

Solutions (?)

On Standardized Tests

Recall MC boys tested by Bernstein

“Assessing whether or not a student can recognize standard English is not, in itself, an issue, especially if an educational system incorporates the systematic introduction of the standard dialect into its educational curriculum. It is, however, problematic as an overall measure of ‘achievement’ since it may measure different things for different groups of speakers. For a standard speaker, an achievement test may measure what the student, for the most part, already brings to school from the home community – inner language knowledge of the standard dialect. For a student from a vernacular dialect introduced to the standard dialect, it actually may measure an aspect of achievement – the ability to recognize standard English forms after the student has been introduced to them in the classroom. The underlying problem, then, is in the comparison of standard and vernacular speakers as if both groups started from the same linguistic baseline” (Wolfram & Schilling, p. 300)

Recall WC boys tested by Bernstein – they performed like MC but not on first try

AAE and Reading

- Washington, Craig, and colleagues: AAE use present
 - African American students produced measurable amounts of AAE during oral reading of SAE texts
 - Exposure/experience
 - Dialect density related to accuracy and rate of reading
- Response to deficit story
 - Increase **code-switching** abilities
 - Polydialectal environment
 - Bridge readers
 - Culturally appropriate methods and styles



Comparison Exercises

- Create actual specific 'this is what you say' and 'this is what they say' type of exercises
- Research
 - this method improves reading and actually decreases use of non-standard features in spoken language
- Can use comparative approach to identify specific issues for specific dialects

Bridge Readers

- Research
 - some benefits to this type of approach but we actually don't know how much
- Builds off of bilingual education
 - Know that learning to read and write in L2 is much more successful if the L1 reading knowledge is present
- Idea of bridge reader which would be a closer approximation to the dialect of the students in question

Controversy with Bridge Readers

Deliberate

- Because of the deliberate use of socially stigmatized language forms in written material. This is viewed by some as a reinforcement of nonstandard dialect patterns.

Isolative

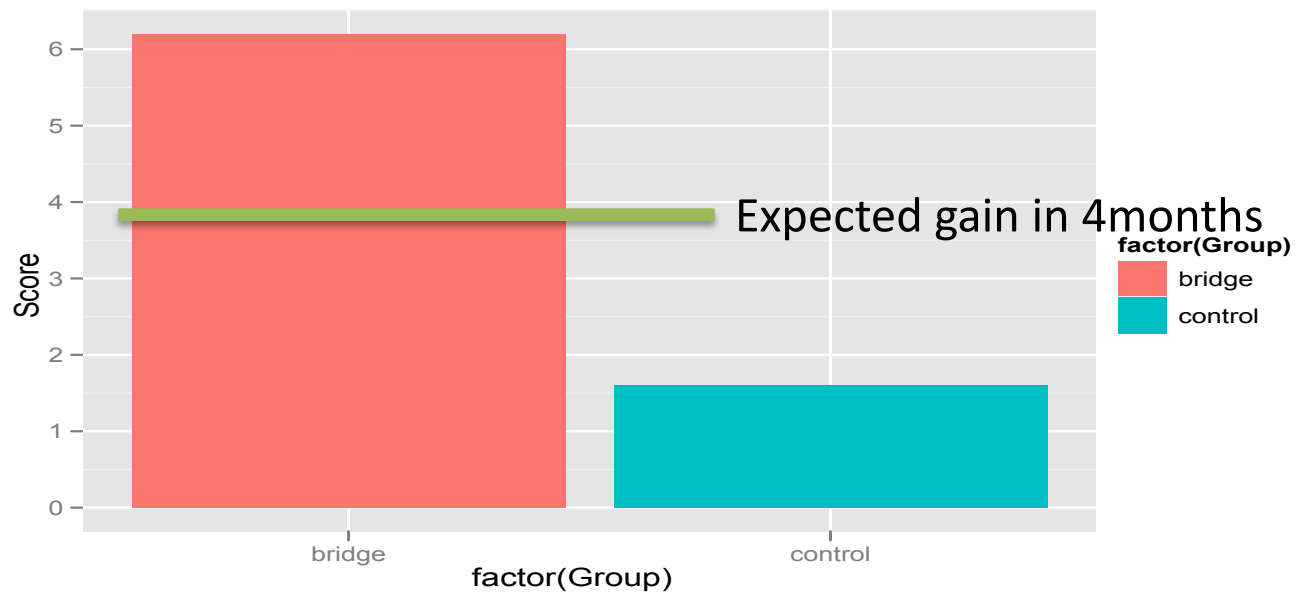
- This approach singles out particular groups of readers for special materials—this process can be viewed as patronizing, classist, or racist educational differentiation

