The Use of Ain't in John Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men

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Abstrak

Dalam semua komunitas, orang – orang berbicara dengan bahasa yang berbeda apakah itu bahasa baku atau tidak berdasarkan kebutuhan mereka. African American Vernacular English (AAVE) setara dengan Working Man's English sebagai bahasa tidak baku. Dengan pengadaan penelitian ini, peneliti hendak menunjukkan salah satu cirri struktur kata dari Working Man's English ain't dan mendeskripsikan penggunaan ain't tersebut. Teori Guth diaplikasikan pada penelitian ini sebagai teori utama dan didukung oleh teori Fought beserta teori Holmes untuk mengetahui penggunaan dari bahasa tidak baku tersebut. Melalui penelitian ini, peneliti hendak menunjukkan stuktur bahasa ain't dan penggunaannya. Penemuan dari penelitian ini adalah variasi penggunaan ain't beserta penggunaannya pada tokoh-tokoh novel dari John Steinbeck yang berjudul Of Mice and Men. Dengan struktur bahasa tersebut, penggunaan ain't diidentifikasi dengan berbagai macam tujuan sebagaimana dipengaruhi oleh faktor—factor social dan dimensi-dimensi social yang merefleksikan solidaritas mereka. Pada novel John Steinbeck, penggunaan ain't ditentukan oleh pembicara, setting, dan topic pembicaraan

Kata Kunci :Bahasa, Working Man's English, AAVE, struktur bahasa, faktor sosial, dimensi sosial

Abstract

In all communities, people speak different language whether Standard or nonstandard based on their needs. African American Vernacular English as the same label with Working Man's English is as nonstandard English variety. By conducting this study, the researcher would like to recognize the one of grammatical features of Working Man's English *ain't* and describe the use of the feature. Guth's theory is applied in this study as the main theory. It is supported by Fought' AAVE theory and Holmes' theory in order to know the use or the nonstandard variety. Through this study, the researcher would like to show the grammatical feature of *ain't* and the use of the variety itself. The findings are the usage of ain't in different usagesand it's use among the characters of John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*. By the grammatical feature, the use of Working Man's English *ain't* is found in different purposes as it is influenced by social factors and dimensions which reflects to their solidarity. In John Steinbeck's novel, the use of *ain't* is determined by the participants, setting and topic.

Keywords: Language, Working Man's English, AAVE, grammatical features, social factors, social dimensions

INTRODCUTION

Standard and Nonstandard English are English dialects or varieties which are related to social life, intellectual, and cultural point of view, (Trudgill, 1995: 15). It means that each language in the world has its own standard and nonstandard dialect. According to Guth (1973:106), Standard English has much more status and prestige than any other English dialect because it is considered as highly valued by many people because of white-collar occupations. On the other hand, Nonstandard English is blue-collar English which is used on the neighborhood, (Guth, 1973:90).

African American Vernacular English (AAVE) is as one of the nonstandard English varieties, so is Working Man's English. According to Fought (2006:46) the definition of AAVE itself is "a variety spoken by many African-Americans in the USA which shares a set of grammatical and other linguistic features that distinguish

it from various other American dialects." Meanwhile, the Working Man's English is a kind of nonstandard English which is used on the job, neighborhood, and home, (Guth, 1973:106).

Of Mice and Men is one of John Steinbeck's master piece novels. It receives a positive reception among readers. In general, the noveltells about the conditions of the migrant workers of North California and American dream in the 1920's and 30's. The setting Of Mice and Men is South of San Francisco in the Salinas Valley of California during the great depression of the 1930s. There are three specific locations - along the bank of the Salinas River near the ranch, in the bunk house, and in the barn. Of Mice and Men's essence delivers the universal themes of loyalty, friendship and the search of one's dreams with the two main characters. George and Lenny as two ranch workers are drifting from one job to the next in the Salinas Valley in California during the

Great Depression of the 1930s. In the ranch, they meet their Boss - the owner of the ranch his son; Curley, and Curley's wife. In the bunk house, George and Lennie meet Candy, Slim, Carlson, and Whit who are their senior ranch workers. In the novel, Steinbeck uses Nonstandard Working Man's English variety through all of its characters. As a fact, the nonstandard variety is used by white American workers. The unique one from the variety is its features are similar with the features of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) in grammatical features.

