"Language" or "Dialect"?: The Case of Ebonics and its Language Policy

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Abstract

In general, the English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching and learning mainly cover the standard forms of English, but English has various forms and is spoken by speakers from different ethnic groups and languages. This paper exemplifies how EFL learners can gain the English knowledge beyond its standard forms, through the transformative learning approach. In this research, the topic of "Ebonics" or an African American Vernacular English (AAVE) was chosen, as the term "Ebonics" was controversial in 1996 and has been discussed nationwide of whether "Ebonics" should be considered as a separate language from English or simply a dialect of American English. In this paper, documentary research from various sources was conducted without bias. In addition, to gain a complete view of language policy, this research was expanded to cover the bilingual education in the southern region of Thailand, so as to compare and contrast it with the American "Ebonics" case. At the end, the EFL learners have been transformed, not only to master their English knowledge, but also to develop their analytical and critical thinking and to combine scientific research methods with English studies for advancing the liberal arts education.

Keywords: dialect, Ebonics, language, language policy, transformative
learning

บทคัดย่อ

        การเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษาต่างประเทศ (EFL)
ครอบคลุมเฉพาะภาษาอังกฤษมาตรฐาน แต่ภาษาอังกฤษมีหลายภาษาย่อยและ
เป็นภาษาที่มีผู้พูดจากต่างเผ่าพันธุ์และต่างภาษา งานวิจัยนี้เสนอตัวอย่างการเรียน
การสอนที่ผู้เรียน EFL ได้เรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษมากกว่าภาษามาตรฐานโดยผ่านวิธี
การเรียนแบบการเปลี่ยนแปลง (transformative learning) ในงานวิจัยนี้ ผู้วิจัย
เลือกหัวข้อ อีบอนิกส์ (Ebonics) หรือภาษาย่อยพูดโดยคนแอฟริกันอเมริกัน
(AAVE) ซึ่งได้รับการวิพากษ์วิจารณ์ทั่วประเทศ ในปี ค.ศ. ๑๙๙๖ ว่า อีบอนิกส์
เป็นภาษาคนละภาษากับภาษาอังกฤษหรือเป็นภาษาย่อยของภาษาอังกฤษ งานวิจัย
นี้เป็นงานวิจัยเอกสารที่เกี่ยวข้องจากแหล่งข้อมูลที่หลากหลายโดยปราศจากอคติ
ทั้งนี้ งานวิจัยนี้ได้ขยายการศึกษาไปครอบคลุมการศึกษาแบบทวิภาษาในภาคใต้
ของประเทศไทยเพื่อศึกษาเปรียบเทียบกับกรณีอีบอนิกส์ของอเมริกา ในที่สุด ผู้
เรียน EFL ได้มีการเปลี่ยนแปลงให้มีความรู้ความเชี่ยวชาญภาษาอังกฤษมากขึ้น
กอปรกับพัฒนาความคิดวิเคราะห์สังเคราะห์และสามารถผนวกการวิจัยแบบ
วิทยาศาสตร์กับการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษซึ่งช่วยให้การศึกษาแนวศิลปวิทยาศาสตร์
(liberal arts education) ก้าวไปไกลขึ้น

คำสำคัญ: ภาษาย่อย, อีบอนิกส์, นโยบายภาษา, การเรียนรู้เพื่อการเปลี่ยนแปลง

1. Introduction

The English as a foreign language (EFL) pedagogy in Thailand mainly includes the standard forms of English such as British English, American English, or Australian English (Finegan, 1999, pp.16−17). In fact, English is spoken by peoples of different languages and ethnicities and various forms of English or Englishes are found in the real world. English is truly the world language, according to Stevenson (1994). There are approximately 300 million to 450 million native−English speakers and more than one billion people all over the world who speak some other forms of English. This means that hundreds of millions of people throughout the world speak English as a native language, a second language (SL/ L2), or a foreign language (FL).Thus, it will be beneficial for advanced SL/ FL learners to be exposed to other English varieties beyond the standard varieties in the inner circle (Schneider, 2009), so that learners will understand the sounds and forms of other varieties and this extended knowledge will help them be competent communicators in the global societies.

