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**AAVE AND ITS GROWING POPULARITY IN THE ONLINE DISCOURSE OF
GENERATION Z**

Vedoucí práce: Mgr. Helena Lohrová, Ph.D.

Autor práce: Andrea Bícová

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I confirm that this thesis is my own work written using solely the sources and literature properly quoted and acknowledged as works cited.

26.7.2024 v Českých Budějovicích,

Andrea Bícová

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Abstract

African American Vernacular English (AAVE) is becoming a part of online discourse of the young generation, which from the sociolinguistic point of view is quite an interesting phenomenon. This thesis in general aims to map AAVE in the online discourse of Gen Z, generation of young people born between the years 1997 and 2012. This study deals with the actual position of African American English in the online discourse of this generation, examines the frequency of use of certain AAVE expressions and identifies their meanings. The conceptual framework of the thesis includes the individual chapters devoted to the definition of AAVE, its historical evolution, and the description of its linguistic specifics. The research on the usage of AAVE among the Gen Z was conducted through an online survey of the students at the University of South Bohemia. The resulting data were compared to posts from users on the social media platform Twitter (X).

Keywords

Linguistics, Generation Z, AAVE, social media, slang, discourse analysis

Anotace

Africko-americká angličtina (AAVE) se stále častěji stává součástí online diskurzu mladší generace, což ze sociolingvistického hlediska představuje zajímavý fenomén. Tato práce konkrétně cílí na zmapování AAVE v online diskurzu Gen Z, generace mladých lidí narozených mezi lety 1997 a 2012. Práce se zabývá aktuálním postavením africko-americké angličtiny v online diskurzu této generace, zjišťuje frekvenci užívání vybraných AAVE výrazů v onlinových interakcích a interpretuje jejich význam. Koncepční rámec práce tvoří kapitoly věnované vymezení AAVE, jejímu historickému vývoji a popisu jazykových specifik. Výzkum používání AAVE Gen Z byl proveden metodou dotazníkového šetření na studentech Jihočeské univerzity a výsledná data byla porovnána s příspěvky uživatelů na sociální síti Twitter (X).

Klíčová slova

Lingvistika, Generace Z, AAVE, sociální média, slang, analýza diskurzu

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Introduction

The English language, as one of the most widely spoken languages globally, encompasses various dialects and styles of communication. Among these is African American Vernacular English (AAVE), a distinct linguistic variety predominantly used by African Americans in the United States. Historically, AAVE and its speakers have been dishonoured, referred to as uneducated or even faced discrimination from the dominating white race (Baugh 350). However, recent technological advancements, particularly the rise of social media platforms, have catalysed a paradigm shift in the perception of AAVE.

People of all genders and races are now embracing its vivid and broad vocabulary. The problem remains their lack of knowledge of the words' origin and its rather painful yet significant history (Dunstan 191; Igoudin 5; Reyes 527).

This thesis examines the growing popularity of AAVE in the online discourse of Generation Z, reflecting broader societal trends towards its acceptance and integration into mainstream communication. Despite its rich linguistic heritage and expressive vocabulary, the origins and historical significance of AAVE are often overlooked or misunderstood by its contemporary users. This thesis seeks to address this gap in understanding, shedding light on/examining the cultural and linguistic aspects of AAVE within the context of online communication.

Through two distinct analyses, this thesis aims to explore the prevalence and comprehension of AAVE slang among Generation Z. The first analysis focuses on the usage of common AAVE slang words in online discourse, drawing data from the social media platform Twitter. Utilising linguistic tools provided by the *Czech National Corpus*, this study identifies prominent AAVE lexis in a sample of 128 tweets used by Generation Z users on the social media platform Twitter (X).

The second analysis investigates the familiarity and comprehension of AAVE slang among Czech students at the University of South Bohemia. By creating and administering a questionnaire, this research segment assesses the level of understanding and cultural awareness of AAVE slang among a non-native English-speaking population. This comparative approach provides valuable insights into how African American Vernacular English spreads between different cultures and how it affects languages worldwide.

In addition to these empirical analyses, this thesis provides an overview of the linguistic disparities between Standard English and AAVE, supported by relevant literature. By situating AAVE within broader sociolinguistic frameworks, this study clarifies its dynamic and evolving nature as a mode of communication.

Overall, this thesis aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of AAVE and its significance in contemporary online discourse, particularly among Generation Z. By bridging the gap between linguistic theory and practical usage, this research seeks to promote cross-cultural understanding and appreciation of diverse linguistic expressions.

1 Literature review

1.1 AAVE: Origin, Features, Variations

From the evolutionist point of view, language is a complex phenomenon that has always been referred to as human's attribute and moreover a marker of the difference between people and animals. According to Fasold and Connor-Linton (343), language has been something that served as a strong link uniting people occupying the same land. It functions as a strong element within culture, which makes it inseparable from each other. Additionally, the language is, together with the national flag, the anthem and claimed territory, a constituent part of every world's nation. Therefore, it can be said that language varies country to country and its specific symbols and traditions may fail to be correctly understood by a foreigner (Fasold and Connor-Linton 348).

1.1.1 Historical background

Not only are there many language families in the world but there are visible differences even within one language. For instance, the English language varies in its vocabulary and pronunciation depending on the demography it is being spoken in. The same applies to the people who communicate it. How American English is produced by the white Americans is dissimilar from the African American citizens' speech (Fasold and Connor-Linton 353). The role of ethnicity can be seen as a double-edged sword, as it holds both positive and negative values.

African American Vernacular English (AAVE) has faced enormous prejudice and discrimination, especially during the era of slavery. Baugh (16) traces its genesis to the area of West Africa, however certain former European colonies of North and South America impacted on its evolution. Although its speakers have been criticized for talking in "bad English" by their mainly white oppressors, it was their urban slang that helped them stick together and survive the gruesome times of enslavement (Baugh 1-2).

According to Sealey-Ruiz (37), nowadays “most African Americans speak AAVE when expressing their deepest feelings and most hilarious moments”. Nevertheless, they switch to Standard American English (SAE) whenever they are in social institutions like school or workplace. They do so, in order to survive in modern day America (Sealey-Ruiz 37).

1.1.2 Hip hop Influence

Music and language are interrelated and therefore even between AAVE and hip-hop culture exists a strong connection. According to Green (156), rap music specifically puts higher emphasis on “the linguistic features and rhetorical strategies” of the song rather than on the message it carries. She further demonstrates this on the lyrics of popular hits by artists like M. C. Hank or Wonder Mike. Their music features the main characteristics of rap which is “bragging and boasting about strengths, possessions and skills in using words” (Green 156).

Femi Lewis writes in his article that hip hop culture, which rap is a part of, emerged in 1970s from The Lake Poets. The main domain where Black artists mastered their craft became the New York City. People from there indulged in graffiti, breakdancing and DJing. According to Mize, Dj Kool Herc played a dominant role in the growing popularity of the genre by hosting parties and keeping the show alive. In 1979 *Rapper’s Delight*, the first hip hop song to gain its public significance, was published. On top of that, Lady B releases her debut single *To the Beat Y’All* and is labeled the first female in this genre of music. Not so long after that in 1983, Ice-T marks the beginning of the subgenre of rap called gangsta rap and in that same year a group under the name Run-DMC makes it on the MTV (Lewis).

As Mize states in his article, rap in its prime form initiated in Africa. Rap as it is known today developed from the oral tradition of griots. The combination of

communicating and singing became one of the major coping mechanisms for African slaves in dealing with oppression and dehumanization and the music's positive influence on mood and connecting people continues to this day (Mize).

The high frequency of African American Vernacular English in rap music illustrates the study by Edwards and Ash (165). The results show that the music by Tupac Shakur, huge rap figure in the 1990s, was characterized by copula suppression, AAVE expressions such as 'gonna' and 'ain't', profanities or the usage of N-word (Edwards and Ash 171). Interestingly, when Edwards and Ash (172) further examined the linguistic patterns of Tupac's speech and songs and put them in comparison, it revealed that way more AAVE features appeared in his music.

1.1.3 The role of AAVE in the Ballroom and Drag community

Besides the music industry there exist other art fields where AAVE plays a significant role in connecting people of the same interest together and helps to establish one's identity (Rowan et al. 178–9). Ballroom culture is a safe space for gay men or transgender people, most of whom are mainly of black ethnicity. The main reason is that being queer is often perceived as unacceptable by many African Americans. The second reason, according to Rowan et al. (189) might be the fact that house/ball culture is viewed as a black people's tradition, in the way of providing "communal support in response to economic and social exclusion". Its members meet regularly at balls, events where they can freely celebrate their uniqueness by dressing themselves in extravagant fashion and competing in various face and body competitions. Additionally, they come there to gain the feeling of belonging to a group where they are understood and freed from the shackles of public judgement (182-3).

Rowan and his colleagues (184) state that the house/ball culture has its specific vocabulary, which is often misunderstood by people outside of this community. Instances

of such expressions shared among the members are adjectives like ‘fab’, ‘fierce’ but very common is also the phrase ‘to be real’. The meaning behind ‘realness’ in ballroom carries the connotation of “playing the role down to the smallest detail” (Rowan et al. 185).

Mann (796) utters that in the drag community, shared terminology and linguistic features play a pivotal role in shaping self-identity. Among its diverse language styles, members, commonly known as drag queens, frequently incorporate African American Vernacular English to express their racial identity. For instance, AAVE slang words such as ‘take care of business’, ‘honey’ or ‘ma’am’ may feature prominently in drag performances (Mann 801). Therefore, it can be said that AAVE serves as a linchpin of all the marginalized groups, where its members respect and understand each other. Despite the slight differences in the choice of words among ballroom and drag community, the importance of the role of language in both of these cases stays the same.

1.1.4 AAVE features

The best way to illustrate the linguistic differences between Standard English (SE) and AAVE is to start at the basic level of language pyramid. From the phonological perspective, it has been proven that speakers of the latter form of English have a tendency to **reduce some final consonants**, such as *nd* and *st* to only *n* and *s*. On that basis the verb *stand* becomes just *stan* and the word *test* gets shorten to only *tes*. A similar approach is adopted to words carrying the *-ing* form. Here the *g* is dropped, and the original *spending* becomes just *spendin*. Other characteristics typical for AAVE speakers is their usage of verb in the present tense also when referring to something that happened before and is now finished. Such example can be seen in the utterance “yesterday she see me”, where the adverb functions as an indicator of the fact that the situation occurred in the past (Green 107, 110).

Major morphological feature of African American Vernacular is also the so-called **finite *be***. While a speaker of SE would utter “we are fine”, an African American will say “we fine”. This *be* can in addition be used in another way, for instance “she be your mother”. **Zero copula** signifies there is usually no third singular /s/ in AAVE. Frequently used among the communicators of AAVE is the **verb *done***. It often plays the same role as the word *already*. Hence “I done told you that” will have the same meaning when replaced with *already*. In very similar way operates the **participle *been***. Unlike Standard English, here the auxiliary verb *have/has* is omitted (Mufwene et al. 124-136).

On the syntactic level, another marker setting those two varieties of English language apart is according to Mufwene et al. (19, 28) the use of ***ain’t*** by black community. It plays a role of a negator, nevertheless its communicative function is rather versatile. On its own it can substitute the verb phrase *do not have* (as in *possess*) or the verb *be not*. When conjoined by another negative word, together it creates a **negative concord** as seen in “Nobody ain’t gonna listen to her”. A similar approach is adopted in the **negative inversion** as in “Couldn’t nobody do better”. Lastly, what is uncommon for the white community but preferably quintessential for AAVE users is the application of **double modals** in apposition like *might could* (Mufwene et al. 158).

Bailey and Thomas (Mufwene et al. 2022) furthermore mention the difference in **stress** and **intonation** or other dissimilarities in pronunciation, however the main focus of the thesis is rather on the written not spoken discourse.

1.1.5 Regional and social variations

As described above, there exist significant difference in the speech of people of white and black race. On top of that, visible nuances also occur between speakers of AAVE based on which part of The United States they are from. Green (123) mentions in her book that for instance the diphthong [oi], incorporated in words such as *coach* or *road*, is preferably

used by the Southern citizens. Likewise, is the pronunciation of *skr* in strawberry or street mainly present in states like Georgia or Louisiana and its usage varies based on how old the speaker is.

In other regions other patterns emerge. For example, African Americans living in northern Texas tend to lower the [ɛr] sound. Thus, the way they say words like *hair* or *fair* differentiates from other parts of the US (123).

Lanehart (212) presents rather an interesting look on how in Coahoma County the copula absence affects mainly the noun phrase subject. Whereas for other AAVE varieties like creole languages in the Caribbean, zero copula favors rather the personal pronoun.

Among the AAVE speakers of Pennsylvania exist a presence of the [ai] monophthongization when expressing words such as *tire* (243).

Typical features for black people living in Philadelphia are expressions like “Yo” or the noun *pavement* (277).

Black Americans located in New York City have their own language patterns. Here the speech is diverse as well. Lanehart (281) outlines an example on the pronunciation of *coffee* as “cawfee” or “beahd” instead of *bad*.

The highest population of African Americans is in California. Common expressions represent the future perfective *be done* or invariant *be* (308).

1.2 Online discourse

With the rise of the Internet in the second half of the twentieth century came a lot of doubt about its effect on human beings. It is globally known that its invention has led to many great things, carrying both positive and negative connotations. In terms of discourse, the role it plays is relatively ambiguous. On one hand, it facilitated the communication of people from different parts of the world, making the process of exchanging messages faster and cheaper. On the other hand, having rather unrestrictive access enabling almost

every person to join in has brought along cyberbullying and various forms of language mockery (Crystal 2–3).

1.2.1 Role of social media in language use

Besides email many young people nowadays prefer having discussions through chatgroups. Here, as Crystal (129) explains, individuals engage in interaction in either real or postponed time. In general most popular remains the interaction via various social media platforms, which activity has been mediated by the establishment of the World Wide Web (WWW) (216).

