Language Varieties' Influence on Oral Reading Fluency and Accuracy

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To better understand students' instructional needs, we recommend taking their language backgrounds into consideration. This includes students who may speak other languages (e.g., English language learners and dual language learners) as well as those who may speak other language varieties. Language variety is another term for dialect; each language variety follows complex, rule-governed phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, and lexical systems. See this glossary for additional information. There are many different variations of the English language, which may be spoken by students in the classroom. The one used in mainstream print media, business, and education is General American English (GAE).

Oral reading fluency and accuracy in GAE can be influenced by the student's language variety due to different rules in phonology, morphology, and syntax of non-GAE language variations. The phonology of non-GAE language varieties may differ in sound, stress pattern, intonation, and prosody, which impacts reading fluency. This can happen in these cases:

	Vowel and diphthong sound variations in other language varieties	Consonant and consonant digraph sound variations in other language varieties	Consonant clusters in other language varieties
Explanation	In General American English (GAE), each of the five vowel graphemes has its own specific short and long sounds, and diphthong graphemes (e.g., *oy* and *ow*) have their unique sounds, which comprise the 44 sounds of the English system. In some other language varieties, two different vowel graphemes may produce the same short vowel sound. This is typical of the short /i/ and short /e/ in certain words. It can also occur with r-controlled vowels, and diphthongs. In such cases, children may use the phoneme pronunciation used in their speech when they read words.	In GAE, there are 44 phonemes (sounds). Each phoneme can be represented by one or several different graphemes (written letters); graphemes can stand for one or more sounds, e.g., the letter *m* only has one sound (/m/) but the letter *c* can have two sounds (/s/ or /k/). The same applies to digraphs, e.g., *th* can stand for /th/ voiced (e.g., *that*) or unvoiced (e.g., *thing*); but most digraph graphemes only have one phoneme. In some other language varieties, a consonant or consonant digraph grapheme may be pronounced differently and stand for a different phoneme based on its position in the word. For example, *th* may be pronounced as /f/ at the end of a word (e.g., a person may say *maf* for the word *math*) or as /d/ at the beginning of a word (e.g., a person may say *dis* for the word *this*). In such cases, children may use the phoneme pronunciation most similar to their speech when they read words.	In GAE, each sound in final consonant clusters is pronounced, e.g., when we say the word *fast*, we distinctly hear and say /s/ and /t/ at the end of the word. In some other language varieties, only the first consonant (C1) of a two consonant (C1C2) cluster is pronounced, e.g., a person may say *fas* for the word *fast*. In such cases, children may pronounce only C1 when reading certain CVCC (consonant-vowel-consonant-consonant) words. In some other language varieties, the pronunciation of certain consonant clusters is different from that of GAE. For example, the *t* in the *str* consonant cluster may be pronounced as /k/ (e.g., a person may say *skreet* for *street*).