This research is an example of the EFL teaching and learning which covers varieties of English. Based on transformative learning method (Mezirow, 1997), EFL learners can not only gain a true knowledge of English, beyond the standard forms of English, but also by practicing their analytical and critical thinking skills. In this research, the topic of "Ebonics" was chosen, as it has been controversial and critically discussed nationwide (or even worldwide), especially by American citizens of various fields (Fillmore, 1997, para.1), of whether "Ebonics" should be considered as a language separate from English or just a dialect of American English.

To the view of non−linguists, the terms: "language" and "dialects" may not be clear. In other words, many people are unable to differentiate the two terms, nor to define them. However, in linguistics

or a scientific study of language, perse−, generally, the two terms can simply be defined by the fact that speakers of two different languages cannot understand each other, but the speech of speakers of two different dialects are mutually intelligible (Finegan, 1999, pp.14−19). In the same literature, it further illustrates the difficulty in drawing the line to separate "language" from "dialect." For example, some languages such as French, Spanish, and Italian, which are in the Romance branch of the Indo−European language family, are counted as different languages, as speakers of these three languages do not understand one another. On the other hand, in another case, though some dialects are thought to belong to the same language, they may not be mutually understandable amongst speakers who speak different dialects. For instance, Chinese dialects such as Cantonese and Mandarin share the same writing system, but have different spoken forms. Thus, the speech of Cantonese speakers is different from those of Mandarin.

Some questions arose of how important the concepts of "language" and "dialects" are and how their distinction would play a role to the national language policy and situation in bilingual or multilingual communities.

In this research, throughout the transformative learning process, the main theme is to study a controversial discrepancy borne from the issue of the language−dialect differences: the "Ebonics" resolution of the Oakland School Board of the United States of America in 1996−1997, together with the bilingual education in the southern region of Thailand.

In this research, through the transformative learning, EFL learners have been transformed, so as to understand both the American Ebonics and the Thai bilingual education in width and depth, as well as to be able to compare and contrast both American and Thai educational systems. This would lead to a novel way of teaching and learning

English, through a documentary research and the so−called transformative learning to advance learners to be able to think analytically and critically and to become multi−literate (The New London Group, 1996) in both standard forms of English and other varieties of English.

2. Background and Theories

This research involves both relevant linguistic theories and learning approaches.

2.1 Linguistic Theories

In this research, related linguistic theories serve as linguistic definitions of "a language" versus "a dialect" (Finegan, 1999, pp. 14−19), the history of English including the topics of pidgin and creole (Fasold, 1990), the world Englishes (Kachru, Kachru, & Nelson, 2009), and the sociolinguistic theories about the language policy (Fasold, 1984).

2.2 Learning Approaches

In this research, the main learning approach was to use the controversial Ebonics case for learners to self−learn, under the supervision of their advisor. At the beginning, learners, who had not known the "Ebonics" case prior to this research, studied the Ebonics case vigorously and critically. The data was drawn from various viewpoints e.g. the ones of the school teachers, administrative school boards, linguists, etc. These Ebonics viewpoints were found not only in the US educational contexts in pre−tertiary and tertiary levels, but also in its nationwide and worldwide media. In this way, learners, whose English was a foreign language (FL), discovered Ebonics case from a variety of perspectives. After learners gained an overview of Ebonics, they went through the data in breadth, width, and depth to develop their analytical and critical thinking, as well as to comprehend the wide variety of the American Englishes and cultures. Once they had a well−rounded

understanding of Ebonics, they were able to compare and contrast the US Ebonics case to the Thai language policy and situation. Along the way, learners changed their worldviews and advanced in their analytical and critical thinking skills, based on the Ebonics case. They were able to see the effects of the languages and cultures of the standard forms on the non–standard ones. Various forms of English, spoken in US, depended on the social factors such as ethnicities, social classes, in–groups/ out–groups, and levels of education (Fasold, 1990). Thus, learners were able to widen their worldviews towards the universality and diversity of global languages and cultures.

This type of learning process matched *the transformative–learning approach* (Mezirow, 1997), in which EFL learners were motivated to learn the linguistic contents from another "frame of reference" and to transform their L1 cognition in languages and cultures to the SL/ FL (English) ones.