Social media has managed to affect the way language is being produced. Users online are now allowed to shorten their sentences to convey important information in more economical form. Dąbrowska (236) furthermore talks about the constant need to use abbreviations, relatively a new phenomenon, which began in text messages. The platform X (formerly known as Twitter) works on a similar principle. Its users are obliged to limit their posts to certain number of words. The newest update raised the latest restriction of 140 characters for normal users to 280 characters per one tweet (Henry 886). Therefore, if one wants to keep the meaning of their message, he or she is forced to use abbreviations. The result of such usage is often a non-conventional spelling. Despite that, findings by Dąbrowska have not shown any implication of loss of cultural values in such shortened texts. Another characteristic of social media discourse is non-standard language and excessive use of word substitutions such as *want* or *every* (239-40).

1.2.2 Its influence on language change

Besides shortening sentences and writing in abirritations, language in online space underwent other changes. McCulloch (224) sets an example where when someone wants to put emphasis on what he or she is communicating, he/she writes it in all caps. The mainstream use of the Internet bought new slang into the everyday life of its users.

Expressions such as “feature”, “bug” or “to cancel” (140) are all part of the Internet jargon vocabulary. Another change that affected language were the acronyms. The most popular ones that are still common today include BTW (by the way), FYI (for your information) or LOL (laughing out loud). McCulloch (187–88) also points to the frequent use of dashes, ellipsis or three dots indicating separation or pause when typing something online. Further features of online discourse are repeated punctuation marks, for example “??? or !!!” (190). Similar way to emphasize the meaning of an utterance is the repetition of vowels in words like “yayyyy” or “nooo” (231). Very beloved are also smiley faces, predecessors of today’s favorable emojis, and other symbols like the “xx” (kiss kiss) or <3 (heart) (190).

What is rather interesting is the difference in formally written text and the one written online. Whereas in the former one people need to stick to specific writing format, the style of communication in chatrooms or social media platforms is mostly free of rules. Hence, internet users tend to put no attention to the use of punctuation, capitalization of letters or grammatical correction (McCulloch 215-9).

1.3 Generation Z and Online Communication

Throughout history there have existed many generations of people categorized by the years they were born in and shared set of historical events. Turner (103) describes the four recent ones the silent generation, the baby boomers, Generation X and millennials. However, the focus of this thesis is on the oldest generation, Generation Z.

1.3.1 Characteristics of Generation Z

People belonging to this generation are the ones who were born in the years between 1997 and 2012. With few exceptions the majority of these individuals are fully accustomed to the functions of the Internet (Turner 104). Anthony Turner presents in his study a various number of findings underlining the great connection of the Gen Z youth to their

technological devices, including smartphones, iPads and more. Such access led to the children spending less time playing outside and more being online. Even more frustrating is the fact that according to a survey done on students, 50% of participants stated they feel more comfortable communicating in an online space than they do in a face-to-face conversation. The same applies to the amount of private information they are prone to share on social media (105-8).

Mark McCrindle (15–16) nicknames the members of this generation digital integrators, commenting on their strong exposure to million applications and online sites like Google, Facebook or YouTube. Here they come to get artificial satisfaction but also search for information, which makes them globally focused and visually engaged.

1.3.2 Trends in online communication among Generation Z

Due to the development of the Internet professional linguists like to talk about the e-discourse which describes the type of communication produced in a digital sphere. Research conducted by AbuSa'aleek (138) done on 160 undergraduate students shows remarkable results about the language trends people use online. Unconventional spelling such as writing “gud” instead of “good” has the highest frequency of use (140). That is followed by usage of contractions (*don't*, *nxt*, *tmrw*) and word-letter replacement, where users replace the verb *see* with simple letter *c* (141). Other common trends include shortenings like *bro*, *sis* or *Fri*, initialisms, and emoticons. Among the favorable initialisms are ASAP (as soon as possible), LOL (laughing out loud) or IRL (in real life) (142).

The creation of new words, neologisms, is another sign of language change supported by transportation of communication to the online space. Amanda Roig-Marín (2-4) names for example expressions like *vlog* (video + blog), *webinar* (web + seminar) or a new way to describe a popular blogger – *blogebriety*.

Another great feature present in the discourse of a young generation is the implementation of slang. Slang to Eble (12) is “an ever changing set of colloquial words and phrases that speakers use to establish or reinforce social identity or cohesiveness within a group or with a trend or fashion in society at large”. According to Jennifer Roth-Gordon (1) it occurs in popular media but also in music and it has many functions often associated with being creative with words and its meaning. Stance is a crucial factor as it “displays a speaker’s orientation toward or away from a topic, situation, interpretations, and a site of social struggle” (Roth-Gordon 2). Hence some words may have double meaning and thus may be understood only among same age groups or races (2). Roth-Gordon (3) elaborates on this when she mentions that today’s slang stems mainly from Black culture and is often used incorrectly by people of other races.

1.4 AAVE in online spaces

African American Vernacular English is becoming more popular with modern generation who spend most of their time on social media. Surprisingly, AAVE is not only being spoken by the Black community, but other races use its terminology as well, if not more. It is often the case that when an African American speaks in Black English, he or she is labelled as immature or unprofessional, however, this does not truly apply on the digital space. Here the way people choose to present themselves is not so strict or limited (Salomon and Meyer 151-2). The rise of AAVE online was mainly done by Hip Hop artists and Rappers. Their music consisting of preferably AAVE phrases seems to appear to today’s teenagers worldwide and most of its listeners adapt such vocabulary and use it freely in their everyday speech.

Coleman and Daniel (83-4) present a short evolution of Ebonics in media. They mention how historically there have always existed a great negative perception of Black English. Not only was it considered bad and illiterate but, in addition to that, in 1926

AAVE faced dishonor when an early radio decided to make fun of the language's pronunciation. Soon other aspects connected to everything African American related became a target of mockery from the point of a white race. Television programs were not afraid to air out movies using the "Black face" or saying the N word. Ebonics therefore regarded racial stereotyping all thanks to the media production and misinterpretation (88). Ever since then the world started speculating whether or not AAVE should be taught in schools (79).

Nevertheless, with the arrival of the Internet and growing popularity of social media platforms, the attitude towards AAVE has begun to change. Vershawn Ashanti Young (49-50) offers an idea that the election of an African American president might have helped its status. Barack Obama was known for his monologues consisting of a blend of features of Ebonics and standard English.

A quite recent look on how AAVE is perceived online provides Malika Imhotep's research on usage of Black English. She suggests an analysis of young people's discourse on the social media platform X, formerly known as Twitter. Imhotep (39) mentions the tremendous recognition a video showing a black woman talking in African American English got and how it shortly after became a viral phenomenon. The female's name is Kayla Newman and in 2014 she used the phrase "We in dis bitch, finna get crunk. Eyebrows on fleek! Da fuq" which entered its way into Dictionary.com. It is fair to clarify such video was initially placed on Vine, an application, where anyone could post recorded videos of the maximum length of six seconds. Vine was also known for popular funny content whose authors were mainly teenagers of the black community. Therefore, Vine could be given the credit for rising the popularity of AAVE slang to the mass population (Imhotep 44).

Another instance of AAVE is presented in Heine's paper. She gives an example which dates back to when a teenage white girl Danielle Bregoli in an interview with a show host Dr. Phil expressed her rude attitude with a phrase "Cash me outside, how bout dat?" in rather a Black accent (Salomon and Meyer 159). Cultural appropriation or stealing other person's culture without fully understanding its heritage and roots is highly tied to African American English. Especially white celebrities commit to such thing by adapting AAVE slang and making it their own accessory providing them with coolness. White rapper Iggy Azalea or the Asian actress Nora "Awkwafina" Lum are an example of it. Whether they do it through public appearance, like in Bregoli's case or through Azalea's song lyrics, their contribution to public awareness of AAVE is rather harmful (Salomon and Meyer 159).

Sydnee Thompson in her article for BuzzFeed News lists more examples when African American English was mocked by non-black people, one of which is the Saturday Night Live (SNL), an American sketch comedy show. SNL writers often try to replicate the newest online trends to address the young generation, however as Thompson continues, when such terms are spoken by a white person for laughs, it loses its deeply rooted cultural ties.

1.4.1 Previous studies on AAVE in digital communication

Notable study done on the representation of AAVE in digital communication was done by Glynda Hull. Hull created a project aiming at African American youth to tell their own life stories in the digital form (Hall and Damico 82). The DUSTY (Digital Underground Storytelling for Youth) project then inspired Hall and Damico to expand on the work of Hull. Their study from 2007 focuses on how Black American students imply their language's discourse modes, such as call and response, signifying or tonal semantics in digital texts (86).

Another research from 2015 focuses on the use of African American Vernacular English on the social media platform Twitter (X) in various regions in the USA. Its results show that the whereabouts of Twitter users could be detected simply based on the terminology they use in their posts (Jones 429).

In the rather recent research from 2020 Jennifer Roth-Gordon and her colleagues (118–19) investigated the usage of AAVE popular words for marketing purposes by famous American food chains such as IHOP, Chipotle or Burger King.

1.4.2 Trends and patterns

Common trends and patterns in online discourse using AAVE provides research done by Christian Ilbury. The results of his study show preference towards phonological and lexical features of AAVE. There seems to be a high occurrence of expressions such as *Y'all* and *yaas* and adjectives like *ratchet* or *thirsty*. In terms of phonology, the online youth tend to eliminate the *ing* form and uses the substitution of dental fricatives *dat* for *that*. Very frequent is the r-lessness, for example in the word *Lawd* (lord) or consonant reduction in the verb *stan* (stand) (9). Finally, very common is replacing letters in words like *work* so it becomes *werk* or even *werq* or changing the *i* in *girl* for *u* (11). All the features stated in this paragraph correspond with what was already said in the section related to the description of individual AAVE features.

To sum up this chapter, African American Vernacular English (AAVE) has a complex history rooted in West African languages and shaped by slavery, discrimination, and the need for communal solidarity. Despite historical prejudice, AAVE has become a key cultural marker, especially within hip hop and ballroom communities, where it signifies identity and resilience. The rise of social media has amplified AAVE's visibility, with its distinctive features, such as phonological and syntactic variations, being widely adopted and sometimes appropriated by non-black users. This phenomenon raises

questions about cultural appropriation and authenticity, particularly as Generation Z, deeply immersed in digital communication, increasingly incorporates AAVE into their discourse. The thesis therefore aims to explore the extent to which Czech students of English Language and Literature and Psychology engage with AAVE in their online interactions, considering the broader implications of this global linguistic exchange.

2 Theoretical Framework

This chapter examines various sociolinguistic theories related to the origin of African American Vernacular English, thereby focusing the approach of this thesis.

2.1 Application of sociolinguistic theories to AAVE

The question of the true origin of AAVE has undergone many changes throughout the years. However, Walt Wolfram, an American sociolinguist, mentions the four most relevant hypotheses and provides description of each.

The first one is called the **Anglicist Hypothesis** and was created in the first half of the 20th century on the basis of interviews done on elder speakers of both white and black community (Kachru et al. 332). This theory argues that there may exist a strong possibility that AAE and European American dialects came from the same source (Kachru et al. 332).

Nevertheless, this hypothesis was later overshadowed by a new paradigm, labeled by Wolfram (Kachru et al. 333), as the **Creolist theory**, whose advocates believed that African American English developed from a language spoken by the creole people living in the South of the United States.

The next theory commenting on the development of AAVE is called the **Neo-Anglicist Hypothesis**. Kachru and her colleagues (335) writes that although the representatives of the third theory agree with the first one on the fact that AAE is closely tied to the dialects spoken in the British Isles. However, unlike the primary mentioned, this hypothesis asserts that through the process of evolution African American language obtained its own distinctive features.

Lastly, the belief that both the role of regional dialect elements and substrate effects contributed to the emergence of AAVE as a variation of the English language are claims of the **Substrate hypothesis** (Kachru et al. 335).

Although all of the theories presented above are relevant, this thesis will try to find out if the collected data support or disprove one of the hypotheses described above.

2.2 Social factors influencing language use in online discourse

In his book *Society and Discourse: How Social Contexts Influence Texts and Talk*, Teun A. van Dijk (25) presents readers with a list of honorable ethnomethodologists' names and credits them for their ground-breaking discoveries on conversation analysis. He furthermore explains the possibilities behind the wave of criticism it faced and says it might have been caused by the CA analysts' insufficient attention given to the social and political aspects of talk.

Crystal (63) expands on this topic by introducing two distinctive linguistic approaches. The first one, **prescriptivism**, holds that one form of language is superior to others and should be enforced throughout the entire speech community. This is rather an inflexible point of view taking in context grammar pronunciation and vocabulary, which emerged in the 18th century and advocated for English. In contrast to that is **descriptivism**, focusing on "the variations in usage found within a language, and explains why variant forms exist" (Crystal 63).

2.2.1 Gender

Gender is a variable that is greatly popular with linguists. Although Lakoff' first study from 1975 on the differences in styles among female and male conversation is still considered to be quite recent, her research provided an open door for more experts to search in that field.

One of the observations on whether gender plays a role in written discourse was made by linguist Douglas Biber (Baron 51) and his colleagues, who undertook research to investigate potential differences in the writing styles of men and women in letter composition. A slightly different approach took Anthony Mulac and Torborg Louisa

Lundell, whose goal was to analyze all the features embedded in essays authored by students at college (Baron 51). The outcomes were similar for both research and showed that linguistic elements each gender uses differ. The indicators that decided a text was written by a woman were for instance “references to emotion, sentence-initial adverbials, uncertainty verbs, or hedge words” (Baron 51).

