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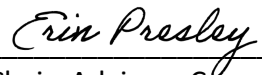
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ASKING APPALACHIA: APPALACHIAN ENGLISH IN THE WRITING CLASSROOM

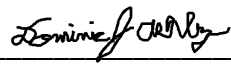
BY

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Date 4/1/2022

ASKING APPALACHIA:
APPALACHIAN ENGLISH IN THE WRITING CLASSROOM

By

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Master of English
Eastern Kentucky University
Richmond, Kentucky
2022

Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
Eastern Kentucky University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
MASTER OF ENGLISH
May, 2022

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the people of Appalachia, who deserve to be seen with the beauty and grace that thrives within their culture and language.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis would not have been possible without the guidance, patience, and support of my wonderful committee, Erin Presley, Dominic Ashby, and Jill Parrott. They are truly a dream team when it comes to this topic, and I cannot thank them enough for their never-ending insight and encouragement.

I also want to thank Eastern Kentucky University's English Department, as these faculty members have shaped me into the young academic that I am as my graduate studies end. They have guided me through my studies and created an academic family of support that I relied on through my undergraduate and graduate studies at ECU.

I want to thank my friends who have seen the not-so-calm-and-collected side of this process. Sarah and Lauren, my co-workers and fellow graduate students, always provided an ear to rant to, and somehow knew exactly what to say to keep me focused and pushing forward. Also, Kaitlyn, my friend since kindergarten and roommate, who got to see the entire process unfold, including when I first peeked at the responses to the survey and cried tears of joy.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I want to thank my parents. They have passed along different aspects of the culture to me, which has made me into a strong Appalachian woman who can do anything she sets her mind to—which includes writing this thesis!

ABSTRACT

This thesis combines primary and secondary research in order to make an argument about the need for better educational practices for Appalachian students. A problem is first established that, because of how Appalachian people and their culture are represented in the media, negative stereotypes are spread about those from the region who are easily identified by their use of Appalachian English. Standard English is widely taught, and students are encouraged to suppress their accent and dialect in order to mediate this. However, these practices allow no room for these students to use and embrace their own language. This thesis investigates the responses of Appalachian people regarding their perception of Appalachian English, experience in writing classrooms, and exposure to Appalachian literature which establishes that as students they are negatively impacted by the current treatment of their language. Further, this thesis lays groundwork for better pedagogical practices for Appalachian English speakers including the honoring students' own languages, assessment of student work, teaching of code-meshing, inclusion of positive examples of Appalachian culture, and use of creative writing in the classroom. This study aims to establish a more Appalachian-focused pedagogy that promotes a greater sense of pride for the students in the area, which will in turn lead to a reinvestment into the region.

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Preface

Language scholars and instructors alike have debated and discussed students' rights to their own languages, and this debate is especially important when it comes to Appalachian students. As an Appalachian person myself, I realized that I was taught to suppress my natural language, dialect, and accent through my education and experiences in writing classrooms. Further, I had not been exposed to Appalachian literature until I attended a university and took an Appalachian Studies course. My classmates and I were asked to read a novel by an Appalachian author, and I selected *Trampoline* by Robert Gipe. This was a life-changing experience as Gipe integrates Appalachian English into his novel, and I had never seen my dialect written out on a page before, let alone written out in a published book. This sparked my interest and allowed me to focus my studies with the goal of learning more about the situation surrounding my culture and why this experience (both the suppression of using Appalachian English and encountering it in print late in my education) is the case for myself and many others. After discussing it with my friends, relatives, and colleagues, I knew I also wanted to investigate what Appalachian people have to say about their experiences and how it influenced their understanding of their language and identities.

Through my graduate studies at Eastern Kentucky University, I have learned more about composition pedagogies and how it is unfortunately common that students may be asked to suppress their own language due to the importance placed on Standard English as the language of professional success. Nonstandard language, such as Appalachian English, does not conform to the broadly accepted style of writing, and so it is not considered "academic" or "formal." Traditionally, writing instructors think that if students cannot conform to a standard language, they will not be successful in their professional lives and academic endeavors, which may be true to a certain extent, but the negligence of instructors to acknowledge Appalachian English causes students to lose the ability to use this language and may negatively affect students' perceptions of themselves. This has led me to want to find a way for students to be able to use and express their own language while still being successful in their professional and academic lives.

When given the opportunity for individual research in my graduate courses, I have used every opportunity to learn more about Appalachia and how dialect is handled in schools. Overall, my research has shown that scholarship lacks concrete ways for composition teachers to make room for both the teaching of Standard English and the students' current use of Appalachian English. For this project, I have combined research of publications on rhetoric, composition, and writing pedagogies with my own field research on Appalachian people and their personal experiences involving their language in order to develop new strategies for educators to follow that can help bring about this change in writing classrooms. The paper that follows includes a mix of several composition and pedagogy practices and theories, such as place-based education (Biviano, Gallo & Hermann), code-switching vs. code-meshing (Lee & Handsfield, Saeedi & Richardson) and honoring the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC)'s statement that students have a right to their own languages. My own survey research has surveyed Appalachian English users on their experiences in composition classrooms, exposure to Appalachian literature, their sense of pride for their language, and their understanding of others' perceptions of them based on their language. In short, this thesis argues for better practices for Appalachian composition instructors to follow when working with students in the area.

I want future Appalachian students (students that I hope to educate one day) to not have the same experience that I had. I did not understand the complexity of my own language because it was not taught in my classes, and I had never encountered Appalachian literature until my post-secondary education. It was then my responsibility to focus my studies to learn more about myself, my culture, and how I am affected by it. The use of Appalachian English is a large part of the identity of these students, and it should not be stamped out of them through their formal education. Additionally, this research has larger implications; Appalachia is a struggling region, but a more Appalachian-focused pedagogy will lead to a greater sense of pride for the students in the area, which will in turn lead to a reinvestment into the region.

1. The Appalachian “Problem”

The Appalachian region faces many challenges: poverty, unemployment, poor infrastructure, and drug use, to name a few. It is a region defined by the Appalachian Regional Commission by geographical location (see Figure 1) in the eastern United States, and spans across thirteen states, from southwest New York to northeast

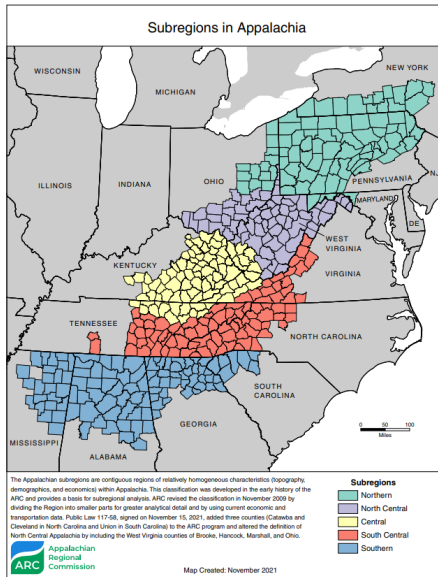


Figure 1: Subregions in Appalachia

Mississippi. Though there is debate about the official distinction of the Appalachian region, it is a very real place to those who live there even though it may sometimes seem like a “mythical land” to those outside it (Clark & Hayward). This unique geography has allowed a flourish of unique people, language, and culture.

The language found there, Appalachian English, differs vastly from Standard English, which is a prescriptive language that was developed to normalize English and is often considered more formal and academic. I will not disagree with this practice; students need to learn how to write for a professional audience for job applications, publications, and documents in their future careers. However, the way Standard English is taught and valued over students’ own language is harmful (Hayes, “Op’nin’ the Door” 176). It is a great injustice that Appalachian students are nearly forced by their educators to suppress their unique, mountain language (McCarroll, Snyder) and replace it with Standard English. This gives in to the negative stereotypes that surround the region; “mountain talk” is widely considered to be the dialect of the illiterate, uneducated, and poor. Instead, we should prove these stereotypes and assumptions wrong by embracing this language and helping

to preserve it through student writing. The perceptions of Appalachian people would change if we could see more Appalachians using their dialect proudly in academic and professional roles.

The Hidden Minority

Appalachian students are a marginalized group. They face difficulties that privileged students do not face; however, they are an invisible minority. They are predominately white but are discriminated against due to differences between their Appalachian culture and mainstream culture (Powers 88). According to the Appalachian Regional Commission, the population of Appalachia is made of 19% minority groups while the national rate is 39.9%. Like these minority groups, Appalachian people are identified as belonging to an “other” and discriminated against due to this status. The use of Appalachian English is an immediate way people are identified as being Appalachian, invoking the application of stereotypes onto the dialect speakers. Sometimes these stereotypes are applied as nearby as residents in the same state. Appalachia spans across thirteen states, with West Virginia being the only state completely inside the region. This divides the remaining states between Appalachian and non-Appalachian portions, which results in the non-Appalachian residents having negative views of those who live in the region due to the cultural differences between them.

For example, Appalachian English is received so negatively in the state of Kentucky that non-Appalachian residents aim to distance themselves from the region and “have very negative opinions about how the people in the mountains speak” (Cramer 46). These residents are aware that “the dominant American image of Kentucky stems from the negative stereotypes of Appalachia” (Cramer 62) and is why they hope to distance themselves from the stigma. This negative reception is also present in schools. In fact, dialect speakers are not tracked in school statistics because they are “white English speakers and are not considered [part of] a subgroup” (Crotteau 27). Sometimes, these class markers are not obvious on the surface, but conflict between the common blue-collar lifestyle of Appalachians and the white-collar lifestyle of the academic cause these class markers to become present in composition classrooms (Fedukovich 143).

To those outside the region, the fact Appalachian people are predominately white justifies the jokes and negative stereotypes against the Appalachian people since they are not considered socially offensive when directed towards white Americans. Appalachian people are discriminated against in the most unexpected moments: “Unlike the mountains, which can be seen from some distance, stereotypes jump out at you in ambush—at parties and meetings, at dinner with friends, from movies, from magazines and newspapers, from your favorite TV show. Even in college classes” (Shelby 153). Appalachian people must live with this burden constantly, as other minorities do, and once they see how others perceive the region, it creates a conflict within them. Therefore, being an Appalachian person means one must grapple with images of Appalachia that do not pertain to their own experience (Shelby 153–54).

This “problem” has been addressed for other minority groups, such as how 2020 began an ongoing, strong social movement, Black Lives Matter, that challenges systemic oppression; the summer of 2020 contained a public outcry of protests and civil demonstrations, which lead several businesses and organizations to release statements about their commitment to making change and ending systemic oppression and racism. Leading organizations in composition are getting behind this movement (such as the CCCCs and their “This Ain’t Another Statement! This is a DEMAND for Black Linguistic Justice!”), because the Black community has language that varies from the standard, and quite literally, overcorrecting, modifying, and essentially oppressing Black people for their language in the writing classroom is a form of White Supremacy. There is a similar need for linguistic justice for Appalachian English speakers; though Appalachian people are a “hidden minority” as they are predominantly white, Appalachian people also face discrimination and disadvantages based on where we are from, which is an aspect that is out of one’s control. Though Appalachian people may not have a nationwide movement to fight their own oppression, there is an outpour of Appalachian pride and scholarship has happened (which predates the nation-wide movement of Black Lives Matter) and includes the work of the Appalachian Studies Association, regional artists, and allies. Perhaps the Black Lives Matter movement will help push linguistic justice for all dialect speakers and can help bring greater attention to

the needs of Appalachian students. As the CCCC's statement addresses, the fight for linguistic justice must begin in the composition classroom.