In addition, this research was conducted in a scientific way. This means that learners conducted the research scientifically by going through and analyzing all types of data from all viewpoints without any bias. This also led to *the liberal arts educational approach*, in which learners could combine the scientific thinking to the arts contents.

Besides, this research can support the theory of *multiliteracies* for training learners toward their private, working, and public lives (The New London Group, 1996). In other words, learners became more literate in the standard forms of English, and also in other varieties of English. Furthermore, they were aware of distinctions within sub–social cultures and norms.

In sum, there are three main learning approaches in this study: the transformative–learning, the liberal arts education, and the multiliteracies approaches.

3. Aim

This study aims at helping learners advance in their English knowledge on the Ebonics case in US and the language policy in Thailand, through transformative learning.

4. Procedures

In this research, procedures can be divided into two main parts: the transformative learning and the documentary research.

In the transformative learning (Mezirow, 1997), the thorough process and outcome of the transformative learning were applied in this research.

In the documentary research, researchers gathered the important information about the "Ebonics" case and the case of the bilingual education in Thailand from various resources such as journal articles, online resources, and textbooks. The gained data were compared and contrasted.

The results are presented in the next section.

5. Results

The results of the transformative learning process and the documentary research are below.

5.1 Transformative Learning

This research exemplifies how the English studies of learners in the senior year can be expanded, through the transformative learning. This research helped advance learners to go beyond just the standard forms of English, but, rather, to be exposed to other forms of English, really spoken in this World. The process of transformative learning is described below.

First of all, learners who have already acquired English chose topics in which they were interested. In this case, the "Ebonics" was the topic that learners paid attention to. Prior to the beginning of this research, learners had no idea of what the "Ebonics" was, and would like to explore more details of "Ebonics." The topic on "Ebonics" allowed learners to discuss extensively of whether "Ebonics" should be a separate language from English, or should be considered as a dialect of English. It should be noted that during the transformative learning process, learners are not to be told that their answer are right or wrong. Instead, they must be informed that what is needed is their valid and plausible explanations and reasons.

Second, learners conducted scientific research in which a documentary type of research was implemented. In other words, a supervisor treated learners as researchers and allowed them to conduct the research independently to enhance their self−study and lifelong−study skills. The former also guided the latter in gathering all related information without any bias.

Along with the process of self−study, the supervisor helped learners develop their analytical and critical thinking skills. After acquiring the results of the documentary research (See Section 5.2), learners seriously and critically discussed of whether or not "Ebonics" was indeed a separate language from English or just a dialect of English. The discussion advanced learners' analytical and critical thinking skills. At this stage, learners were permitted to reconsider the answers that they had given at the beginning. After gaining enough information, they were then allowed to either stick to their first answer or change their answer. Once again, they were asked to support what their thoughts with plausible explanations and reasons. In this research, learners came to believe the fact that "Ebonics" was indeed a dialect of American English.

Lastly, learners were advised to compare and contrast what happened in the "Ebonics" case to the Thai educational system such as the bilingual education in the southern region of Thailand (See Section 6). This assisted them in being capable of integrating old and new information.

It is believed that, through the transformative learning process above, learners assisted themselves in gaining new knowledge and thinking analytically and critically, to combine old and new information, and to broaden their worldview. In other words, learners had transformed themselves to be knowledgeable in width and depth.

5.2 The Documentary Research

The results of the documentary research cover the background of the " Ebonics" (Section 5.2.1); the characteristics of "Ebonics" (Section 5.2.2); the Ebonics controversy of the Oakland School Board (Section 5.2.3); the concepts of "language" versus "dialect" (Section 5.2.4); and the English history and its dialects (Section 5.2.5).

5.2.1 The Background of the "Ebonics"

Historically, the term "Ebonics" literally means 'black speech.' It is a blend of the two words: 'ebony' meaning 'black' and 'phonics' meaning 'sounds' (Rickford, n.d.). This term was created in 1973 by an African American social psychologist, Robert Williams. In other words, the term "Ebonics" refers to "Black English" or the African American Vernacular English (AAVE) (Rickford, 1996a, 1996b), which is a different dialect from Standard American English (SAE) ("American Variety: African American English. Ebony + Phonics," n.d., paras. 2−3).

