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Envisioning Sociolinguistic Indicators in Langston Hughes' Selected Poems

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**Letter of Recommendation**

Sushil Paudel has completed his thesis "Envisioning Sociolinguistic Indicators in Langston Hughes' Selected Poems" under my supervision. He carried out this research paper from April 2014 to April 2015. I hereby recommend this thesis to be submitted for viva voce.

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**Letter of Approval**

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## **Abstract**

The research entitled "Envisioning Sociolinguistic Indicators in Langston Hughes's Selected Poems" deals with the linguistic features such as sounds, words and structures to underscore social issues like race, class, gender, ethnicity, equality and inequality, religions and culture, art and music, nationality. The use of language in Hughes poetry talks about race, class, gender, ethnicity, religion, culture, food, art music of particular group and gives identity to African American people. The writings of Hughes raise racial consciousness among African American people and then sociopolitical situation. The research assumes that language is an indicator of social values and practices. Hughes uses sociolinguistic indicator in the poetry to foreground linguistic and cultural diversity of African American people.

## Table of Contents

### Page No.

Acknowledgements

Abstract

I. Introduction: Envisioning Sociolinguistic Indicators in Hughes' Poems 1-21

II. African American Racial Consciousness in Langston Hughes Poems 22-50

III. Language as Indicator of Social System, Values and Practices 51-53

Works Cited

## **I. Introduction: Envisioning Sociolinguistic Indicators in Hughes' Poems**

This thesis focuses on Langston Hughes' Selected Poems (1921 – 1967) which talk about African American music, politics, dream, racial discrimination, death, hybridity, slavery, migration, inequality, alienation, history, and celebrate the linguistic and cultural diversity of African Americans. In particular, it explores a racial consciousness and cultural nationalism devoid of self-hate that united people of African descent and Africa across the globe and encouraged pride in their diverse black folk culture and aesthetics through socio-linguistic indicators. This thesis proposes sociolinguistic indicators as a tool for analyzing the poetry of Langston Hughes, which evokes the race, class, ethnicity, and geographical impact on language, existing politics, religious faith, gender and black and White's culture.

Sociolinguistics is the study of the relation between language and society – a branch of both linguistics and sociology, sometimes called sociology of language. Sociolinguistics is the descriptive study of the effect of any and all aspect of society, including cultural norms, expectation and context, on the way language is used in society. Hughes' use of different sociolinguistic indicators such as his frequent topic dream, colloquial contraction, African American images, different sociolinguistic communities, euphemism, hyperbole, rhetoric questions, ambiguous words, irony, dialogue, reported speech, montage, double negation, homonymous words which foreground class, ethnicity, geographical location, politics, religion and culture in general and racial segregation, slavery, dream of seeking freedom and white supremacy in particular. Above mentioned sociolinguistic indicators makes his poem so memorable and beloved as they carry the theme of racism, the American dream, dignity, aspiration, wisdom and self actualization.

Langston Hughes has his own tone of denouncing racism and depicting the

oppression that African American experienced at the hand of white American supremacy. He alludes to lost and forgotten aspirations, insinuating that African Americans are not allowed access to American dream because of their race. In "Mother to Son", the mother describes the various vicissitudes she has faced exacerbated or directly caused by color of skin using different colloquial contraction and African American imagery.

During the Langston Hughes time, African American readers felt that the poet works directly explored their lives, their hopes, their fears, their past and their dream as Hughes brings the sociolinguistic indicators such as the place imagery, jive talk, African American imagery from the African American community which as opposed to the obtuse modernist poet like T.S Eliot and Ezra Pound. The African American characters in Hughes oeuvre embody all the complexities of life in segregated America. Hughes writes from the point of view of struggling jazz musicians, frustrated dreamers, disenfranchised students, biracial children and so on, finding dignity in their daily struggles. Like W.E.B DuBois, Hughes work calls attention to his characters strength, endurance and the purity of their souls.