The interactions students have in composition classrooms is a starting point for their understanding of their language and their perception of themselves. Present and future composition instructors have a responsibility to continue this outpour of pride if they teach Appalachian students, but the same sentiment should be held by all instructors who encounter students who bring their own language into the classroom. Those tasked with instructing students must respect all languages and experiences that students bring into the writing classrooms. Though the CCCC's first released the statement that students have the right to their own languages in 1974, my research shows this has not been upheld. Additionally, it is important to point out that, specifically regarding Appalachian English, only one source (Sohn) attached in the extensive bibliography of the CCCC's statement addresses it. Appalachian English lacks the attention it needs in academia.

Perpetuation of Stereotypes by the Media

This status as a hidden minority, meaning that the Appalachian people are predominately white but still targeted for discrimination, makes it much easier for stereotypes to become accepted. There is a wide range of stereotypes that represent Appalachian people in popular culture, most of them negative and offensive. Further, "a stereotype is a composite of the most vivid, memorable, and reductive traits of a given identity, often resulting in an unchanging character whose traits mark them as different from a cultural—and in America, a particularly 'modern' and educated—norm" (Hall qtd. in Massey 124–25). This means that the Appalachian stereotype is a product of the circulated, reduced characteristics compared to the American cultural norms and is not representative of the area's culture and people.

The Hillbilly Character. The stereotypical hillbilly character, who was first known as a "fool," is an outcast, either placed by others or themselves outside of accepted codes (Ballard 139-40). This shows the marginalization and "othering" of the Appalachian hillbilly, which makes him a minority outside of his community. A few definitions of this character can be offered: "The noun 'fool,' according to the Oxford English Dictionary,

usually fits one or more of these descriptions: 'deficient in judgment or sense, one who... behaves stupidly, a silly person, a simpleton'; 'one who professionally counterfeits folly for the entertainment of others, a jester, a clown'; or in Biblical terms, a 'vicious or impious' person (Ballard 140).

This character moved through literature and into other forms of media, such as comics, and began to pick up the associations with rural people. In the first comic to feature hillbillies as the main characters, Al Capp introduced characters such as Mammy, Pappy, and Abner Yokum in *Li'l Abner* in 1934 (Ballard 144). Capp sets the family in Dogpatch, Kentucky, and they discover that the world outside of their home is a treacherous place (Ballard 144). The comic can be considered satirical, with *Li'l Abner* always triumphing over his opposition, who frequently represented ideas affecting American society. Despite the outsiders constantly exploiting and taking advantage of Abner's evident gullibility, he is never corrupted and maintains his goodness (Ballard 145). *Li'l Abner* remained popular for several years and was compiled into *The Best of Li'l Abner* in 1978.

As home entertainment advanced, this stereotypical character moved onto the television screen, and it remained an inaccurate portrayal of Appalachian way of life; however, stereotypes of the "hillbilly fool" were also paired with likable and admirable qualities: "Although the fictional people who populated rural sitcoms lacked education, most compensated with a strong moral compass and healthy dose of common sense" (Eskridge 93). These

shows were designed to pull a rural audience despite misrepresenting its viewers. Even shows such as *The Beverly Hillbillies* (1962-1971) (see Figure 2) were likable because



Figure 2: Buddy Ebsen, Max Baer Jr., Donna Douglas, and Irene Ryan in *The Beverly Hillbillies* (1962)

the characters were overall wholesome, such as Jed Clampett who "was always grabbing for a jar of corn liquor in a way that recalled hillbilly stereotypes, but the character also displayed a quiet thoughtfulness and dignity that gave him another dimension" (Eskridge 93-4). This expresses that if a character is not reduced down to simply their negative stereotypes, they can be relatable and likable to those they are portraying.

Romanticization of the Region. For those who live outside the region, the Appalachian way of life is either stigmatized or, on the other hand, romanticized by its representations in the media (Clark & Hayward, Johnson) but both create an inaccurate understanding of the region, the culture, and the people who live there. Very often, Appalachian culture is presented through television, comics, movies, etc. A prime example that many are familiar with is *The Andy Griffith Show* (1960-1968). In this show, Andy Griffith uses a very specific dialect to represent his character, which serves the purpose of establishing the rural setting in which the show takes place (Johnson). Griffith manipulates his audience with dialectic features of phonology and syntax, such as elongation of vowel sounds and the use of *they* as an expletive (Johnson 71). The town of Mayberry, North Carolina, represents a romanticized view of Appalachia and rural life that captivates audiences but unfortunately does not accurately depict the culture of the region and perpetuates the stereotype of homogeneity.

Homogeneity. One of the most harmful stereotypes of the region is that the culture is homogeneous, meaning one culture lives throughout the region with not much diversity, and this is a stereotype easily perpetuated through media such as the aforementioned television show. Based on the representations in media, Appalachian culture is reduced down to basic terms, when truly there is a variety of influences that affect the arts and culture of the region. For example, basketmaking can be traced back to Cherokee tradition, and one of the most iconic instruments in traditional Appalachian music, the banjo, can be traced back to African origins (Hayes, "Language" 53). The same can be said for the language, often referred to as "Mountain Talk" or "Appalachian English." Some descriptors of this language are "bad grammar, hillbonics [or yallbonics], hick, comfortable tongue, nonstandard English, briar, and countrified" (Clark & Hayward 1). Though there is no official recorded origin of Appalachian English, there is evidence of

the language being derived from Scotch-Irish and perhaps Elizabethan words (Berrey), which proves there is an interesting linguistic history of the language that deserves to be acknowledged.

More recently, a movement to embrace Black Appalachians, coined “Affrilachians” by Frank X Walker in 1991, has pushed against the idea that there is no racial diversity in the Appalachian Mountains. Walker created this term with the intention to fight the stereotype of an “all-white, all-poor Appalachia,” and since other Affrilachian people have joined in sharing their experiences (“Affrilachian: A History of the Word”). This shows that Appalachian people have the power to share their experiences to fight against stereotypes.

Poverty. According to the Appalachian Regional Commission, Appalachia has higher rates of poverty than the national average (see Figure 3), and eastern Kentucky is one of the most impoverished areas in the United States. Though this is true, this statistic does not define the experience of every Appalachian person who has lived in east Kentucky.

The region has been struggling with poverty for a long time, and was first put in the public eye for this reason with the media coverage and presidential campaign called The War on Poverty. The television program was the first to bring national attention to the issues in Appalachia. This was a significant event that led to the “othering” of Appalachians from the rest of America. “The idea of

Appalachian otherness gained renewed prominence in the 1960s with the ‘discovery’ of remarkably high levels of poverty in the region—especially in the coalfield communities of West Virginia and Kentucky—and the subsequent war on Poverty” (Billings &

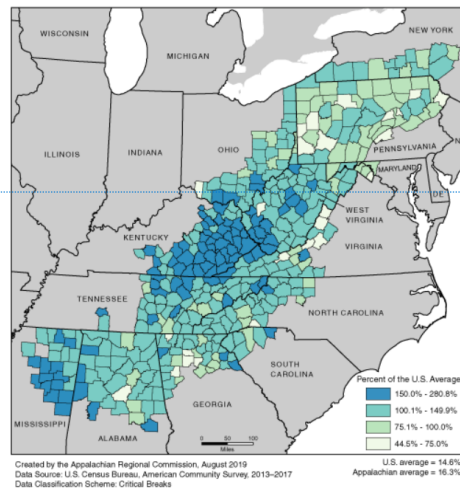


Figure 3: Relative Poverty Rates in Appalachia, 2013-2017

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Kingsolver 227-28). The media coverage showed images of impoverished Appalachians in horrible conditions. It focused on a very limited view of the Appalachian way of life, but the images shown in the program quickly became representative of all of Appalachia.

During this time, President Johnson paid a visit to Appalachian Kentucky to promote the Appalachian Regional Development Act as a part of the War on Poverty. Media further covered Appalachia through this event, and the “images of the rural poor created an image of southern people as impoverished, uneducated, and desperate” (Eskridge 109). This sudden and shocking representation of Appalachian people in the media led to a widespread perception of them as simply impoverished and in need of help. Though the depictions were authentic, the images were not representative of the entire Appalachian way of life, as some families are better off than others in the region. The program, so widely broadcasted to the American people, would perpetuate stereotypes of mountain people for years to come.

In the late 1960s, the country inherently “lost interest in Appalachia as a ‘problem region,’[so] the War on Poverty became billed as a disastrous waste of money and resources, and rural poverty once again faded from public consciousness, [and, therefore, shows like] *The Beverly Hillbillies* became considerably less significant culturally” (Graham & Monteith 197). Since The War Against Poverty had failed, and Appalachia fell out of the public eye, no solution was ever found for the region. What is left are inaccurate representations that still harm perceptions of Appalachian people and leave negative effects on those connected to the Mountains. Through examining different types of popular culture, we can see why these representations are harmful, why they are popular, and why they are wrong. This is an experience that students should have, as well, to expand their understanding and knowledge about the stereotypes of their region. Though not as important as seeing positive examples of their culture (which I go more into more detail about later in this paper) students should be shown examples of mainstream popular culture that (mis)represent Appalachia and its people. This will give them knowledge about stereotypes that may unjustly be placed on them and allow them to have informed discussions about where those stereotypes came from.

2. Appalachian English

The use of Appalachian English is one of the most obvious ways to tell someone is from Appalachia, and therefore, makes that person a receptor of the harmful stereotypes associated with the region. Just as understanding these stereotypes can lead to thoughtful discussion and prepare Appalachian people to fight against them, the understanding of Appalachian English can do the same. Therefore, Appalachian people should be taught about their language to deepen their understanding of it and give them the ability to discuss it with others.

First, we must look to others passionate about the subject to define Appalachian English. There are many ways to do so, whether it be to focus on the grammar and pronunciation of Appalachian vocabulary, or to delve into the linguistic properties and history of the language. Either way, this investigation proves that Appalachian English is a valid variant of the English language and deserves to be taught to those who speak it.

Defining Appalachian English

Grammar. Though the topic is raising in popularity, there are not many publications on Appalachian English that aim to explain the language and provide examples. However, a great resource that does so is Troy D. Smith's impressive blog post "How to Speak Southern Appalachian," as it presents an expansive list of Appalachian dialect, grammar rules, and examples in a way that honors and respects the language. He is an author and historian, and at the end of this post he shamelessly plugs one of his novels, *Good Rebel Soil: The Champ Ferguson Story* (2015), which is about a Confederate guerrilla soldier. He says he uses quite a bit of dialect in his book, which shows Appalachian authors purposefully use Appalachian English in their writing and may use his blog post to do so.