In terms of the origin of "Ebonics," according to Fromkin, Rodman, & Hyams (2003), there are three theories of the origin of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) or Ebonics.

In the first theory, Ebonics was the outcome of learning English as a second language. In the same literature, it stated that Ebonics was originated when African slaves learned English from colonial masters as their second language. The surface differences between Standard American English (SAE) and African languages were persisted due to the linguistic differences. Later, children were taught English by their parents in the forms that may not exactly match the standard forms of English. In the process of their English acquisition, they were taught some basic grammar of English, but not all syntactic features. Thus, this theory points to the fact that Ebonics or AAVE shares some grammar with SAE, but the syntactic and phonological rules are not similar due to the interference of the rules of native African languages.

The second theory, however, suggests that AAVE developed into a pidgin and a creole. Besides, AAVE started during the 17th to 18th centuries, the era of the slave trade. All African slaves were gathered and forced to use English as a lingua franca to communicate with one another. Due to the differences between the two languages, African slaves of the parents (first)' generation developed a simplified form called a pidgin. This pidgin then was developed into a creole language in the children's generation (Fasold, 1990, pp.180–222).

In *the third theory*, the origin of Ebonics is closely similar to the Southern dialects of American English. This theory suggests that the African slaves learned English of the Southerners. It also suggested that Southern dialects might adopt some features from AAVE because some White Southern children were said to be raised by black women and played with black children.

5.2.2 The Characteristics of the "Ebonics"

The Ebonics form, clearly, differed from that of Standard American English. The linguistic characteristics in terms of its phonology, lexicon, and grammar are, as follows:

In terms of the phonology of "Ebonics," clusters are simplified in (1). The inter−dental fricatives /θ, ð/ are substituted by the alveolar stops /t, d/ in (2). A final velar nasal is a final alveolar nasal in (3).

(1) /−ft/ > /−f/
e.g., lift up (SAE)   = lif' up (AAVE/ Ebonics)
(Wolfram, 2009, p. 330)

(2) /θ, ð/ > /t, d/
e.g., the, they, that (SAE) = de, dei, dat (AAVE/ Ebonics)
(Sidnell, n.d.)

(3) /θ, ð/ > /−n/
e.g., nothing (SAE)   = nufn (AAVE/ Ebonics)
(Sidnell, n.d.)

In terms of the "Ebonics" lexicon, Ebonics or AAVE shares the same vocabularies as Standard American English (SAE). However, there are some words that AAVE speakers use with specific meanings, as in (4) and (5).

(4) hep, hip (AAVE/ Ebonics) = 'well−informed, up−to−date'
(Sidnell, n.d.)

(5) dig (AAVE/ Ebonics)   = 'to understand, appreciate,
(Sidnell, n.d.)   pay attention of'

In the AAVE (Ebonics) grammar, AAVE speakers use the verb 'be' to present the habits, as in (6), as also mentioned in McWhorter (1998, p.138). They also omit the copula 'be' in the form of 'is', as seen in (7) and drop the possessive marker's', as in (8). Furthermore, they delete the final /−r/, as seen in (9). Besides, they use double

negation, as seen in (10) and another negative form 'ain't' instead of 'didn't', as seen in (11). Additional examples of completed past actions are evident in (12)−(13). Examples for (6)−(13) are presented below.

(6) She is not usually there. (SAE) = She don't <u>be</u> usually (Wolfram, 2009, p.330)   be there.
                                   (AAVE/ Ebonics)

(7) She is nice.(SAE)   = Shenice. (AAVE/ Ebonics)
(Wolfram, 2009, p.330)

(8) man_ hat(SAE)   = man's hat(AAVE/ Ebonics)
(Wolfram, 2009, p.330)

(9) car (SAE)   = ca (AAVE/ Ebonics)
(Labov, 1972, p.14)

(10) I didn't see anything. (SAE) = I ain't see nothing.
(Sidnell, n.d.)   (AAVE/ Ebonics)

(11) I didn't believe you on that day. (SAE)
= I ain't believe you that day, man. (AAVE/ Ebonics)
(Sidnell, n.d.)