	Vowel and diphthong sound variations in other language varieties	Consonant and consonant digraph sound variations in other language varieties	Consonant clusters in other language varieties
Example – how does this affect oral reading fluency and accuracy?	Students may say /i/ when reading *pen* or /e/ when reading *win* because they pronounce the short /i/ and short /e/ the same way (e.g., *pen* and *pin* sound the same in their language variety). This variation may be apparent in their writing as well. (AAE, AppE, MAE, and SoE)	Students may say *maf* for *math*, *muv-uh* for *mother*, or *dis* for *this* in their language variety; so when they encounter *th* in a word, they may read it as /f/, /v/, or /d/ depending on the placement of the *th* grapheme. (AAE and MAE) Students may say *van* when reading *ban* or *bet* when reading *vet*. (MAE) These variations may be apparent in students' writing as well.	Students may say *tes* for *test* and *des* for *desk*. (AAE, MAE, and SoE) Students may say *skreet* for *street* and *skrawberry* for *strawberry*. (SoE) These variations may be apparent in students' writing as well.
Applicable language varieties	African American English (AAE) Appalachian English (AppE) Mexican American English (MAE) Southern English (SoE)	African American English (AAE) Mexican American English (MAE) Southern English (SoE)	African American English (AAE) Mexican American English (MAE) Southern English (SoE)
Instructional tips	To determine whether or not students can recognize or produce letter sounds and read in GAE, familiarize yourself with your students' language varieties phonetic systems. Writing opportunities will also help make this clear, e.g., if a student writes *pin* for *pen*, this confirms their perception that /e/ may be represented by the grapheme *i*. Students may need explicit instruction with many opportunities for modeling and practice to support their pronunciation and writing of certain letter sounds in GAE that are either different from or do not exist in their language variety.	To determine whether or not students can recognize or produce letter sounds and read in GAE, familiarize yourself with your students' language varieties phonetic systems. Writing opportunities will also help make this clear, e.g., if a student writes *wif* for *with*, this confirms their perception of /th/ in the final position of words as /f/. Students may need explicit instruction with many opportunities for modeling and practice to support their pronunciation and writing of certain letter sounds in GAE that are either different from or do not exist in their language variety.	To determine whether or not students can read CVCC words in GAE, familiarize yourself with your students' language varieties phonetic systems. Writing opportunities will also help make this clear, e.g., if a student writes *fas* for *fast*, this confirms their perception of final consonant clusters (i.e., pronouncing only C1 of a C1C2 cluster) and their pronunciation. Students may need explicit instruction with many opportunities for modeling and practice to support their pronunciation and writing of all letter sounds of CVCC words in GAE and words with beginning consonant clusters that sound different in their language variety.
More on…	Vowel and diphthong sound variations	Consonant and consonant digraph sound variations	Consonant cluster variations

	Past tense, plural, possessive marking, and third person singular present rules in other language varieties	Divergence in subject-verb concord in other language varieties	Variable and systematic use of copula and auxiliary forms of the verb *to be*
Explanation	In General American English (GAE): • Past tense is grammatically marked with an *-ed* ending and pronounced with the sound /d/, /id/, or /t/ at the end of words, e.g., *I wanted to take a nap.* • Plurals are marked by adding an *-s* or *-es* at the end of words and by reading and pronouncing words with the added suffix, e.g., *two races.* • Possessive are marked by adding *'s* after the owner's name. • Third person singular may be marked and pronounced with an *-s* or *-es* at the end of verbs, e.g., *she watches.* In some other language varieties: • Past tense may be marked by context or inflection (e.g., by using words like *yesterday* or *last week*). It may also have a variable *-ed* form (e.g., *It lookeded pretty awesome.*). • Plurals may be marked by a numeral or quantifier preceding the noun. • Possessives may be denoted by proximity in which the owner's name precedes the object, with word order indicating possession, i.e., "owner + thing owned." • Third person singular present form may retain the same form in person and number. Each of these instances can impact how a word is read, adding an inflectional ending to words in GAE. For example, a teacher may expect to hear inflectional endings pronounced for the past tense of *want* (i.e., want-ed for *wanted*), the plural of *race* (i.e., rac-es for *races*), the possessive marking of *sister* (i.e., sister-s for *sister's computer*), and the third person singular of *watch* (i.e., watch-es for watches). In the case in which the word remains unchanged in other language varieties, inflectional ending pronunciation will match how the word is spoken, i.e., each word previously mentioned (*want*, *race*, *sister*, and *watch*) may be pronounced as a one-syllable word or as a word without an additional inflectional ending suffix.	In GAE, verbs are marked to agree with the subject-noun phrase; this is often referred to as "subject-verb agreement" or "concord." This concord is mostly apparent and differentiated with 3rd person singular subjects, which are often represented by adding the *-s* inflectional suffix to verbs, e.g., *My sister buys milk.* When the 1st person, 2nd person, or plural subjects are used, there is no distinction to the verb, e.g., *I buy milk* and *we buy milk.* In some other language varieties, subject-verb concord does not always follow that of GAE, and the pattern may be different for both singular and plural subjects. For example, a student may say *Me and my sister buys milk* for *Me and my sister buy milk.* The following are four categories of agreement patterns that are often influenced by other language varieties: Conjoined noun phrases: • *Me and my sister buys milk.* • *A girl and her auntie was a-playin'.* Collective noun phrases: • *Some people likes it warmer than you might.* • *People's not worried about it.* Other plural noun phrases: • *Their parents has taught 'em better than that!* • *The birds was all up on the same tree.* Expletive "there": • *There's different kinds of fruits and vegetables.* • *There was three coyotes right outside!*	In GAE, the copula (i.e., linking verb *to be*) is used to link the subject to its complement in a sentence, e.g., *The grass is green* or *it was going to dry out. To be* is irregular and has eight different forms: be, am, is, are, was, were, being, and been. In other language varieties, there may be variable and systematic uses of the copula and auxiliary forms of the verb *to be.* Context helps determine the appropriate meaning, since a stranded "be" verb could be due to other reasons: • Habitual "be" is the use of the copula verb "be" to mark a habitual aspect, e.g., *She always be doing that.* • Cluster simplification, e.g., *They be going, if I let them* for *They'd be going, if I let them.* • Present tense copula verb, e.g., *the cat in the tree* for *the cat is in the tree.*