This blog post, however, is a fantastic example of how dialects should be considered a valid spoken language. Smith expresses several times the value of this dialect, "remember that it IS a dialect, and accent, a different way of saying things--not something inferior, which is how it has usually been portrayed. Its speakers continue to be assumed to be ignorant, backward, and lazy." It seems this list was compiled through his own experience and the input of others, as investigating the comment section will

show Appalachian English speakers discussing their use of the language and suggesting additions to his already expansive list. This is important for students to hear, as they should know how their way of speaking is perceived by others but should not perceive it in that way themselves. He describes differences and variations depending on the county or region of Appalachia but ultimately argues that like Standard English, Appalachian English has rules that are just as complex. The very long list of dialectal terms and rules that follow prove that claim.

On this list, Smith breaks down common terms, verb usage, and pronunciation that separates this dialect from standard dialect. For example, “Wasper = wasp,” “Tote = to carry,” and “Boggan, or toboggan = a knit cap” (Smith). Verbs can have different tenses, for example “ruin” in the past tense is “rernt” (Smith). In my own experience, I notice myself saying “learnt, sount, and burnt, to name a few. Some pronunciations are unique as well, such as “Serious = seerce,” “vomit = vomick,” and “Vienna sausages = vye-eenies” (Smith). These examples are all abnormal when compared to Standard English and will cause conflict when students are expected to write only in Standard English. The complexity here shows that this language is truly unique, and it should be preserved in younger generations of Appalachian people.

Smith presents Appalachian English in a way that Appalachian people may have never encountered before. The rules he explains are ones they may practice when speaking to my family and friends but have likely never seen them written out before as if they were “real” rules to follow. Dialect speaking students could greatly benefit from seeing Appalachian English treated with an equal importance to Standard English. The grammar established could become meaningful to them as a basis for writing. Further, the Appalachian way of life can be preserved and recorded through writing and there is no better way to do that than through the authentic and accurate language of the people.

It is also important to note the readers’ interaction with this post. Some readers related very well to what was posted, but others felt some things were missing from the list. This language is very diverse throughout Appalachia, so it can be different for each person who reads it. Smith listened to his audience and added their suggestions to his list. Thankfully his post is here to preserve the dialect of those through Appalachia.

Linguistics. The Appalachian dialect is one of the surviving forms of old language, and scholars have long discussed the origins of it. Some say the Appalachian dialect has origins from the Scotch-Irish settlers, and it has been found that several terms, grammatical features, and pronunciation of this language is recognizable to native Appalachians (Hayes, “Language” 52-3). Others may argue that the language takes a lot of characteristics from Southern English migrants (McQuaid), as several words can be read in the plays of Shakespeare. Since the region stretches over thirteen states, Appalachian English has many variants that can be observed as locally as in one’s own community.

On the other hand, the Appalachian dialect has been debated as even being a dialect, as many have the misconception that it does not represent a culture or history; instead, Appalachian language has been perceived as a signifier of a lack of education, ignorance of Standard English (or “correct” English), and a threat to students’ success in economics and society (Hayes 52). This is a widely-held perception of those who are not familiar with linguistic study, but thankfully, the Appalachian dialect has been in focus for linguists, and many Appalachians are grateful, as looking at the Appalachian dialect to investigate the patterns and ideas behind the language use can lead to an understanding of the cultural heritage that helps to develop language differences, that ultimately should not be considered “right” or “wrong” (Hayes, “Language”). This is a problem that has plagued Appalachian students: their language has long been corrected in the classroom. The work that linguists do helps to promote a greater understanding of the language as a valid form of communication and challenges preconceptions about those who speak it.

When it comes down to it, language is more than a means of communication: it symbolizes social experiences and locates us within social groups that give us our identities (Luhman).

Dialect is widely considered by those in linguistic fields as a variety of a language that is clearly distinguishable by its syntax, phonology, and lexicon (Clark & Hayward). This means the Appalachian dialect has very distinct grammar, speech sounds, and vocabulary. For example, the dialect can be used in such a way: “I’m a-fixin’ to do a right smart bit of work in the morning but they ain’t no way I can git it done ‘til pert ‘near

dinner time” (Luhman 332). This is a near exaggeration, as it is a purposeful illustration that combines as many examples as possible into one sentence, you can see a variety of the characteristics of Appalachian English here.

There are several key characteristics of the dialect that are often investigated by linguistic scholars. These are well outlined by Lester V. Berrey in his article “Southern Mountain Dialect,” and include local differences, pronunciations, palettizations, metathesis, parts of speech, pleonasm, portmanteau, and folk etymologies. Dialectal differences noted by Berrey are specific to Southern Appalachia and the Ozarks, though as previously stated, one can expect to find different dialectal characteristics outside of these areas with other forms of “Mountain Talk.”

A-prefixing is one of the most notable characteristics of the Appalachian dialect. It involves adding an “unnecessary” a-prefix to words, though it must be done following a set of constraints, like any other rule of syntax. In this practice, “a-” is pronounced [ə] and is often attached to a verbal *-ing* form that is also modified (McQuaid 2). For example, A-prefixing must not be used with lax-vowel-initial verbs, such as **a-asking*, or verbs with noninitial stress, such as **a-discovering* (Wolfram & Christian qtd. in McQuaid 4). Further, the resilience of this practice gives an intriguing look into linguistic studies; a-prefixing causes a cross of morphology and phonology, as well as morphology and syntax (McQuaid). The dialect also has unique features of contraction forms, such as in the case of *ain't* and *hain't*. This practice developed in the region much like other contractions and have become common practice to where the two are used interchangeably for most dialect speakers (Montgomery 55).

As you can see, looking at this language linguistically reveals just how complex it truly is. It is almost ironic that the stereotype involving the language is that those who speak it are ignorant and uneducated, but the dialect shows a long history of complex developments through a language.

However, it should be noted that looking at the language historically may unintentionally affirm stereotypes of the region, such as the residents being uneducated or the way of life in the mountains being outdated. It is important for Appalachian people to have a deeper understanding of their language and culture which includes its origins, but

it should be done so with stereotypes in mind. Perhaps this language has survived due to the pervious isolation of mountain communities, but students can attest that their own experience differs from these stereotypes (especially in an electronic age), and this could open the door to where their language stands linguistically today.

Appalachian English in the Writing Classroom

The presence of Appalachian English in classrooms has caused turmoil among students and teachers. There are a lot of misrepresentations of Appalachian dialect that have led to negative stereotypes about the region and have contributed to the marginalization of this group, which in turn has cause students to be routinely criticized for dialect because it does not match the dialect present in the school system (Harless 70).

There are several ways in which Standard English poses a threat to dialect speaking students. First, there is a societal need for Standard English to be the dominant form of dialect (Harless). The goal of Standard English is to set a consistent, normalized language; however, this removes personal identifiers from one's self-expression whether based on class, race, or country of origin. As a result, the usual practices that English Language Arts teachers use, for example, may have adverse effects, such as making the student feel isolated by separating them from their own language or cultural group (Biviano). Appalachian students are given a choice of group solidarity or being stigmatized due to their accent or dialect (Powers). Students can feel this pressure from both sides and can clearly differentiate between "real talk" and "school talk," (Powers 97) or the way they are free to talk and express themselves at home versus the way of speaking they must conform to at school. In some cases, students who perceive those nonstandard ways of talking are not as highly valued by the school as Standard English may deliberately fail to produce assignments to match teacher expectations (Powers). It is important to note that this division is also experienced by Appalachian academics, as in Cassie Fedukovich's case in which she describes how she must suppress her natural dialect in the academic setting in fear that she will lose credibility. Her awareness of this pressure causes her to add linguistic elements, such as code-switching to her pedagogical goals (Fedukovich 146).

Unfortunately, this language has been directly connected to the success of Appalachians due to these harmful stereotypes. In fact, “speech is but one of the many markers of social position that we use to make guesses about others based on less than complete information” (Luhman 332). To “help” Appalachian students avoid these negative labeling by others, teachers think they must overcorrect their students in order to ensure their success beyond school, which is a flawed perception that I would argue perpetuates stereotypes. Appalachian students may be unsuccessful for reasons beyond how they sound, such as “systemic social inequality that makes it difficult to access education opportunities and jobs that pay fair wages without causing environmental harm or requiring outward migration” (Hayes, “Language” 51-2). Some students see their Appalachian heritage as something to be ashamed of.

To expand, Appalachian people who take on academic and professional roles also struggle with the use of Appalachian English. Some must put the outdated tool of “code-switching” (which I will delve into further in a later section) into place to separate themselves from the negative stereotypes of the region when fulfilling professional roles and duties. In other situations, Appalachian scholars who are discussing Appalachia have a pressure to “sound the part” to meet the expectations of their audience and feel authentic enough (Hayes, “Language” 45). This illustrates how the connection between language and credentials of a speaker is very strong. Though there are plenty of Appalachian people in professional and academic roles, the issue arises when they feel pressured to hide or minimize part of their identity in order to avoid scrutiny by their peers and audience.

Though Appalachian English is a complex language with an interesting linguistic history, the harmful stereotypes of mountain people have overtaken the language and what it means. The harsh truth is the use of Appalachian English “will completely affect another person's evaluation of [the speaker's] intelligence, their reliability, their truthfulness, and their ability to handle complex tasks” (Montgomery qtd. in Smith). Therefore, this paper further argues for a more Appalachian-centered pedagogy that illustrates the complexity and value of the language can better prepare students to use their Appalachian English without fear of stigmatization.

3. Asking Appalachia

Introduction

In my experience, I was of course overcorrected and taught Standard English over my natural Appalachian English. My Standard English was perfect on paper, but I still retained my Appalachian English in my speech. I differentiated a “correct” way to write and speak apart from my natural way and learned to switch between the two depending on the setting I was in. But I had no reason to ever write in Appalachian English, so I never practiced that ability. When I got to Eastern Kentucky University, I took an Appalachian Studies course as an elective. This is where I had a life-changing experience that led me down the path I am taking today with my studies. I was assigned to read the book *Trampoline* by Robert Gipe, and it was quite an experience. *Trampoline* is a unique novel, as it is partially a graphic novel, but like much other Appalachian literature, it is written with dialect and accent details. When I first opened the book, I had no idea what I was reading. I had never seen Appalachian English written out on a page before, let alone in a published book! I struggled to read it at first, but quickly realized that what I was reading was part of my natural vocabulary, and I had heard the pronunciation out loud for my whole life. This made me think: Why had I never considered the ability to write this way? Why have I never read an Appalachian author before this moment? This inspired me to ask other Appalachian people about their own experiences.