(12) I finished seeing her today. (SAE)
= "I done seen her today." (AAVE/ Ebonics)
(McWhorter 1998, p.138)

(13) I finished washing the car by the time Jojo got back with the sodas. (SAE)
= "I be done washed the car by the time Jojo gets back with the sodas." (AAVE/ Ebonics)
(McWhorter, 1998, p.138)

Example (6) shows the use of copula 'be' for the habitual 'be' in intermittent activity. Example (7) presents the missing copula 'be' in the 3rd person singular form 'is'. In Example (8), the possessive marker '−'s' are omitted. In Example (9), the final '−r' are deleted. Examples (10) and (11) exemplified the double negation and the use of 'ain't' instead of 'didn't', respectively. Examples (12)−(13) present the completed action with the form 'done', instead of the regular past− tense or '−ed' form of the verb 'finished'.

Thus, it can be seen that the Ebonics/ AAVE form is different from English, in terms of its phonology, lexicon, and grammar.

5.2.3 The Ebonics Controversy of the Oakland Unified School District School Board

This section provides further information about the controversy of Oakland Unified School District school board (the Oakland School Board, thereafter) on "Ebonics."

The controversy of the Oakland School Board on "Ebonics" started on December 18, 1996 ("Ebonics (word)" in Wikipedia, n.d, para.1; "Oakland Ebonics resolution" in Wikipedia, n.d, para.1). At that time, the Oakland school board passed a controversial resolution in which "Ebonics" was termed as "African Language Systems are genetically−based and not a dialect of English" (Original Oakland Resolution on Ebonics, n.d., para.2).

The intention of the Oakland School Board was to establish the educational programs for children and youth with limited English proficiency. This group of students included the ones who spoke "Ebonics" which was termed by the Oakland School Board as "Black sounds" or "Pan African Communication Behaviors or African Language Systems" (Original Oakland Resolution on Ebonics, n.d., para.1). This was because the Oakland School Board was concerned about providing equal opportunities for all of the students including African American

students who were accounted for 53% of all the students in the district. Most of the African American students could not perform well in classes with the average of D+ (Gregorio, n.d., para. 21). From the Resolution, the Oakland School Board placed Ebonics as a separate language from English, so that they could establish the bilingual program or English as a second language (ESL) programs for "Ebonics" students to improve the English proficiencies and education (Gregorio, n.d., paras. 18−19).

A question arose of whether "Ebonics" is a separate language from English as proposed by the Oakland School Board, or as a dialect of American English as viewed by linguists.

Thus, it is worth it to review the concepts and definitions of "language" versus "dialect", and these affected the beliefs and thinking of educators and the national language policy, especially for the Ebonics case proposed by the Oakland School Board.

5.2.4 The Concepts of "Language" versus "Dialect"

The concepts of "language" versus "dialects" were based on the definitions and interpretations of the two terms.

In Collins COBUILD Advanced Learner's English Dictionary (2006, p.804), the term "language" is defined as "...a system of communication which consists of a set of sounds and written symbols which are used by the people of a particular country or region for talking or writing..." In the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (2010), 'language' is defined as "the expression of human communication through which knowledge, belief, and behavior can be experienced, explained, and shared."

In the same dictionary, the term "dialect" is defined as "...a form of language that is spoken in a particular area..." (Collins COBUILD Advanced Learner's English Dictionary, 2006, p.388). A dialect is

spoken by a particular of group of people, and it must therefore be noted that a dialect is not the inferior form of the language (Fromkin, Rodman, Hyams, 2007, p.445). In addition, there is no dialect that is better, more correct, or more logical than the other dialect (Akmajian, Demer, Farmer, & Harnish, 2010, p.281).

Another criterion for drawing a line between language and dialect is the mutual intelligibility. It suggests that if a speaker from one dialect group can understand and communicate with another person from another dialect, then they speak different dialects of the same language. In contrast, if the two parties cannot understand each other, they speak different languages. (Akmajian, Demer, Farmer, & Harnish, 2010, pp. 273−274; Baron, 1997)

As for the "Ebonics" case, most of the linguists thought that "Ebonics" or African American Vernacular English was a dialect of American English (Patrick, n.d.; Rickford, 1996). Labov (1997) and McWhorter (1998) expressed that Ebonics, or African American Vernacular English, shared most of its grammar and vocabulary with other dialects of English but AAVE was different in numerous ways. McWhorter (1998) added that the fact that AAVE was different from Standard American English, and it does not mean that Ebonics was a slang, a grammatical mistake, or a broken English. He further explained that AAVE had a well−formed set of rules of pronunciation and grammar that was capable of conveying complex logic and reasoning.