Hughes often writes about aspirations as dreams. He explores hidden dreams, lost dreams, dreams regained, dreams redeemed with the use of sociolinguistic indicator; the frequent topic dream. African Americans from the time of slavery to the oppression of Jim Crow era were treated like second class citizens in the eyes of the American law. Hughes believed that this inferior social status forced most African Americans to hide their dreams behind protective psychological barrier. For many Hughes characters, the American dream is completely unattainable. Hughes expresses the power of dreams in different ways throughout his works. In his poems, Hughes comments that despite the difficulty of realizing these dreams, it is important for the



disenfranchised to keep them alive in order to sustain the will to live. Further Hughes writes that if these dreams remain dormant for long enough, then they might explode. Hughes also shows wisdom being passed down through generations such as mother who tells her son to never give up, even when the road is hard. Wisdom is result of experience and can inform one's decision to persevere in the face of adversity. Courage can lead to be gained from confronting one's demons. Finding a mode of expression for sorrow- like music or poetry- is a form of wisdom in that a person can learn how to separate him or herself from bad experiences.

Further, music, particularly the blues and jazz permeates Hughes' oeuvre. Many of his poems have an identifiable rhythm or beat. The lines read like the verses in a blue songs and echo themes that are common in blue music, like sorrow lost love, anger and hopelessness. Hughes frequently alludes to music that originated during the era of slavery, using 'call and response' pattern for auditory effect and to create a link between the past and the present. By invoking the musical traditions of slaves, Hughes connects himself to the painful history of African Americans. Hughes poetry like blues and jazz has a distinct and expressive tone often depicting tales of sorrow, alienation and loneliness. Hughes is realistic about the discriminatory environment that he lives in, but he also expresses hope that one day the racial inequality in America will start to even out. Many of the speakers in Hughes poems start in situations of despondency and helplessness, one has argued with a lover, another faces discrimination, a biracial man struggles with his identity and so on. Despite his or her difficult surroundings, these individuals are able to find inherent inner strength, allowing them to preserve against the odds.

Langston Hughes is obsessed with the dreams and he frequently uses the term dream in the title of the poem such as "Dream Boogie", "Dream Variation", "I Dream

a World", "As I grew Older", "Children Rhyme", "Dream Dust", "The Dream Keeper", etc. Most often in Hughes' poetry, the word 'dream' does not refer to dream in literal sense, but in the metaphorical sense of hope and aspirations. Sometimes these aspirations are personal and various, as in the poem "Dream Variation" where the poet longs for two dreams; one is dream of rural life and second his incomplete dream as a city dweller. At the other times, the aspirations to which Hughes refers are clearly social and utopian, as in his famous, "I Dream a World". One might ask, do dreams figure so prominently in Hughes' oeuvre? For Hughes, I would argue that "the dream" is a generic signifier, a placeholder if you will, for a wide array of psychic phenomenon from the smallest and seemingly the most inconsequential wishes to grandest utopian visions. Primarily focused on the dreams of oppressed people, especially people of color, Hughes' poetry celebrates the capacity of dream power to overturn established structure of race and class.

In the poetic vision of Langston Hughes, dream can be deferred but they cannot be stopped; they represent the irrepressible human desire to build a world based upon an ideal of social justice. Many of Langston Hughes' poems invoke the theme of the American Dream. Hughes, however, addresses this concept from the perspective of the country's disenfranchised including African Americans, Native Americans, downtrodden immigrations and poor farmers. He portrays the glories of liberty and equality as out of reach for these populations depicting individuals who are trapped under the fists of prejudice, oppression and poverty. Their dreams die or forgotten in a life defined by a desperation to survive. However, Hughes does often end his poem on a somewhat hopeful note, revealing his belief that African Americans will one day be free to pursue their dreams.

