

Linguistic Markets and Symbolic Power in Television Commercials Using AAVE

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1 Introduction

A commercial for Volkswagen opens on an African-American man dressed in a comically hyperbolic urban style standing in what looks like an airplane hanger. He is by a hideous black, yellow, and hot pink car with an absurdly large spoiler. Two white people—an older man and a young, Nordic-looking blonde woman, both dressed in white lab coats—stand behind the car. Behind them, outside the hangar, is a device that looks like a cross between a crane and an oil derrick. The white man, in an exaggerated German accent, says “Vee Dub here in full effect with Tré and his ride.” The car is backed out of the hangar while the woman, also with a German accent, remarks that it “looks like it can fly.” As workers in white bodysuits outside work to attach the car to the crane-like device, the white man asks “What [pronounced “vat,” of course] time is it?” and, when Tré doesn’t know, responds “time to un-pimp the auto.” With a look of strangely sexual satisfaction, he pushes a button on a remote control, and the crane outside flings the car through the air. When it crashes, the white man says “oh, snap!” After this, as a sensible-looking white Volkswagen is driven in, he kneels in front of it, flashing a parody of a gang sign that looks moderately like the Volkswagen logo, and says “German engineering in the house, ja.”

Another commercial, this one for Subway, opens as a car pulls up to a fast food restaurant’s drive through. The people inside the car are a white couple, presumably middle to upper-middle class judging by appearance and type of car; they are unremarkable in just about every possible way. The man orders first, saying “can I get the love handles, the double chin, and some blubber?” The person taking the order asks if he wants double blubber—he does. The woman leans over and says “and I’ll have the same thing but instead of the blubber can I get some thunder thighs and a badonkadonk butt?” The commercial ends with voiceover warning about the dangers of greasy fast food and extolling the health benefits of Subway sandwiches.

These commercials both feature white speakers using words and phrases initially coined in African American Vernacular English, or AAVE—“badonkadonk butt” in the

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Subway commercial is a borrowing from AAVE, and virtually everything that the white man says in the Volkswagen commercial is, if not a direct borrowing from AAVE, an allusion to something from hip-hop culture.¹ While borrowing words and phrases from other languages and dialects is obviously an unremarkable practice, when the source language is typically spoken by a group that is kept in a marginalized or subjugated position by the speakers of the borrowing language, loaned words and phrases can be used in such a way that they contribute to the proliferation of negative stereotypes and hegemonic structures. Writing about the relationship between Spanish and English in America, linguistic anthropologist Jane Hill argues that monolingual English speakers promote and proliferate negative stereotypes of native Spanish speakers through a register of Spanish that she calls “Mock Spanish” (Hill, 1998 Hill, 2005). Mock Spanish terms are used in a number of ways, including what Hill calls “semantic pejoration,” or the process by which Spanish terms that have a neutral or positive meaning take on a negative connotation when they are borrowed into white speech, indirectly and subtly trivializing both the Spanish language and its speakers.

I am of the opinion that the formation of mock dialects is not limited strictly to Spanish, but rather has the potential to occur when members of the dominant white mainstream culture use any and all languages, dialects, and ways of speaking of those from marginalized groups. In this paper I will advance this argument by analyzing the Volkswagen and Subway commercials described above. Furthermore, I will be focusing this case study on commercials because, unlike the use of mock discourses that occurs in day-to-day white speech, it is being used in a specialized and markedly persuasive type of discourse that exists solely to convince people to buy products. The persuasive nature of these advertisements implies that there is a motivation for white speakers to co-opt minority languages or dialects that goes beyond the maintenance of the dominant social order. Indeed, Peter Trudgill’s influential work on “covert prestige” (Trudgill, 1983)—along with the work of other linguistic anthropologists like Cecelia Cutler (Cutler, 1999)—explores the ways that, through their association with socially valued aspects of essentialized and hyperbolic notions of minority dialect speakers, minority languages can gain a special type of limited cultural currency. While Hill’s work does not take covert prestige into account, the two theories do not seem mutually incompatible in the least, but a larger paradigm for conceptualizing the ways in which mock discourses simultaneously attempt to both denigrate minority languages/dialects while exploiting the limited social value vested in them seems necessary. I will argue that such a paradigm can be found in aspects of Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of linguistic market (Bourdieu, 1991).

Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1990) has had a great influence within the field of linguistic anthropology, but I wish to argue that a useful model for conceptualizing the relationships between semantic pejoration and covert prestige can be

¹ In my analysis of these commercials, I often cite definitions of the AAVE terms from the website UrbanDictionary.com. Because the most recent AAVE dictionary that I’m aware of (Geneva Smitherman’s *Black Talk: Words and Phrases From the Hood to the Amen Corner*) was last published in an updated edition in 2000, a number of the terms in these commercials that I want to discuss do not have entries in it as they were not yet in common usage. While I will use Smitherman when possible, I need to rely on Urban Dictionary for a number of the more recent coinages that I’ll be discussing. It is my opinion that Urban Dictionary is a perfectly legitimate source for definitions of terms not yet in standard dictionaries due to its ranking system (users can rate definitions with a thumbs-up or -down).

found in his theories of the ways in which “legitimate languages,” or standard languages/dialects, serve as forms of symbolic capital operating within a linguistic market. When applied to language and dialect usage within a genuine capitalistic market (i.e. commercials designed to sell products), it also provides a useful explanation for the symbolic capital gained through the use of mock discourses. I will use the Volkswagen and Subway commercials discussed above, then, as a case study to show that an expansion of Hill’s theories from Spanish to AAVE is both necessary and beneficial, that the use of mock discourses to sell products implies a tension between the pejoration and prestige of minority languages and dialects, and that Bourdieu’s notion of linguistic market provides a way of conceptualizing this tension.

2 Mock Spanish/Mock AAVE

In her work on the use of Spanish words and phrases by monolingual whites, linguistic anthropologist Jane Hill has posited the existence of a particular register of Spanish—“Mock Spanish”—used exclusively by whites to proliferate racial hegemony. She argues that while for native Spanish speakers, “code switching is condemned as disorderly, Whites ‘mix’ their English with Spanish in contexts ranging from coffee-shop chat to faculty meetings to the evening network newscasts and the editorial pages of major newspapers” (Hill, 1998, p. 682). Aside from this apparent double standard, Whites are rarely careful with their Spanish pronunciation and grammar, and, beyond even this flippant trivialization, Hill argues, they use Spanish in ways that need to draw on negative stereotypes of native Spanish speakers to make sense. Mock Spanish is a racist discourse in that its primary functions are “the ‘elevation of whiteness’ and the pejorative racialization of members of historically Spanish-speaking populations” (p. 683); it “incorporates Spanish-language materials into English in order to create a jocular or pejorative ‘key’” (p. 682). Mock Spanish is a method of normalizing whiteness and denigrating Spanish as marked, different, and perfectly acceptable to misuse, and draws on and reinforces negative stereotypes of Spanish speakers.

One of the ways in which Mock Spanish items can enter into English and achieve these ends that is not necessarily related to translation between languages (i.e. the borrowing of an abundance of dirty words or the misapplication of Spanish morphology to English words to create new pejorative forms) is what Hill refers to as “semantic pejoration” (p. 682), or “the use of positive or neutral Spanish words in humorous or negative senses” (p. 682). As an example, she offers “mañana,” which in Spanish means “morning” or “tomorrow,” but is usually used by monolingual whites as a joking way of saying “later,” particularly with an air of deliberate procrastination (Hill, 2005). According to Hill, this use of Mock Spanish both relies on and reinforces negative images of Spanish speakers; she argues that whites would not be able to see the humor in Mock Spanish without access to negative stereotypes: “it is impossible to ‘get’ Mock Spanish—to find these expressions funny or colloquial or even intelligible—unless one has access to these negative images...” “Mañana” works as a humorous substitute for ‘later’ only in conjunction with an image of Spanish speakers as lazy and procrastinating” (Hill, 1998, p. 683). Hill frequently notes that analogous borrowings from other, higher-status languages do not make sense in the contexts in which Mock Spanish is used; for instance “morgen,” the German word for “tomorrow,” cannot be used to convey the same meaning of lackadaisical procrastination. Mock Spanish operates indirectly, both playing on unconscious racist attitudes and requiring them to be part of the White “in-group” without ever really acknowledging their existence—“because of its covert and indirect properties,

Mock Spanish may be an exceptionally powerful site for the reproduction of White racist attitudes. In order to be ‘one of the group’ among other Whites, collusion in the production of Mock Spanish is frequently unavoidable” (683). Mock Spanish thus operates through a systematic but covert denigration of native Spanish speakers that simultaneously relies on and proliferates negative stereotypes to create white solidarity and reinforce white social dominance.

