

International Linguistic Association Co-Sponsored by the Department of English John Jay College of Criminal Justice

Judy B. Bernstein
William Paterson University

Expletives and other Displaced Pronouns in Appalachian English

Appalachian English allows subjects to be split between two positions to a greater extent than standard American English:

- (1) a. *There* can't *nobody* ride him. (Appalachian English; Montgomery & Hall 2004)
- b. *They* can't *many people* say that. (Montgomery & Hall 2004)
- c. *They* didn't *nobody* live up there. (our fieldwork)
- d. *We* don't *nobody* know how long we have. (Montgomery & Hall 2004)

The sentences in (1a,b) involve expletive pronouns (*there* and *they*) and transitive verbs, so-called transitive expletive constructions; that in (1c) an expletive (*they*) and an unaccusative verb; the one in (1d) a referential pronoun (*we*) and a transitive verb. For all these examples, the initial piece of the subject is a pronominal element and the second a quantificational noun phrase (usually negative). What explains this pattern in Appalachian English? Zanuttini and Bernstein (2011) argue that the pronoun (e.g. *there*) starts out as a unit with the quantificational subject (e.g. *there-nobody*) and raises to a position higher than the canonical position for lexical subjects. This is facilitated by movement of the modal or auxiliary. Other varieties displaying the pattern in (1) are Belfast English, Late Middle/Early Modern English, and Older Scots, an ancestor of Appalachian English (Montgomery 1989, 1997). Resembling (1) but not identical to it is so-called negative inversion, which is displayed in both Appalachian English and African American English:

- (2) Didn't *nobody* get hurt or nothin'. (Appalachian English; Wolfram & Christian 1976)
- (3) Ain't *nothin'* went down. (African American English; Labov et al. 1968)

But unlike Appalachian English, African American English apparently does not display the pattern in (1) with overt pronouns.

Saturday, November 12, 2011

11 AM - 12 PM

John Jay College of Criminal Justice

Conference Room, Department of English (7th Floor)

619 West 54th Street (between 11th and 12th Avenues)

New York, NY 10019

Contact: Dr. Effie Cochran, ecochran@jjay.cuny.edu.

www.ilaword.org