Simpkins and Simpkins 1981

- Based on other studies showing the general result that students taught to read in their vernacular dialect perform better over the long run than students taught to read directly in Standard English
- Bridge readers in AAE
 - 540 students
 - 7th to 12th grade
 - 27 different schools
 - 5 different regions
- Two groups:
 - control group: traditional reading program
 - other group: bridge readers with traditional reading program

Results

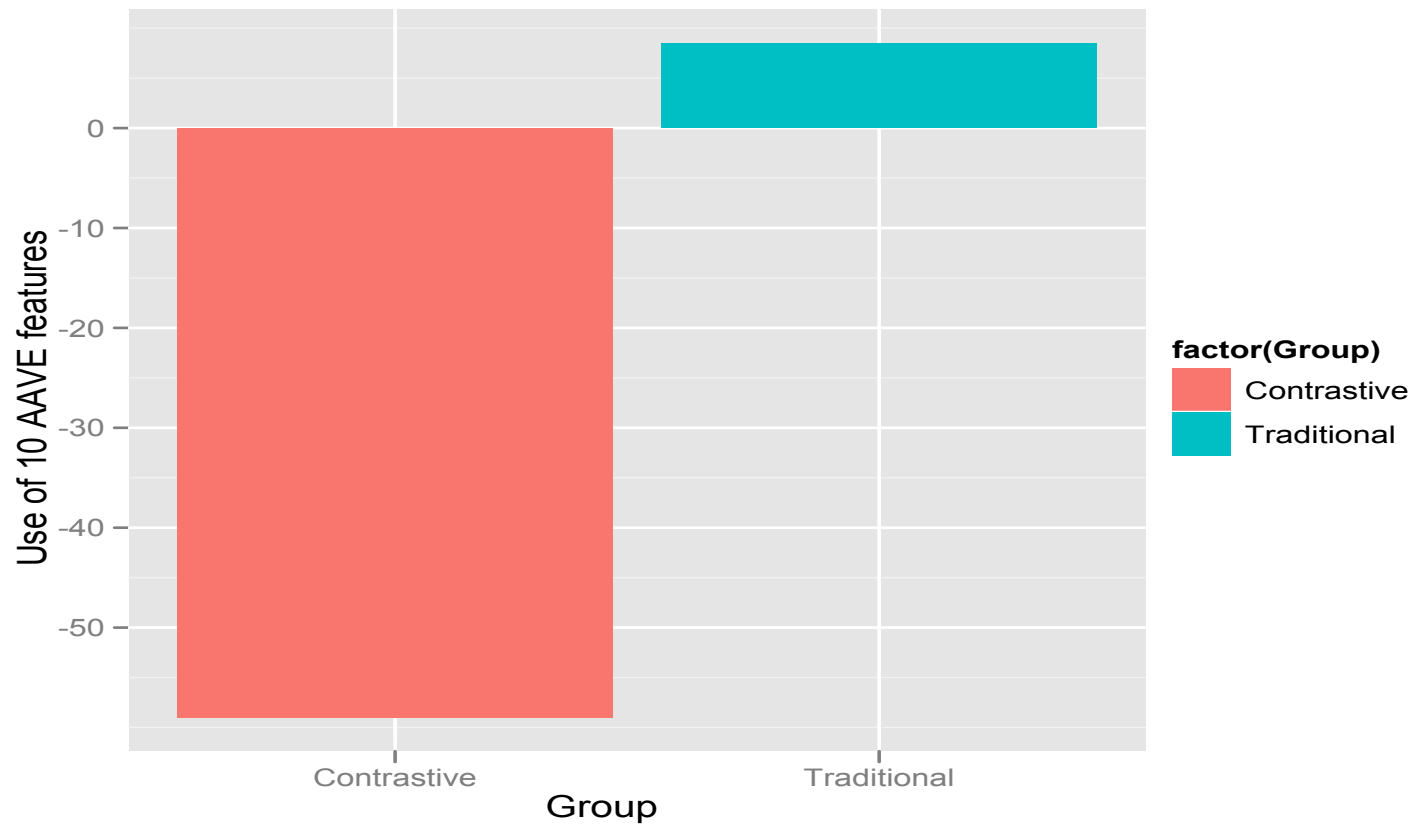
- After 4 months of instruction
 - Control: 1.6 month gain ACTUALLY A LOSS!
 - Bridge: 6.2 month gain ACTUALLY A GAIN!



Taylor 1991

- Compares 'traditional' vs. 'contrastive' approach
- Contrastive approach
 - Draws on the local vernacular as a point of comparison to demonstrate differences between it and Standard English
 - Should reduce the use of AAVE features
- College writing setting
 - 11 weeks of traditional vs. contrastive

Results



Proactive Dialect Awareness Programs

- “From a humanistic standpoint, dialect awareness programs help us understand similarities and differences in human behavior. They also offer an opportunity to see how language reflects and helps shape different historical and cultural developments.”