School of Education. I am in the process of conducting research on special education teacher attitudes toward African American English. I am writing to seek your permission to use your African American English Teacher Attitude Scale (AAETAS) as published in: Hoover, R.M., McNair, F., Lewis, S.A.R., & Politzer, R.L. (1997). African American English Attitude Measures for Teachers. In Reginald L. Jones (ed.), Handbook of Test and Measurements for Black Populations (pp. 383-393). Hampton, VA: Cobb. I also request to adapt the responses of the AAETAS by including Neutral and I Don’t Know. I must give full credit to you and the other authors. Your permission to use and adapt the AAETAS would be greatly appreciated. If you approve, please notify me in writing or via email correspondence. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Denise Osborne
Doctoral Student
Appendix C

School Administrator Email Script

Greetings (School Administrator),

My name is Denise Osborne, and I am a DCPS school psychologist and a 2nd-year doctoral student at Johns Hopkins University School of Education. I am requesting permission to have the ELA inclusion special education teachers in your school complete a Google survey for my dissertation. The Memorandum of Agreement from central office is attached.

The survey is about special education teacher attitudes toward African American male students with learning disabilities who speak African American English (AAE). The survey only takes 15 minutes to complete, and the consent form is attached to the Google survey. There is the risk to confidentiality when collecting responses on a small pool of teachers answering possibly sensitive questions related to their attitudes and pedagogy. The teachers’ participation in the needs assessment is 100% voluntary.

If permission is granted, I will directly email the Google survey to the special education teachers you identify as meeting the criteria.

Please feel free to contact me directly at dosborn6@jhu.edu with any questions or concerns.
Appendix D

Teacher Email Script

Greetings (Special Education Teacher),

My name is Denise Osborne, and I’m a DCPS school psychologist and a 2nd-year doctoral student at Johns Hopkins University School of Education. I am looking for special education teachers to complete a Google survey for the first step of my dissertation.

This survey is about African American English (AAE) and its influence on reading skill development. You will be asked questions on your beliefs about AAE in education and its use among African American male adolescent students with learning disabilities in your high school.

This survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete, and you are free to skip any questions you prefer not to answer or end your participation at any time. There is the risk to confidentiality when collecting responses on a small pool of teachers answering possibly sensitive questions related to their attitudes and pedagogy. If do not choose to complete the survey, there will be no negative consequences on your employment or job evaluation.

Your responses will be confidential, and data will be aggregated such that no individual response or respondent can be identified. All your answers will be kept confidential.

Please feel free to contact me directly at dosborn6@jhu.edu with any questions or concerns.
PURPOSE OF RESEARCH STUDY:
The purpose of this research study is to examine an educational problem within an educational context to determine the salient factors contributing to this problem. The ultimate use of the data gathered will or may become part of the student researchers’ dissertation research study.

PROCEDURES:
The student researcher will ask adult participants to complete an online survey (10-15 minutes) to examine an educational problem within an educational context.

RISKS/DISCOMFORTS:
The risks associated with participation in this study are no greater than those encountered in daily life.

BENEFITS:
The research projects will help the student researcher to better understand the salient factors that are contributing to a problem within their educational organizations. This knowledge will help to develop informed interventions that will address these contributing factors.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION AND RIGHT TO WITHDRAW:
Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary: You choose whether to participate. If you decide not to participate, there are no penalties, and you will not lose any benefits to which you would otherwise be entitled. If you choose to participate in the study, you can stop your participation at any time, without any penalty or loss of benefits. If you want to withdraw from the study, please email (Student Investigator: Denise Osborne; dosborn6@jhu.edu), Dr. Marcy Davis at marcy@jhu.edu or Dr. Carey Borkoski at cborkoski@jhu.edu explicitly stating your intention.
If we learn any new information during the study that could affect whether you want to continue participating, we will discuss this information with you.

**CIRCUMSTANCES THAT COULD LEAD US TO END YOUR PARTICIPATION:**

There are circumstances for which the researcher may decide to end your participation before completing the study. If you are no longer an employee within the organization, your participation within the study will be terminated.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:**

Any study records that identify you will be kept confidential to the extent possible by law. The records from your participation may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including members of the Johns Hopkins University Homewood Institutional Review Board and officials from government agencies such as the National Institutes of Health and the Office for Human Research Protections. All of these people are required to keep your identity confidential. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records.