A literary language is used as a reflection of reality which is delivered by author's idiolect and knowledge. According to Green (2002: 164) states that language in literary has four goals; connecting a character with particular region, identifying the character as a particular type, making the character more authentic and developed, and evoking the readers' feeling. It means that language use indicates a character's communication of cultural understanding. Thus, our speech can show and reflect our social background for instance in John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*:

Joad: "Maybe I should of been a preacher. (He brought out his tobacco and papers and rolled a cigarette. He lighted it and squinted through the smoke at the preacher). "I been a long time without a girl. It's gonna take some catchin' up."

Casy: (Continued), "It worried me till I couldn't get no sleep. Here I'd go to preachin' and I'd say, 'By God, this time I ain'tgonna do it.' And right while I said it, I knowed I was."

Joad: "You should a got a wife. Preacher an' his wife stayed at our place one time. Jehovitesthey was. Slep' upstairs. Held meetin's in our barnyard. Us kids would listen. That preacher's missus took a godawfulpoundin' after ever' night meetin'." (Joad and Casy, p.21)

In the dialogue above, there are different grammatical features such as the unstressed 'been', double negatives, usage of *ain't*, the past tense irregular becomes regular, and a single auxiliary verb form for both plural and singular subjects". From the speakers above, there are grammatical differences among of them which give us clues about their social backgrounds called social-class dialects, (Trudgill, 2000: 23). Thus, language is closely tied up with the social structure, value systems of society, different dialect and accent as a social phenomenon, (Trudgill, 2000: 8).

Based on the explanation above, the grammatical variation of WorkingMan's English variety especially ain't and AAVE as the Nonstandard English variety can be used to identify the social background of a

speaker for instance on Trudgill's theory which has been stated before and why people speak in a different way.

GUTH'S NONSTANDARD 'WORKING MAN'S ENGLISH'

Basically "working man's" English is a kind of nonstandard English which is used on the job, neighborhood, and home, (Guth, 1973:106). The nonstandard variety is used by white American workers whether they are on job, neighborhood and home. The white workers tend to use Guth (1973; 106) mentions that the nonstandard Working Man's English variety features of *ain't* as follows:

The usage of ain't as negator

For instance:

Working Man's English : Billy ain't talking to his

sister.

Standard English : Billy isn't talking to his

sister.

Ain'tis a negative form of unclear historical origin and of very wide usage – both grammatically and geographically," (Anderwald, 2002:116). She adds that ain't functions as the negative form of both present BE and present tense HAVE in non-standard English today. Green (2002:36-39) adds that ain't can be stand for of present progressive, past tense, perfect tense, present future, and past perfect. Form the explanation, ain't serves as a negative marker and is not evidently marked for tense because ain't is a short form of auxiliary verbs am not, is not, are not, has not, have not, did not, will not, and had not. In addition, ain't does not make person distinctions. Thus, there is only one form which is applied in all subjects whether it is plural or singular

HOLMES' SOCIAL FACTORS

Holmes (1997:11) says that "Certain social factors have been relevant in accounting for the particular variety used which generally reflect to the linguistic choices." It means that the social factors can influence a speaker speaks in a certain language whether in a standard and nonstandard dialect. According to Holmes (1997), there are four kind of social factors as follows:

1. The participants

The participants here means who is talking to whom for instance wife - husband, customer - shop-keeper, boss - worker, teacher - student, etc, (Holmes,1997:11). As a fact, when someone talks to his friends and his boss, he will use different language. The person will speak more formally to the boss than his friends because he uses Standard English to the boss while nonstandard English to his friends.