Susan Herring looked onto how much gender influences online conversation and found out that it is pretty much the same as for face-to-face interaction as they both “include verbosity, assertiveness, use of profanity (and rudeness), typed representations of smiling and laughter, and degree of interactive engagement” (Baron 52). Herring specified that men have greater usage of longer messages when talking to the opposite sex, express themselves more vulgarly and present opinions forcefully as if they were facts (Baron 52). In contrast to that, her study also showed that if a woman communicates with another woman, they tend to talk for a longer period of time than in a male-to-male conversation (Baron 65).

2.2.2 Race and ethnicity

In the research conducted by Tynes, Reynolds and Greenfield (680) the results imply that race is a quintessential feature of online conversations. Very interesting was the finding about biracial teenagers. In their case internet chatgroups may eliminate the feeling of not fitting into one box – black or white. Here they are not forced to choose, which race they resonate more with and can “move in and out of conversations with each group” (Tynes et al. 680).

Research study by Bailey presents interesting insights into the representation of races in online space. Results show that prior that observation there was a higher representation of individuals from the white race than there was from black and Latino’s. Nevertheless, nowadays the situation is quite balanced (Tynes et al. 681).

In order to not cause an unwanted racist talk, users in chatgroups need to figure out how to approach an ethnical minority in a politically acceptable manner. In addition to that they must gauge their choice of a topic and attitude they possess (Dijk 204).

2.2.3 Social groups and communities

It is important to note that people all over the world change their way they communicate based on the person who they are trying to address (Dijk 26). Conversation takes a different turn whether or not one speaks to someone he or she is close to. Similarly, it is when two or more unfamiliar cultures meet, and their speakers need to consider what is appropriate to say to not offend the others (27).

Crossman refers to Erving Goffman's theory of a social construct, where speakers change their communicative style according to how they want to present themselves. Research by Angela Reyes provides interesting perspective on the Asian American teenagers living in the United States and their usage of AAVE terminology. The study's results show that instead of merely trying to blend in with the black race, these teens employ African American Vernacular English to build their identities as the 'Other Asian' among the predominantly white population of Americans (Reyes 527).

2.2.4 Search for identity

David Crystal comments on the common goals of Internet users who prefer to converse online. He states that many of them try to target certain group or "whom they would like to influence" (Crystal 60) and connects it to the search for an identity. Teun A. van Dijk (73) writes that people are often members of more than one social community. For that reason individuals tend to develop multiple identities to align better with each group (Dijk 73). An example of that could be the previously mentioned drag or ballroom culture, where language serves as a powerful tool that not only brings together people from

minority and discriminated groups but moreover promotes mutual understanding of things among themselves (Rowan et al. 183).

A slightly different view on that topic shares the duo Wray and Bloomer (144) when they talk about anonymity. More specifically, how in a computer-mediated communication the process of adopting a fake persona is way easier than in real life. Such artificially established identity may be difficult to unravel especially when it becomes involved in a foul activity (Wray and Bloomer 143).

2.2.5 Keeping up with technological evolution

Another factor besides the creation of an identity real or fake one, can be the urge to find the perfect technique of transforming one's life experiences and thoughts into comprehensible sentences that align to the way people want to be perceived by others in the digital world (Wray and Bloomer 143). Wray and Bloomer do not forget to mention that even the Internet has its limitations its users need to respect (145). Hence people like to create their own jargon made predominantly for online purposes. Part of adaptation to Internet language or Netspeak as David Crystal (67) labels it, is the process of words' abbreviation. The most common ones are *afaik* (as far as I know), *imo* (in my opinion), *jk* (just kidding) or *gr8* (great), whereby their use depends mainly on the context and target chatgroup (Crystal 84).

Another social factor playing a role in the style of Internet discourse can be the need to appear friendly and emphatic or show signs of disapproval or agreement when needed. Next feature of digital discourse is the new way of spelling, like changing the plural -s to -z. Unconventional spelling may help in conveying emotions online, since it is often challenging for others to perceive one's true feelings without having access to visual cues. Many messages exchanged between Internet users compose of reactions such as *yep*, *yup* for *yes* or *kay* when something is okay (Crystal 88).

In conclusion, the sociolinguists' interest in the development of African American Vernacular English has led to many theories on their true origin (e.g., Anglicist, Creolist, Neo-Anglicist, Substrate hypothesis). Since language is a means of communication in both public environments and online spaces, experts have focused on the social factors that influence the use of language online. Lakoff's work on gender-specific conversational styles shows, unlike Herring's findings, that women and men use language differently, with women adhering to more emotional and polite communication. Race and ethnicity also significantly influence online discourse. Theories by Goffman and Reyes illustrate how language helps shape social identities, with Crystal and Dijk commenting on how people create multiple personas online to align with different social groups. With new technology constantly developing, people in the online space are forced to adapt their language for digital communication, often resulting in the use of abbreviations and unconventional spelling.

3 Data Collection

This chapter provides a comprehensive explanation for the research design employed in the present study investigating the question of popular African American Vernacular English expressions used in the discourse of the social media platform Twitter (X). The data gathered from Twitter posts later helped to construct an online questionnaire for the second part of the research.

The thesis chose the quantitative method and administered the online survey to collect evidence on the Czech students' awareness and understanding of African American English vocabulary, its grammatical rules and spelling. For a sample to provide representative results, the research targeted Gen Z students at the University of South Bohemia majoring in Psychology and the English language and literature.

3.1 Description of Twitter data

For the first part of data collection for this research the total number of 128 posts were gathered from an online platform Twitter, a social media website used daily by users all over the world. Many famous people like celebrities or political figures are part also frequent contributors on there (Kwak et al. 595). Twitter seemed as the best social media platform to collect for this thesis, thus as mentioned in chapter AAVE in online spaces, it is known for high usage of slang language, and unlike Instagram, TikTok or YouTube, people use Twitter for written communication. However, it is difficult to provide detailed information about the users' identity because the network does not provide their personal information, unless the users state it on their own Twitter page. The posts, also called tweets, were collected in a form of a screenshot (see **Fig. 3**: An example of a tweet). The authors of the posts collected for this thesis were all active users of social media platform Twitter (X), presumably of various age and social economic backgrounds with ability to write in the English language.

The sampling approach for obtaining data from Twitter was based on selecting tweets containing AAVE expressions that were posted by Twitter users. The identification of AAVE tweets was conducted on the basis of studied literature on African American language (including publications by Lanehart and Green), online articles discussing current AAVE terminology, and an AAVE focused website (Master AAVE Glossary), run by an African American. All the tweets were collected within one week in November 2023.

3.2 Questionnaire data

To gain an overall view on the university students' knowledge of AAVE, an online questionnaire was applied in this study. The questions for the survey were conducted on the basis of AAVE words found in the collected Twitter posts (see Appendix 2: Online Questionnaire; questions 29 and 31), and online articles concerning popular AAVE terms.

The sampling strategy used for the recruitment of participants was convenience sampling. That means asking volunteer students at the University of South Bohemia who are pursuing a degree in either Psychology or English language and Literature, whether they would be available to fill out a questionnaire for this research. The link to the survey was sent to students of the English Language and literature mainly through social media, for example via Facebook chat. Academic advisors at the Faculty of Pedagogy at the University of South Bohemia then sent a collective email with the survey link to the students of Psychology

To participate in the research, students were required to meet certain criteria. The first one was to be of Czech nationality. Participants had to be born between the years 1997 and 2012, so to fulfill the Generation Z criterion, possess an intermediate or high level of proficiency in the English language, and be active users of social media platforms.

The survey comprised a total of 36 questions (including two follow-up questions marked by asterisk (*)) (see Appendix 2: Online Questionnaire). The first section asked questions which would gain basic information about the participant's race, ethnicity, gender, age and the major of their study (questions 1-*6). The following section was then focused on the students' comprehension of African American Vernacular English (questions 7-31). The primary goal here was to examine their understanding of black English and test their knowledge on its grammatical system, spelling rules and vocabulary. In some cases, the questions had only one correct answer, in other times more than one option was possible. Sometimes participants were asked to provide a short response to an inquiry or to rewrite a sentence from AAVE to Standard English. The third section revolved about the term 'cultural appropriation' (questions 32-36). Here the participants were asked to submit a concise description and to share their personal opinion on such issue.

All the questions concerning the students' knowledge of AAVE were marked as non-mandatory to complete. The reason for that is that we did not want one task to stop them from filling out the rest of the questionnaire.

4 Data Analysis

After gathering data, the next very crucial step was their analysis. That involved systematically and logically examining and interpreting the data. First step was to edit the raw data, code and classify it and finally organize it into tables. For this thesis the Microsoft Excel was used to store questionnaire data and find correlations. Thanks to its overall comprehensibility, it was possible to link individual pieces of information together and on this basis then create graphs. Mainly bar chart and pie chart were used in this research to display results.

4.1 Twitter Data Analysis

The analysis of Twitter posts was completed with the help of Czech National Korpus application called KWords. This software driven application is used to determine which keywords are most frequently present in a particular discourse (Cvrček and Richterová, paragraph 1). Before that the data needed to be transformed from a screenshot to the form of a text using Microsoft Word (see Appendix 3: Transcription of Twitter Posts). Here the minimal, maximal, and average value of characters per one post were manually counted. The minimum was three characters (tweet 49), maximal was 263 characters (see tweet 39) and the average was 49,3 characters per one Twitter post. The final number of all words from the tweets was 1144, of which 120 were AAVE terms (see red words in Appendix 3: Transcription of Twitter Posts). The first term, ‘nasty ass’ is an AAVE alternative for the SE adjective ‘nasty’, both meaning the same. According to Master AAVE Glossary: ‘chile’ is ‘child’ in AAVE, ‘deadass’ means to be serious, ‘bae’ is an AAVE synonym for ‘babe’, ‘fye’ means ‘fire’ (as in very cool), ‘bop’ indicates good music (e.g., song that is very good), ‘sis’ is short for SE ‘sister’, ‘bruh’ refers to ‘brother’, ‘tweak’ indicates abnormal movement, ‘vibe’ is a synonym for great energy, to ‘flex’ means to show off (e.g., brag about belongings), ‘queen’ defines someone beautiful, ‘purr

(or period)' is used to express strong approval or to put emphasis on something. 'Left no crumbs' is sometimes used as a complement to 'ate' and means the same, therefore it was counted as one AAVE term (e.g., tweet 42). 'Sassy' can be used to define a person who is cheeky, provocative, and outspoken (Ilbury 15). 'Boujee/bouijie' describes someone of high-class (Axis). 'AF' or 'as f***' is used to "emphasize or exaggerate a point" (Ogunyinka). 'Taking it' was popularized by African American actress Mo'Nique and, according to Urban Dictionary, it is used when someone does something astonishing. 'Mother' and to be 'mothering' are drag terms and mean to be excellent in something (Levine). Some African American expressions are already mentioned in the thesis: 'eat', 'slay', 'yall', 'lowkey', 'serving', 'gagged', '(for) real', 'cook(ed)', 'giving' (see Fig. 2). The indication was conducted using online articles on AAVE and websites concerning African American Vernacular English terminology (Master AAVE Glossary and knowyourmeme.com)

The yellow highlights in Appendix 3: Transcription of Twitter Posts indicated 53 African American grammatical features, for instance copula absence (for better comprehension indicated by empty space in the brackets; e.g., tweet 112), finite *be* (tweet 113), double negation (tweet 4) or absence of possessive 's (indicated by brackets; e.g., tweet 38). The identification of the AAVE expressions and grammatical features was based on the studied literature concerning African American Vernacular English (see AAVE features), and publications on African American language by Green (2009), Lanehart (2015), and Mufwene (2022). For better clarity, please consult Figure 1.

AAVE Gramatical Aspects in Tweets	
Aspect	An example of a tweet
copula absence (<i>is</i>)	She () ripping car apart with her bare hands, I don't think he can do anything else but watch
copula absence (<i>are</i>)	We () funny as hell, we () happy for 1\$ margaritas but side eye 50 burgers
substitution of a dental fricative	Damn dis bob is fye
demonstrative <i>them</i>	These look like them kinda wings that I don't like idk
finite <i>be</i>	Post what Biden kids be smoking
completive <i>done</i>	Beyonce hasn't even cleared Rihanna, someone who retired 7 years ago, in sales. And they done compare her to MJ
absence of a third person singular	I'm sorry but the face card go crazy
absence of possessive 's	Rihanna() face card never declines
negation (<i>ain't</i>)	I ain't been boujje.
double negation	He don't be doing nothing at the gym but oil himself up and remote
immediate future tense	If we () walking together just know imma bump into u cus I can't walk in a straight line
irrealis mood (<i>finna</i>)	Imma delete all my socials eventually. Nobody finna bully me into texting back.
non-standard verb form (<i>are</i>)	Crabs just don't know how good they damn legs is chile
non-standard verb form (<i>weren't</i>)	Let's act like we wasn't gagging a little when this dropped
omission of an auxiliary verb (<i>did</i>)	Why () he gag her like that
stylistic features (<i>their</i>)	Crabs just don't know how good they damn legs is chile

Fig. 1: AAVE grammatical aspects found in collected Twitter posts

Then the transcribed tweets were compared to the words in referential corpus Intercorp version 13. For the purpose of excluding any unrelated and irrelevant data, the process of cleansing was put into effect. For example, from each tweet grammatical mistakes (including missing letters) were corrected, and any emoticons, interjections or unnecessary punctuation marks were erased. Abbreviations (e.g., ngl, idk, omg) have not been changed, as they reflect the authentic usage of words on Twitter (X). All words in the document converted to lowercase to ensure that the analysis is not disrupted by the same word appearing twice, one with an uppercase letter and once with a lowercase letter. After that the KWords results were downloaded and transferred into a table in Microsoft Excel (see Appendix 1: KWords Analysis of Twitter Data).