Surveys collected in electronic format will be stored on a password-protected computer. All paper documents will be kept in a locked file that is only accessible to the student researcher. Finally, all files will be erased and paper documents shredded seven years after collection.

**COMPENSATION:**

You will not receive any payment or other compensation for participating in this study.

**IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS:**

You can ask questions about this research study now or at any time during the study, by talking to the JHU faculty member working with you or by contacting (Denise Osborne; dosborn6@jhu.edu), Dr. Marcy Davis via e-mail at marcy@jhu.edu or Dr. Carey Borkoski at cborkoski@jhu.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or feel that you have not been treated fairly, please call the Homewood Institutional Review Board at Johns Hopkins University at (410) 516-6580.

**SIGNATURES**

**WHAT YOUR SIGNATURE MEANS:**

Your signature below means that you understand the information in this consent form. Your signature also means that you agree to participate in the study.

By signing this consent form, you have not waived any legal rights you otherwise would have as a participant in a research study.
## Appendix F

### Review of Prospective Interventions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th>Study design</th>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bacon (2017)</td>
<td>Preservice, United States</td>
<td>$N = 56$</td>
<td>Mixed Method; Tx and comparison group</td>
<td>Four sessions of an SAE-myth module within a course</td>
<td>Minimal change across groups; written reflections noted shifts; underlying deficit ideologies were maintained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baily and Katradis (2016)</td>
<td>In-service, United States</td>
<td>$N = 58$</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>Graduate program; 6 weeks of an online discussion</td>
<td>Moved along the continuum from implicit to explicit beliefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bozoglan and Gok (2017)</td>
<td>Preservice, Turkey</td>
<td>$N = 58$</td>
<td>Quantitative; Tx and comparison group</td>
<td>14-week dialect awareness training</td>
<td>Sessions promoted the legitimization of non-standardized English dialects; British English maintained the highest rating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endo (2015)</td>
<td>Preservice, United States</td>
<td>$N = 20$</td>
<td>Mixed Method</td>
<td>Semester-long diversity course</td>
<td>Increased their attitudes toward linguistic diversity to at least one level; most common shift occurred from Level 2 to Level 3 followed by Level 1 to Level 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fogel and Ehri (2006)</td>
<td>Preservice and in-service, United States</td>
<td>$N = 73$</td>
<td>Quantitative; Tx and control groups; random assignment</td>
<td>One-hour session with three groups: exposure (E), exposure and strategies (ES), and exposure, strategies, and practice (ESP)</td>
<td>Modest improvement of attitudes in all three groups; ESP group wrote with greater AAE proficiency than the E group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Godley, Reaser, and Moore (2015)</td>
<td>Preservice, United States</td>
<td>$N = 24$</td>
<td>Mixed Method</td>
<td>Four modules of an online CLA course</td>
<td>Developed CLA for teaching ELA; did not acknowledge power and privilege unless prompted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver, Rocheouste, Vanderford, and Grote (2011)</td>
<td>In-service, Western Australia</td>
<td>$N = 104$</td>
<td>Quantitative; stratified random sample</td>
<td>ABC of 2-way literacy &amp; learning PD program</td>
<td>Increased teachers’ understandings of AE &amp; knowledge about language variation; control group maintained a deficit perspective with *SAE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaser (2016)</td>
<td>In-service, United States</td>
<td>$N = 21$</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>3 sessions of a dialect awareness curriculum</td>
<td>Increased understanding of their language biases; change was incremental during the intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weaver (2019)</td>
<td>In-service, United States</td>
<td>$N = 4$</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>4 PD workshops</td>
<td>Participant's beliefs about language were maintained by conflicting language ideologies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wiese et al. (2017)</td>
<td>In-service, Germany</td>
<td>$N = 159$</td>
<td>Quantitative; Tx and comparison groups</td>
<td>3 modules of a language-directed anti-bias program; 9 total sessions</td>
<td>Positive attitude changes in the teachers; targeting attitudes toward language structures had the largest effect; addressing attitudes toward speakers had the smallest effect</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Tx = treatment or intervention; AE = Aboriginal English; *SAE = Standard Australian English.
Appendix G

Letter to Request Permission for Use of Instrument

Dear Mrs. Denise Osborne,

Peter Lang Copyright AG has approved your recent request. Before you can use this content, you must accept the license fee and terms set by the publisher.