Methods

The research in this project set out to accomplish a lot. I hoped to compare responses of Appalachian people to what I have already learned to determine what the best course of action would be for future instructors who are working with Appalachian students. This research combined qualitative and quantitative questioning in order to get a broad understanding of how Appalachian people perceive themselves and their language based on their time in writing classrooms.

Materials and Data Collection. The data was collected via an electronic survey with primarily close-ended, multiple-choice questions with optional short-answer fields at the end of each section for additional responses. Likert scales were also used to determine how great of an understanding the participants had of certain concepts. The sections of the survey focused on particular aspects and are as follows: About You, Perception of Appalachian English, Appalachian English in Writing Classes, Appalachian Literature, and Final Responses. Participation was completely voluntary, and each submission was recorded anonymously.

The About You section asked for demographic information to create a basis for the responses. Participants were asked if they openly identify as Appalachian, where they are from, where they currently live, their age, gender, and level of education. The Perception of Appalachian English section asked questions about their understanding and use of Appalachian English, including whether they suppress their usage and if there are any stereotypes they hope to avoid by doing so. Appalachian English in Writing Classes asked about their experiences in composition classes: if the experience was positive, if they were corrected for their use of nonstandard language, if they were taught about Appalachian English as a valid language, their use of it, and whether or not they have been taught code-switching or code-meshing. Appalachian Literature asked about whether and when they had read any Appalachian authors and how this impacted their understanding of their language and culture. The Final Responses section asked if they hoped to see the language become more acceptable to use, and if it should be preserved and continue to be used.

The survey was hosted via Google Forms and was distributed via email and social media. Since I am an Appalachian myself, I knew that I could reach a fairly large participant population on Facebook. The survey was shared publicly from my personal Facebook account. The original post was shared twenty-nine times, and from the shared posts I can see, it was shared an additional fifteen times. I had expected a maximum of 100 responses to this survey over the length of the study, but at the fifth hour after sharing there were more than that. After a few days on social media, the survey was sent out to Eastern Kentucky University's First-Year Writing program email list. I asked the

writing instructors to distribute the survey to their students, hoping to get more responses in the younger age group. After the survey was open for approximately three weeks, there had been 213 responses recorded.

Assessment. Google Forms automatically converted the quantitative data into pie charts showing the number and percentage of responses each option got for the multiple-choice questions and bar graphs for the Likert scale responses. The qualitative data was then reviewed and considered alongside the quantitative data. All data was converted into a Google Sheet for analysis and easy conversion. I then assessed the county of origin and current location of each respondent and made a note if they had migrated out of Appalachia. Participants who do not consider themselves an Appalachian or did not list their home or current location within the Appalachian Regional Commission's definition of Appalachia were considered for removal from the data. If these participants gave extra reasoning, such as their parents being from Appalachia, their data were kept in the study.

Limitations. The largest limitation of the survey was the pool of the participants. Since the survey was shared on my personal Facebook, most of the participants were women from eastern Kentucky. Appalachia spans across thirteen states, so in the larger picture the participants are from a small portion of the region. I would like to repeat this study in the future with better means of access to a more varied and diverse population. If I were to repeat this study, I would change the survey questions as well. I would like to have more specific questions regarding where the participants are from and where they currently live. While I was assessing this data, I only counted out migrations that I could confirm, meaning they listed a county or city that is outside of the Appalachian Regional Commission's service area. Some participants simply answered with a state, so I was unable to determine if they were still in Appalachia or not. I would better word the questions to easily ask them if they moved away and/or if they live in a large city.

This study could also benefit with a change of the Likert scale questions. I think it is hard for participants to effectively answer these questions, as each person has their own understanding of the question and may relate it to the scale differently. These questions asked them about their awareness of standard and nonstandard language. I personally learned the most about standard versus nonstandard language late in my

English undergraduate career and throughout my English graduate career. Now, I think the education level and area of concentration for each person could influence their level of “understanding.” Depending on these factors, I would imagine certain participants have a deeper understanding of language than others. I would like to find a better way to ask these questions in future studies.

I would also like to note that since the responses were collected via an electronic survey that was distributed through social media, I expect most participants took the survey on their mobile phones. This means a lot of the short answer and additional comments are expected to have spelling, punctuation, and grammar errors. The intention of this survey is not to investigate the “correctness” of the responses, only the meaning of the answers provided.

Results

Demographics. The majority (84.5%) of participants in this study openly identify themselves as Appalachian. Though they are mostly located in eastern Kentucky, a few respondents were from West Virginia, and a few participants (6.3%) have reported migrating out of Appalachia. The ages were reported as follows: 18-22 (17.4%), 23-28 (33.3%), 39-54 (35.2%), 53-73 (14.1%). No participants were over the age of 74. Women

What is your level of education?

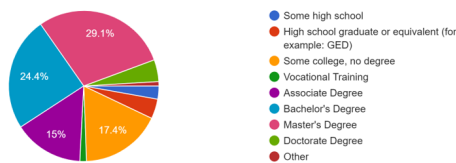


Figure 4: Level of Education of Participants

mostly participated in the survey (84.5%), with only 14.1% of the responses belonging to men and 1.4% of responses coming from nonbinary or other gendered people.

Education was one of the most varied demographics (see Figure 4), as 2.8% reported some high school, 4.2% reported a high school diploma or equivalent, 17.4% reported some college with no degree. A whopping 73.2% of participants have obtained college degrees: 15% with Associate, 24.4% with a Bachelor’s, 29.1% with a Master’s, and 4.7%

with a Doctorate. The remaining 1.4% and 0.9% listed vocational training and “other,” respectively.

When asked if they would like to provide any additional information, some took the opportunity to distinguish and add extra information about the demographic questions, such as having multiple degrees or if they are continuing their education. Several shared stories about how having an accent and using Appalachian English has affected them and family members, such as:

I was made fun of occasionally because I grew up in a house where my parents were from Cumberland and Benham and we were proud of our Appalachian roots and celebrated that. My mom told me a story (she was brilliant and a great student) about going to ECU and having a professor insult her intelligence because of her accent. It stuck with me. I have deliberately continued to pronounce things the way I was taught. My sister went to Harvard and experienced that there as well. For some reason it has always been a badge of honor I have worn and I don't want to see it get choked out like other eastern ky traditions.

Several respondents wanted to share their experiences with writing and whether they were previously or currently writing teachers or instructors. There was also an outpour of Appalachian pride, with one respondent saying,

I adore the people and the the heritage of the Appalachian Mts. I truly consider myself a Mt Girl. When I travel home and get close to the gorge , I see the mountains ahead and I feel such joy, comfort and love. Others I know, who left East KY and travel back home, report the same feelings when they travel on the Mt Parkway.

This respondent, an east Kentuckian Appalachian who moved to Lexington, must travel a road called the Mountain Parkway while returning home. The road travels into the mountains, and the traveler can watch them grow and become more abundant the farther they go. The Red River Gorge, a popular landmark in the Daniel Boone National Forest, is located on this road. Though this respondent now lives in Lexington, KY, they wanted

to share the feelings associated with returning to Appalachia, and how this has a lasting impact on them.

Perception of Appalachian English. Most participants reported having a clear understanding of both the nonstandard language they use and what is considered to be standard English. These questions were Likert scales from 1-10 with one being “I am not aware” and ten being “I am very aware.” Only 8% of participants answered a five or below on these questions. When asked about situations where they may or may not use Appalachian English,

Do you think that others will think negatively about you if they hear you speak with an accent or use specific words and phrases common in Appalachian English?

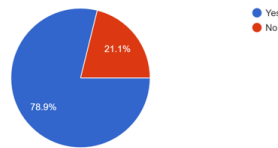


Figure 5: Negative Perception of Appalachian English

87.3% of them responded that they find themselves using this language more around other Appalachian people. Further, 72.8% found themselves suppressing their accent or dialect when around non-Appalachian people or when in formal settings. The participants were then asked about how others may perceive them (see Figure 5), and 78.9% reported the fear that others may think negatively about them based on their use of Appalachian English. When asked about stereotypes regarding the use of dialect and accent, the most common answers were “ignorant,” “poorly educated,” “stupidity,” “incompetence,” “dumb hillbilly,” and other similar terms. Other answers included being “impoverished,” “incestuous,” “gullible,” “drug addicted,” or assumed to be “conservative,” “racist,” and “bigoted.” Despite these answers, 91.5% of people answered a six or higher on a scale of 1-10 when asked about how proud they were of their Appalachian heritage.

In the additional comments section, several respondents shared what their professors and instructors would tell them regarding their use of Appalachian English. One response was, “I was once shamed in a freshman undergrad course by the professor for my accent. He said I would have to ‘tone it down’ to be in the professional world,” and several others expressed similar experiences.

Appalachian English in Writing Classes. This section focused on experiences in writing classes, and 52.1% reported being harshly corrected for their use of Appalachian English while 12.7% reported being praised for their use of the language (see Figure 6). Further, 73.7% were never taught that Appalachian English is a unique language with its own grammar rules and linguistic history, and 59.6% have never written (either for an

Were you ever praised for using Appalachian English in your writing classes?

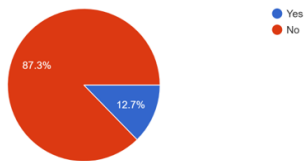


Figure 6: Praise for Appalachian English

assignment or creatively) or purposefully used Appalachian English. Next, the survey asked about the skills of code-switching and code-meshing. More of the respondents have some knowledge of code-switching, with 24.9% of them learning the skill and 27.2%

being unsure of it. Code-meshing was much less known; 58.2% reported they were not taught the skill with 37.1% unsure. When asked if their experience in writing classrooms negatively impacted their perception of their accent and dialect, 43.2% agreed. Though this is not a majority, it is a number I would like to see lowered.

When asked for specific memories from their writing classrooms, there was a mix of positive and negative responses, though more negative memories were shared. On the positive side, there were memories of English professors loving creative stories written in dialect and students being assigned the task of writing in Appalachian English. One student “felt seen for the first time in education” when taking an Appalachian Literature course, and one shared an experience working with Kentucky’s Poet Laureate Gurney Norman, stating,

Professors who encourage students to be themselves instead of leaving their heritage at the door are the best professors. He encouraged us to use our voices without restriction— and, I would assume, this is largely in part to the love he has for his own roots. He made all students feel right at home, and much of his own work reflected a very apparent Appalachia dialect.

Most of the positive responses mention instructors that are aware of Appalachian English and encourage students to use it in class, whether for specific assignments or simply in their daily speech.

Negative responses for this question were much more common, as it seems negative interactions regarding students' accent and dialect leave a more lasting impression. Several respondents shared that they were ridiculed and embarrassed by instructors and classmates alike for their use of Appalachian English in both their writing and speaking. One student described how an interaction with a writing instructor caused them to begin to suppress their use of Appalachian English:

The suppression of my Appalachian dialect came from having a "well-meaning" instructor "kindly" correct my use of "holler" in place of "hollow" in a creative non-fiction piece. The instructor went on to explain to me that I "had so much potential, but no one would take [me] seriously if [I] didn't work the "accent" out of my writing and speech."

