

African American English, Slang, Dialect, and Hip-Hop Jargon

The purpose of this micro-study is to make a comparison of several styles of speech namely slang, dialect and hip-hop jargon based on the following dialogue between a young boy and his mother. The following dialogue was provided by an instructor as a pedagogical starting point for this research based micro-study. In the dialogue, the boy speaking to his mother says, "I ain't got no homework today." His mother might respond, "Don't use slang! Don't they teach you better than that in school?" He then replies, "Ah! Mah! Don't crimp my game! I'm just doin me!"

The young boy's manner of speaking gives rise to a series of research questions such as, is there any aspect of the exchange that is slang? Any that is dialect? Any that is hip-hop? According to the writing instructor for this grammar course, "slang and dialect are terms that many Americans use synonymously. And hip-hop terminology is often confused with both." This micro-study paper will focus on this assumed interchangeableness between slang, dialect and hip-hop jargon in the mind of many people. Several sources think that they are not synonymous.

Is it the case that African American English is synonymous with slang or some other non-standard speech? In order to investigate the answer to this question, we will need to define the terms slang, dialect, and hip-hop jargon at the outset. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, slang is "a language of a highly colloquial type, considered as below the level of standard educated speech, and consisting either of new words or of current words employed in some special sense. The same source defines dialect as a 'manner of speaking, language, speech; esp. a manner of speech peculiar to, or characteristic of, a particular person or class; phraseology, idiom. Again the same source defines hip-hop as 'a youth subculture, originating amongst the black and Hispanic populations of New York City, which comprises elements such as rap music, graffiti art, and break-dancing, as well as distinctive codes of dress.'" Consequently, hip-hop jargon may be thought of as words such as 'diss' meaning to disrespect, 'my dogg' meaning my friend, 'ganja' meaning marijuana, or hood meaning neighborhood, just to name a few familiar terms.

Having defined these terms, we are now in a position to analyze the above conversation. So, let's piece it apart.

Bibliography:

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