Use this link to accept (or decline) the publisher's fee and terms for this order.

Request Summary:
Submit date: 21-Nov-2020
Request ID: 600029411
Title: Critical Language Pedagogy: Interrogating Language, Dialects, and Power in Teacher Education
Type of Use: Republish in a thesis/dissertation

Please do not reply to this message.

To speak with a Customer Service Representative, call +1-855-239-3415 toll free or +1-978-646-2600 (24 hours a day), or email your questions and comments to support@copyright.com.

Sincerely,

Copyright Clearance Center
Appendix H

Research Summary Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>Measures or Instrumentation</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
<th>Data Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ1 - To what extent are each of the</td>
<td>Project implementation: Participants’ access to the videos, articles, and activities in each</td>
<td>Once a day during the course</td>
<td>Descriptive statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>online PD module videos, articles, and</td>
<td>online module; teachers’ access to the Canvas LMS website</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>activities uploaded and available for</td>
<td>Participant emails: Receipt of emails from the teachers about technical issues accessing any</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the special education teachers every</td>
<td>of the videos, articles, activities, and the Canvas LMS website in each online module</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>week?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ2 - What did the special education</td>
<td>Context: Participants’ level of satisfaction learning using the Canvas LMS</td>
<td>Once (after the course)</td>
<td>Descriptive statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teachers consider to be the most useful</td>
<td>Participant evaluation questionnaire (closed and open-ended questions)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Conventional content analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and notable online PD content they</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Hsieh &amp; Shannon, 2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learned?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ3 - To what extent are the special</td>
<td>Participant responsiveness: Posting one paragraph commenting on another teacher’s initial</td>
<td>Twice a week during the course</td>
<td>Frequency count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>education teachers posting one complete</td>
<td>response in a module. A paragraph is defined as four to six sentences in a response.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paragraph in their initial and</td>
<td>Total number of paragraphs of each initial discussion post</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>follow-up responses in three of the</td>
<td>Total number of paragraphs for follow-up responses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>four online PD modules?</td>
<td>Total number of responses from the student researcher with questions for critical reflections</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ4 - To what extent did the online PD</td>
<td>Teachers’ attitudes toward AAE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>improve the special education teachers’</td>
<td>Language Attitude Scale (LAS; see Appendix L)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Descriptive statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attitudes toward AAE?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

211
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ5 - How did the online PD content change the special education teachers’ understanding of CLA?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Understanding of CLA</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ6 - How did the online PD change the special education teachers’ understanding of language variation?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Understanding of language variation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ7 - What were the special education teachers’ experiences learning about CLA during the online PD?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Experience learning about CLA</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ8 - What were the special education teachers’ experiences learning about language variation during the online PD?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Experience learning about language variation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| RQ9 - Which stages of the transformative learning process did the special education teachers experience during the online PD? |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages of transformative learning during the online PD</th>
<th>Discussion post responses</th>
<th>Once (after the course)</th>
<th>Directed content analysis (Hsieh &amp; Shannon, 2005)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ9a - What stage(s) of transformative learning did the special education teachers experience during module 1?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage(s) of transformative learning</td>
<td>Discussion post responses</td>
<td>During Module 1</td>
<td>Directed content analysis (Hsieh &amp; Shannon, 2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ9b - What stage(s) of transformative learning did the special education teachers experience during module 2?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage(s) of transformative learning</td>
<td>Discussion post responses</td>
<td>During Module 2</td>
<td>Directed content analysis (Hsieh &amp; Shannon, 2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ9c - What stage(s) of transformative learning did the special education teachers experience during module 3?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage(s) of transformative learning</td>
<td>Discussion post responses</td>
<td>During Module 3</td>
<td>Directed content analysis (Hsieh &amp; Shannon, 2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ9d - What stage(s) of transformative learning did the special education teachers experience during module 4?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage(s) of transformative learning</td>
<td>Discussion post responses</td>
<td>During module 4</td>
<td>Directed content analysis (Hsieh &amp; Shannon, 2005)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix I

Theory of Treatment

Target population
9th- through 12th-grade special education teachers in East School District (ESD)

Intervention
4 x 3.5-hour online modules and an hour of pre- and postcourse surveys completed in a month for a total of 15 hours. Teachers are required to make four comments per week.