Colloquial contraction "Ain't you heard", "Ain't got nobody", "in from o'

me”, “I’s frustrated”, “Ain’t got nobody”, “Howdy – do?” and “I’s been a-climbin’ on”, “I ‘se still goin’ honey” in his poem "Dream Boogie", "The Weary Blues", "Bound No'th Blues", "Bad Morning", "50-50", "Madam and Rent Man", "Mother to Son" respectively gives the taste of Black English Vernacular. There is the use of double negation as well as contraction in above mentioned poems as he is the representative of African American speech community. Colloquial contraction does not only indicate as a language of lower standard but Hughes uses Black English Vernacular to promote the black aesthetic, culture and language. David Crystal writes in his *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*, "The vernacular principle is the view that it is this variety which will convey the best insight into the natural speech of a community, and one which will show the closest connection with the language history"(511). Black English Vernacular comes as a personalized version of English in Hughes poems. His work loses the formality and gains a sense of emotion and humanity. "Mother to Son" by Hughes is a poem that utilizes Black English Vernacular as a means of expressing rather than solely communicating, the mother's warmth, lack of education and her struggle.

African American music, particularly, blues and jazz, permeates in Langston Hughes poetry like in "Dream Boogie" and "The Weary Blues". Many of his poems have an identifiable rhythm or beat. The lines read like the verses in blue song and echo themes that are common in blues music like sorrow, lost, love, anger and hopelessness. Hughes frequently alludes to music that originated during the era of slavery, using a ‘call and response’ pattern for auditory effect and to create a link between the past and present. By invoking the musical traditions of slaves, Hughes connects himself to the painful history of African Americans. Hughes’ poetry like jazz and blues has a distinct and expressive tone, often depicting tales of sorrow,

alienation and loneliness. In the poem, "Dream Boogie", the first stanza "Good morning daddy! Aint you heard the boogie-woogie rumble of deferred?" Here the poet asks whether you have heard boogie-woogie rumble of dream deferred. Boogie-woogie is an indicator of black music as it is African American style of piano based blues that became popular after 1928. It is mainly associated with dancing. The whole poem "The Weary Blues" is written in a musical pattern of blues. Hughes wrote this poem in free verse with an irregular rhyme scheme, mimicking the natural patterns of speech and music. The poet's blues poetry was influenced by the music, he heard during his childhood. "The blues" is a musical style invented and propagated by African Americans, which historians often label as the secular counterpart to old slave spirituals. Both genres of music express themes of deep pain, although blues songs often address a lost or wayward lover. Unlike the spirituals, which are sung by group, blues songs are usually performed by individuals, which emphasize the loneliness of the sorrowful melancholic lyrics. Hughes embraced blues music because it expressed the worries of a common man in simple and direct manner. Blues songs feature heavy repetition and singers often seem to be laughing and crying at the same time.

The use of jive talk like, "daddy" in the poem "Dream Boogie" and "howdy-do?" in the next poem "Madam and the Rent Man" are other sociolinguistic indicators in Hughes Poetry. "Man" is the next commonly used jive talk in Hughes poetry which is commonly used in African American society as an interjection or for emphasis. Also in alternative to 'boy' which was used by whites as a disparaging term used to hail African American adult males. Jive talk is also known as Harlem jive, it is a vernacular of jazz world. It is a distinctive slang which developed in Harlem where jive or jazz was played and was subsequently adopted more widely in US society peaking in the 1940s. Using jive talk in Hughes is depicting the then society of

America and valorizing his own native language as well as expressing the African American scorn toward whites for their misbehavior. Hughes always wants to promote his culture. So to document jive he supported Dan Burley to publish *Original Handbook of Harlem Jive*.

Use of African American imagery such as “negro”, “black”, “dark”, “slave”, “scars”, “colored”, “dusky”, “red man”, “shadow” are easily found in Hughes poems: "Theme for English B", "Let America be America", "As I Grew Older", "Negro Speaks River", "Dream Variation" and others too. With the use of African American images in his poetry, he promoted equality, condemned racism and injustice and celebrated African American culture, humour and spirituality. In the poem "Theme for English B", African American student is attributed with different images such as “colored”. In "Let America be America" the narrator calls himself “negro” and showed his pain through images like “slavery scars”. "As I Grew Older" brings the narrator as a “black” again and his dream is shadowed. There is even image of Afro-American in the title of the poem in "Negro Speaks of River". Here “negro” is the collective voices of black people. In "Dream Variation", the narrator proclaims himself as a black and wish for carefree life away from color presentation and racial discrimination.