Several recount times that others in class would comment on, publicly correct, and even laugh at their writing and speech. One instructor had a very harsh response, stating "[the student] would never go anywhere in life with [their] language."

Not surprisingly, 43.2% of respondents reported that the way they were educated regarding Appalachian English negatively impacted their perception of their accent and or dialect. Despite this, 77% reported to have a positive experience throughout school.

Appalachian Literature. Against my hypothesis, 85.9% of participants have read a book, poem, or story by an Appalachian author, and 78.9% said they have read literature containing Appalachian English. A lower number, 66.2%, said they encountered Appalachian literature in school, with 55.6% encountering it in college, 49% in high school, but only 22.2% in middle school and 24.8% in elementary school. When asked to

If you have read Appalachian literature, do you think it gave you a better understanding of the Appalachian culture and/or Appalachian English?

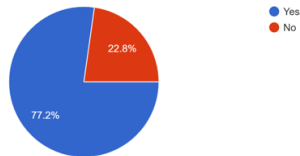


Figure 7: Literature and the Understanding of Appalachian Culture/Language

name some Appalachian authors, some common answers were Silas House, Jesse Stuart, James Still, and bell hooks, though many more were named. Not all respondents could list these authors. Of those who have read

Appalachian literature, 77.2% said that it gave them a better understanding of Appalachian culture and/or Appalachian English (see Figure 7).

The short answer responses for this section provided some clarification for the participants responses, if they felt necessary, but also provided some better insight into their exposure to Appalachian literature. One submission states, “I did not see myself in literature until college when I took an Appalachian Literature course, and it was a pivotal moment for me--up until that point, I did not even realize such a genre existed.” One respondent commented that reading Appalachian literature “helped validate [their] own experience as worthy.” Another said they shared a Silas House novel with their non-Appalachian spouse in order to help them “see a different perspective of eastern Kentucky rather than just the perspective of [their] family.” Though most responses were positive, some were critical of Appalachian authors, with one submission stating, “I feel Appalachian author's generally try too hard to be ‘artistic’, for lack of a better word. I mean they don't present their work in a natural and un-self aware way, and are very conscious of the two languages and the differences.”

Final Responses. The last section of the survey asked the fewest questions. 90.1% of participants wish to see Appalachian English become more acceptable to use, and an astounding 95.8% wish to see Appalachian English preserved and continue to be used by following generations. For the final question, I asked them to add any concluding thoughts, comments, or experiences about being an Appalachian person or using the dialect and accent of the region. Several shared positive comments about the purpose of

the survey:

“Continuously

a shame of

stigma is put

down on those

with an accent!

You are helping

break those!”

“Thank you for

your interest in

perpetuating this facet of Appalachian culture,” and “Appalachian dialect/accents has been

synonymous with ignorant and lower class. I hope to see that stereotype be squashed. I

love my accent and the way Appalachian English has a way of expressing things in a

unique way.”

And finally, not just in this section of responses, but all the optional short answer questions received comments about how proud people are to be from Appalachia:

- “Proud of my heritage!!”
- “I am proud to be an Appalachian and know we are a unique people.”
- “I am so proud of my accent, and it’s a large part of who I know myself to be. It’s also very comforting for me to be surrounded by it. It just feels more inviting and warmer somehow.”
- “I am grateful for my Appalachian roots and way of life”
- “My family made me who I am and I am grateful for all aspects of my heritage.”
- “Proud Hillbilly”
- “Appalachia = cool”

And these are only a few of these responses.

Do you wish to see Appalachian English be preserved and continue to be used by following generations?

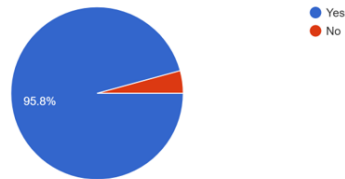


Figure 8: The Wish to Preserve and Continue Appalachian English

Discussion

The results from my study are not entirely surprising, as I feel it correlates well with the secondary research and my own experiences. The respondents have a strong understanding of Appalachian English and how it differentiates from Standard English. However, it was widely reported that Appalachian people feel most comfortable using their own language around other dialect speakers, and they are likely to suppress their use of Appalachian English when around non-Appalachian people or in formal settings. I would imagine this has to do with the fact that 73.7% of respondents reported they were never taught Appalachian English as its own language with grammar rules and linguistic properties, which naturally has created a division between the language of “home” and the language of “school.”

Appalachian English has been ignored vastly by writing instructors, so students have learned this language at home, and the negative reactions of their peers and instructors have shown there is no place for it in academic settings. The suppression of the use of Appalachian English is vastly due to the fear of being negatively perceived by others. It has been established that Appalachian people are discriminated against based on stereotypes that are perpetuated by inaccurate media representations. The first major conclusion to draw is that these stereotypes are not representative of the entire Appalachian community, as a vast majority (73.2%) of participants have obtained a college degree. Despite obtaining a college education of some type, a lot of the respondents reported that they suppress their use of Appalachian English to avoid being labeled as uneducated, dumb, or ignorant. This shows that society’s current perceptions of the people of Appalachia take away the confidence of these people and their use of their own language.

Respondents supported this with stories of being ridiculed by non-Appalachian people, including instructors and classmates, based on their use of Appalachian English. If instructors could approach this usage differently, perhaps by making space for students to bring their own languages into the classroom and establishing the classroom as a space where various languages are welcome, Appalachian students would have better experiences regarding their language and identities. This is all too important as 43.2% of

students reported that the way they were educated regarding Appalachian English negatively impacted their perception of their accent or dialect. It is particularly disheartening to hear of instructors overcorrecting students' language while teaching at institutions inside of Appalachia. If instructors wish to work with these students, they should be educated on the culture and language of the region and accept that as part of the students' identities.

More negative classroom interactions were shared in this study, but the few positive examples were phenomenal. Respondents shared feeling valued and represented and had a greater respect for the class and the instructor when they were accepted or encouraged for their use of Appalachian English. Therefore, instructors should have a greater awareness of the language that students bring into the classroom and try to create assignments that give students the opportunity to use Appalachian English. Respondents shared very positive experiences when instructors had a clear acknowledgment of Appalachian English and asked students to use it for assignments in class; however, 59.6% of Appalachian English users have never written in or purposefully used the language for assignments or creative writing. Though students would be successful in professional and academic lives without ever writing in Appalachian English, most respondents are being deprived of the positive experiences associated with being able to use their own language in the classroom and in their writing. A more balanced approach to Standard English and Appalachian English could ensure student success while promoting an appreciation and understanding of their culture and language.

This brings us to the teaching of code-switching and code-meshing. It may be difficult for instructors to find the balance between the necessary use of Standard English and the introduction Appalachian English, and based on the responses collected, more attention should be paid to the incorporation of these into the classroom. Code-switching was better known by those who took the survey, though only 24.9% learned the skill officially. Previously, it was discussed that 72.8% of participants reported suppressing their dialect around non-Appalachian people which means code-switching is widely practiced unknowingly. Further, code-switching is practiced to avoid negative stereotypes associated with Appalachian people, which illustrates how code-switching is a harmful

practice for Appalachian English speakers. In simplest terms, Appalachian people are forced to suppress their unique qualities to meet society's standards and will do so unknowingly. This is a stigma that can be changed through the teaching of code-meshing, which will place power back into the hands of nonstandard language speakers. It was reported that code-meshing was even less known, with over 95% of participants reporting they were not taught it or are unsure of it. Code-meshing is a relatively new practice that helps to better integrate one's own language with the standard. This brings a better balance between the two and could give Appalachian English speakers more confidence in the use of their own language.

In addition to code-meshing, the inclusion of Appalachian literature in classrooms should be encouraged based on the responses to this survey. It was reported that having exposure to Appalachian literature helped the respondents feel represented in their studies and gave them a positive image of their culture. Though 85.9% of participants have encountered Appalachian literature, only 66.2% encountered it in school, with it being most common in college courses. Only 24.8% encountered it in elementary school. To enhance the positive benefits of reading Appalachian literature, it would be better introduced earlier while Appalachian students are developing writing and speaking skills. Since participants said it helped them better understand their culture and/or Appalachian English, it may be coupled with writing assignments to give students models for how to discuss their culture and use their language.

The most compelling piece of data I collected was despite all the negative interactions throughout their time in writing classes, 77% reported having a positive experience throughout school. I believe this correlates with the massive response of pride that Appalachian people have. Every section of the survey had responses where participants claimed and expressed their pride in their heritage. When I applied for research through the International Review Board, I listed on the application that I expected 100 participants maximum over the course of the survey. I obtained over double this amount! I believe this shows that the Appalachian people care deeply for their culture and language, and they want their voices heard by those outside of their community.

Unfortunately, the stigma against Appalachian people will be hard to change, as stereotypes have run widely rampant since the 1960s and continue to do so. Therefore, I hope to illustrate that a more Appalachian-focused pedagogy will better prepare students to combat stereotypes and give them more confidence in their use of language, which will result in Appalachian people better using their language in academic and formal roles. The best way to challenge stigma and stereotyping is to directly prove them wrong.

Further Study. This survey collected a lot of data about each participant, and a lot of the qualitative data could be used and investigated further. I purposefully asked for a county of origin but let each participant give their current place of residence in their own terms. I had hoped that they would perhaps provide a city, if they lived in one, so I could get a closer proximity to where they live. A lot of respondents currently live in Kentucky cities such as Pikeville, Richmond, Morehead, and even Lexington (though outside of Appalachia), and I think it is no coincidence that these cities contain large universities and are much more urban compared to most of Appalachia. This poses a few more questions that could be investigated.

First, on what scale is this migration of young Appalachians pursuing an education? What percentage of these students stay in or near the cities that they move to after graduation? Then, I would like to further consider how universities can be considered “contact zones.” Students from all over the state, country, and even world come to universities such as Eastern Kentucky University, Morehead State University, and the University of Pikeville. This means that Appalachian students who go there have a greater and more direct exposure to cultures that are not their own. How exactly does this influence their understanding of themselves and their language? Does this make them feel comforted that they are not the only students that differentiate from Standard English? How has living and working in these contact zones influenced their experiences?

4. Best Practices for Appalachian Instructors

As established throughout this project, the current situation for Appalachian students could be improved to give them better control over their use of Appalachian English. This should start in the classroom where instructors should better value Appalachian English and give students the opportunity to learn about their nonstandard language use in a broader sense. Teaching methods exist to help alleviate the negative effects of teaching only Standard English with no accommodation for students' own language, and the positive effects that respondents have identified in the previous section can be maximized through different pedagogical practices. Additionally, students should be able to understand how their own language could be perceived in a broad sense, which can be achieved by watching documentaries or looking at examples of how the Appalachian dialect is represented in media (Biviano).