4.2 Questionnaire Data Analysis

The questionnaire administered to the students at the University of South Bohemia was created on the basis of the AAVE terms and grammatical features found in Twitter posts. After obtaining the responses from the Google Forms questionnaire, the data were converted to Microsoft Excel and analyzed. Firstly, participants who did not complete the questionnaire were eliminated from the dataset. Afterward, a value was calculated for

each column in the dataset to provide information about the studied problem. The most common operation to count for instance the number of students majoring in the English Language and Literature was the formula =COUNTIF (range, criteria). The column containing data about students' majors symbolizes the range and the major is the criterion. The final request may look something like this =COUNTIF (A1:A52, "English Language and literature").

Since the survey questions were not marked as mandatory, participants who did not select any of the provided options were interpreted as unfamiliar with the meaning of the words. This scenario occurred specifically in the task where respondents were asked to indicate their familiarity with AVE words *boujee*, *slay*, *period*, *ratchet*, *lit*, and *sis*. Responses options included: (1) 'I do not know what this word means', (2) 'I recognize this word', (3) 'I know this word but I do not use it', and (4) 'I use this word myself' (refer to Appendix 2: Online Questionnaire; question 11).

The same applied to the question asking the participants to rewrite an AAVE phrase into a Standard English format or the task where they were to provide an explanation to an AAVE sentence. In the case of question number 26 (refer to page 80), if respondents failed to complete a famous internet phrase, it was assumed they were unfamiliar with it. However, here the analysis focused exclusively on the correctly completed responses.

After calculating the responses to each question, it was time to decide, which data seem to be the most significant and interesting for this research and should be put into a graph. It is important to note that certain tasks in the questionnaire are not mentioned in the Findings chapter, simply because they did not seem as relevant as the others. That is the example of tasks number 17, 20, 24, 25 in Appendix 2: Online Questionnaire. The question 33 (see page 83) about participants' thoughts on cultural appropriation was also

not included in the Findings chapter. These questions were simply meant to gain insight into the students' awareness of AAVE and test the consistency of their answers.

Prior to the research, all participants were introduced to the course of the research and its objectives. All of them were given the possibility to withdraw from the research at any time. In order to maintain the respondents' full anonymity throughout the research the online survey did not ask for them to provide any contact name or email address. The participation was completely voluntary.

5 Findings

The purpose of this chapter is to present the results obtained from the research, provide its detailed description with focus on the data analysis. Empirical data are supported through pie charts and bar graphs to help with the navigation and comprehension of the information.

5.1 AAVE in Twitter Posts

Twitter analysis was conducted on 128 Twitter (X) posts using the Czech National Corpus tool KWords available from kWords (korpus.cz.). The analysis served to determine the most frequently used African American Vernacular English terms in the selected tweets produced by English-speaking users on Twitter. Finally, an online questionnaire investigating the Czech students' awareness of African American English was developed based on the identified AAVE vocabulary in Twitter posts.

Of the total number of 53 keywords (see page 69) indicated by KWords, only 13 were AAVE terms (see yellow highlighted words on page 69). 'Ate', 'eat', and 'eating', according to Islam, means someone performed well in a task (see tweet 46, 25, 37). Author of Master AAVE Glossary states that to be 'gagged', or to 'gag' someone means to be positively surprised or to amaze someone (see tweet 86 and 90). 'Yall', according to the article by Lufkin, has roots in African American English, and when translated to SE, means 'you all' (see tweet 35). The website on AAVE glossary states that 'slay' is used to praise someone for their good looks or performance (tweet 29), and 'real' can be used to say someone is serious about something (e.g., a situation) (see tweet 61). According to popular website knowyourmeme.com, 'cook' was popularized by rapper Lil B, and it means to "let someone do their thing", therefore in the tweet 52, 'cooking' refers an individual proving their point. Axis.org explains that to be 'lowkey' means to be subtle about something (see tweet 117). To 'serve' or 'be serving', according to the author of the

website Master AAVE Glossary, is used to talk about people posing and giving looks (see tweet 72; referring to a picture of an attractive woman performing activism). ‘Giving’ as explained by Islam, is often used in a phrase ‘it is giving’, meaning one thing is similar to another (see tweet 28). For further clarity, consult Figure 2.

AAVE Word	Context of use	An example of a tweet
eat	to perform well in a task/ look good	Shoutout to my nail tech for real he gonna eat every timeee
eating	to be doing well (in a task)/ look good	Rihanna's hair is eating OMG
ate	to have performed well in a task/ looked good	Oh my hairdresser ate ..
gag	to amaze someone	Oh, she's about to gag the live
gagged	to be amazed by someone/something	The way she backed up??? Oh, Nola had Beyonce gagged lmaooo iconic
yall	to say 'you all' in Standard English	I'm sorry but he look better than some of yall
slay	to praise someone for their good performance	He slayed a bit
real	to be serious about something	He's so real for this
(to be) cooking	to be making a point	He was cooking with that homelander bar
lowkey	to be subtle about something	Uber & Lyft really lowkey dangerous when you think about it
(to be) serving	to be giving looks; posing or modeling	And she was serving while doing it too, I hope she's having an amazing day
(it is) giving	to say one thing is similar to another	Why is it kinda giving Sabrina Carpenter

Fig. 2: AAVE terms analysed by KWords

The rest (40 keywords) were abbreviations (e.g., ‘idk’, ‘omg’, ‘u’), contractions (e.g., ‘kinda’) and different types of speech (e.g., nouns, pronouns, verbs, adverbs).

It is important to note that African American Vernacular English words are English words but become AAVE terms when used in specific context. For instance, according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, ‘gag’ as a verb in Standard English can be substituted for ‘choke’. Nevertheless, in the data from Twitter the use of this word was very different and was usually followed by a direct object. An example of that is the tweet “oh she’s about to gag the live” (see tweet 90). Even as a noun, the meaning of it varied from the dictionary’s definition, for instance one Twitter post uttered “this was the gag of the century like you had to be there” (see Fig. 3).



Fig. 3: An example of a tweet

The situation with ‘slay’ was similar. According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, in Standard English it means “to kill violently, wantonly, or in great numbers”, whereas in AAVE it can be used a verb as in “She kinda the first person with light eyes to ever slay” (see 87) which means that that person is the first light-eyed individual who looks good. The term ‘slay’ in AAVE functions moreover as an adjective in “Back camera is kinda slay” (see 55), illustrating that the camera is flawless or very good. Both of these examples of ‘slay’ as AAVE term indicate it means something positive and admirable. Akingbe and Onanuga (30) propose ‘slay’ implies someone or something is fashionable, therefore an adjective. In conclusion the use of this word is versatile.

The most important and interesting factor indicated by KWords was the relative frequency accompanying each word (see Appendix 1: KWords Analysis of Twitter Data). Certain authors of the website korpus.cz, Václav Cvrček and his colleague Olga Richterová (paragraph 2), define it as an “absolute frequency measured by the total length of the corpus” which functions as an “indicator of the frequency of the phenomenon in itself and enables comparison between corpora or texts of unequal size” (Cvrček and Richterová). The highest relative frequency (textRelFq) in all the 128 tweets of the 13 AAVE terms had ‘ate’ (24166.7). The frequency of ‘gagged’ was 10000. Lower frequency had ‘yall’ (5833.3), ‘slay’ and ‘real’ (both 5000), followed by ‘cooking’ (4166.7). The expressions ‘gag’, ‘cleared’, and ‘eat’ had the frequency of 3333.3. Last four AAVE terms: ‘lowkey’, ‘serving’, ‘eating’, ‘giving’ had the same relative frequency (2500).

On the other hand, when compared to the referential corpus (see third column in Appendix 1: KWords Analysis of Twitter Data), ‘ate’ had the frequency of 23.7 but here the meaning of it would rather not be related to AAVE, since ‘eat’ in SE is quite a common verb used by people to talk about food. In AAVE it is often associated with a great

performance (see tweet 37 and 121). Greatest contrast in the relative frequency in text versus in the referential corpus (refRelFq) had: ‘ate’ (23.7), ‘gagged’ (0.8), and ‘lowkey’ (0). The reason for this could be the fact that the referential corpus does not specify the age, or other demographical data about the people. Or it could simply mean that the language and vocabulary of Twitter truly differs from the offline discourse.

The fourth column in Appendix 1: KWords Analysis of Twitter Data provided information about the number of times each word appeared in the text (absolute frequency or textAbsFq). Among the 128 collected tweets, the term ‘ate’ had the highest textAbsFq (29), and ‘lowkey’, ‘serving’, ‘eating’ and ‘giving’ the lowest (3).

Perhaps far more interesting was the difference index (DIN) for which the calculation requires two values: the frequency of the given word in the original text (RelFq (Ttxt)) and its frequency in the referential corpus (RelFq (RefC)) (Horký, Vondříčka, and Cvrček, paragraph 8). Here is the formula for the calculation:

$$DIN = 100 \times \frac{RelFq(Ttxt) - RelFq(RefC)}{RelFq(Ttxt) + RelFq(RefC)}$$

Fig. 4: Formula for the calculation of the difference index (DIN). Source: Horký, V. – Vondříčka, P. – Cvrček, V.: KWords (ver. 2). FF UK. Praha 2023. Available from WWW: <<http://kwords.korpus.cz>>

Cvrček and his colleagues (paragraph 10) further explain the significance of the index value. If it is under zero it means the given word exists solely in the referential corpus. If the index value is 0, the frequency is about the same in both corpora. Value of 100 indicates that the word of interest occurs mainly in the original text and therefore can be considered exceptional. Majority of the expressions from Twitter data acquired values of somewhere between 75 and 100 (see seventh column in Appendix 1: KWords Analysis of Twitter Data). According to what is written on the website about KWords, this can be viewed as a crucial and interesting fact (Horký, Vondříčka, and Cvrček, paragraph 11).

Only 12 words from the total of 53, obtained number lower than 75 (see orange highlighted words on page 69). On the contrary, all 13 yellow highlighted AAVE expressions acquired value over 90. The value of 100 acquired three AAVE terms ('gagged', 'yall', and 'lowkey'), and five non AAVE expressions ('shes', 'idk', 'omg', 'beyonce', and 'kelly'). This information indicates that those eight words are mainly used among users on the social media platform Twitter (X), and moreover supports the claims made in chapters 1.2-1.4, that language in online space relies on usage of abbreviations and slang.

5.2 Online Questionnaire Results

This chapter offers a comprehensive analysis of the survey results, including detailed interpretations of the responses.

51 (11 male and 40 female) Czech and one female Ukrainian student at the University of South Bohemia voluntarily participated in the survey. The ethnic composition of the respondents was predominantly white, with two respondents identifying as Asians. Participation was restricted to individuals born between the years 1997 – 2005. Seven respondents were born between 1997 and 1999, 31 between 2000 and 2002, and the last 14 participants between 2003 and 2005. This experiment primarily targeted students majoring in Psychology (22 participants – 42.3 %) and English language and literature (19 participants – 36.5 %). However, it also included eleven participants from other academic programs (21.2 %). 30.8 % possessed an intermediate level of English and 69.2 % were advanced.

5.2.1 Summary of responses

In the opening section of the survey (see page 74) participants were provided with a short description of the definition of AAVE and on this basis were asked whether or not they have ever heard or encountered such phenomenon. The 72.3 % of students of Psychology answered, 'yes' to hearing about it and only 27.3 % answered 'no'. With students of English language and literature the results were very similar. Nearly 79 % of them have heard of such term prior to reading the description and only 21 % have not. 63.6% of students from other majors answered, 'yes' to this question, and 36.4 % 'no'. Surprisingly, only 27.3 % of Psychology students have encountered African American English in their life in contrast to 63.2 % students of the English language. Of the 52 respondents 38 students at the University of South Bohemia gave a positive answer to knowing the meaning of AAVE. Additionally, 21 respondents reported encountering it through online discourse (47.6 %), movies (23.8 %), music (23.8 %) or public interaction (4.8 %).

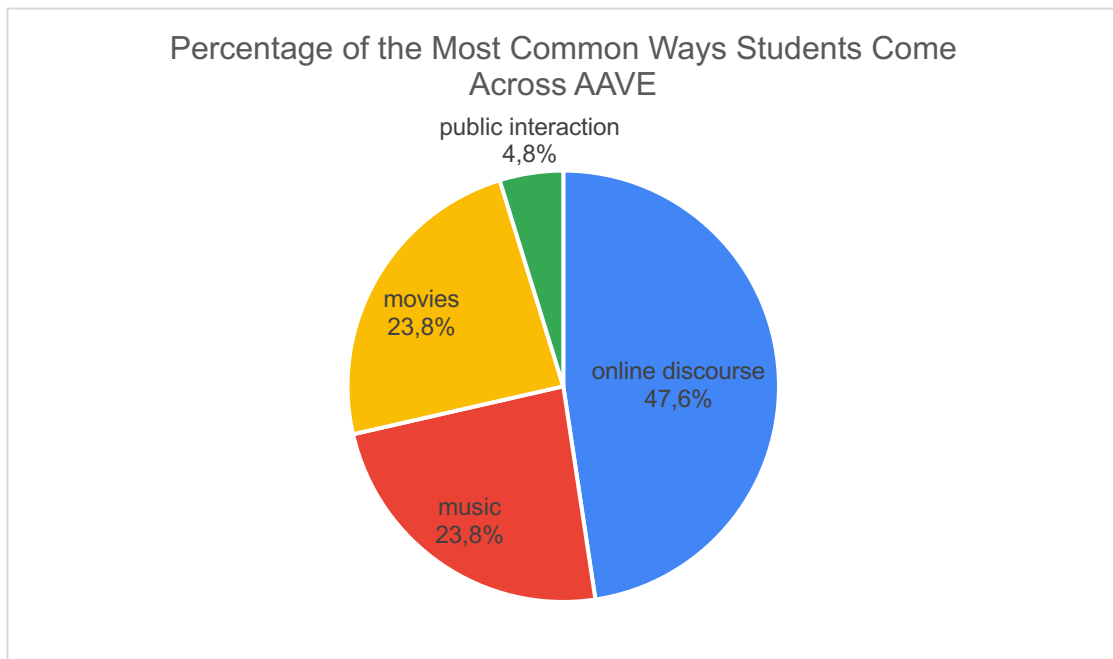


Fig. 5: Various ways students encounter AAVE

The most common social media platforms where students encountered AAVE were Instagram (33.3 %), YouTube (20.8 %), TikTok (19.4 %), Twitter (X) (13.9 %) and Facebook (12.5 %). Please refer to the pie chart in Figure 6.

