

LITERARY USE OF DIALECT: CASE OF WALKER'S THE COLOR PURPLE

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ABSTRACT

There seems to be consensus that representation of naturally occurring speech varieties in literature has always been of perennial interest to many writers who endeavor to infuse flavor to their works by dint of multifarious dialectal idiosyncrasies. This idea is broadly reverberated in literature, inasmuch as authors often tend to render their works, in letter and spirit, realistic through endowing their characters with speech, which arguably, fits into their social environment. Hence, this paper offers a ready laboratory specimen for investigating different linguistic features of vernacular African American English (AAE) used by Walker as her characters' talk in *The Color Purple* (1982). In pursuit of this stated intent, the present paper attempts to conduct a rigorous analysis that accounts for Walker's linguistic choices, particularly, at the phonological and grammatical levels. Correspondingly, a corpus-based approach is used to analyze dialectal data used by dialect characters in specific patches of dialogues by means of computer-aided analysis. Therefore, this paper intends to extract and analyze a large corpus of attested dialect data from a computer database "AntConc" which will enable us to conduct an analysis based on objective criteria and also account for the purposes that made Walker cling on to the use of literary dialect in her masterpiece *The Color Purple*. Accordingly, this paper attempts to answer the following questions: Why do authors tend to use literary dialect in their writings? And what are the linguistic features of vernacular AAE in the characters' speech in the *Color Purple*?

Keywords: Dialect data, literary dialect, the *Color Purple*, vernacular AAE, Walker.