2. The setting or social context of the interaction

Talking about setting, in people's mind reflects to time and place. Time refers to on what occasion or when a speaker talks to other people whether in a formal or informal situation. When someone is in a formal situation, he uses Standard English and speaks formally. It is different when somebody has a relax time and a nice chatting with his relatives. Besides, a place as a part of setting refers to where a speaker speaks whether at a school, home, office, bank, restaurant, and so on, (Holmes,1997:11-12). Those places will influence the speaker indirectly in using of a certain language.

3. The topic

Everyone's talking has his own topic. According to Holmes (1997:12) topic is "what is being talked about." When a speaker talks about informal topic such as fashion, cooking, hanging out, and other life style, he uses nonstandard English variety in order to make a relax and charm situation. It is different when the speaker talks about politics, economics, education, business, and other serious topic, he will employ Standard English.

4. The function

Holmes (1997:11-12) states that function reflects to a reason why a speaker speaks or in what purpose he speaks whether he just wants to having fun, teaching, promoting, persuading, arguing, anger, and commanding. Those purposes will make a speaker use Standard and nonstandard English variety in a different function.

Those components above are very significant in describing and analyzing all kinds of interaction because they are the basic components in sociolinguistics why people speak in a different way as Holmes (1997:12) says that:

"Those components above will prove important in describing and analyzing all kinds of interaction. They are the basic components in sociolinguistics explanations of why we don't all speak the same way, and why we don't all speak in the same way all of the time."

SOLIDARITY

To support those social factors which have been stated before, there is a social dimension for analysis them which help to know implicitly about a reason why a speaker speaks in a different way. Holmes (1997;12) says the social dimension is as follows:

A social distance

This scale concerns with the speakers' relationships whether they have a close or far relationship, (Holmes,1997:12). The relationship reflects how high or low solidarity which the speakers have. The diagram is as follows:

Fig.1. The Solidarity – Social distance scale

Intimate	——— Distant
High Solidarity	Low Solidarity

The closer relationship, the higher solidarity among the speakers for instance on Trudgill (1997:5):

"Every afternoon my friend packs her bag and leaves her Cardiff office at about 5 o'clock. As she leaves, her business partner say *goodbye Margaret*, (she replies good bye Jill) and the caretaker says *Bye Mrs. Walker*, (to which she responds goodbye Andy), As she arrives home she is greeted by Hi mum from her son, *Jamie,hello dear, have a good day?* from her mother, and simply *you're late again!* from her husband. Later in the evening the president of the local flower club calls to ask if she would like to join. *Good evening, is that Mrs. Billington?* She asks. *No, it's Mrs. Walker, but my husband's name is David Billington,* she answers. *What can I do for you?* Finally a friend calls boradar *Meg, how's thing?*"

The case above shows the use of of Meg vsMrs. John that refers to Standard and nonstandard English variety's greeting.

METHODOLOGY

This study applies a descriptive qualitative approach. In this study, the researcher would like to describe and find out the grammatical features *ain't* of the nonstandard Working Man's English variety which is used in John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*. The researcher describes the relationship between the linguistics and social phenomenon through the use of the nonstandard English variety based on the social factors and dimensions of the characters.

Researcher as a key concept selects the relevant dialogue and reduces the irrelevant conversation by The Boss, Curley, Curley's Wife, Lennie, George, Slim, Carlson, Candy and Whit in John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*. The researcher selects according to Guth's working man's English of *ain't* and the use of it by Holmes' theory of social factors and dimensions.

In avoiding the misintrepretation of the data, the researcher uses Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary the Third Edition in order to know the meaning of each utterance and the part of speech or word classes. In collecting data, the researcher reads the source of data repeatedly and gives a mark on the utterances or dialogue that suitable with Guth's, Fought's, and Holmes' theory by categorizing the data into tables. Then the researcher draws a conclusion.