Something as special as the Appalachian dialect should be kept alive and well. Language provides a living link to the past, and those who carry the Appalachian dialect share connections to a range of other languages, peoples, and cultures that allow them to carry the heritage in their mouths (Clark & Hayward 19). Using this language connects Appalachian people to their community, family, and overall, their shared histories (Burkett qtd in McQuaid 19). In order to further, respect, and preserve this language, changes must be made in schools with young dialect speakers.

Pedagogy

At the core of this pedagogy, students should not be told that how they use language is wrong, but instead, they should be taught to use Standard English in addition to their own languages. Appalachian teachers who share the same dialect with their students or have the same cultural practices or interests can share this part of their identity with them (Fedukovich 146, Azano & Stewart 6). Teachers should seek professional development that allows for self-reflection of how they teach Standard English and code-meshing skills with hopes of achieving an understanding of their role in modeling Standard English while honoring the Appalachian dialect (Brashears).

Another helpful tool, place-based pedagogy, “invites students to explore their environments as a way of preserving natural and cultural resources... by engaging in place-based literacies, students examine, interact with, study, and collect artifacts that represent their lives and communities” which allows students to learn beyond curriculum chosen by the school (Gallo & Hermann 32-33). An Appalachian-focused pedagogy can give students a better opportunity to use their own languages while they learn about and investigate their own culture and surrounding geography. A deeper understanding of the culture can lead to a greater appreciation of it for young generations of Appalachian people.

Scholars are also pushing for students to have better representations of their dialects in the classroom. Just as Shakespeare gives students a sense of the beauty and history of the English language, Appalachian authors can give the same to students who use an Appalachian dialect (Iddings & Angus 157). It’s also important to note that not all Appalachians have very thick, recognizable dialects and accents. It is possible to combine the phonology and lexicon and still use rules of Standard English (Luhman 332). Research has continued to show that the Appalachian dialect is worth studying, as it is such a diverse language (Mitchell, Montgomery 63), and including linguistic study of the language will bring greater awareness to the population so that perceptions about the language may change.

Additionally, the Appalachian region could (and should) be seen as “a zone of interaction among the diverse people who have lived in or acted upon it, as it is also their interactions with the region’s complex environment” (Williams qtd. in Clark & Hayward). Some are also pushing for a systemic functional linguistics (SFL) approach to the discussion and learning of texts in classrooms (Iddings & Angus 160). Under this model, students will be presented with texts by Appalachian authors and investigate the context and genre that surround each piece. This method also allows students to learn about their own heritage and lives, as for what is perhaps the first time, they will see their way of life reflected to them on the page. This differs from the Six-Traits model, where students are asked to practice and use skills surrounding ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions, and presentation (Iddings & Angus 161); the Six-

Traits model is one that is used all around the country, and therefore is not tailored to the specific needs and demands of students who have and use a preexisting dialect. If anything, instructors should help students learn to use and control their language, not overcorrect them, so that they can be able to fully participate in broad society (Iddings & Angus).

Honoring Students' Own Languages

Pedagogies and practices are better developed for populations of minority students who also speak a variation of English that differs from the standard, and Appalachian instructors can use these as models for their own pedagogy. One example is dual language education enacted by instructors of bilingual students. Fránquiz et al argue that “Because images, metaphors, public discourses, and language ideologies have the power to shape an individual speaker’s perception of who s/he is and the speech community to which s/he belongs, it is important to notice how teachers and students use languaging in bilingual settings” (136). Though Franquiz et al are working with Latinx communities, and though speakers of Appalachian English do not create a bilingual community, this statement is true for Appalachian people. Having a language-informed classroom will give students a better understanding of how they operate as dialect speakers and how they may be perceived by those who do not speak Appalachian English. Giving the necessary attention to pedagogy can create “linguistically profiled” students who will have a better understanding about how language can work for or against them (Alim, Anzaldúa qtd. in Fránquiz et al 136). This will better prepare students for the positive (belonging to a community, connecting with one another, embracing their heritage) and negative effects (possible ridicule and judgment from non-Appalachians) of using Appalachian English.

Assessment

Since Appalachian English speakers are often harshly criticized for their dialect, accent, and writing, instructors should take care while assessing student work. If students are harshly criticized during writing assessment, they may become discouraged, and the

feedback could instead become a barrier for students to improve (Elbow). If writing is assessed solely on the structure or language used, larger, more important ideas can easily be overlooked and have less attention placed on them. Typically, details such as grammar and punctuation pose no barrier to the higher concerns of student writing, such as formation of ideas, supporting claims through evidence, and critical thinking. If students are overcorrected on minor details, they are then inherently forced to conform to the conventions of Standard English.

Code-Meshing

Though students have a right to their own language, they must still be prepared to meet expectations placed on them in professional settings, their future careers, and with other formal writing and speaking. Code-meshing is a tactic which can help bring a balance to the use of Appalachian English and Standard English, and although it is like code-switching, it has a more positive resonance and respect for the nonstandard language. Code-meshing aims to blend the two languages together and should be favored over code-switching (Lee & Handsfield).

Code-switching, on the other hand, asks students to pick between the two depending on the situation, and therefore reinforces that Appalachian English is not appropriate; it also requires individuals to use acceptable academic language which may make them feel as if they do not belong and are not valued in the setting due to their identity as a dialect speaker. This pressures students to assimilate into Standard English (Saeedi & Richardson) and is harmful to their self-perception of their language and identity.

Code-meshing will allow students to practice their right to their own language while blending it with Standard English to meet professional standards and goals. This may be a challenge to some students and professionals, as their balance between the two could depend on their rhetorical audience and purpose (Canagarajah). Instructors of these students will want to be aware that although it differs from Standard English, and although one of the most common stereotypes is that its speakers are uneducated, Appalachian English has a strong linguistic history that can and should be studied by

instructors in the region (Mitchell). This further supports the idea that students' own languages are unique and deserving of presence in writing classrooms and professional/formal settings. Code-meshing could therefore be a valuable way to incorporate students' language practices, literacies, and cultures into the classroom (Saeedi & Richardson) and is a tool they can use in life and endeavors that go beyond the classroom.

Positive Examples of Appalachian Culture

If students can be informed of their culture, they can then develop a greater sense of pride in it. Due to the negative representations of Appalachians in popular culture and media, it is necessary for Appalachian students to view and study them to gain a deeper understanding of how their culture is perceived by others. This can be accomplished by including Appalachian-focused pedagogies in classrooms that show the negative misrepresentations of their culture but does not neglect accurate or positive representations of the Appalachian people. Students must understand that they are part of a hidden minority that allows these stereotypes to be placed on them in society.

Though these representations are mostly problematic, they are enjoyed by those who they represent. Students should understand that people who are not familiar with Appalachia have these examples from popular culture and media to form their understanding of the region. Though students may enjoy *The Beverly Hillbillies'* Clampett family, they should know that others may take these representations and the stereotypes that come with them a bit too seriously. This can help them see how others may perceive them and allow them to know how to properly educate others about the true way of life in the region.

For students' own benefit, they should not be limited to the negative representations of their way of life in popular culture and media. Students need to see accurate and real representations of their culture that were created by Appalachians themselves. They can then have informed conversations with others about the reality of Appalachian culture. For non-Appalachians, these popular culture representations may be

their only exposure to Appalachian culture, and unfortunately, it is left to Appalachian people to make clarifications and be positive role models when able.

Appalshop. Appalshop is a fantastic resource for finding accurate depictions of the Appalachian way of life. Graham and Monteith explain a brief history of Appalshop as well as what the organization does:

In 1969 Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty helped to establish the Community Film Workshop of Appalachia in Whitesburg, Ky., as a film and television training center for impoverished young people in the region. As its activities and mission expanded, Appalshop (as it was renamed in the 1970s) also became a community-based filmmaking organization dedicated to telling the stories of Appalachia, recording the traditions of the region, and challenging the seemingly durable stereotypes associated with southern mountain people and their cultures. Quilting, woodcarving, chair making, weaving, guitar making, storytelling, singing, dancing, and bluegrass playing (notably, in *The Ralph Stanley Story*, 2000) have been sensitively explored in Appalshop documentaries since the mid-1970s, yet the organization's major influence on national media has perhaps been its commitment to the relentless documentation of labor injustices. (53)

Appalshop came along with the War on Poverty in hopes to show real Appalachian experiences and culture. They hope to tell the touching stories of Appalachians as well as the injustices that have happened to them. There are several options of films for students to watch, such as "*Buffalo Creek Revisited* (1984), *Sunny Side of Life* (1985), *Strangers and Kin: A History of the Hillbilly Image* (1984), *Coal Mining Women* (1982), *Grassroots Small Farm* (1988), and *Stranger with a Camera* (2000)" (Graham and Monteith 188). These more accurate representations of Appalachian life have made it into more popular areas of media and culture and have made a difference in how Appalachia has previously been represented. For example,

the gravity of "hillbilly" stereotypes escaped national consideration until veteran Appalshop director Elizabeth Barret made *Stranger with a Camera* in 2000. Recounting the story of the murder of Canadian documentarian Hugh O'Connor in 1967 by a Kentucky landlord resentful of the War on Poverty's

“negative” images of Appalachia, the film struck responsive chords outside the South, and was broadcast on PBS; screened at national film festivals, including Sundance; won film and history awards; was reviewed in the New York Times; and was the subject of a New Yorker article written by Calvin Trillin. (Graham & Monteith 54)

This documentary was able to reach a large audience and show how harmful negative stereotypes can be on the Appalachian people. The negative representations of Appalachians have not fully stopped, and they may never, but putting more accurate



Figure 9: The *Appodlachia* Logo

representations of this culture into media and popular culture is a start at changing perceptions of the region. It is important for students to see how Appalachians put forth their own representations into the larger sphere of media and popular culture.

Appodlachia. With a similar goal as *Appalshop*, *Appodlachia* (see Figure 9) is a podcast described as “a shrewd, witty, comical, sometimes irreverent, and always honest podcast providing a

counter-narrative to the negative portrayal and harmful stereotypes of Appalachia” (“What is Appodlachia?”). It is widely available and free to listen to on most podcast platforms, making it easy to access for students, educators, and fans. The podcast is hosted by Chuck Corra and Big John Isner. Both are Appalachian natives, but Corra is an “Appalachian expat,” meaning he has migrated out of the region. The hosts of this show tackle a variety of contemporary topics concerning Appalachia, with their early 2022 episodes focusing on “Leaving Appalachia,” “Coming Back to Appalachia,” “Why Move to Appalachia?” “Is TikTok Censoring Appalachian Progressives?” and “Black Life in Appalachian Coal Towns.” This show provides an excellent example of how Appalachian people can support their region, whether they live within it or not, and can help broaden the understanding young Appalachian students have of current events within their region.