I have always felt that Hill’s theory of a “mock language” used to proliferate stereotypes and reinforce hegemonic social structures has incredible potential to aid in the exploration of the relationships between languages and dialects other than English and Spanish. Indeed, I believe that provided that the right social conditions exist between the dominant culture and an even slightly linguistically different group, evidence can be readily found that mainstream white American culture forms mock versions of this group’s way of speaking. The commercials described above illustrate this point—words and phrases from AAVE, as well as references to hip-hop culture, are used in ways in line with Hill’s theories of how Mock Spanish is formed.

The Volkswagen commercial abounds with examples of borrowings from AAVE. As mentioned, every utterance that the male, white German scientist makes contains a borrowed AAVE word or phrase or a reference to hip-hop culture. “In full effect,” “Oh, snap,” “in the house,” and “what time is it” are all AAVE phrases or references to hip-hop lyrics—not to mention “un-pimping the auto,” the very premise of the commercial, which is a reference to MTV’s “Pimp My Ride,” a show in which a viewer’s (usually dilapidated) car is transformed in a custom body shop through the addition of a variety of (usually flashy) bells and whistles. All of these words have neutral or positive meanings in AAVE; as an example, I will focus on “pimp.” Smitherman (Smitherman 2000) does not recognize “pimp” as a verb in this sense, and searching Urban Dictionary for “pimp” leads to definitions mostly of the connotation related to prostitution that speakers of mainstream American English would recognize. Searching for “pimped,” however, is more productive, as UrbanDictionary confirms that “pimp” in this sense has the connotation of being “way tight and decked out in expensive stuff,” “all out,” or expensively decorated or adorned. Smitherman similarly recognizes “pimped out” in the sense of “well-dressed” (Smitherman, 2000, p. 230)—not a far cry from its definition as relates to cars. Both of these definitions of “pimped” are positive ones—to be “pimped out” is to be decorated fancily, expensively, and, most importantly, attractively.

As it is used by a white speaker in the context of the Volkswagen commercial, however, the process of “pimping” creates something so excessively decorated that it is not only ridiculous but too heinously offensive to even be salvaged—it must be destroyed outright. To me, this constitutes as clear an example of semantic pejoration as there could be. A word that has an undeniably positive meaning in AAVE is used by a white person in a context that presents it as being incredibly negative, undesirable, and laughable. Furthermore, the humor intended by this denigration of the meaning of the word “pimp” only really makes sense if one can draw on stereotypes of African-Americans as flashy hyperconsumers, obsessed with cheap, gaudy junk.

The white woman in the Subway commercial similarly uses an AAVE term with a highly positive meaning in a markedly negative way: “badonkadonk” is an AAVE word for a curvy woman’s shapely posterior. Smitherman (2000) does not recognize it, but the users of Urban Dictionary have plenty to say—pages worth, in fact. They define it as “an

extremely curvaceous female behind,” an “adjective used to described [sic] buttocks of exceptional quality and bounce,” or simply as a “Voluptuous ass,” along with many other definitions singing the praises of a badonkadonk butt that explain its qualities and its effects on men in ways inappropriate for polite company. To a speaker of AAVE, then, a badonkadonk butt is something positive—something incredibly attractive and sexy.

This, however, is clearly not the way the woman in the Subway commercial means the word. Her definition of “badonkadonk butt” is something fat and frumpy—the rear end equivalent of the other things she and her companion order: “thunder thighs,” “love handles,” and a “double chin.” In fact, she’s directly substituting the badonkadonk butt for “blubber” in the same way you’d substitute fries for onion rings, a practice that necessitates that the items being swapped are close in value. So again, we have a pretty clear-cut example of semantic pejoration—a word for something that speakers of AAVE find very physically appealing is used by white speakers to denote something fat and unpleasant. Like the use of “pimp” in the Subway commercial discussed above, the humor here can only make sense if one has access to negative stereotypes of African Americans, this time as licentious, physically unappealing, and, in the case of women, prone to large backsides.