Language Varieties' Influence on Oral Reading Fluency and Accuracy (continued)

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	Past tense, plural, possessive marking, and third person singular present rules in other language varieties	Divergence in subject-verb concord in other language varieties	Variable and systematic use of copula and auxiliary forms of the verb *to be*
Example – how does this affect oral reading fluency and accuracy?	Students may read: • *I want to take a nap* for *I wanted to take a nap* (GAE). • *They ran two race* for *They ran two races* (GAE). • *She watch the birds* for *She watches the birds* (GAE). These differences in grammatical rules in various language varieties can influence the ways that students read a passage and impact both fluency and accuracy.	Students may read: • *Me and my sister buys milk* for *Me and my sister buy milk* (GAE). • *Some people likes it warmer than you might* for *Some people like it warmer than you might* (GAE). • *There was three coyotes right outside!* for *There were three coyotes right outside!* (GAE). These differences in grammatical rules in various language varieties can influence the ways that students read a passage and impact both fluency and accuracy.	Students may say and read: • *She running* for *She is running* (GAE). • *She be running* for *She runs* or *She's always running* (GAE). • *He gone* for *he is gone* (GAE). These differences in grammatical rules in other language varieties can influence the ways that students read a passage and impact accuracy.
Applicable language varieties	African American English (AAE)	African American English (AAE) Appalachian English (AppE)	African American English (AAE)
Instructional tips	To help students identify and apply GAE rules to different patterns of inflectional endings, isolate words that have a different inflectional ending and help students read and pronounce the sounds expected in GAE. Pointing to and acknowledging differences in pronunciation in GAE and the student's language variety might also be helpful. Then, place the word back in the sentence and assist students in reading the full sentence, if adding context is confusing due to language variety differences. For example, show the word *races* and help students identify the inflectional ending suffix and pronounce the word in GAE. Then, place the word back in its contextual sentence and read the entire sentence together: *They ran two races*. It may be beneficial to focus on only one pattern difference at a time, e.g., first, focus only on verb forms showing past tense with the *-ed* ending. Once students grasp the expected pronunciation in GAE, move on to a different pattern difference, e.g., nouns showing plurality (*-s* and *-es*).	To help students identify and apply GAE rules to different patterns of word endings, isolate words that have an ending pronounced differently in the student's language variety and help students pronounce and read the sounds expected in GAE. Pointing to and acknowledging differences in pronunciation in GAE and the student's language variety might also be helpful. Then, place the word back in the sentence and assist students in reading the full sentence. For example, show the word *like* and have students read it in isolation. Then, place the word back in its contextual sentence and read the entire sentence together: *Some people like it warmer than you might.* Again, pointing to and acknowledging differences in pronunciation in GAE and the student's language variety might also be helpful.	To help students identify and apply GAE rules to the copula verb *to be*, it may be helpful to teach it in the context of a passage, and to focus on only one type of its common use. For example, highlight differences in the students' language varieties when to be is used to mark a habitual occurrence, e.g., *she always be singin'* and its application in GAE, i.e., *she is always singing* or *she always sings*. Pointing to and acknowledging differences in usage in GAE and the student's language variety might also be helpful. Provide many opportunities for students to practice both reading different forms of *to be* and using them in writing.