DISCUSSION

The use of ain't

The use of ain't is found in different usages and uses as follows:

a. The usage of ain't as auxiliary 'have'

Curley's wife: How'd you like not to talk to anybody?"

(1) Lennie: "Well, I ain't supposed to. George's scared I'll get in trouble." (Curley's wife and Lennie, p.95)

In utterance (1), *ain't* stands for the auxiliary verb haven't. It can be seen from the past participle **supposed**. From it, there are two possibilities. The tense of the utterance is present perfect or past perfect tense. In the utterance (1), there is no time signal which shows that the sentence is in past perfect tense. It means that the sentence is in present perfect tense. It means that the *ain't* is a short form of an auxiliary of present perfect. In addition, the subject of the utterance is **I**. As the first person singular, **I** am followed byauxiliary **have**. As a note, the sentence is in negative form. In Standard English becomes "I haven't supposed to" as the pattern of negative present perfect is S + Have/ Has + not + Past Participle + O.

The dialogue between Curley's wife and Lennie above occurs in a barn.Lennie uses *ain't*in order to remind her that he doesn't talk to her or anything because of avoiding his trouble. This shows the high solidarity between Lennie and Curley's wife. Even they are in arguing but their relationship is still intimate. It can be seen from the use of Working Man's English *ain't* through hisspeech when he reminds her.

b. The use of ain't as auxiliary 'do' or 'does'

- (2) Slim :"He ain't mean," said Slim."I can see Lennie ain't a bit mean."
- (3) George: "'Course he **ain't** mean. But he gets in trouble alla time because he's a God damb dumb. Like what happened in Weed-" (p.45)

In utterance (2) and (3), the usage of *ain't* appears. At this time, *ain't* appears in different usage. In the (2), there are two *ain't*. In the first *aint*, a subject of the utterance is third person singular **he.** The subject precedes the *ain't* while the *ain't* precedes a verb mean. Thus, the short term of *ain't* is**does not**. It also occurs in the second *ain't*. As a matter, the subject in the second *ain't* isLennie that is the same word classes with **he**. All in all, the usage of *ain't* in both utterances are short term of **does not**. Standard English form for both utterances in (2) becomes "He doesn't mean," said Slim and "I can see Lennie doesn't a bit mean." This case also occurs in utterance (3).

The dialogue above, the setting is in a bunk house. The topic is informal topic; Lennie who is always in trouble. As a fact, when people talk about informal topic, they tend to use nonstandard English. Both George and Slim uses *ain't* in their speech. The use of *ain't* here is applied to share about Lennie's trouble toward Slim who is the same worker as George. Thus, their solidarity is high as they have the same status scale and use the same nonstandard variety.

c. The use of ain'tas auxiliary 'to be'

- (4) The boss : (Pointed a playful finger at Lennie) "He ain't much of a talker, is he?"
- (5) George: "No, he **ain't**, but he's sure a hell of a good worker. Strong as a bull."

Lennie: (smiled to himself) "Strong as a bull" (George scowled at him, and Lennie dropped his head in shame at having forgotten)

The boss: (Suddenly) "Listen, Small!" (Lennie raised his head) "What can you do?" (In a panic, Lennie looked at George for help)

George: "He can do anything you tell him.He's a good skinner. He can rassel grain bags, drive a cultivator. He can do anything. Just give him a try."

The boss: (Turned on George) "Then why don't you let him answer? What are you trying to put over?"

(6) ()George: (Broke in loudly) "Oh! I ain't saying he's bright. He ain't. But I say he's a God damn good worker. He can put up a four hundred pound bale." (The Boss, George, and Lennie, p. 23-24)'

The usage of *ain't* is identified again in (4), (5), and (6). Accidentally,the *ain't* in the three utterances are the same. The *ain't* is a short form of **isn't**. As a fact that the third person subject pronoun he precedes the *ain't*. Moreover, the sentences are in present tense form. It can be seen by direct conversation about fact. In addition, there is no adverb of time that shows a specific tense. Thus, the (4), (5), and (6) becomes "He isn't much of a talker, is he?", "No, he isn't, but he's sure a hell of a good worker. ...", "He isn't bright..... but he isn't bright.