Introduction of modules: teachers learned how language was used in different communities in weekly online discussions. The discussions engaged teachers about how to respond to language variation, language ideologies, and linguistic discrimination in secondary ELA classrooms.

Module 1: Teaching about dialects in literature
Module 2: Responding to Vernacular Dialects in Student Writing and Speech
Module 3: Leading Discussions and Investigations of Language Variation
Module 4: Teaching About Linguistic Discrimination and Power

Short-term outcomes
Increase the teachers’ attitudes toward AAE.

Intermediate outcomes
Teachers will increase positive attitude interactions toward African American students speaking AAE on their special education caseload.

Long-term outcomes
Increase the instances of positive attitudes from the teachers toward African American students speaking AAE on the school level.

Increase the teachers’ understanding of critical language awareness in ELA.

Increase their awareness of language variation in the classroom.

Teachers will increase the application of language awareness and variation in their pedagogy.

Increase the integration of critical language awareness in lesson planning with ELA-content general education teachers.
Appendix J

Logic Model
Appendix K

PD Course Catalog Script

The Social Practice of Literacy in Special Education

Instructor: Denise Osborne, Doctoral Student Researcher

Orientation: Wednesday, February 16 @ 7 pm via Zoom

Pre-course surveys (Feb 28-March 6): Background History Survey, Pre-course Teaching Scenarios, & the Language Attitude Scale

Module 1: March 7-13

Module 2: March 14-20

Module 3: March 21-27

Module 4: March 28-April 3

Post-course surveys (Due: April 4-8): Participant Evaluation Questionnaire, Post-course Teaching Scenarios, & the Language Attitude Scale

This free asynchronous professional development course is part of a dissertation study that will focus on increasing high school special education inclusion teachers’ awareness of how language ideologies lead to different instructional practices toward African American students. Specifically, the teachers will learn how the ideologies associated with African American English (i.e., Ebonics) and Standard English influence special education services for African American students. High school special education inclusion teachers will learn more about African American English, learn productive ways to talk with students about the dialects they use, understand language variation and identity in the teachers’ use of language, and learn about linguistic discrimination of regional dialects in the United States. The student researcher is requesting informed consent to examine one’s pre- and post-course survey responses and discussion post responses for dissertation data to evaluate the effectiveness of the online course. Consent to permit the use of one’s course responses is 100% voluntary. All teachers will earn 15 free PLUs for completing the course, regardless of their informed consent decision.

Participation criteria: High school special education inclusion teachers

Participants will receive 15 free PLUs

Location: Online via Canvas Learning Management System
Appendix L

Language Attitude Scale

**Directions:** As an educator, please circle your response in terms of your level of agreement with each statement using a scale of 1 to 4 (1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. AAE is a misuse of SAE.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. AAE is a clear, thoughtful, and expressive language.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. AAE has a faulty grammar system.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Continued usage of AAE would accomplish nothing worthwhile for society.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Teachers should allow African American students to use AAE in the classroom.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. AAE sounds as good as SAE.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. AAE is cool.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. AAE as effective for communication as is SAE.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. If use of AAE were encouraged, speakers of AAE would be more motivated to achieve academically.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. In a predominantly African American school, AAE as well as SAE should be taught.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Widespread acceptance of AAE is imperative.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. AAE should be considered a bad influence on American culture.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. AAE must be accepted if pride is to develop among African Americans.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Attempts to eliminate AAE in schools results in situations that can be psychologically damaging to African American children.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. When teachers reject the native language of a student, they do him or her great harm.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. One of the goals of the American school system should be the standardization of the English language.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. AAE should be discouraged.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. AAE should be accepted socially.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Acceptance of AAE by teachers will lead to a lowering of standards in schools.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. The scholastic level of a school will fall if teachers allow AAE to be spoken.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. AAE is an inferior language system.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. A teacher should correct a student’s use of AAE.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. One successful method for improving the learning capacity of speakers of AAE would be to replace their dialect with SAE.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. AAE sounds sloppy.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. The sooner we eliminate AAE the better.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix M