Appalachian Literature. In addition to documentaries and podcasts, another great representation of this culture is the literature that is created by Appalachian people. Appalachian literature is very rich with expression and culture from the perspective of the region. In fact, “the writers who portray their places are the ones who largely ignore the loudest and most prevalent cultural appraisals made of them, and instead draw on their own knowledge and resources to evoke these places, albeit sometimes indirectly, as best they can” (Clabough 174). This will allow students to read and share accurate representations that differentiate their own lives from those negative, exaggerated portrayals. Appalachian literature is best used in classrooms as students can use the texts as a foundation to base their own works.

Further, there is a community of writers that are Appalachian, and perhaps showing students these texts can show how their voices can be heard in a larger community (Biviano). Having a clear representation of themselves in their class material is extremely important for Appalachian students, therefore Appalachian literature should be used in English classes in Appalachia. I did not read any Appalachian literature until I attended a university, yet I was born and raised in Central Appalachia. Students need to see these texts as role models to show that they have the potential to use Appalachian English to tell stories about their lives. This is one way instructors can bridge the gap between Standard English and Appalachian dialect to lead to student success in both academic and non-academic endeavors.

Creative Writing

Creative writing is the bridge between the two worlds for students who speak languages other than the standard. First, students who speak Appalachian English should be educated on the difference between it and Standard English, and the ability to use both languages should be taught alongside one another. As previously discussed, the most recent “best practice” for doing this is code-meshing (which allows students the ability to use their own language and standard language together in all settings to ensure success and freedom of expression) which could be put to good use in creative writing. Depending on the purpose of the assignment, a student may lean a certain percentage

towards their natural language or vice versa. For example, if a student is writing a lab report, they will most likely not need to use their own language and will heavily use the acquired language of the discipline. Therefore, creative writing is important to the development of students' skills using their natural language, because when students write creatively, they can do so with any purpose in mind. They can do it for self-expression, catharsis, or telling a true story about their lives. This means that students have much more liberty to express themselves and vary their language. So, for example, if code-meshing is taught on a gradient, they can lean much harder towards their natural language than they could with other assignments, projects, and papers.

Additionally, students who belong to marginalized groups are often forced to sit and hear their own histories and cultures told to them by someone who is in a place of authority, even if that person has no true experience with the culture (Royster). This can lead to students feeling silenced and unable to share and celebrate their own experiences. However, if given this as a specific task in the writing classroom, students will be encouraged to find their voice to share and preserve their culture and experiences. I have personally incorporated details about my culture into my creative writing and have looked to other Appalachian authors to see examples of how to do so. Depending on the goals of the writing course, instructors can use this to introduce students to this practice and build upon the discussion of Appalachian literature in the classroom.

Primary Source Analysis. Text analysis is an essential skill for students who are taking writing courses, whether composition or creative. If given the opportunity, instructors should choose Appalachian texts when working with Appalachian students. When these texts are analyzed, this opens the classroom for discussion of issues that are often seen in these works and gives students an example of how they may create their own works regarding the topic of Appalachia. For creative writing, "Diamonds" by Kathryn Stripling Byer is a poem that may be selected for analysis (see Appendix B for a sample analysis of this poem). The poem has a lot of subtextual meaning that should be discussed with the students, including some issues found in Appalachia and characteristics of the culture. This would open the classroom for students to share their experiences and allow them to expand upon these ideas in their writing.

Expansion Upon Source Analysis. Another poem, George Ella Lyon's "Where I'm From," would be a perfect model text for students as they can easily expand upon their analysis of the text. Having students complete this practice is a great way introduce them to ways they can convey their personal experiences through poetry. Students should understand that being from Appalachia is a wonderful thing and creating their own poems in response to Lyon's can help them record their own heritage and begin to express themselves in their own language. It's important to note that the details in this poem are based on Lyon's life, so the meaning of each thing described may not be very clear to students initially. If I were to use this as a lesson in the future, I am interested in how students will interpret the poem, as I was taught this poem by a non-Appalachian professor and her understanding of it was much different than mine. I feel that having the same background as the author helped me relate to the poem more than my professor. So, a group of Appalachian students may be able to have a much deeper understanding of the poem and have a very thoughtful discussion.

Reading this poem and creating a response could give students a stronger sense of pride in their mountain heritage, so it should be discussed how self-expression through poetry can be a very rewarding experience and how it is especially rewarding for people connected to Appalachian Mountains. As established by this project, Appalachian students have experiences that are not the "norm" of mainstream society, so therefore their lives are especially unique, and that makes them worthwhile, so it is even more important that they record and share their heritage. Creative writing is a perfect outlet to do so, as they can use our own voices for their own purposes.

Students could then be shown some examples of other "Where I'm From" poems, including one written by the instructor to further model the creative writing process. Students could then be tasked with creating their own poem in response to the original. Once students are happy with their poems, the class could then browse through the official website of the "I Am From Project." This is an ongoing project organized by the author and others that collect and publish these poems, and this will show students that there are ways to share their works outside of the classroom, and as Appalachian students, it is important that they do so. This practice could help students appreciate the

elements of Appalachian English that are still part of their everyday language, and perhaps have an appreciation for the stronger versions that exist in older generations of their families. By having a very Appalachian-centered and Appalachian-positive pedagogy, a difference can be made in how these students see themselves and their cultures.

5. Conclusion

“If you don’t tell your story, somebody else will.”

- Frank X. Walker

Though the Appalachian region is one that faces many challenges, it is one that is home to a people that is very proud of their culture and heritage. This culture, which includes the use of Appalachian English, is different from what is widely accepted in mainstream culture, and therefore, it is subject to scrutiny. The status of Appalachian people as a hidden minority (Powers) means they are openly discriminated against based on stereotypes of the region that come from popular culture and media representations of those who live in the mountains. Because of this, Appalachian English is thought to be the language of the uneducated and ignorant. To separate students from this stigma and ensure their success, they are taught Standard English and are encouraged to suppress their accent and dialect by their writing teachers.

This is, however, an injustice to Appalachian English and those who speak it. Though there is not wide scholarship that illustrates the complexity of this variation of English, there are others passionate about the subject that have begun to record the rules of it. This language has its own vocabulary, syntax, pronunciations, and rules (Smith; Berrey) the speakers follow despite never learning it concretely in a classroom. The language also has a complex linguistic history (McQuaid) that can better help students understand where their dialect features come from. With traditional teaching methods, these details about Appalachian English are overlooked in the classroom, even though students bring the language with them to class every day. This causes some conflict in the classroom, between the instructor, student, and his peers, and within the student himself.

The responses of Appalachian people in this project affirm all of the above; however, I believe it to be even more meaningful coming from Appalachian people themselves. Appalachian people are aware. They are aware of the challenges they face, how their culture is very different compared to the mainstream culture, and the discrimination and misrepresentation present in pop culture and media which lead to harmful stereotypes against them. They are aware of their nonstandard language and how

if someone identifies their accent and dialect, those negative stereotypes will be applied to them, no matter their occupation or level of education. Despite this, Appalachian people hope to see their language become more acceptable to use and preserved and kept alive by future generations. They are very prideful in this language and culture, and they have expressed that clearly.

The findings of this project illustrate that a change needs to be made. The current treatment of Appalachian English in writing classrooms has left a negative, lasting impact on the participants of the survey. Appalachian people are harshly corrected and seldomly praised for using their own language. They are not taught that this language is unique and complex, with its own grammar and linguistic properties. Instead, they are taught (both directly and indirectly) that their language is not appropriate for the classroom and other professional settings, which causes students to lose the ability to read and write Appalachian English. Though the respondents had widely encountered Appalachian literature, which would help with these skills, most encountered it in their college education or afterward.

A more Appalachian-focused pedagogy can give these students the best of both worlds. To educate students on their language, they should be taught Standard English *in addition* to their own language. This starts with the responsibility of the instructor to understand the language that students bring into the classroom and allow and encourage its use in the classroom space. Students' own languages should be honored and incorporated into class material when able. When assessing student work, it should be done with care that does not focus on tedious details of grammar and punctuation. Further, students should be taught the skill of code-meshing, which would allow them to use both standard and nonstandard languages simultaneously with a specific goal in mind. To help students understand their culture and better fight negative perceptions, they should be shown positive examples of Appalachian culture. There are several outlets for this, but whether it be *Appalshop*, *Appalachia*, or literature, students can see their culture and language in a positive light. Instructors can then encourage students to create their own examples, perhaps best through writing creatively in the classroom.

I asked Appalachian people and they answered. Based on their responses, I have suggested changes that could help alleviate the situation surrounding Appalachian English in writing classrooms. The responsibility to enact change is now in the hands of present and future teachers and instructors of Appalachian students. I hope this project contributes to the wider understanding of Appalachian people, culture, and language that can help enact the social change necessary to see better treatment of the Appalachian region. I can visualize a future where Appalachian people are empowered by their language, and I believe this can become a reality with changed perceptions of Appalachian English that begin in the writing classroom.

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APPENDIX A:
Asking Appalachia: The Survey

Appalachian English: Perceptions, Understanding, and Writing Classrooms

You are being invited to take part in a research study on Appalachian English in writing classrooms. This study is being conducted by Rachel Hampton, a Graduate Assistant with the department of English, at Eastern Kentucky University.

If you decide to participate in the study, you will be asked to complete an electronic survey hosted by Google Forms. Your participation is expected to take no more than ten minutes.

This study is anonymous. You will not be asked to provide your name or other identifying information as part of the study. No one, not even members of the research team, will know that the information you give came from you. Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write up the results of the study, we will write about this combined information.

We will make every effort to safeguard your data, but as with anything online, we cannot guarantee the security of data obtained via the Internet. Third-party applications used in this study may have terms of service and privacy policies outside the control of Eastern Kentucky University.

If you decide to take part in the study, it should be because you really want to volunteer. You will not lose any benefits or rights you would normally have if you choose not to volunteer. You can stop at any time during the study and still keep the benefits and rights you had before volunteering.

This study has been reviewed and approved for exemption by the Institutional Review Board at Eastern Kentucky University as research protocol number FWA00003332. If you have any questions about the study, please contact Rachel Hampton at Rachel.Hampton@eku.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, please contact the Division of Sponsored Programs at Eastern Kentucky University by calling 859-622-3636.

By completing the activity that begins on the next screen, you agree that you (1) are at least 18 years of age, (2) have read and understand the information above, and (3) voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

* Required

About
You

Help me give context to this research by answering some demographic questions about yourself.

1. Do you openly label yourself as an Appalachian? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
 No

2. What county and state are you from? (ex. Floyd County, Kentucky) *

3. Where do you currently live? *

4. What is your age? *

Mark only one oval.

- 18-22
- 23-38
- 39-54
- 55-73
- 74 and over

5. What is your gender? *

Mark only one oval.

- Male
- Female
- Nonbinary or other

6. What is your level of education? *

Mark only one oval.