Based on the examples in this case study, it seems warranted to say that the process of semantic pejoration that occurs in the formation of Mock Spanish also applies to AAVE. Whites use terms that are neutral or positive in AAVE in ways that are negative or humorous. Their use of AAVE forms is intended to be innocently humorous, but it requires access to negative and racist stereotypes of African Americans to be funny; as such, it proliferates these stereotypes, elevating whiteness and treating it as smugly superior while simultaneously presenting reductive and racist notions of AAVE speakers as not only acceptable, but light-hearted and funny as well. These commercials show that Hill’s theories about Mock Spanish are not limited strictly to Spanish. They prove that an analogous Mock AAVE key exists—as such, Hill’s observations about the formation of mock discourse can be applied to other marginalized languages and dialects as well.

3 Covert Prestige

There is, however, something that rings somewhat false (or at least incomplete) to me about the idea that Mock AAVE is incorporated into these advertisements solely to promote white normativity and solidarity. Advertisements differ from everyday spoken discourse in that they are persuasive texts designed to appeal to the largest possible audience—advertisers obviously have a vested interest in not appearing racist. Indeed, Hill reports that she has observed the people who use Mock Spanish saying that they use it because “they have been exposed to Spanish—that is, they are cosmopolitan. Or, that they use it in order to express their loyalty to, and affiliation with, the Southwest...they have regional ‘authenticity.’” Or that they use it because it is funny—that is, they have a sense of humor” (Hill, 1998 p. 683), and I would also argue that even the notion of cosmopolitanism or regional authenticity associated with Spanish use plays on essentialized notions of Spanish-speaking populations as foreign and exotic. Similarly, the use of Mock AAVE allows speakers to create a self-presentation that identifies with stereotypes of African-Americans as hip, urban, and ultra-contemporary. Even though these motivations for using mock discourse still draw on reductive stereotypes, they prove that there must be other forces at work aside from the covert elevation of whiteness motivating the borrowing of words and phrases from other languages and dialects and

peppering them throughout standard white speech. Indeed, a number of AAVE terms and phrases obviously make it into mainstream American English without undergoing any pejoration (i.e. “rap,” “hit me up,” etc.). As Smitherman (2000) points out in the introduction to her dictionary, “what is Black slang today is mainstream American English tomorrow” (p. 6). White speakers clearly view AAVE as having some value to them that goes beyond the proliferation of negative images of its speakers.

This is in line with Peter Trudgill’s influential notion of “covert prestige.” Trudgill generalized his experiences researching dialects in rural England to argue that “there are hidden values associated with non-standard speech...but they are values which are not usually overtly expressed” (Trudgill, 1983 p. 172). Focusing specifically about the covert prestige of AAVE and its use by young white middle- or upper-class males, Cecelia Cutler writes in “Yorkville Crossing: White Teens, Hip Hop, and African American English” that “the adoption of African American speech markers is an attempt by young middle class whites...to take part in the complex prestige of African American youth culture” (Cutler, 1999 p. 429). Cutler acknowledges the reductionism that goes into the covert prestige of AAVE; she writes that her informant—an upper-middle class white boy who adopts many AAVE lexical items and phonological features—may identify with hip-hop culture in a way that draws “on stereotyped conceptions of gangs and African American urban street culture” (p. 429). Still, although she argues that the political history of AAVE’s covert prestige—based in part in the historic economic condition of inner city blacks—has been obscured by a commodified version of hip-hop life style, Cutler admits that AAVE is nevertheless associated with what has become “the dominant consumption-based youth culture” (p. 435). Cutler’s analysis shows that AAVE’s covert prestige is inextricably linked not only to stereotyped notions of African-Americans as urban and tough, but that these stereotypes themselves are linked to the incredibly consumerist hip-hop lifestyle—it is beneficial for whites to use AAVE, then, not only to align themselves with these positive aspects of the stereotypes of AAVE speakers, but to also self-identify as being in the know about the trends that ultra-hip consumers are following.

This also seems like a fitting motivation to include AAVE in advertisements. Portraying knowledge of AAVE allows advertisers to present their products as hip—if whites who can pepper their speech with words and phrases from a dialect so closely linked not only to cutting edge urbanism but to a dominating force in cultural consumption are linked to a product, it portrays the product itself as cool enough for them. And if it’s cool enough for them then surely it must be cool enough for everyone. Mock discourses, then, operate not only to elevate the dominant white culture and to denigrate other races—they also allow white speakers to cash in on positive aspects of stereotypes of speakers of the discourses being mocked. These two drives seem somewhat at odds with each other; mock discourses simultaneously seek to devalue a language or dialect while at the same time trying to capitalize on its value—they tug at the source language or dialect in two directions. In one way, they pull minority languages and dialects towards being something whites see as inferior, goofy, and worthy only to be poked fun of, and in the opposite direction towards being something associated with positive, tangible value that whites want to be able to lay claim to and capitalize on.