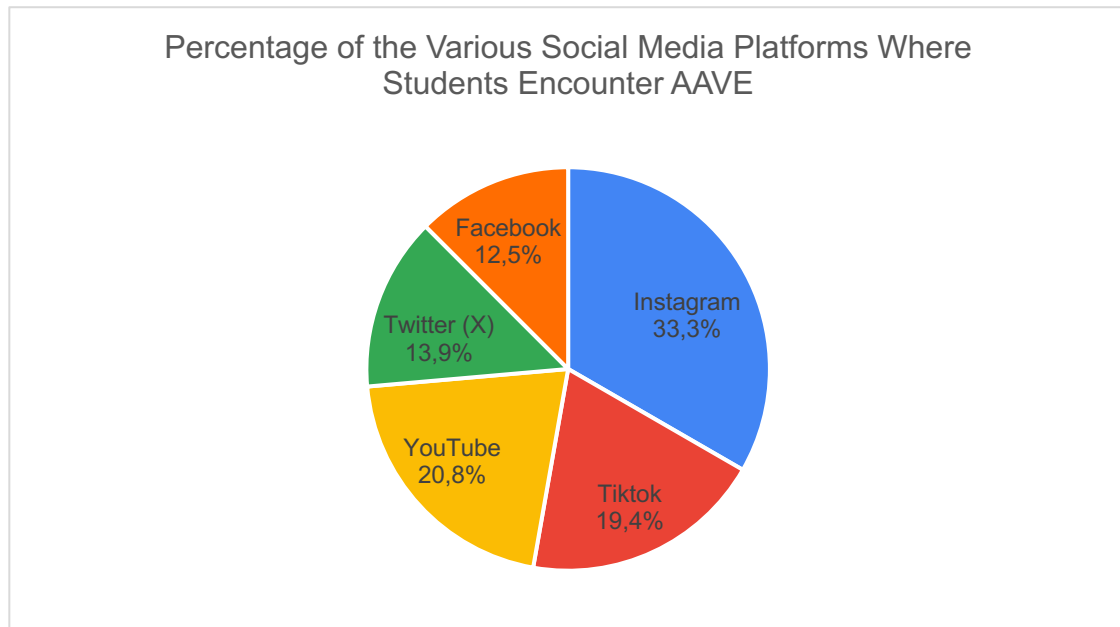


Fig. 6: Preferred social media platforms for students to encounter AAVE

Next section studied the students' familiarity with certain AAVE phrases. First five questions (7-11) examined to what extent were participants acquainted with each term – *bouijee*, *slay*, *period*, *ratchet*, *lit*, *sis*. The students were asked to provide their state with each word choosing from the options (1) 'I do not know what this word means', (2) 'I recognize this word', (3) 'I know this word, but I do not use it' and (4) 'I use this word myself'. The least known word was *ratchet*, of which 38.5 % of respondents did not know the meaning. Likewise, 36.5 % individuals admitted to not being aware of the adjective *bouijee*. 30 participants (57.7 %) responded that they use the word *slay* themselves. In addition, 55.8 % said they employ *period* into their speech and 44.2 % of students make use of the expression *sis*. The most popular response with the term *lit* was that 60 % of all participants know the definition of the word but do not put it to use.

The following questions (see Appendix 2: Online Questionnaire; questions 12-25), were phrased differently, but the main purpose was to test the respondents'

comprehension of the grammar of African American English, its pronunciation, and again its vocabulary. Here the focus was on how the individual study fields performed, so the provided percentage representation applies to the defined study major. Data presented in Figure 7 are drawn from tasks number 12, 14-19, 22 and 23 (Appendix 2: Online Questionnaire).

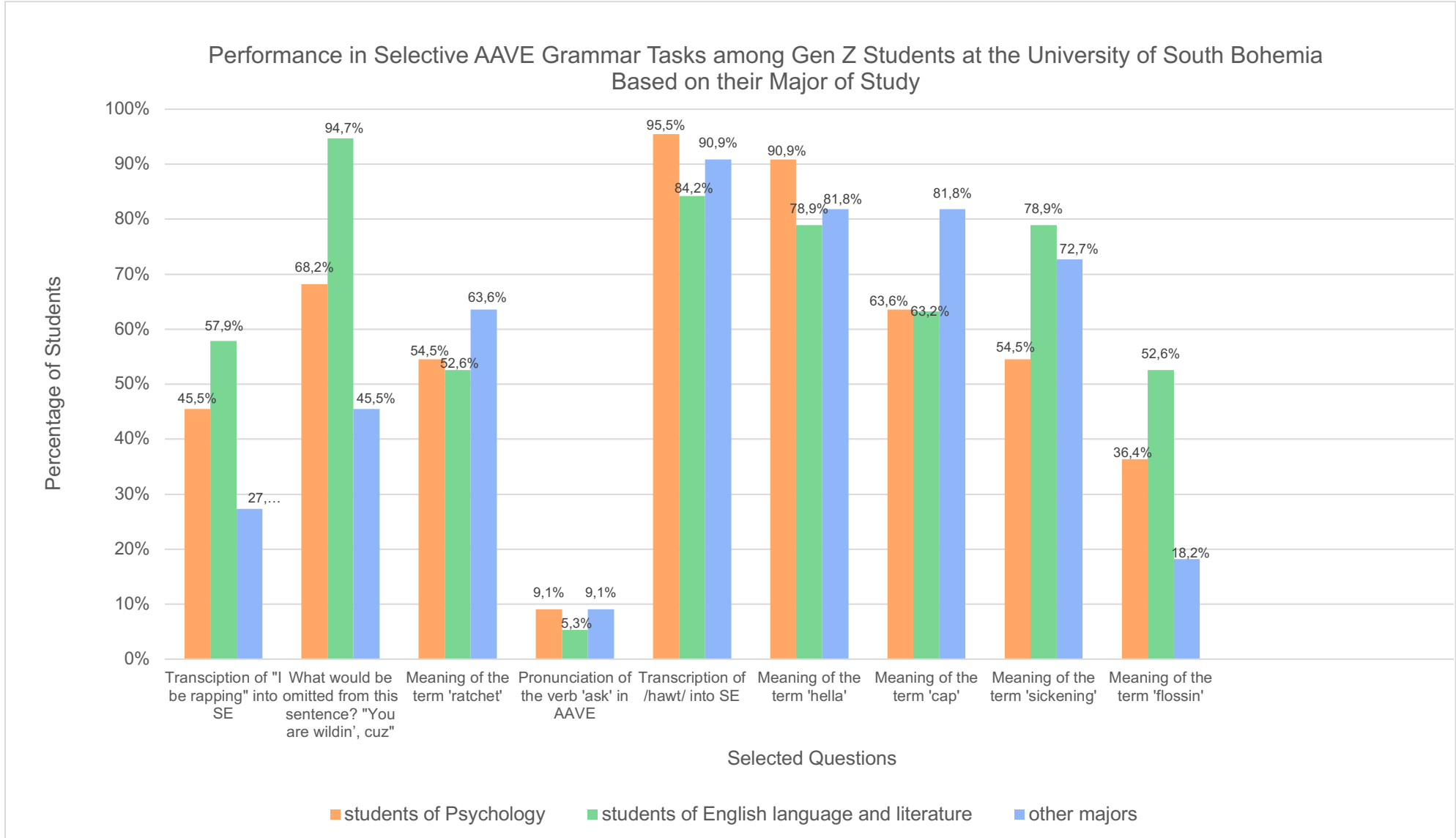


Fig. 7: Students' performance in tasks considering AAVE

Figure 7 shows that the question with the highest number of correct answers (47) asked participants to transcribe /hawt/ into Standard English. Psychology students had the highest success rate (21, or 95.5 %), followed English language and Literature students (16, or 84.2 %), and students of other majors (10, or 90.9 %). The right definition for the expression 'hella' chose 44 participants: 20 were respondents from Psychology (90.9 %), from English (78.9 %) and ten from other majors (90.9 %). The slang word 'woke' was correctly defined by 41 individuals: 86.4 % of Psychology students, 68.4 % of students of English, and 81,8 % of students of other majors. When asked what would be omitted from the sentence 'You are wildin', cuz', 68.2 % of Psychology students, 94.7 percent of English language and literature students, and 45.5 % of students from other majors answered correctly. For the words 'cap' and 'sickening', each had 35 correct answers. Students of Psychology scored better with 'cap' (14 individuals) than 'sickening' (twelve individuals), however with students of the English language it was the opposite; twelve of them knew what 'cap' meant but 15 understood the adjective 'sickening'. Participants of other majors had nine correct for 'cap' and eight for 'sickening'. Over 84 % of students of English knew the meaning of 'lit', compared to 45.5 % of Psychology students and 45.5 % of other majors. Surprisingly, students of other majors had the highest score for the adjective 'ratchet' (63.6 percent), followed by Psychology (54.5 %) and students of English language (52.6 %). When asked to give a transcription of 'I be rappin' into SE, students of other majors scored the lowest (27.3 %), while students of Psychology and students of English scored similarly (45.5 % and 57.9 %). The verb 'flossin' was known by 36.4 % of Psychology students 52.6 % of English language and literature students, and 18.2 % of other majors. The biggest issue was the pronunciation of 'ask' in AAVE, with only four correct answers: 9.1 % of Psychology students, 5.3 % of students of English, and 9.1 % of other majors.

To study the Czech students' awareness of viral AAVE phrase popularized on the Internet by mainstream social media platforms, participants were asked to finish the given sentence 'We in this b*tch, finna get krunk eyebrows'. Here in Figure 8 the data from the survey show interesting results.

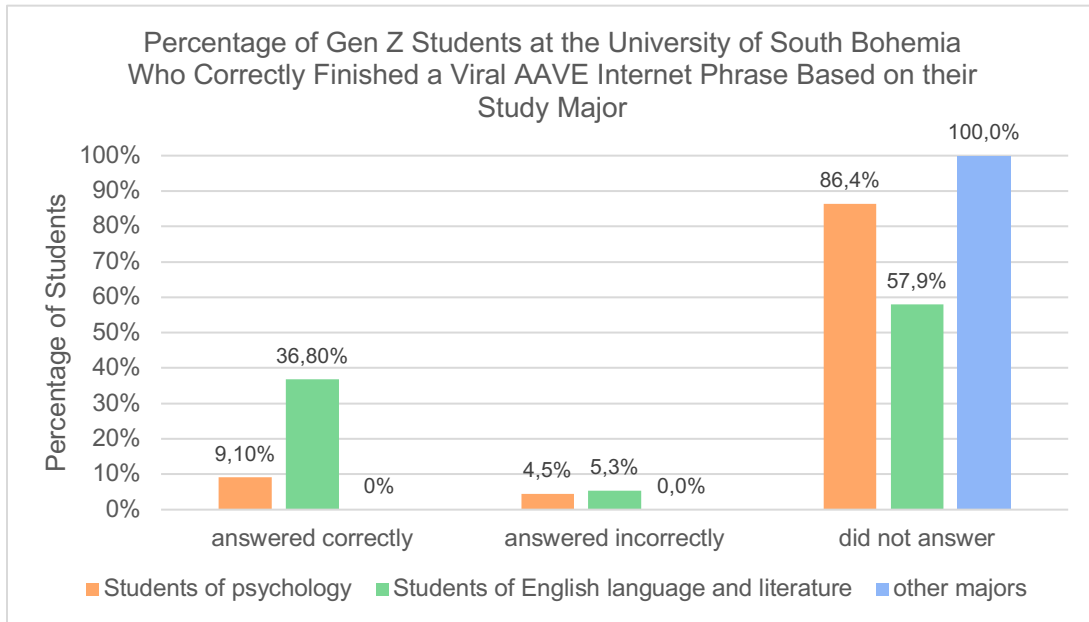


Fig. 8: Students' knowledge of a viral AAVE phrase

Out of 52 respondents, only 9.1 % of respondents majoring in Psychology answered correctly, 4.5 % incorrectly and 86.4% did not answer or stated that they do not know such phrase. With students of the English language the percentage of right answers was slightly higher – 36.8 % filled in the correct missing words, one individual (5.3 %) provided wrong answer and 57.9 % did not respond at all. However, with students of other majors (ten individuals), no one answered to this question. Quite interesting was the fact that if the focus was on the role of age in this case, of the total number of correct answers – nine, 22.6 % were students born between the years 2000-2002 and 14.3 % were born in the years 2003-2005.

Another way of trying to examine to what extent Czech Generation Z students at the University of South Bohemia were acquainted with AAVE and social media was a task, in which they were asked to decide which one of the four named rappers was the

author of the popular expression ‘pushin P’ (Appendix 2: Online Questionnaire; question 27). Here the analysis focused on the correlation between correct answers (six individuals) and number of respondents who stated they have encountered AAVE through music (five individuals). Nevertheless, only two participants who came into contact with African American English through music, provided the right response. Similar results showed the following question about which female rapper created the slang word ‘munch’. Out of the four given options, the right one chose eleven students (21.2 %), however only three of the five music listeners knew the correct answer.

Next task provided the participants to choose only one of the four given alternatives providing the correct meaning of the AAVE expression to be ‘gagged’ by something or someone (Appendix 2: Online Questionnaire; question 29). The options were 1) stunned, 2) shocked, 3) offended or 4) hurt. As the graph in Figure 9 shows, only 17 students out of 52 gave the correct answer and three individuals did not fill in their answer – did not know it.