The Boss does interview toward George and Lennie in a bunk house. The boss and George uses the *ain't* in their speech. This means that the boss wants to make the relationship closer. Moreover, he turns to informal topic about George and Lennie's job experience. He also wants to make a nice situation as they are in the bunk house. In addition, the formality gets lower and lower as the boss' utterance as in (4). It is said because he asks to Lennie but George always answers his question. It can be meant that the boss is teasing toward George and Lennie. Then the conversation goes on by using *ain't* as in (5) and (6). This shows that the social distance between George and the boss gets closer than before. Thus George uses Working Man's English again even The Boss turns to use Standard English again.

- (7) Curley's wife :(She looked at her fingernails). "Sometimes Curley's in here."
- (8) George: (Said brusquely). "Well he ain't now."
- (9) Curley's wife: "If he ain't, I guess I better look some place else" (playfully). (George and Curley's wife p. 35)

In this case, the *ain't* stands for is not. It can be indicated from a third person singular subject **he** that comes before the *ain't*. It is also supported by the tense of the sentence that is in present progressive as the existence of adverb **now**. Then the second *ain't* is in conditional sentence type I. As a result, the Standard English becomes "....You see if she isn't a tarthe isn't now "and "he isn't."

When people talks to his boss he speak more formally than he speaks to their friend. This doesn't occur in the dialogue above. The setting of the dialogue is in the bunk house. It means that it is informal setting. This makes George uses Working Man's English toward Curley's wife directly even the woman is the boss' family. Moreover, Curley's wife replies George's utterance by using the nonstandard English too. At the same time, they social distance between the high and low class is not too far as both of the using the same nonstandard language. Thus, their solidarity becomes high. As a matter they have the same idea in using a certain language.

Besides George feels the informal setting. Therefore, he speaks the nonstandard variety toward Curley's wife even she speaks Standard English as the high class. In addition the topic of the dialogue also supports the use of Working Man's English itself. The topic is about life style. It is a wife who looks for his lovely husband.

d. The Use of ain't as double negatives

The short form of *ain't* as 'haven't' is found in an utterance with an indefinite quantifier. It uses **no ketchup** in utterance (10) below:

Lennie: "I like beans with ketchup."

(10) George: "Well, we ain'tgot no ketchup." (George and Lennie. p. 8)

The utterance () uses a second person plural subject **we** as its subject. The verb is past participle **got**. All in all, the Standard English for (10) is "Well, we haven't got any ketchup."

In the dialogue above, Lennie talks to George by Standard English. As shown in the dialogue, Lennie talks by using Standard variety when he talks about his favorite supper but George replies him by using Working Man's English *ain't* in arguing about eating the supper. This makes their solidarity becomes lower because their intimate becomes further as there is a distance between of them. As a fact they don't have the same opinion. Even they have a close relationship and the same status scale.

Another usage of ain't as both negator and double negation is found in another utterance in John Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men as in utterance (11) below:

(11) Lennie: "Ain't we gonna have no supper?"

George: "Sure we are, if you gather up some dead willow sticks. I got three cans of beans in my bindle. You get a fire ready. I'll give you a match when you get the sticks together. Then we'll heat the beans and have supper." (George and Lennie. p. 8)

The usage of *ain't*as negation in utterance (11) is different with utterance (10). In the utterance (11), the sentence is in interrogative sentence. The usage of ain't is simplified of aren't. It can be indicated by a present future marker gonna that is always preceded by auxiliary verb is, am, or are. The auxiliary depends on the subject pronoun that precedes the auxiliary. As a matter, the subject pronoun of the utterance is **we**. Therefore, *ain't* is a short form are not. For the usage pattern of double negatives in (11) is ...auxiliary ...no The negative marker no is followed by a noun supper. In short, utterance (11) in Standard English becomes "Aren't we gonna have any suppers?"

