## Introduction

**Purpose**
- To examine the performance of TD and LI AAE- and MAE-speaking children on a communicative role taking (CRT) task.
- Semantic/pragmatic appropriateness was scored.
- To examine the syntactic forms that TD and LI AAE and MAE children produce during the CRT task.
- The forms are:
  - Direct speech responses
  - Indirect speech responses
  - Partial/mixed responses
  - Ambiguous responses
- Specifically, how does the dialect of AAE differ from MAE in the syntax of indirect speech reports?

**Participants**
- 529 TD and LI AAE- and MAE-speaking children between the ages of 4.0 and 9.11
- 337 TD (n = 186 AAE; n = 151 MAE)
- 192 LI (n = 105 AAE; n = 87 MAE)
- Criteria used to be classified as TD AAE speaker:
  1. Examining SLP identified child as an AAE speaker
  2. Participants were identified as showing “significant deviation from MAE” according to the DELV-ST (Seymour, Rooser & de Villiers, 2003)
- 3. Identified as “lowest risk” TD language users by the DELV-ST diagnostic items
- Criteria to be classified as LI:
  1. Examining SLP identified child as LI
  2. Participant scored as “high” or “highest risk” on DELV-ST

**Method**
- The Role-taking subtest of the DELV-CR provided opportunities for elicitation of two examples of each of the following speech acts based on a two-picture sequence:
  - Reporting an event (telling)
  - Making a request (asking)
  - Prohibiting an action (saying to)
  - For example, the child was asked, “What is the girl telling/tasking/saying to her mother?”

## Results

### 1. CRT: Semantic/Pragmatic Appropriateness

**Question 1a:** Are there significant differences between AAE- and MAE-speaking children on the CRT task?

### Question 1b: Are there significant differences between TD and LI children on the CRT task?

| TD significantly better than LI (p = .000) | Interaction between clinical status and age (p = .001) |

### 2. CRT: Syntactic Form

**Question 2a:** Direct Speech responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AAE vs. MAE: NS</th>
<th>TD vs. LI: NS</th>
<th>Age: p &lt; .000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Post-hoc: 5 &gt; 8</td>
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<td>No interactions</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Question 2b:** Indirect Speech responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AAE vs. MAE: p = .003</th>
<th>TD vs. LI: p &lt; .002</th>
<th>TD &gt; LI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAE &gt; MAE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Age: NS</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>No interactions</td>
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**Question 2c:** Partial/Mixed Speech responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AAE vs. MAE: p = .000</th>
<th>TD vs. LI: p &lt; .000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAE &gt; MAE</td>
<td>TD &gt; LI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age: NS</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>No interactions</td>
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</table>

**Question 2d:** Ambiguous Speech responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AAE vs. MAE: NS</th>
<th>TD vs. LI: p = .028</th>
<th>Age: p &lt; .002</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TD &lt; LI</td>
<td>Post-hoc: 4 &gt; 5</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No interactions</td>
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**Further analysis:** Indirect + Mixed/Partial Speech responses combined

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AAE vs. MAE: NS</th>
<th>TD vs. LI: p = .000</th>
<th>TD &gt; LI</th>
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## Discussion

### 1. CRT: Semantic/Pragmatic Appropriateness

- No significant differences were found between the two dialect groups. This indicated that the designed CRT task is not biased against AAE-speaking children.
- The CRT task differentiates clearly between TD and LI populations.
- The CRT task should accurately distinguish a language disorder from a language difference based on the semantic/pragmatic appropriateness of the responses provided by children.

### 2. CRT: Syntactic Form

- No significant differences were found between the two dialect groups for Direct Speech and Ambiguous responses; however, significant differences were found between the two dialect groups for Indirect Speech and Partial/Mixed.
- Indirect speech responses showed a clinical effect because the LI group produced more Ambiguous speech responses than the TD group. They were missing the syntactic markers that disambiguates the forms.
- Indirect speech responses showed an effect for the dialect group because MAE-speaking children produced more Indirect speech forms. AAE-speaking children produced more Partial/Mixed speech forms.
- Examining verb form responses for Mixed/Partial revealed that the auxiliary verb was inverted in the AAE-speaking children’s responses although the indirect speech form of the pronoun was used.
- An inverted auxiliary verb is acceptable in embedded question forms in AAE (e.g., “I wanted to see [was it the one we bought]”; Green, 2002)
- The TD AAE-speaking children used this dialectal indirect embedded form in place of the MAE indirect form, but only in the case of interrogative speech acts.
- LI AAE-speaking children produced significantly fewer of this indirect embedded form than the TD AAE.
- When Indirect + Mixed/Partial forms were combined, the difference between AAE and MAE children was eliminated.