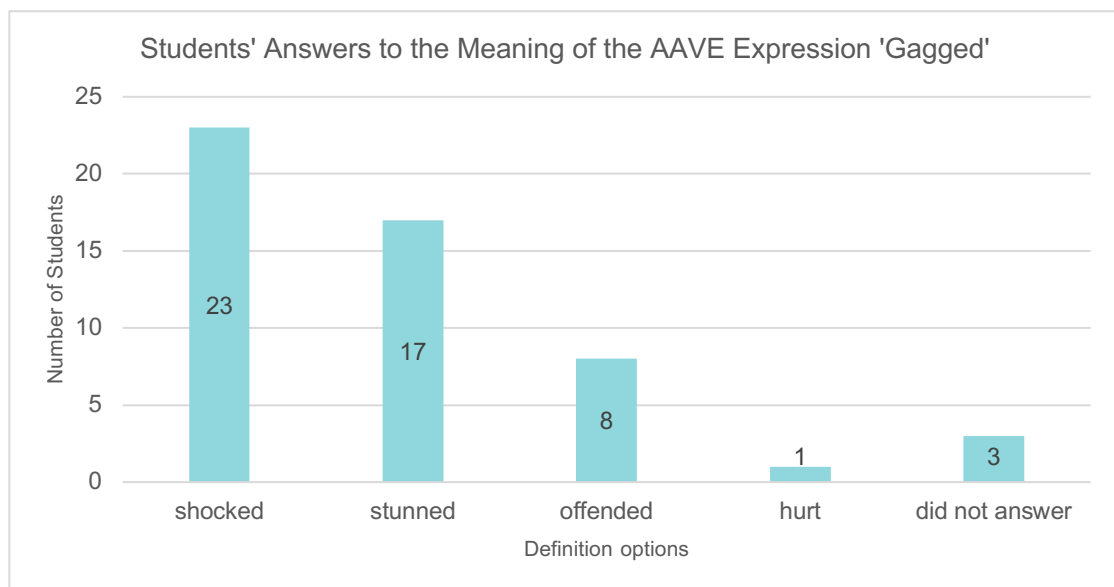


Fig. 9: The students' understanding of the AAVE term 'gagged'

The next task (Appendix 2: Online Questionnaire; question 30) inquired students to list at least three popularized English words seen online, which they use in conversation

with their friends. After data cleansing, where expressions not belonging to AAVE were excluded from the dataset, results provided an overall look on to the most common phrases Czech college students at the University of South Bohemia use. The number of words was 37. To indicate AAVE expressions the thesis referred to Master AAVE Glossary. The word with the highest occurrence was ‘slay’ (15.7 %), followed by ‘bro/bruh’ (12.7 %). Eight times (6 %) the words ‘sis’ and ‘period’ were mentioned, and the phrase ‘lit’ seven times (5.2 %). Participants also stated that they use AAVE words like ‘homie’, ‘sus’ and ‘flex’ when communicating with their peers (4.5 %). Same frequency had ‘yas’ and ‘chill’ (3.7 %). The phrase ‘to spill tea’ or just ‘tea’ occurred four times (3 %). For both words ‘bussin’ and ‘queen’ the number of references was three (2.2 %). Only two times (1.5 %) students agreed to usage of words such as ‘ate’, ‘gag/ gagging/ gagged’, ‘swag’, ‘drip’, ‘cap’, ‘kinda’, ‘hella’, ‘yappin’, ‘vibe’ or the expression ‘it’s giving’. The words, which were each listed only once (< 1%) were those: ‘lowkey’, ‘rizz’, ‘tho’, ‘fr (for real)’, ‘dope’, ‘shade’, ‘spicy’, ‘bread’, ‘miss girl’, ‘pick me girl’, ‘girlie’, ‘snitch’, ‘simp’, ‘cuz’ and to ‘read’ someone. However, according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, ‘kinda’ (‘kind of’) and ‘tho’ (‘though’) both represent informal way of speaking English, and therefore cannot be considered AAVE. Please refer to the bar graph presented in Figure 10.

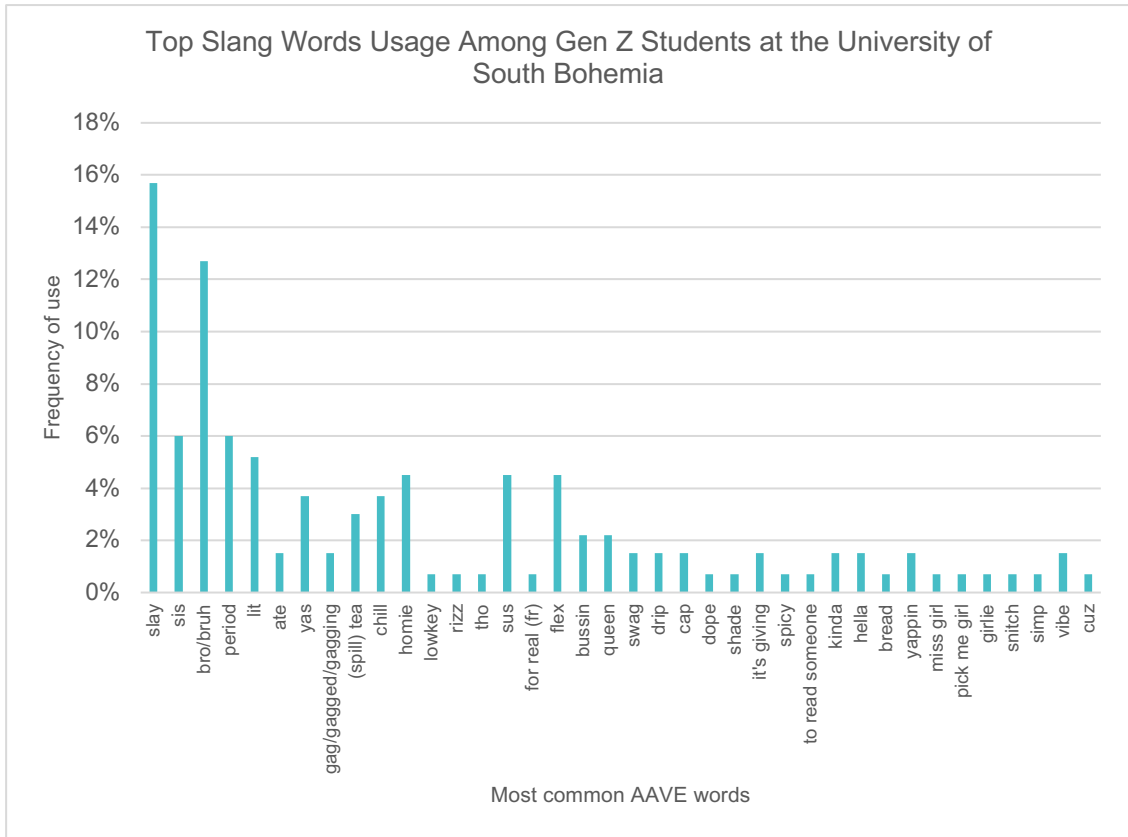


Fig. 10: Slang words used among students at the University of South Bohemia

With the following 16 African American words (see Appendix 2: Online Questionnaire; question 31), participants were asked to tick whether they a) Use the word a lot, b) Use it only occasionally or c) Do not use at all. The analysis focused only on a) and b). The graph in Figure 11 provides information on how often each participant uses each AAVE word.

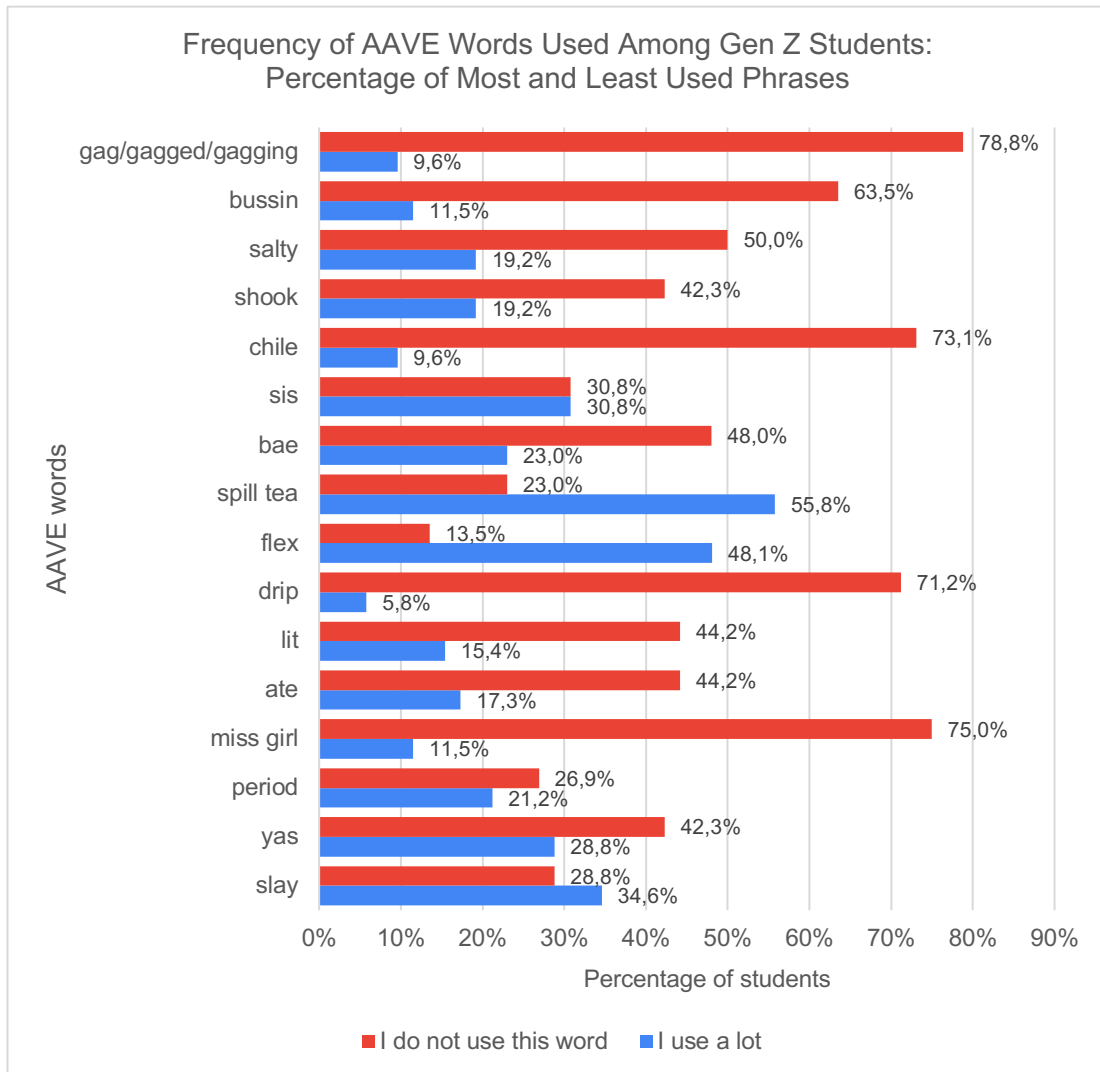


Fig. 11: Frequency of use of AAVE words among JU students

To illustrate some of the results, for example 55.8 % use the phrase ‘spill tea’ and 23 % do not. ‘Flex’ uses 48.1 % of students but 13.5 % do not. The greatest contrasts in their usage were visible with words like ‘gag’, ‘chile’, ‘miss girl’ or ‘drip’. Whereby the first word 78.8 % of participants stated they do not communicate it and only 9.6 % do. With the second word 73.1 % do not use it in conversation, whereas 9.6 % do. The third expression 11.5 % of respondents incorporate it in their speech and 75 % do not. Three students (5.8 %) admitted to high use of ‘drip’ but 71.2 % agreed on not putting it to use.

The last and the third section of the questionnaire (Appendix 2: Online Questionnaire; questions 32-36) delved into the concept of cultural appropriation. The students were asked whether or not they view the situation where a non-black person talks in AAVE to be an act of cultural appropriation. The results are shown here in Figure 12.

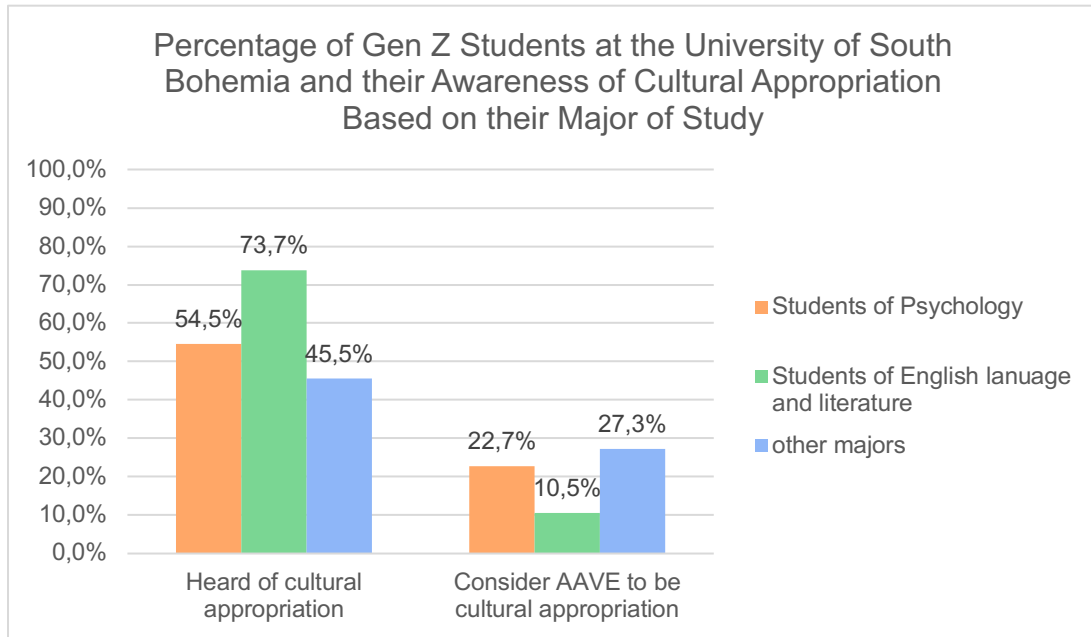


Fig. 12: Students' awareness of cultural appropriation

Out of 52 students surveyed, 31 (59.6 %) indicated they were familiar with the term in question. Among them, 54.5 % were Psychology majors, 73.7 % studied English language and literature, and the remaining 45.5 % were from other majors. Another question explored whether Gen Z students at the University of South Bohemia consider non-black people using AAVE to be cultural appropriation. Responses varied: 30.8 % disagreed ('no'), (28.8 %) were unsure ('maybe'), 21.2 % did not know. Only 17.3 % agreed ('yes'), of which 27.3 % were students from other majors, 22.7 % were Psychology students and 10.5 % were students of English. When asked about white people using the N-word, opinions diverged. Some respondents found it offensive due to its historical ties to slavery, while others believed its use should not be restricted based on the user's race.