Letter to Request Permission for Use of Instrument

May 3, 2021

Dr. Orlando Taylor
Distinguished Senior Advisor to the President
Executive Director, Center for the Advancement of STEM Leadership
Fielding Graduate University
2020 De la Vina Street, Santa Barbara, CA 93105

Dear Dr. Taylor:

My name is Denise Osborne, and I am a doctoral student at Johns Hopkins University School of Education. I am in the process of conducting research on Special Education Teacher Attitudes toward African American English. I am writing to seek your permission to use your Language Attitude Scale (LAS) as published in: Taylor, O. (1973). Teachers’ attitudes toward black and nonstandard English as measured by the Language Attitude Scale. In R. W. Shuy & R. W. Fasold. (Eds.), Language attitudes: Current trends and prospects (pp. 174–201). Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press. I am also requesting to modify two of the original acronyms in your instrument. For example, I intend to change AAVE to AAE and change MAE to SAE (Standard American English) for consistency with my dissertation. I fully understand that I must give full credit to you. Your permission to use the LAS and modify the two acronyms would be greatly appreciated. If you approve, please notify me in writing or via email correspondence. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Denise Osborne
Doctoral Student Researcher
You are being asked to join a research study. Participation in this study is voluntary. Even if you decide to join now, you can change your mind later.

1. **Research Summary (Key Information):**
The information in this section is intended to be an introduction to the study only. Complete details of the study are listed in the sections below. If you are considering participation in the study, the entire document should be discussed with you before you make your final decision. You can ask questions about the study now and at any time in the future.

The purpose of the research study is to evaluate an asynchronous online professional development course. The goal of the course is to increase high school special education inclusion teachers' understanding of how language ideologies influence instructional practices in special education. The primary requirement is that all participants hold a valid special education certification at the secondary level (e.g., 6th- through 12th-grade). The student investigator is seeking teachers willing to have their survey and discussion post responses used as dissertation data to evaluate the course. As part of the six-week course, teachers will complete pre- and post-course surveys and answer two or three discussion post questions per week. The student researcher is just requesting that she use this course data to evaluate the course in her dissertation. There are no potential benefits to the teachers giving consent for the student researcher to access their survey and discussion post responses. There is a minimal risk for participating in the study other than what occurs in daily life. There are no costs associated with participation.
2. **Why is this research being done?**
This research is being done to contribute to the body of knowledge of how the language ideologies informing the learning standards and curricula influence the instructional practices of high school special education inclusion teachers.

High school special education inclusion teachers will be invited to join.

We anticipate that about 20 teachers will take part in the evaluation.

3. **What will happen if you join this study?**
If you agree to be in this study, we will ask you to do the following things:

As part of the course, you will already be responding to the following surveys and activities. The consent form is requesting permission to use your responses to the following items in an evaluation of the course as part of a dissertation study:

- A 15-item background history questionnaire. It will take approximately 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire.
- A 25-item Language Attitude Scale. It will take approximately 15 minutes to complete the rating form.
- Responses to weekly discussion post questions and responses. It will take approximately 1.5 hours per week to complete the discussion post responses.
- Two 7-item teacher scenario questions ask you to read a hypothetical classroom language scenario and rank the given responses from what you would most likely use (1) to least likely use (5). You will write your rationale for your ranking of each of the five responses. It will take approximately 20 minutes to answer the questions.
- An 8-item participant evaluation questionnaire that asks about your thoughts on the usefulness of the videos, activities, and online discussion responses. It will take approximately 5 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

All of these tasks will occur on the Canvas Learning Management System website and be collected by the Washington Teacher’s Union as part of their evaluation of the course.

**How long will you be in the study?**
You will participate in the online course for six weeks. The course registrants will have seven calendar days after the orientation to read and review the consent form.

4. **What are the risks or discomforts of the study?**
The risks associated with participation in this study are no greater than those encountered in daily life. There is a chance that the use of the survey and discussion responses in the
dissertation may identify a participant if a small number of teachers permit the student investigator to use their data.

5. **Are there benefits to being in the study?**
   There is no direct benefit to you for participating in the evaluation of the course. However, this study may benefit society by contributing to the body of knowledge. The reason is that there is a gap in education research investigating how current language ideologies influence instructional practices in special education.