Thus, Ebonics is not a separate language from Standard American English, unlike other languages such as French, German, Italian, Russian, with different and incomprehensible sounds, grammars, and vocabularies. In fact, "Ebonics" was a dialect of American English.

Since Ebonics is considered as another English dialect. The question arises as to what are the characteristics of other English dialects? Might they be similar to or different from that of AAVE? The next section covers other English dialects.

5.2.5 The English History and its Dialects

The English language has developed from Old English to Middle English, Early Modern English, and the Modern English (Pingkarawat, 1998). The same literature stated that the English language had gone through multiple influences from other languages via the conquests such as the German conquest, the Scandinavian conquest, the French Norman conquest, and its colonial period. Throughout the British history, the English language has expanded itself and has been widely spoken by peoples around the globe (Kachru, Kachru, & Nelson, 2009).

As Ebonics is considered as an American English dialect, it is interesting to review other dialects of American English. Two dialects of American English, exemplified in this research, are Texan and Chicano dialects.

First, *Texan English* was "a sub−dialect of the border American English dialect known as Southern American English, also contains some unique lexical, grammatical, and phonological features" (Texan English, Wikipedia, n.d.). Texan English is mainly spoken in Texas (Hinrichs et al., 2012), and terms of the phonology is different from Ebonics in that Texan English is rhotic, while Ebonics is r−lessness, as indicated in (14). However, Texan English has its unique consonantal and vocalic system. Texan English distinguishes between [hw] and [w], as illustrated in (15), while Standard American English does not. Furthermore, Texan English has different pronunciation of vowels from Standard American English, as evident in (16).

(14) Texan English: *car /kar/*
       Ebonics: *car /ka/*
       Standard American English: *car /kar/*

(15) Texan English: *whale* [hw] versus *wail* [w]
Standard American English: *whale* − *wail* [w]
(Texan English, Wikipedia, n.d.)

(16) Texan English: *buy* /ba:/
Standard American English: *buy* /baI/
(Texan English, Wikipedia, n.d.)

According to Sidnell (n.d.), both Ebonics and Texan English does not have a vocabulary separated from other varieties of American English. However, Ebonics and Texan English speakers use some words that cannot be found in any other varieties. Both also use some Standard American English words for different meanings. Examples of Texan English are in (17) and (18).

(17) 'looker' (Texan) = 'an attractive woman' (SAE)
(Texan English, Wikipedia, n.d.)

(18) 'fixin' to' e.g., "It's fixin' to rain." (Texan)
= 'about to' (SAE)
(Texan English, Wikipedia, n.d.)

As for the grammatical features, both Ebonics and Texan English are different from Standard American English. For example, Ebonics uses 'gonna' and 'gon' for indicating its future tense, as in (19) Texan English has multiple modals, as in (20).

(19) Ebonics: "I gon tell him to be quite because he don't know what he talkin' about"
SAE: "I will tell him to be quite because he doesn't know what he is talking about."
(Sidnell, n.d.)

(20) Texan: "I might could do that."
     SAE: "I may be able to do that."
     (Texan English, Wikipedia, n.d.)

From this comparison between Ebonics and Texan dialects, we can see that they both were slightly different from Standard American English. However, both of them still can be understandable and recognizable by other American English speakers. This supported what Baron (1997) had once stated that two people use the same language if they can understand the speech of each other. This is one of the indications that both Ebonics or African American Vernacular English and Texan English are dialects of American English.

Another American dialect is *Chicano English* (Chicano English, Wikipedia, n.d.; Fought, 2003). *Chicano English* or *Mexican American English* is spoken by Chicanos who reside in the south of Texas. *Chicano English* (CE)is different from both Standard American English and Mexican Spanish in terms of the phonology, lexicon, and grammar, as CE was influenced by Spanish (Fought, 2003, p.1).