Language Varieties' Influence on Oral Reading Fluency and Accuracy (continued)

	Past tense, plural, possessive marking, and third person singular present rules in other language varieties	Divergence in subject-verb concord in other language varieties	Variable and systematic use of copula and auxiliary forms of the verb *to be*
More on…	Past tense rules Plural rules Third person singular present rules	Subject-verb concord	Variable and systematic use of copula and auxiliary forms of the verb to be

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	Reflexive pronouns and possessive pronouns in other language varieties	*a*-prefix rule in other language varieties

Explanation	In General American English (GAE):
	
	• Reflexive pronouns are formed by adding *self* to the possessive pronoun for 1st and 2nd person (e.g., *my*self, *your*self, *our*selves, and *your*selves) and by adding *self* to the accusative form for the 3rd person (e.g., *him*self, *her*self, *it*self, *them*selves, etc.).
	• Possessive pronouns indicating possession are: *mine*, *yours*, *hers*, *theirs*, etc.
	
	In some other language varieties:
	
	• Reflexive pronouns may be formed by adding *self* to all personal pronouns, including those in the 3rd person (e.g., *hiss*self, *they*self, or *their*selves). (AAE and AppE)
	• Possessive pronouns:
	  ° May have overgeneralized or different forms, such as using *mines* (AAE and MAE) for *mine* (overgeneralization of *hers* or *yours* in GAE).
	  ° May end with *-n* in the context in which *-s* would be added in GAE (i.e., in an absolute position phrase such as *it's yours* or *yours is great*), e.g., *yourn*, *hisn*, *hern*, *ourn*, and *theirn*. (AppE)
	  ° Be replaced with a bare pronoun, e.g. *It's they book*. (AAE)
		In GAE:
		
		In some language varieties, some verbs ending in *-ing* will include the *a*-prefix, pronounced as a schwa. This occurs most commonly with progressives. For example, a student might say *My aunt had a horse and we was a-ridin' it one day.*
		
		Common contexts also include where the participle form functions as an adverbial complement, such as after movement verbs (*come, go, take off*, etc.), e.g., *All of a sudden a bear come a-runnin'*, and with verbs for continuing or starting (*keep, start, get to*, etc.), e.g., *He just kep' a-beggin'.*

Example – how does this affect oral reading fluency and accuracy?	Students may read: • *The teacher hisself came to check on things* (AAE and AppE) for *The teacher himself came to check on things* (GAE). • *That book is mines* (AAE and MAE) for *That book is mine* (GAE). • *It's they book* (AAE) for *It's their book* (GAE). These differences in grammatical rules in various language varieties can influence the ways that students read a passage and impact both fluency and accuracy.	Students may read *We was a-ridin' the ATV through the jungle* for *We were riding the ATV through the jungle* (GAE). These differences in grammatical rules in various language varieties can influence the ways that students read a passage and impact both fluency and accuracy.

Language Varieties' Influence on Oral Reading Fluency and Accuracy (continued)

	Reflexive pronouns and possessive pronouns in other language varieties	*a*-prefix rule in other language varieties
Applicable language varieties	African American English (AAE) Appalachian English (AppE) Mexican American English (MAE)	Appalachian English (AppE)
Instructional tips	To help students identify and apply GAE rules to pronouns, explicitly teach pronouns, model their use in GAE and provide many opportunities to use them in reading and writing. Pointing to and acknowledging differences in pronoun usage in GAE and the student's language variety might also be helpful.	To help students identify and apply GAE rules to different words, isolate words that have a different pronunciation in the student's language variety and help students pronounce and read the sounds expected in GAE. Pointing to and acknowledging differences in pronunciation in GAE and the student's language variety might also be helpful. Then, place the word back in the sentence and assist students in reading the full sentence. For example, show the word *riding* and have students read it in isolation. Then, place the word back in its contextual sentence and read the entire sentence together: *My aunt had a horse and we were riding it one day*. Again, pointing to and acknowledging differences in pronunciation in GAE and the student's language variety might also be helpful.
More on...	Reflexive pronouns Possessive pronouns	a-prefix rule