
Appalachian Englishes in the Twenty-First Century

Educational Materials

Chapter 4

Discourse in Appalachia

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In order to reflect on discourse and the creation of social meaning, examine the following conversational narratives from Appalachian speakers. Given the content of the narrative, the information provided about each speaker, and their use of Appalachian features such as the ones found in this chapter, provide an analysis of this data. You can consider these narratives singly, or you can consider them as a group. The first thing to do is identify the occurrences of Appalachian grammatical features. Then look closely at where they occur. Does there seem to be a connection between the topics and the speakers' use of these features? Think about the speakers in terms of age/generation. Do the older speakers use more Appalachian features in their stories? Do the story topics seem connected to the speakers' ages? What kinds of stances do you think Appalachian features help these speakers enact? In other words, what is language helping these speakers *do* with their stories? There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers; the important thing is to think about how these features (or the features associated with any dialect) allow speakers to create and re-create social meaning for themselves. (Note that these excerpts have been edited lightly for clarity and length.)

1. Excerpts from Bobby, age 53. The first story is about his grandfather, the second excerpt is part of a longer story about the high school basketball coach that led his team to a state championship.
 - a. He used to be real interesting to uh, that was your grandfather's father, to listen to. He could remember everything. But when he got older, in his seventies and eighties, he used to set up there on the porch, I mean every day, that's all he done, set out there in a rocking chair on the porch. But people would come by and it was just unreal to people

who come by and just asked him to tell them, you know, what all he remembered and could go on for a day. He could remember all kinds of stuff.

- b. One story about when I was in high school, we had a guy whose name was WR who was our basketball coach. It really started when I was in the, I guess seventh or eighth grade at Nathan's Creek at that time there were no organized basketball or any kind of sports in the county. This guy, he was born here but he went to Gardener Webb and played basketball there and came back and he started organizing ball in the elementary schools at that time and he would come around to, like three elementary schools that fed Ashe Central [...] once a week or twicet a week he'd come down to the little ole school where I went and he'd help us with basketball and when I, when this class graduated to go on to high school he got a job at Ashe Central as the basketball coach at the high school so he kept a-working with us and kept a-working with us.
2. Opal, age 96, telling a story about walking with her sister, Macie, to visit a friend up the road. Her sister's sons, Dave and Ed, were reluctantly accompanying them.
 - a. [Macie] was the funniest thing you have ever seen in your life. She could tell that, she could tell that thing so funny and I know one time Macie and me was a-going up to Ruth's I guess and Dave and Ed was just little and they's a-running on in front you know, and Macie said, or they was in front of us, and Macie said, 'go on up there boys I got something I want to tell your Aunt Opal.' Dave said, 'we might as well just climb up on the fence here and set till they get through.'
3. Roy, age 67. Roy is Opal's oldest son.
 - a. It's hard to believe this now, but it happened down here in the church. Mom and Aunt Macie [...], they was in the choir, just an old wooden church, had lamps to see by and everything. But they was a-singing and there's a rat run cross the floor and Macie hollered 'Opal, it's a rat!' They hid up in the seats with their feet and they never missed a note. They just kept singing.
 - b. There was one store, [...], I'd take chickens, we would raise chickens and I'd take chickens and eggs over there and swap for coffee and sugar. And I stoled a, me and my friend over here stoled one chicken, and we fed it gravel down the road and BB shot and everything to make it weigh more, tied stuff under its wings to make it weight more and sold it to the store over there and we bought it every bit in raisins, we never got full of raisins till then. I think that's the only thing I ever stoled.