4 Linguistic Market/Symbolic Capital

Pierre Bourdieu’s analogy of the linguistic market in *Language and Symbolic Power* (Bourdieu 1991) provides a useful framework for conceptualizing the tension between the

semantic pejoration inherent in the formation of mock discourses and the covert prestige associated with languages and dialects spoken by marginalized groups. Though much scholarship on Bourdieu's views of language (Shusterman, 1999; Fowler, 2000) deals with the ways in which he argues that language legitimates power as a key part of the *habitus*—the network of social structures into which we are all inextricably embedded that “produces individual and collective practices...in accordance with the schemes generated by history” (Bourdieu, 1990 p. 65)—I would like to extend this analysis of Bourdieu's theories of the ways in which language works to legitimate existing social structures by taking his analogy of the linguistic market and applying it specifically to my case study of the Volkswagen and Subway commercials. Because these advertisements so explicitly illustrate both semantic pejoration and the covert prestige of AAVE and function in a real, capitalist market, I think that Bourdieu's analogy is especially salient and that the status of the commercials as texts designed to persuade consumers to buy particular products makes them a good starting point for application of various aspects of the theory of linguistic market.

Bourdieu's theories are clearly in line with any body of work that, like Hill's, attempts to expose systems of dominance being proliferated through subtle indices and covert persuasion. He writes in *Language and Symbolic Power* that:

[T]here is every reason to think that the factors which are most influential in the formation of the *habitus* are transmitted without passing through language and consciousness, but through suggestions inscribed in the most apparently insignificant aspects of the things, situations and practices of everyday life. (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 51)

The *habitus* is sustained through covert injunctions that we recognize and follow unconsciously, not through explicit linguistic instruction but through messages subtly buried within “the modalities of practices, the ways of looking, sitting standing, keeping silent, or even of speaking” (p. 51). In Bourdieu's theory, hegemonic social structures are proliferated through largely unconscious processes of persuasion—much in the way that mock discourses draw on negative stereotypes without ever explicitly acknowledging them or even bringing them to the foreground in a way that speakers using mock discourses would even recognize.

Bourdieu explicitly discusses the relationships between different languages and dialects in *Language and Symbolic Power* by analogizing these relationships to a market. He argues that linguistic exchanges between a speaker and a hearer are also at the same time “an economic exchange which is established within a particular symbolic relation of power between a producer, endowed with certain linguistic capital, and a consumer” (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 66). As such, “utterances are not only...signs to be understood and deciphered; they are also *signs of wealth*, intended to be evaluated and appreciated, and *signs of authority* intended to be believed and obeyed” (p. 66). Utterances gain value by being presented in a manner of speaking appropriate for the situation: “linguistic practice inevitably communicates information about the...manner of communicating, i.e. about the *expressive style*, which, being perceived and appreciated with reference to the universe of theoretically or practically competing styles, takes on a social value and a symbolic efficacy” (p. 67). In Bourdieu's linguistic market model, different ways of speaking have different symbolic value. They get this value through culturally determined market relations; Bourdieu writes that “utterances receive their value...only in their relation to a

market, characterized by a particular law of price formation. The value of the utterance depends on the relation of power that is concretely established between the speakers' linguistic competences" (p. 67). In this market system, mastery of more highly valued "linguistic competences," or ways of speaking, functions as a sort of symbolic capital. So in many situations in America, a dialect like standard American English would have a higher "market value," while a language like Spanish or a dialect like AAVE would have less, due to the uneven power relations between the speakers of these dialects.

The linguistic market analogy is a useful tool for conceptualizing the relationships between different languages or dialects, and thinking of these relationships in terms of relative market value allows insight into the motivations for speakers to use different languages or dialects in different situations. Obviously, even less valued ways of speaking have some value in this market, so there is some motivation for speakers of even the most highly valued languages or dialects to attempt to exploit some of the symbolic capital vested in the less well-ranked ones. The notion of symbolic capital vested in dialects that enter into market relationships with one another is a good way of conceptualizing covert prestige—speakers of standard, highly ranked languages or dialects desire some of the symbolic capital vested in languages or dialects associated with marginalized groups.