In terms of the phonology, Chicano English has syllable−timed rhythm, whereas English has stress−timed rhythm. Chicano English simplifies or substitutes some consonants, as in (21)−(23). Chicano English makes less distinction between the tenses /i/ and the lax /I/, as in (24).

(21) *Devoicing*
     Chicano: /z/ > /s/ e.g., 'easy'/isi/
     SAE: /z/ 'easy' /izI/
     (Chicano English, Wikipedia, n.d.)

(22) *Devoicing*
    Chicano: /v/ > /f/ e.g., 'love'/lʌf/
    SAE: 'love' /lʌv/
    (Chicano English, Wikipedia, n.d.)

(23) *Cluster Simplification*
    Chicano: CC# > C# e.g., start /star/
    SAE: 'start /start/
    (Chicano English, Wikipedia, n.d.)

(24) *Tense/ Lax Vowel*
    Chicano: feel = fill (homophones)
    SAE: feel # fill
    (Chicano English, Wikipedia, n.d.)

In terms of lexicon, there are some lexical differences between Chicano English and Standard American English, as in (25).

(25) Chicano: borrow e.g., "Borrow me a pencil."
    SAE: lend e.g., "Lend me a pencil."
    (Fromkin, Rodman, & Hyams, 2007, p.446−447)

Like Ebonics, Chicano English also differs from Standard American English in terms of syntactic features. Chicano English, which is similar to Spanish, has a double negation, as in (26).

(26) Chicano: "I don have no money."
    SAE: "I don't have any money."
    (Chicano English, Wikipedia, n.d.)

In sum, Chicano English, like Ebonics or AAVE, is not a separate language from English, as it is comprehensible for those who know SAE.

Thus, in this section, the results of the documentary research were presented in terms of the background of the "Ebonics"; its characteristics; the Ebonics controversy of the Oakland School Board; the concepts of "language" versus "dialect"; and the English history and its dialects.

Section 6 will discuss the Ebonics case and the educational policy in the southern region of Thailand.

6. Ebonics and the Educational Policy in the Southern Region of Thailand

The Ebonics case and how it compares with education in the Southern part of Thailand, where people speak more than one language or dialect, is discussed further in this section.

Back to the Ebonics case, the resolution of Oakland School Board caused a huge controversy, as they tried to apply AAVE or Ebonics which is an informal variety of English to be another separate language from English or the second language for AAVE students in the Oakland district. In doing soothe language policy and the funding from the government would have changed to support the schools to run a bilingual program.

However, on the one hand, this resolution actually is based on a good intention to upgrade the proficiencies of AAVE students, not only in (Standard American) English but in other content areas with the use of English as a medium of instructions. They also mandated some instruction in that dialect, both for "maintaining the legitimacy and richness of such language... and to facilitate their acquisition and mastery of English language skills." (Aristar, 1996).

On the other hand, the fact that the Oakland School Board defined the so−called Ebonics as a separate language from Standard American English led to the controversy of whether Ebonics is really a separate language from SAE or just a dialect of American English. This issue is discussed widely. In sum, to the linguistic view, Ebonics is simply an American−English dialect, as speakers of Ebonics and SAE are mutually intelligible.

In light of this, learners conducted further documentary research on the language policy of the southern region of Thailand, where speakers speak more than one dialect or more than one language.

In the literature (Premsrirat & Samo, 2012), at first it was found that the educational achievement scores of the southern provinces of Thailand are lower than expected. In those areas such as the province of Pattani, speakers have Pattani Malay as their native language, which are not the same as the Standard Thai, the official language of Thailand.

Basically, Pattani Malay is a dialect of the Malay language spoken mainly by speakers of Thai Malay ethnic group in the southern provinces of Thailand along the border of Malaysia. However, Pattani Malay is also used as a lingua franca by Thai people in southern rural areas. Religion wise, some citizens in the region are Muslim, and others are non−Muslim.