5.3 Generation Z's Use of AAVE

Many experts have already commented on the rather thin line between slang and African American Vernacular English, for example Roth-Gordon (7) says that “many popular expressions that take up elements of AAVE are commonly recognized as slang, and they are often employed by speakers to index a persona that is youthful, edgy and current”. Social media are the main place for young generations, including Generation Z, to use slang to communicate, joke or perform other language tasks (Sundaram et al. 132457). When asked what popularized Internet slang Czech students at the University of South Bohemia use to talk with their friends (Appendix 2: Online Questionnaire; question 30), with no indication to AAVE, most of the expressions provided by the students were of AAVE terminology (except for ‘kinda’ and ‘tho’) (see **Fig. 10**). The most common was the word ‘slay’, which “originated in the ballroom scene, an urban subculture made up of Black and brown, queer and trans folk who found community in performing” (Caringal). Being African American herself, Malika Imhotep argues that AAVE terminology, even if new, is always understood within the black community and demonstrates that on the example of the term ‘(on) fleek’, which when encountered by people of the white race was used incorrectly (46). Therefore, even though popular slang words in the online communication of Generation Z look like they come from Standard English, it is important to consider the context they are used in. The problem of indexicality is often the reason AAVE gets mistreated for teenage slang without giving its credits to black people’ creativity and wit (Cramer).

Finally, the talk about African American Vernacular English can often turn into a political debate about whether or not non-black people should be allowed to use it or not. According to some African Americans white race speaking AAVE is viewed as a form of cultural appropriation (CA) (Cramer). The population of black Americans sees it as a way

of stealing parts of African heritage without acknowledging its deeper historical meaning. Harry Ainsworth, for instance, lists some of the AAVE expressions which should not be used by anyone of the white or non-black race. Among the many words he mentions are 'period', 'sus', '(spill) tea', 'lit', and 'sis', which the students at the University of South Bohemia admitted using (Ainsworth).

6 Discussion and Conclusions

This thesis chapter provides an overview of the key research findings in relation to the research aims and questions. It also reviews the limitations of the study and proposes opportunities for future research.

The objective of this bachelor thesis was to investigate the popularity of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) in the discourse of Generation Z. The study sought to elucidate the level of awareness and familiarity the Czech students at the University of South Bohemia have with AAVE terminology.

The first part of the research question was designed to provide data supporting the popularity of AAVE in online communication and present the most frequent AAVE slang words used on the social media platform Twitter (X). With the assistance of *Czech National Korpus* application KWords, the study provided the prominent lexis used by Internet users of Generation Z. A significant portion of the lexis consisted of grammatical aspects (consult **Fig. 1**) and words (consult **Fig. 2**) specific to African American Vernacular English. The information obtained from the selected Twitter posts contributed to the design of an online questionnaire. The questionnaire was constructed based on the vocabulary commonly used by the international Internet community and served to examine the extent to which Czech students at the University of South Bohemia are familiar with AAVE used on Twitter (X).

AAVE expressions such as ‘gagged’, ‘yall’ and ‘lowkey’ were indicated by KWords as exceptional, existing predominantly in the original text. The reason for that could be the context of use and its speakers. Twitter is known for being used by active users of social media and the Internet; therefore, they might be more exposed to slang terminology and online language more than people who don’t spend that much time online, are older or do not have access to modern technology. Abbreviations (‘idk’,

‘omg’), phonological contraction (she’s) and celebrity proper nouns (‘Beyonce’ and ‘Kelly’) were also indicated as exceptional. The explanation for that could be that Twitter allows its users to use maximal number of 280 characters per one tweet, and this restriction leads individuals to frequently employ abbreviations and shorter versions of words to communicate (see 2.2.5).

Among other findings, the research discovered that many of the collected tweets featured grammatical aspects typical for African American Vernacular English (see **Fig. 1**). One explanation for that is that social media platforms, including Twitter (X), are used by people of various races and ethnicities, leading to mutual influence on the language used. In addition, community dynamics plays a role (see 2.2.3 and 2.2.4), as AAVE can serve as a means for African American individuals to connect with each other without being judged for the way they speak. Lastly, a significant factor may be that AAVE represents a modern style of communication, with its expressions often becoming viral, especially among the youth in the online sphere.

The second part of the research question relied on the online questionnaire to ascertain the level of awareness and familiarity the Czech students at the University of South Bohemia have of African American Vernacular English. The results drawn from the online survey indicate that Gen Z students at the University of South Bohemia are familiar with the phenomenon of AAVE. Both English language students and Psychology students, as well as those from other majors, reported having heard of AAVE. They most commonly encounter African American Vernacular English through online communication on social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, as well as through music and movies.

The majority of the questionnaire's tasks aimed to investigate the understanding of African American Vernacular English and delved into students' familiarity with its

vocabulary. Interesting findings emerged from the questions testing knowledge of AAVE vocabulary and grammar. The research examined differences in success rates across various fields of study (Psychology majors, English majors, and other majors). Surprisingly, English language students scored better than the other two groups in only four out of the nine selected tasks (**Fig. 7**). None of the three groups showed a clear advantage in either grammatical tasks or those requiring knowledge of AAVE vocabulary definitions. It is evident that the most challenging task for all students was the transcription of the verb 'ask' into African American Vernacular English, while the easiest was the transcription of /hawt/ into Standard English. The last two tasks make it difficult to determine which hypothesis (e.g., Anglicist, Creolist, Neo-Anglicist, Substrate) mentioned in chapter 2.1 is more applicable. Rather than a confirmation of one of the hypotheses, the results indicate there is still room for research to figure out the question of AAVE and its roots.

An important finding emerged from the question regarding knowledge of a viral AAVE phrase that became popular in 2014. Most students were unfamiliar with the phrase. However, those who answered correctly were born between 2000-2002, meaning they were teenagers when the phrase gained popularity. Younger students (2003-2005) and older students (1997-1999) either did not use the Internet as extensively at the time or, as in the case of the older group, were focused on different content.

Furthermore, this research aimed to identify the favourite AAVE words among Gen Z students at the University of South Bohemia. The terms 'slay' and 'bro/bruh' were the most frequent among the students. Particularly, 'slay' proved to be very popular in two out of three instances (see p. 44 and **Fig. 10**). On the other hand, **Fig. 11** shows a lower usage frequency for the word 'slay'. The same was true for the word 'period'. This discrepancy may be due to the difference in how the data was collected. In **Fig. 11**,

students recorded which words they use frequently, whereas in the other two cases, they were simply asked whether or not they use the word.

Clearer results were found in the questions examining expressions that are not commonly used by students. The least known and used word was 'gagged' (**Fig. 9** and **Fig. 11**). This could be because 'gagged' gained popularity only recently and thus may not have yet reached the students' awareness.

African American Vernacular English is often associated with cultural appropriation. The last part of the questionnaire sought to address the way students at the University of South Bohemia view such issue. Students of English showed the highest awareness of this issue, nevertheless, they were the group that indicated they did not consider African American English to be a cultural appropriation. On the contrary, students from other majors were not as familiar with the cultural appropriation and were the ones who considered AAVE to be a victim of this issue. The reason for this could be that English majors are more exposed to discussions about linguistics and various dialects, leading to a better understanding of AAVE. Students from other majors, lacking education on this topic, may be influenced by opinions from the media and social media posts.

Despite findings suggesting the popularity of African American Vernacular English speech both in the online space of Twitter (X) users from around the world and among students at the University of South Bohemia, the results of these two groups cannot be directly compared. This is because the collection of Twitter data focused on selecting tweets containing AAVE expressions, whereas the aim for the university students was to determine their level of awareness of African American English. Nevertheless, the data from Twitter (X) supported the creation of the questionnaire used to test the students.

Perhaps future research could explore the motivations that lead both of these groups to use this variant of English.

Limitations

It is important to comment on some of the limitations of the present thesis. One limitation of this research was the relatively small sample size. With a larger and more diverse sample, the findings might have been more representative of the Czech population of Gen Z students. Another issue was the online questionnaire. Despite providing the respondents with clear instructions, some questions might not have been clear enough, leading to misunderstandings and skewing the results. Additionally, the Twitter data lacked information about the participants, such as their gender, race, or ethnicity. It is also important to acknowledge the possibility of confounding variables, such as language proficiency, technical difficulties and other, which might have influenced the results of the research.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of this thesis suggest that African American Vernacular English (AAVE) serves as the cornerstone of much of today's slang terminology. Slang is an integral part of contemporary speech, both online and offline, and its popularity is rapidly rising due to its flexibility and ability to serve multiple communicative functions. Generation Z on Twitter uses slang to share opinions, express feelings, or simply to bond with others. With most of today's youth being users of online technology, they easily access current trends. The results of this study indicate that the influence of social media, music, and film contributes to a greater awareness and frequent use of AAVE even among Czech students at the University of South Bohemia. However, it can be challenging to discern between ordinary teenage slang and the appropriation of African American

Vernacular English. Therefore, it is crucial to carefully consider the context in which such expressions are employed.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: KWords Analysis of Twitter Data

This Appendix includes keywords drawn from collected Twitter posts using online software KWords.

word	textRelFq	refRelFq	textAbsFq	refAbsFq	statValue	effectSize
ate	24166,7	23,7	29	3829	337,5	99,8
i	19166,7	53,5	23	8657	219,2	99,4
she	17500,0	1703,0	21	275653	57,9	82,3
he	17500,0	3629,1	21	587437	31,4	65,7
this	17500,0	4273,2	21	691692	26,3	60,8
is	13333,3	7278,5	16	1178156	4,3	29,4
kinda	12500,0	11,1	15	1797	173,9	99,8
her	10833,3	2257,2	13	365362	18,7	65,5
gagged	10000,0	0,8	12	132	191,6	100,0
im	8333,3	2,4	10	382	135,1	99,9
so	8333,3	1455,0	10	235516	16,7	70,3
shes	6666,7	0,9	8	148	117,1	100,0
yall	5833,3	0,2	7	26	120,8	100,0
dont	5833,3	16,5	7	2668	62,4	99,4
just	5833,3	1523,7	7	246643	7,2	58,6
they	5833,3	2139,9	7	346387	4,2	46,3
slay	5000,0	1,4	6	228	77,8	99,9
oh	5000,0	42,2	6	6838	40,7	98,3
real	5000,0	247,2	6	40007	21,7	90,6
them	5000,0	1427,8	6	231121	5,3	55,6
idk	4166,7	0,0	5	0	103,1	100,0
cooking	4166,7	11,5	5	1868	43,1	99,5
crying	4166,7	30,9	5	5000	34,3	98,5
why	4166,7	391,4	5	63356	12,3	82,8
omg	3333,3	0,0	4	0	79,7	100,0
beyonce	3333,3	0,0	4	0	79,7	100,0
gag	3333,3	2,5	4	405	42,4	99,9
cleared	3333,3	16,3	4	2645	29,3	99,0
fear	3333,3	82,4	4	13333	18,2	95,2
eat	3333,3	113,0	4	18284	16,0	93,4
bad	3333,3	224,3	4	36314	11,5	87,4
face	3333,3	288,5	4	46701	9,9	84,1
look	3333,3	517,9	4	83833	6,3	73,1
really	3333,3	523,9	4	84809	6,3	72,8
how	3333,3	728,3	4	117887	4,5	64,1
lowkey	2500,0	0,0	3	0	56,4	100,0
kelly	2500,0	0,1	3	20	43,3	100,0
u	2500,0	2,3	3	379	28,9	99,8
pop	2500,0	11,9	3	1922	20,9	99,1
serving	2500,0	12,0	3	1950	20,8	99,0
eating	2500,0	35,4	3	5738	15,5	97,2
card	2500,0	38,6	3	6246	15,0	97,0
damn	2500,0	67,7	3	10962	12,3	94,7
giving	2500,0	79,5	3	12875	11,5	93,8
girls	2500,0	97,8	3	15833	10,5	92,5
looks	2500,0	102,7	3	16616	10,3	92,1
hell	2500,0	180,1	3	29145	7,7	86,6
hard	2500,0	185,0	3	29938	7,6	86,2
show	2500,0	209,1	3	33850	7,0	84,6
sorry	2500,0	298,7	3	48347	5,4	78,7
every	2500,0	313,0	3	50670	5,2	77,7
left	2500,0	347,6	3	56262	4,8	75,6
doing	2500,0	421,4	3	68218	4,0	71,2

Appendix 2: Online Questionnaire

This Appendix includes the online questionnaire used for data collection, detailing the questions presented to participants (students at the University of South Bohemia) and the response options provided. Questions with an asterisk are follow-up questions.

AAVE And Its Use in the Online Discourse of Generation Z

Hello,

My name is Andrea Bícová and I am a student of English language and Literature at the University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice. I am currently conducting research for my bachelor thesis on the topic of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and its increasing influence on the online discourse of Generation Z.