Bourdieu also recognizes this strategy of exploiting covert prestige and points out the ways in which it reaffirms existing hegemonic social structures. He calls attempts to cash in on symbolic capital vested in lower ranked dialects "strategies of condescension," which he describes as "deriving *profit* from the objective relation of power between the languages that confront one another in practice...in the very act of symbolically negating that relation, namely the hierarchy of the languages and of those who speak them" (Bourdieu 1991, p. 68). Purposefully using a lower-status way of speaking when the speaker is perfectly capable of using one with more symbolic capital allows for the exploitation of the value of the lower-status way of speaking. Strategies of condescension can be used when everyone in an audience recognizes the hierarchies present so that the speaker's choice to momentarily ignore that hierarchy "enables the speaker to combine the profits linked to the undiminished hierarchy with those derived from the distinctly symbolic negation of the hierarchy—not the least of which is the strengthening of the hierarchy implied by the recognition accorded to the way of using the hierarchical relation" (p. 68). As Bourdieu points out, by deliberately and consciously ignoring hierarchies between the symbolic capital afforded different ways of speaking in a given linguistic market, strategies of condescension and attempts to exploit covert prestige allow speakers of highly ranked languages or dialects to exploit what little symbolic capital is vested in the lower-ranked languages and dialects in two ways. First, they can draw on whatever positive associations come with the less highly ranked language or dialect, whether it's appearing folksy or common, or urban and hip. Second, speakers of higher-ranked languages and dialects reaffirm the ranking of their own way of speaking relative to the lower-ranked one that they momentarily use by drawing attention to the hierarchies that they, due to their positions of dominance, are free to subvert.

Bourdieu's analogy of the linguistic market and strategies of condescension thus provide a good way of conceptualizing the tension between covert prestige and the reinforcement of negative stereotypes inherent in mock discourses. By viewing languages and dialects as having symbolic worth in relation to one another in a linguistic market, we can see how covert prestige and strategies of condescension work by attempting to cash in on whatever "market value" is granted to lower status languages and dialects. We can also

see how such an exploitative move would reaffirm systems of linguistic dominance. Because, as Bourdieu points out, strategies of condescension are at least in part a deliberate attempt to strengthen existing hierarchies by drawing deliberate attention to the status differential between the languages or dialects (and speakers thereof) involved in a linguistic exchange, it also makes sense that they could potentially involve a degree of pejoration and draw on negative stereotypes of the speakers of devalued languages or dialects. If the exploitative use of minority dialects or languages by speakers of dominant ones is understood in market terms as an attempt to capitalize on the symbolic capital vested in the lower-status dialects while simultaneously reaffirming and strengthening the value of their own, it follows that this act is a potentially pejorative one and it is no surprise that mock dialects have the potential to form. Both semantic pejoration and covert prestige are seen as two parts of the same process.

5 Conclusions

I believe that my case study above illustrates that an expansion of Hill's theory of Mock Spanish is feasible and necessary. To that end, I propose the possibility of not only Mock Spanish or Mock AAVE but the notion of "mock dialects" as a conceptual tool for exploring and analyzing the ways in which the use of the languages and dialects of all marginalized groups by members of the dominant majority perpetuates systemic dominance and inequality. Though countless other examples of Mock AAVE exist in casual white speech (the pejorative sense of "baby mama/daddy" comes to mind, and I have been itching to find an opportunity to discuss how whites almost invariably use the word "bling" pejoratively), I limited the scope of my case study to the Volkswagen and Subway commercials because I believe that advertisements more clearly illustrate attempts to capitalize on the covert prestige of AAVE than examples from casual white speech. Although it could potentially be argued that the use of mock forms in day-to-day spoken interaction exist solely to elevate whiteness and denigrate those who are linguistically different, advertisements make it clear that something more nuanced is going on and that mock discourses also simultaneously operate as attempts to cash in on the social value granted to the languages and dialects of marginalized speakers. I felt it best to expose the attempts to exploit covert prestige inherent in the use of mock discourse in order to argue that Bourdieu's analogy of the linguistic market allows us to see the relationship between covert prestige and semantic pejoration. By showing how strategies of condescension both reaffirm existing hierarchies and exploit the symbolic market value of lower-status ways of speaking, the analogy of the linguistic marketplace provides a valuable conceptualization of how mock discourses operate.

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