6. **What are your options if you do not want to be in the study?**
   Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You choose whether to participate. If you decide not to participate, there are no penalties, and you will not lose any benefits to which you would otherwise be entitled.

7. **Will it cost you anything to be in this study?**
   No.

8. **Will you be paid if you join this study?**
   No.

9. **Can you leave the study early?**
   - You can agree to be in the evaluation process now and change your mind later, without any penalty or loss of benefits.
   - If you wish to stop, please tell us right away.
   - If you want to withdraw from the evaluation process, please contact Dr. Marcia Davis at marcy@jhu.edu or 410-627-3598, verbally or in writing.

10. **How will the confidentiality of your data be protected?**
    Any study records that identify you will be kept confidential to the extent possible by law. The records from your participation may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including members of the Johns Hopkins University Homewood Institutional Review Board and officials from government agencies such as the National Institutes of Health and the Office for Human Research Protections. (All of these people are required to keep your identity confidential.) Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records.

    The background history survey, participant evaluation questionnaire, teacher scenario items, Language Attitude Scale, and the discussion post responses will be collected and stored in the password-protected Canvas Learning Management System. The principal investigator will have access to all the data. The principal investigator will collect the electronically submitted consent forms. The student researcher facilitating the course will not know the identity of those participating in the evaluation until the course has ended. Pseudonyms will replace the participants’ names in the study report. The principal investigator will download and store the sensitive data on a Johns Hopkins University
password-secured website.

11. **What does a conflict of interest mean to you as a participant in this study?**
The researcher has no financial or other interest in this study.

**What is the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and how does it protect you?**
This study has been reviewed by an Institutional Review Board (IRB), a group of people that reviews human research studies. The IRB can help you if you have questions about your rights as a research participant or if you have other questions, concerns, or complaints about this research study. You may contact the IRB at 410-516-6580 or hirb@jhu.edu.

**What should you do if you have questions about the study?**
Call the principal investigator, Marcia Davis, Ph.D., at (410) 627-3598. If you wish, you may contact the principal investigator by letter. The address is on page one of this consent form. If you cannot reach the principal investigator or wish to talk to someone else, call the IRB office at 410-516-5680.

You can ask questions about this research study now or at any time during the course by talking to the researcher(s) working with you or by calling Marcia Davis, Ph.D., principal investigator, at (410) 627-3598.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or feel that you have not been treated fairly, please call the Homewood Institutional Review Board at Johns Hopkins University at (410) 516-6580.

12. **What does your signature on this consent form mean?**
Your signature on this form means that: You understand the information given to you in this form, you accept the provisions in the form, and you agree to join the study. You will not give up any legal rights by signing this consent form.

**WE WILL GIVE YOU A COPY OF THIS SIGNED AND DATED CONSENT FORM**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signature of Participant</th>
<th>(Print Name)</th>
<th>Date/Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signature of Person Obtaining Consent</th>
<th>(Print Name)</th>
<th>Date/Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix O