As part of my research, I am conducting a survey to gauge the familiarity of Czech students from the University of South Bohemia with AAVE and how frequently they encounter its expressions online. This survey data will be supplemented by an analysis of Generation Z Twitter users to explore how AAVE has become integrated into contemporary discourse.

I would greatly appreciate it if you could take the time to complete this questionnaire for me. It comprises up to 40 questions, and your participation will require approximately 30 minutes.

Conditions of participation in this research:

To participate in this research study, individuals must meet the following criteria:

1. Be of Czech nationality.
2. Have been born between the years 1997 and 2012.
3. Possess an intermediate or high level of proficiency in the English language.
4. Frequently use social media platforms.

Please note that the questionnaire is anonymous, and participation is entirely voluntary. Participants have the right to withdraw from the research at any time without the need to provide an explanation.

If you have any further inquiries or require assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me via my email address: bicova00@ff.jcu.cz

Thank you very much for your involvement in the research.

Warm regards,

Andrea Bícová

1.

What is your nationality?

Czech

Jiné: _____

2.

What is your race or ethnicity?

White

Black

Hispanic or Latino

Asian

Arab

Prefer not to say

Jiné: _____

3.

What gender do you prefer to be identified as?

Male

Female

Non-binary

Prefer not to say

Jiné: _____

*3.

Here you can identify your gender:

Vaše odpověď _____

4.

Please select the range of years you were born in:

- 1997-1999
- 2000-2002
- 2003-2005

5.

What do you study at the University of South Bohemia?

- English language and literature
- Psychology
- Jiné: _____

6.

What is your proficiency level in English?

- Intermediate (B1/B2)
- Advanced (C1/C2)
- Jiné: _____

*6.

Which of the following applies to you?

- I have participated in a study abroad program that took place in an English-speaking country
- I have relative(s) in an English-speaking country with whom I stay in touch.
- none of the above

Introduction to African American Vernacular English (AAVE)



AAVE is an abbreviation for African American Vernacular English, a variation of American English predominantly spoken by black African Americans living in the United States. AAVE differs from Standard English in its grammar structures, vocabulary, and accents.

Example AAVE sentence: *"Ain't nobody said that, y'all just trippin"*.

Note: For all the following questions please **choose only ONE honest answer!**

7.

Prior to reading the description above, were you familiar with AAVE?

Yes

No

8.

Have you ever come across or heard of the term AAVE?

Yes

No

9.

In what context?

Through online discourse

Through public interaction

Through music

Through movies

10.

Please state on which media platform it was. More than 1 option is possible.

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Tiktok
- Twitter (X)
- Youtube
- Jiná...

11.

To what extent are you familiar with those words: *boujee*, *slay*, *period*, *ratchet*, *lit*, *sis*?

	I do not know what this word means	I recognize this word	I know this word but I do not use it	I use this word myself
boujee	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
slay	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
period	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ratchet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
lit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
sis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

12.

What do you think does the slang word 'ratchet' stand for? Choose **only 1 answer**.

- a noun describing a toothed bar with which a pawl engages
- an adjective to describe someone who is attractive
- an adjective used when describing someone of a lower class
- a noun linked with the word 'rat'

13.

Pick one case, in which the word 'lit' **can** not be used. Choose **only 1 answer**.

- "The party on Friday gonna be lit"
- "Look at her outfit, looks lit"
- "He looks kinda lit, who did this to him?"
- "This food you cooked be lit as hell"
- woke

14.

Translate: 'I be rappin'. Choose **only 1 answer**.

- I am rapping right now
- I rap frequently
- I have rapped
- I have been rapping

15.

If speaking in AAVE what would be omitted from this sentence? "*You are wildin', cuz*". Choose **only 1 answer**.

- cuz
- wildin'
- are
- you

16.

How would you transcribe this from AAVE to Standard English? Choose **only 1 answer**.
[hawt]

- hat
- hot
- heat
- how

17.

How would you rewrite this sentence from AAVE grammar to Standard English grammar?
"*Ma partna be going thru sum thangs*"

Text stručné odpovědi
.....

18.

How would 'ask' be pronounced in AAVE? Choose **only 1 answer**.

- /æsk/
- /aks/
- /ax/
- /a:sk/

19.

What does the slang expression 'hella' mean? Choose **only 1 answer**.

- A lot of something; very much
- Different way to say 'hell'
- AAVE way of saying 'hello'
- AAVE way of saying 'crazy'

20.

In AAVE slang the word 'bread' is often used as a synonym for money. Which of the words below **also** stand for money? Here **more than 1 option is correct**.

- Benjamins
- fetti
- cheese
- cream

21.

If someone says "*That's cap, fam*", what do they mean by that? Choose **only 1 answer**.

- That something is wrong
- That something is funny
- That something is a lie
- That something is suspicious

22.

In this question choose **only 1 answer**.

When someone looks 'sickening' he/she looks:

- very good/amazing
- ill/not well
- ugly/unattractive
- poor

23.

In this question choose **only 1 answer**.

'Flossin' ' in AAVE slang means the following:

- taking care of one's teeth using dental floss
- dancing
- lying
- showing off; usually an object

24.

Which of these words referring to a friend is/are **not** a part of the AAVE discourse? More than 1 answer is correct.

- pal
- bro/sis
- bestie
- homie

25.

What do you think "*She just built diferrent*" means in AAVE slang?

Text stručné odpovědi

26.

Finish the rest of this sentence according to the popular internet phrase?

*"We in this b*tch, finna get krunk eyebrows"*

Text stručné odpovědi

27.

What rapper is known for his famous phrase 'pushing P' ? Choose **only 1 answer**.

- Gunna
- Offset
- Future
- Travis Scott

28.

Which one of these artists is known to be associated with the word 'munch' ? Choose **only 1 answer**.

- Nicki Minaj
- Cardi B
- Megan Thee Stallion
- Ice Spice

29.

In this question choose **only 1 answer**.

When you are 'gagged' by something/someone you are:

- stunned
- shocked
- offended
- hurt

30.

What popularized English words seen online do you use to talk with your friends? Please name **at least 3**.

Text stručné odpovědi

31.

Please **tick all the words** from this list that **you use** either in online communication or public discourse. Identify to what extent.

	I use a lot	I use this word only occasionally	I do not use this word
slay	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
yas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
period	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
miss girl	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
lit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
drip	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
flex	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
spill tea	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
bae	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
sis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
chile	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
shook	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
salty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
bussin'	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
gag / gagged / gagging	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

32.

Have you ever heard the term 'cultural appropriation'?

Yes

No

33.

What do you think 'cultural appropriation' means? Please provide your **answer below**.

Vaše odpověď _____

34.

Do you consider the usage of AAVE slang by *non-black* people to be a cultural appropriation? Choose **only 1 answer**.

yes

no

maybe

I don't know

35.

Do you agree with the statement that non-black people should **not** be allowed to use the N-word? Choose **only 1 answer**.

yes

no

I don't know

I don't care

What is an N-word?

36.

What is your opinion on the usage of the N-word by non-black people? Provide a **concise answer**.

Text stručné odpovědi
.....

Appendix 3: Transcription of Twitter Posts

This Appendix includes transcribed tweets, highlighting African American Vernacular English elements. Red words indicate AAVE vocabulary, whereas yellow highlights mark AAVE grammatical features.

1. Frank Gallager () tryna be slick
2. She look stupid as hell. Nasty ass whale woman with no matter
3. Chile...it would've literally taken every avenger to pull me off him
4. He don't be doing nothing at the gym but oil himself up and remote
5. Her diesel slay
6. He deadass looks like Natalia Portman
7. I AIN'T WANT HIM IF HE () sassy
8. I'm crying she ate this
9. Bestie cleared. In the history books already
10. Damn dis bob is fye
11. They ate this so bad I'm crying
12. Still a bop
13. This eats omg!!
14. Who do you think ate Betty Boop up more? Ice Spice or Chloe?
15. Y'all can say whatever y'all want about shad moss but he has some of the most realistic looking meltdowns in all his movies. That roll bounce scene when he found out pops was lying? Chewed him up and left him for de*d
16. I ain't been boujje.
17. Harper cleared. It's sharp AF bae
18. It's lowkey kind of fascinating how this person looks visibly queer. How did we get to the point where mustache and mullet and earrings became an obvious queer aesthetics
19. When Anne Hathaway sang it on the Kelly Clarkson show and gagged Kelly
20. She is deathly allergic to not serving
21. The community gagged you idk if you saw
22. Post what Biden kids be smoking

23. She knew she **ate** I'm crying
24. **Ate** that right up
25. Shoutout to my nail tech **for real he ()** gonna **eat** every timeee
26. Hasan **cooked** Piers Morgan right here
27. These look like **them** kinda wings that I don't like idk
28. Why is it kinda **giving** Sabrina Carpenter
29. He **slayed** a bit
30. Don't play with my **sis** sabrina PLS don't do it
31. She's allergic to not **servng** I swear
32. Bratz **be eating** with these scary movie recreations **for real**, my two worlds colliding
33. Skipped dinner but I still **ate**
34. Why are people **cooking** her for pointing out that the 9-5 work structure is broken ??
she's literally right ??
35. I'm sorry but he **look** better than some of **yall**
36. Ask Beyonce is the biggest and most elite light **flex** I've ever heard. She **ate** that.
37. Rihanna's hair is **eating** OMG
38. **Rihanna()** face card never declines
39. I didn't know you lot were so bitter till I entered the quotes. It's a fresh sound with a feel
good summer pop kinda **vibe** and obvious cultural integration. She can sing, dance and
her face card is not declining so tyla babes they could never make me hate u!!!
40. "They're really homelander wallah" I'm sorry he **ate** them up that's sending me
41. This **()** kinda hard ngl
42. She **ate** a six course meal and **left no crumbs**
43. It's **giving** yolandi visser
44. Oh she's **taking** it
45. Why's she kinda **eating**? Like I know we are cancelling her but she's winning the idgaf
war
46. Oh my hairdresser **ate**..
47. I'm not even gonna say anything.. just here **y'all** go
48. Kinda **ate** idk

49. Ate
50. QUEEN
51. She ate so hard ??
52. He was cooking with that homelander bar
53. He might didn't clean the plate but he ate I fear
54. White pop girls will never serve this hard again
55. Back camera is kinda slay
56. The one in pink knew she was about to eat
57. He ate that 360 though let's be real
58. This man was cooking for real
59. He ate and left no crumbs
60. Idk Paul kinda ate these I fear
61. He's so real for this
62. Idc he kinda served
63. Okay slay miss billybob
64. Ate them up
65. Nicki Minaj is so versatile, she's a rapper but can eat pop songs
66. Beyonce hasn't even cleared Rihanna, someone who retired 7 years ago, in sales. And they done compare her to MJ
67. Gag it I fear
68. She kinda ate that
69. Hold on let him cook
70. Kinda ate idk
71. He cooked them
72. And she was serving while doing it too, I hope she's having an amazing day
73. They ate this so bad I'm crying
74. Bruh clocked her
75. Doja Cat ate in 'Agora Hills
76. She ate yall up I fear. Clocked them, purr
77. Why () he gag her like that

78. I'm sorry but the face card **go** crazy
79. Oh, she's **taking** it
80. The show sucked but this trailer... **gagged**
81. Let's act like we **wasn't** **gagging** a little when this dropped
82. **Mother** is **mothering**
83. **slay**
84. **Mother!!**
85. I'm crying they love her on tik tok but they **be** **cooking** her here. Just shows how different both apps are
86. The way she backed up??? Oh, Nola had Beyonce **gagged** Imaooo iconic
87. She **()** kinda the first person with light eyes to ever **slay**...
88. She **()** ripping car apart with her bare hands, I don't think he can do anything else but watch
89. When Anne Hathaway **gagged** Kelly so bad in her own show with her own song
90. Oh, she's about to **gag** the live
91. Enough time has passed... this **cleared** Jimin's solo debut
92. Oh, she **gagged** him
93. **Ate** that
94. Men **don't be loving** their girls like this anymore, I hate that for us
95. This was the **gag** of the century like you had to be there
96. When I tell you she was **cooking**...!!!
97. Beyonce is so damn insane for this. To say I was **gagged** is an understatement
98. I **gagged** when it was revealed who Justin Timberlake was throwing on a blaccent for.
99. Nicki got me **gagged**, just woke up to this
100. He **()** tryna connect the charger without getting outta bed
101. The face **()** gonna **eat** every single time, amen
102. She kinda bodied **dis**
103. She just single handily **gagged** everyone
104. I **ate** this up a lil

105. Y'all I'm 22 & why do I feel like I've already failed at life???? Pls tell me this ()
normal cause I'm finna have a panic attack.
106. Her surgeon ate down
107. If we () walking together just know imma bump into u cus I can't walk in a
straight line
108. The cheetah girls gagged them so bad omg
109. We funny as hell, we happy for 1\$ margaritas but side eye 50 burgers
110. The way we ate this
111. Whoever made Pinterest ate down
112. 21 Savage sound like he () tired of rapping for Drake
113. Sometimes I be doing too much
114. Cute slay lmao I do love you
115. Zendaya's looks this week. Served.
116. Why () he look kinda um ???
117. Uber & Lyft () really lowkey dangerous when you think about it
118. Crabs just don't know how good they damn legs is chile
119. That phase when u lowkey start hating life is crazy
120. Imma delete all my socials eventually. Nobody finna bully me into texting back.
121. Name a time a singer ate an acting role
122. This song will forever be a bop
123. It just downed on me... Princess Diana & Barbie World really gagged the live.
124. Y'all not used to being chose & it shows
125. Ice Spice's real name is Isis omg that kinda eats
126. Self reflecting be funny as hell you gotta admit you be tweaking sometimes
127. Kenzo B verse on area codes really do it for me like
128. Your hair is giving purr