Langston Hughes brings different settings such as “Winston-Salem”, “Durham”, “City College Harlem”, “Mississippi”, “Lenox Avenue” which are associated with Africans’ history and life style. Winston-Salem is the city of North Carolina, as south is the origin of African American people; the poet portrays the situation of African American in northern part of America such as Winston –Salem. Durham University is the University of North Carolina where Afro American people like the narrator of the poem "Theme for English B" suffered from racial biasness.

Through the image of “Mississippi” river, Hughes traces the history of the African American from Africa to America. The muddy Mississippi makes Hughes consider the roles that river have played in human history. Lenox Avenue was the heart of Harlem during the Harlem Renaissance in the 1930s. The street brought together African Americans, Latinos, British West Indians and Spaniards who developed relationships over common interest such as jazz.

In most of the cases, Langston Hughes brings two communities such as, “white writing teacher and black students”, “singer and audience”, “landlords and tenants”, “white father” and “black mother” in his poems "Theme for English B", "The weary blues", "Cross", "Ballad of Landlords" and others. In "The Ballad of the Landlords", we do read about various characters' uptake or response to a direct minority intervention in dominant society's presupposition and practices. In fact, the entire poem is structured around a series of pragmatic uptakes to utterances in a social dialogue. The poem narrates the social dialogue. The poem narrates the story of a tenant/landlord dispute which escalates to the point that the African American tenant lands in jail. In "Themes for English B", the conflict between African American student and white writing teacher is presented, where at the end of the point is reconciliation between the two parties. But in "The Weary Blues", the relation between singer and audience is communal. The singer is droning and swaying as he performs, but so is the audience as they listen, thus they become conflated grammatically in the sentence that describes their interaction. Here, then, Hughes suggests that the blues offer a sort of communal experience, that they express the feelings of not only the artist, but the whole community.

Hyperbole, euphemism, rhetorical questions and irony are other figures of speech as well as sociolinguistic indicators in Hughes poetry, specially found in the

poem "The Ballad of the Landlord". Hyperbole or exaggeration is used to convey the desired effect of the poem: to indicate the tenant's anger and the landlord's unwillingness to make the necessary repairs in the apartment. The tenant in order to be heard feels that he must exaggerate in the lines 21-24 "police! police! Come and get this man ! he's trying to ruin the government and overturn the land!".

Euphemism is a device that substitutes an inoffensive or in this case, less aggressive statement for unpleasant meaning that the statement actually conveys. In this poem, the line spoken by tenant in line 19 and 20 "you ain't gonna be able to say award If I land my first on you" is an example of Euphemism. This line means to tell us tenant is threatening to break the landlord's jaw, not merely to prevent him for talking. Rhetorical question is one to which the speaker and listener already know the answer. These kinds of questions are used in place of statement to give greater expressive and persuasive force: "Ten Bucks you say I owe you? Ten Bucks you say is due?" from the same poem. The tenant has obviously heard the landlord and already knows the price rent. These questions are much more forceful than statement. Overall, "The Ballad of the Landlord." is leading up to a climatic use of irony. Typically, irony refers to the use of the words to convey the opposite of their literal meaning. However, here, thematic irony is used; in which several episodes lead up to an unexpected outcome: The tenant call the police to report the landlord is refusing to make basic repairs on his apartment. However the police arrest the tenant instead. To understand this irony, it helps to look at the historical contexts. Hughes bases this poem on actual living condition in 1930s Harlem, a time and place in which African American were discriminated against based solely on race.

Hughes uses ambiguous words such as "beat", "Raggy" and "down" in his poems: "Dream Boogie", "The Weary Blues". In the poem "Dream Boogie", the poet

asks “you think it’s a happy beat?” Here, beat means the music of parade or musical instrument or it can be beaten or punished. In the poem "The Weary Blues", terms like “raggy” and “down” are used raggy gives two meaning; style of jazz and torn out clothes, “down” architecture of Harlem and below too. Ambiguity is not taken as a linguistic problem by the literary writers as linguists do for creative writers; ambiguity is one of the powerful literary devices. But for the linguists, ambiguity is hindrances for intelligible and unequivocal expression tend to be compact and complex multiple meanings and desirable. So, literary writers tend to generate ambiguity in their language use while the linguists try to avoid it.