Overview of the PD Course Modules

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Learning Goals</th>
<th>Materials/Activities</th>
<th>Discussion Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Teaching About Dialects in Literature</td>
<td>Learn about various dialects spoken in the United States. Consider people’s attitudes toward various dialects. Learn how to lead discussions about authors’ portrayal of vernacular dialects in literature.</td>
<td>Watch the opening of the documentary American Tongues on YouTube. Read “American Varieties,” “Myths and Realities” and “What is Standard English?” from Do You Speak American? at pbs.com. Watch the TEDx Youth video about AAVE on <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rNhB1DW_-s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rNhB1DW_-s</a> Read “Everyone Has an Accent” by Walt Wolfram (2000).</td>
<td>Choose a myth about language from this week’s reading that you have heard or experienced. In what ways would knowing the “reality” of this myth make an ELA teacher more effective at teaching literacy than a teacher who believed the “myth”? Respond to the teaching scenario that asks you to respond to students’ negative reactions to the dialects characters use in To Kill a Mockingbird.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Responding to Vernacular Dialects in Student Writing and Speech</td>
<td>Discover grammatical patterns in two vernacular dialects. Consider productive ways to talk with students about the language varieties they use. Help students recognize patterns in different dialects and code-switch/code-mesh in different situations.</td>
<td>Read “Talking about Language Variation With Your Students” (written by the authors). Do the “A-prefixing” activity for Appalachian English. Do the “A Special Use of BE in African American English” activity. Watch the YouTube video of linguist David Crystal arguing that texting is good for the English language. Read about features of African American English from the University of Hawai‘i Sato Center. Watch the YouTube video about the Academic English Mastery program in Los Angeles Unified Schools District.</td>
<td>How would you assess the vernacular grammatical patterns in a student’s essay and help her develop her Standardized Written English? Discuss the pros and cons of the Academic English Mastery Program and how you might use this approach in secondary ELA. Respond to the teaching scenario that asks you to respond to students who use Appalachian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leading Discussions and Investigations of Identity and Language Variation</td>
<td>Consider language variation and identity in your own use of language. Design ways for your students to investigate variation and identity in their language use.</td>
<td>Read/view “That’s How I Talk” blog created by a teacher and her linguistically diverse English class. Read “Language Variation and Identity” and “Code-Switching and Code-Meshing” (written by the authors). Watch the YouTube video about 3 ways to speak English by Jamila Lyiscott on <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k9fmJ5xQ_mc&amp;t=105s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k9fmJ5xQ_mc&amp;t=105s</a></td>
<td>Discuss a time when you spoke markedly differently from others or a time when you were asked to change the way you spoke. Think about the language you use in formal and informal settings. What are the benefits to using these phrases in certain situations? Respond to the teaching scenario based on the “That’s How I Talk” blog. Consider how you would construct an assignment that allows students to investigate identity and language variation in their own lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaching About Linguistic Discrimination and Power</td>
<td>Learn about linguistic discrimination in current U.S. society. Plan how to teach students to combat linguistic discrimination and prejudices. Consider how to design a curriculum about linguistic diversity, linguistic discrimination, and language and identity for students of varying linguistic,</td>
<td>Do the “overhearing a heated conversation” activity. Read about linguistic profiling post-Hurricane Katrina at newamericamedia.org Read and view the poem “Listen Mr. Oxford Don” by British-Guyanese poet John Agard. Read an article about linguistic discrimination in the legal system in the Nation article: <a href="https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/in-the-legal-system-talking-white-is-a-precursor-to-justice-and-thats-wrong/">https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/in-the-legal-system-talking-white-is-a-precursor-to-justice-and-thats-wrong/</a> View the Housing and Urban Development Public Service Announcement about linguistic profiling.</td>
<td>Drawing on the activity and readings/viewings about linguistic discrimination, what do you want your students to know about linguistic profiling? How would your goals and approach change depending on your and your students’ linguistic and racial identities? How could you teach the poem “Listen Mr. Oxford Don” to raise issues of linguistic discrimination, English language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>racial, and cultural backgrounds.</td>
<td>variation, and language and identity with your students?</td>
<td>What 2–3 major ideas are you taking away from this course for your own teaching?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Denise R. Osborne

School Psychologist
drb12182@gmail.com

Education

Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD May 2023
Doctor of Education
Specialization: Mind, Brain, and Teaching
Dissertation Focus: The Evaluation of a Professional Development Course to Increase Critical Language Awareness Among High School Special Education Teachers

Howard University, Washington, DC May 2006
Master of Education in School Psychology
GPA: 3.80, Summa Cum Laude

University of South Florida, Tampa, FL May 2004
Bachelor of Arts in Psychology
GPA: 3.65, Cum Laude with Honors

Professional Experience

Public Schools, Washington, DC 2010 – Present
School Psychologist

School Psychologist

Public Schools, Washington, DC 2007 - 2007
Substitute Teacher

Presentations

2009 Fort Belvoir South Post Child Development Center Inservice: Special Education: The Process

2021 Tampa Virtual Community Vaccine Information Session: Call The Shots: Put Up Your Best Defense and Get the COVID-19 Vaccine
## Affiliations, Certifications, and Endorsements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District of Columbia Association of School Psychologists</td>
<td>2019-Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Psychologist, PreK – 12 Certification</td>
<td>2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Psychologist, K – 12 Certification</td>
<td>2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Psychologist, K – 12 Certification</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>