In the dialogue above, Lennie talks to George by Working Man's English. As a matter they have a close relationship and the same status scale. This is supported by the informal setting and topic. The topic is about supper. As shown in the dialogue, Lennie talks by using the nonstandard variety when he talks about supper. As a fact when a speaker talks about informal topic such as fashion, cooking, hanging out and other life style, he uses nonstandard variety in order to make a relax and charm situation. Unfortunately, George uses both Standard English and Working Man's English even most of Standard English. Moreover, they are in arguing about getting and eating the supper. This makes their solidarity becomes lower because their intimate becomes further as there is a distance between of them. As a fact they don't have the same opinion.

The use of *ain't* means double negatives are also found in the dialogue below:

George: "Hide in the brush till I come for you. Can you remember that?"

Lennie: "Sure I can, George. Hide in the brush till you come."

(12) George: "But you ain't gonna get in no trouble, because if you do, I won't let you tend the rabbits." (Threw his empty bean can off into the brush). (George and Lennie, p.17).

An utterance (13), the *ain't* as double negatives exist in a single sentence. The *ain't* stands for of **are not**. This is because *ain't* precedes future tense marker **gonna** which is a short form of going to. This short term is always gone before 'to be.' And the 'to be' depends on the subject pronoun that comes before it. Besides the usage of *ain't* in (13), the *ain't* has double negation. As a matter *ain't* is annegator. In (13), the indefinite is no trouble. No trouble is an indefinite noun phrase negator because there is no specific trouble which is mentioned in the noun phrase. Thus, a negative concord is identified. In Standard English, the utterance (13) is "But you aren't gonna get in any trouble"

The high solidarity can be indicated from the use of *ain't* in the George's and Lennie's speech above. Even the topic is a little bit serious but George delivers it by the variety in order to get a nice situation toward Lennie. It can be seen from the George's utterance as in (13). The utteranceexpresses both information about Lennie may not tend the rabbits if he does the same trouble while also conveying his feeling toward Lennie's trouble. In

addition, he is in annoying toward Lennie's trouble. As a matter he throws the bean can off into the brush.

CLOSING

Conclusion

Language is a communication tool which reflects to a certain culture. Each language consists of its own linguistics elements such as phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics that differs each other. Thus, people can indicate someone's social background or community through their language use. Working Man's English is one of nonstandard variety which is used on the job, neighborhood, and home, (Guth,1973:106). The nonstandard variety is found in the usage of *ain't*which is the same features of African American Vernacular English (AAVE). The usage varies in four items. They are *ain't*as auxiliary 'have', 'do' or 'does', 'to be', and means as double negatives. The most usages is the usage of *ain't*as a means of double negatives.

Beyond the usage of the nonstandard variety, there must be some factors why people speak in a different way. The factors are known as social factors and dimensions. John Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men uses the nonstandard variety ain'through all characters whether they are high or low class in different usages and purposes. The high class here is the owner of a ranch while the low class is the workers. Even the high class use the ain't but they are not too often in using it. It depends on a certain occasion. As Holmes (1997:158) states "The higher social groups prefer to use more the standard forms while the lowest groups use less standard forms." In addition, Steinbeck uses the nonstandard variety in order to strengthen the characterization itself as the high class and the working man in California when the great depression of America. He describes the high and the working class by supporting their language use though their speech. This reflects to their social status and class implicitly. Therefore, the boss and his son as the owner of the farm, they are considered as the higher class not only because they are rich but also they use more of Standard language than Working Man's through their speech in the novel.

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Suggestion

Based on the findings, the researcher suggest for the next researchers who are interested in analyzing nonstandard English especially Working Man's English, to conduct their study in finding the phonological, vocabulary, and another grammatical of Working Man's English. As a matter, the nonstandard variety has its own phonological and vocabulary as found in John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*.

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