- Some high school
- High school graduate or equivalent (for example: GED)
- Some college, no degree
- Vocational Training
- Associate Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Doctorate Degree
- Other

7. Is there anything else you would like me to know about you?

Perception of Appalachian English

8. How aware are you of the "nonstandard" language that you use? Meaning, can you identify specific words and phrases that are Appalachian in origin? *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

I am not aware. I am very aware.

9. Do you have a clear understanding of what "standard" language is in comparison to Appalachian English? Meaning, in your mind, is there a "right" and "wrong" way of speaking, writing, and talking in general? *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
I do not have an understanding of this. I have a very clear understanding of this.

10. Do you find yourself using Appalachian English more often when around others from Appalachia? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes
 No

11. Do you find yourself suppressing your accent or dialect when around non-Appalachian people or when in formal settings? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes
 No

12. Do you think that others will think negatively about you if they hear you speak with an accent or use specific words and phrases common in Appalachian English? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes
 No

13. What are some common stereotypes about Appalachia that you hope to avoid when you suppress your dialect and accent? *

14. How proud are you of your Appalachian heritage? *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
I am not proud of my heritage. I am very proud of my heritage

15. Is there anything else you would like to add to this section of responses?

Appalachian English in Writing Classes

16. Do you think you had a positive experience in your writing classes throughout school and how you were treated as an Appalachian student? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
 No

17. Were you ever harshly corrected for your nonstandard use of language? Meaning, was it clear to you that using Appalachian English was "wrong" or not appropriate? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
 No

18. Were you ever praised for using Appalachian English in your writing classes? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
 No

19. Were you ever taught that Appalachian English is a unique language with a specific set of grammar rules and a linguistic history? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
 No

20. Have you ever written (either for an assignment or creatively) and purposefully used Appalachian English? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
 No

21. Were you ever taught the skill of code-switching? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

22. Were you ever taught the skill of code-meshing? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

23. Do you have any specific memories about using Appalachian English in writing classrooms that you would like to share?

24. Do you believe that the way you were educated regarding Appalachian English and Standard English has negatively impacted your perception of your accent or dialect? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

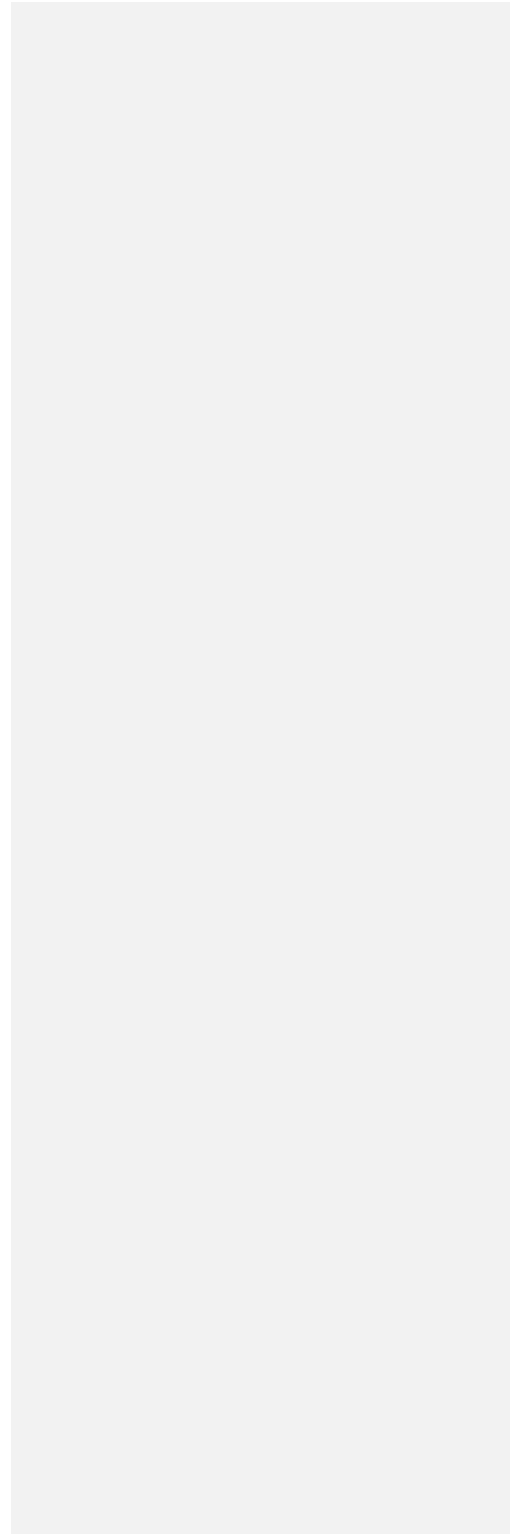
25. Is there anything you would like to add to this section of responses?

Appalachian Literature

26. Have you ever read a book, poem, story, etc by an Appalachian author? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No



27. If so, did this piece of literature use Appalachian English? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
 No

28. Were you ever exposed to Appalachian literature during your time in school? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
 No

29. If yes, please indicate when you encountered Appalachian literature, and select all that apply:

Check all that apply:

- Elementary School
 Middle School
 High School
 College

30. Can you name some Appalachian authors?

31. If you have read Appalachian literature, do you think it gave you a better understanding of the Appalachian culture and/or Appalachian English?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
 No

32. Is there anything you would like to add to this section of responses?

Final Responses

33. Do you wish to see Appalachian English become more acceptable to use? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
 No

34. Do you wish to see Appalachian English be preserved and continue to be used by following generations? *

Mark only one oval.

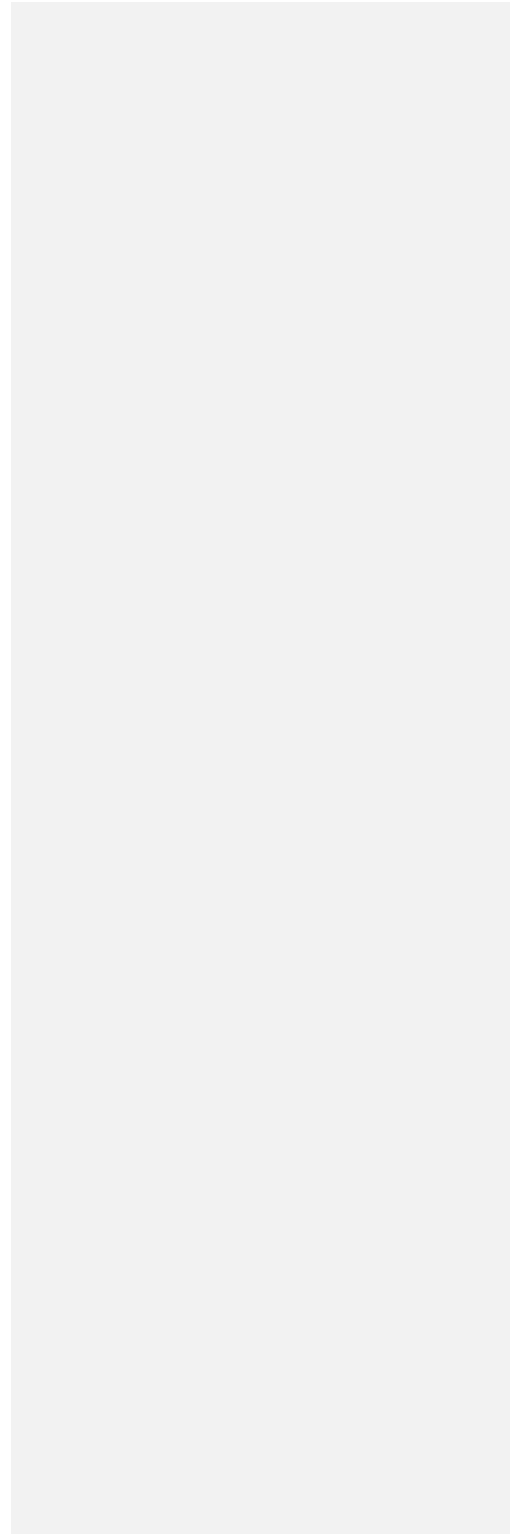
- Yes
 No

35. Is there anything else you would like me to know about your experience being an Appalachian and using the accent/dialect of the region?

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Google Forms

APPENDIX B:
Example Primary Source Analysis



Example Primary Source Analysis

“Diamonds” by Kathryn Stripling Byer is a poem consisting of three stanzas and fifteen lines. It expresses a moment of love and passion between the speaker and a male partner despite the hardship of poverty. Quite obviously, the male partner is impoverished, as the speaker alludes to several times, but nonetheless, the speaker seems to not care and wants only “that he fill his hands with [her] hair” (Byer v15). Having love is much stronger than having money.

This poem can be found in a collection of Appalachian poets’ works titled *Southern Appalachian Poetry: An Anthology of Works by 37 Poets*. Kathryn Stripling Byer wrote an introduction to her section where she explains she is a poet from southwest Georgia who grew an appreciation for the mountains through her upbringing. She attended college in North Carolina where she got her MFA degree and then moved to Cullowhee, North Carolina. Her voice developed from the voices of other Appalachian women who shared stories and culture that helped her find a way to write about the Appalachian experience. She writes in an alter-ego-like voice, Alma, who she relates to her grandmother.

This development of her voice is clear in her poem “Diamonds.” The Appalachian experience is told and provokes emotion in the reader. She tells of the sadness of the Appalachian condition of being in poverty, and subtly comments on the idea that poverty can be inherited:

This, he said, giving the hickory leaf
to me. *Because I am poor.*
And he lifted my hand to his lips,
kissed the fingers that might have worn
gold rings if he had inherited
bottomland, not this
impossible rock where the eagles soared
after the long rains were over. (Byer v1-8)

A hickory leaf shows that they are in a rural area, as much of Appalachia is. The male partner admits he is poor immediately, but he still bestows a gift on the speaker. She

recounts that her hands may have been embellished with gold if he had money, and the cause of his poverty is farmland that is unable to produce enough to make money from. These are all details of early Appalachian life wrapped in the first stanza. Her partner is a farmer who is impoverished, but despite it, they are still deeply in love.

The poem ends with lines that turn this situation into a hopeful and positive one. “I licked the diamonds off the green / tongue of the leaf, wanting only / that he fill his hands with my hair.” (Byers v13-15). The speaker licks “diamonds” from the leaf that is most likely water droplets showing that she finds wealth in nature, not in material objects. She wants him to fill his hands with her hair, showing that she wants only love and passion from him. His hands could be filled with money instead, but love is more powerful and more important to her.

This source is very significant for showing students how their native language and cultures can be expressed through writing. Byer is an Appalachian and writes of the Appalachian experience. Though this poem is not dialect-heavy, as it mainly focuses on experience and a moment, there is the use of the hickory leaf and the term “bottomland” to give cultural context in the poem. This is a great example of how students can use mostly standard language and still write about things that affect them as Appalachian people. Byer is a well-known poet who focuses on Appalachia and the experiences, stories, and feelings that live in the region. She can be a positive role model for Appalachian students to show that they can be successful if they embrace their background.