In the poem "The Ballad of Landlord", the tenants act heroically from a progressive point of view, fighting for tenant’s rights and fair housing, he lands in jail for talking back and threatening violence. The last section of the poem represents the legal narrative as montage of objects and places whose sequences implicate a narrative of arrest, sentencing and jail time. The poem ends with the official written report of the events in newspaper screamer headlines: MAN THREATENS LANDLORD |TENANT HELD NO BALL| JUDGES GIVES NEGRO 90 DAYS IN COUNTRY JAIL! The capital letters visually suggests the hysterical response the tenant’s speech and actions have triggered as well as the alliance between the landlord’s call for police back up and the court’s decision supporting the landlord. The only concrete action reported and named in newspaper headline is the tenant’s conditional threat in lines 19-20. The landlord’s failure to respond the tenant’s requests and then demands and the landlord’s own threats and actions, as reported in the poem, go unreported in the monologic newspaper text. The poem embeds and retests the newspaper text within a more encompassing dialogic discourse of economic and racial inequality. In Hughes poem, the narrative represents in dialogue,



reported speech, digetic montage and embedded text the triumph of the landlord over the tenant. The underdog or disempowered character is done in by the powerful antagonist supported by lawful racial inequality.

Homonymous words such as “cross” and “curse” evoke the idea of cultural segregation and racial hybridity in a poem "Cross" by Hughes. In this very poem the narrator is young mulato expressing his frustration at being both black and white but never fully belonging to either of two races, being cross race became curse for him. The excessive repetition of the words such as “road” “walk” “alone” portrays the lonely journey of African American people from the laborious struggle of South to the relatively affluent North for better life. Repeating lines are also the part of traditional blues especially from what we heard on blue playlist. Hughes poem’s title such as "Let America be America Again" published in 1935 became popular and came as a discourse in recent time. John Kerry, the democratic senator used the poem’s title as his slogan for his presidential campaign while running against George W. Bush in 2004.

Throughout the poem, Hughes contrasts his hopes for America with the reality of life for those outside of the socially and economically dominant racial, religious and social groups. Hughes brings ‘madam’ persona in his seventeen poems like "Madam and the Rent Man", "Madam and the Sensuous Man", "Madam and the Phone Bill", "Madam and her Madam, Madam’s Past History" etc. The seventeen ‘madam; poems create a rebellious, witty, grassroots, cagey African American woman who defies a diverse range of societal norms. Man and woman have been socialized drastically differently because of gendered constructions of reality. The predominance of his poetry with Afro American as subject, his identification with these women, his refusal to judge these women, his indirect condemnation of the norm of African

American male masculinity, and his elusive, private attitude toward his sexuality deconstruct stereotypical expectation of gender and emphasize the distinction between sexuality and gender that is how the subject of women's studies and feminist discourse.

The primary objective of this research is to dig out existing culture, race, class, black and white culture, ethnicity, and gender through the study of sociolinguistic indicators which roles are discussed previously. At a time, when modern American poets were following traditional verse forms of British and American canon, and use Standard American English in their poetry. But Langston Hughes differs from the canonical American poets consistently used free verse and uses colloquial contraction, jive talk, jazz, musical and African American images; Hughes frequent topics are 'dream' and 'madam' persona and also uses characters who are from two sociolinguistic communities and apply dialogue, reported speech and digetic montage in his writings.