Linguistically, Pattani Malay has different phonological and syntactic features from Standard Malay. Therefore, Pattani Malay and Standard Malay evolved in different directions. Pattani Malay received more influence from Thai, while Standard Malay was influenced more by English. This was because Malaysia was once under the British colonization. (Premsrirat & Samo, 2012)

In the Thai school system, previously, all content subjects have been taught in Standard Thai, and students with Pattani Malay as their

native tongue have faced difficulties in learning and understanding those subjects. However, after a bilingual education was introduced and initiated, students are able to adapt themselves to be emerged into using Standard Thai in school, as well as improving their scores in the content areas.

The systematic and circumspect educational planning is the key to the success of this bilingual education plan in Southern Thailand. The results of this project were highly satisfactory and the students are successful in learning. According to the students' pre−test and post−test scores analysis (Premsrirat & Samo, 2012), the Thai language skills of Kindergarten 1 and Kindergarten 2 show a dramatic improvement, of more than 45% on average, among children in one of the three experimental schools. In an on−site evaluation conducted by the Thailand Research Fund, parents were asked to grade the project in which the result was 99.9% approval. Teachers gave the project grades ranging from 80−90%. They noted that the students in the project were really provided much more creativity, confidence, and enthusiasm than other students in traditional monolingual classes. The approach of this project is very demanding of the teachers. However, these evaluations prove the fact that the students understand their lessons much better and are now well−prepared to advance to higher grades.

When comparing the Ebonics case to the Southern Thai Pattani−Malay case, it seems that both Ebonics and Pattani Malay are non−standard forms of the national formal languages: Standard American English and Standard Thai, per se. Both forms represent the in−groups amongst AAVE speakers in USA and Malay speakers in Thailand, respectively. However, the Thai bilingual program in the South seem to gain a higher success. One reason is that the Oakland School Board, mistakenly, defined the Ebonics as a separate language from English, and this led to the national controversy through the media (Terrence, David, Gerda, Enid, & Wright, 2006). Thus, the controversy made

people oppose to the bilingual program of the Oakland school system. Moreover, the School Board themselves also had no statistical evidence to prove its success in improving the students' educational performance. Besides, Oakland School Board's program was not well−planned enough.

In contrast, the bilingual program in Southern Thailand are planned systematically and it did the 9−yearexperimental action research project for students to gradually adapt Pattani Malay into formal education language. This is considered successful because of the steady and well−planned process which was without any prestige controversy and became one of the best examples of bilingual education system planning.

Conclusion

This research exemplifies how EFL learners can obtain a holistic perspective of English. Through the process of transformative learning, learners discover how to obtain the necessary data to scientifically conduct research that supports their own assumptions without prejudice or bias. Furthermore, learners are encouraged to try to understand the others' thoughts to broaden their own perspectives. In addition, learners learned how to think logically and critically when new material is presented. At the same time, one can bear in mind during conducting a research that a researcher has to be open−minded and objective. This is to prove the controversy with plausible evidences and reasons.

After conducting this research on the Ebonics controversial case, through the transformative learning, learners discover that they have not only advanced the knowledge of linguistics and the arts of conducting a research on controversial debates, but also developed the analytical and critical thinking. The fact that learners can transform themselves reflect the ultimate higher education on liberal arts education, the integration between science and arts, and also the learning process

helped cultivate learners the Mahidol Core Values (Mastery–Altruism–Harmony–Integrity–Determination–Originality–Leadership).

In details, first of all, Mastery gives learners the systematic perspective to judge and analyze problems with one's own consideration. Altruism makes one think of other people's benefit, not just one's own self. The society would recognize the significance of the different dialects, not as the inferior varieties of language.Harmony makes people more capable of working with one another successfully and peacefully. It helps them show empathetic by judge things more neutrally. The Oakland School Board and people in the country would be able to effectively solve this problem together without prejudice or bias. With Integrity, learners bear in mind that they have had to use only facts and to consider them without bias. Through their Determination, learners finish this study by bringing together all effort into every process. For Originality, learners used what they learned from study to establish new ways of solving the problem, even in Thailand, one's own country. In the future, if by any chance these learners can become leaders, it is hoped that they can takeep this controversy in mind and judge every problem with understanding and without a bias.

Last but not least, the research was conducted in the scientific ways, by elaborating only facts and analyzing the facts without bias. After reading all the information from many aspects, learners started to understand more about the both sides. Taking only facts and consider them with understanding and without bias make learners become the "True Liberal Arts".

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