This research with the spectacle of sociolinguistic analysis assumes that Hughes poems, in most of the cases were written in free verse to represent the free voice of African Americans which are being made silent since past. Through the free verse, the poet himself wants to pour the anger; dissatisfaction against the white on the one hand, on the other depicts the tale of sorrow, alienation, frustration and domination and with the use of Black English Vernacular Hughes to explore a racial consciousness and cultural nationalism devoid of self-hate that united African American people across the globe. Most importantly, Hughes differs from other writers, uses colloquial contraction, jive talk jazz music and African American images to valorize own native language, culture where the readers felt that the poet's works directly explored their lives, their hopes, their past and their dreams- as opposed to the

obtuse modernism of poets like T.S Eliot or Ezra Pound. Hughes frequent topics are “dream” because for him, dreams are hope of African Americans. Hughes addresses the concept of dream from the perspective of countries’ disenfranchised, including: African Americans, Native Americans, down trodden immigrants and poor farmers. He portrays the glories of liberty and equality as out of reach for those populations depicting individuals who are trapped under the fist of prejudice, oppression and poverty. Further, Hughes uses ‘madam’ persona, two sociolinguistic communities and apply dialogue, reported speech and digetic montage in his writings to the African American characters in Hughes’ oeuvre embody all the complexities of life in segregated America. He writes from the point of view of struggling musicians, frustrated dreamers: disfranchised students, biracial children, oppressed tenants and so on and the persona of madam is one of them. Hughes works calls the attention to his characters’ strength, endurance and purity of their soul. All in all, my research argues that Langston Hughes characters and language of poems and Hughes himself are the representative voice of the then African American society who advocates for the equality and promotes black aesthetics. Through different sociolinguistic indicators in his poems, Hughes becomes the mouthpiece of African American, Native Americans, downtrodden immigrants and poor farmers of different ages and different genders.

This research is library based research and it uses sociolinguistic studies as its tool which helps to find out the different sociolinguistic indicators and sociolinguistic indicators and sociolinguistic variation in Hughes poetry. Sociolinguistic studies how language varieties differ between groups separated by certain variables, for example, ethnicity, religion, status, gender, level of education age etc and how creation and adherence to these rules are used to categorize individuals in social or socioeconomic classes. This thesis mainly draws upon William Labov, Ronald Wardaugh, Elizabeth

Closs Traugott and Mary Louise Pratt, whose study helps to dig out sociolinguistic indicators and their meanings or signals in Hughes' poetry.

William Labov is often regarded as the founder of the study of sociolinguistics. He is specially noted for introducing the quantitative study of language variation and change, making the sociology of language into scientific discipline. Labov in his *The Social Stratification of English in New York City* states: "The problem social variation is to reduce our general impression of the social significance of ( r) to an exact statement of social distribution ( and eventually, social evaluation). We will want to compare groups and individuals through the exact use of index for (r), and other indexes as well (38)."

Language users' speech habits get influenced by degree of formality required by degree of formality required by the subject matter and the person whom they are talking, the genre of speech and the medium contribute the variability in language. Moreover, the varieties of language including English include the pronounced difference in the linguistic habits of people from different regions, social classes and ethnic groups. Such varieties are also called dialects. Speech community is a concept in sociolinguistics that describes a distinct group of people who use language in a unique and mutually accepted way among themselves. To be considered part of speech community, one must have a communicative competence. That is the speaker has the ability to use language in a way that is appropriate in the given situation. It is possible for a speaker to be communicatively competent in more than one language.

Ronald Wardaugh's *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics* provides further insight in the study of sociolinguistics. Wardaugh remarks:

Any discussion of the relationship between language and society or of the various functions of language in society should

begin with some attempt to define each of these terms. Let us say that a society is any group of people who are drawn together for a certain purpose of purpose. By such definition 'society' becomes a very comprehensive concept, but we will soon see how useful such a comprehensive view is because of the different kinds of societies, we must consider in the course of discussion that follow. We may attempt an equally comprehensive definition of language: a language is what the members of particular society speak. (1)

In all language communities, there are language variations along the lines of regional ethnic and socioeconomic status that carry the socio-culture values. For instance, in England before the Second World War, royal family English was taken as high prestige even opted to civil service and academic post. Such a socially highlighted variety is dramatized in Shaw's *Pygmalion*. Thus, language functions as the indicators of social identity. So, when we are having socio-linguistic analysis of speech, we need to look at the type of speaker, type of addressee, topic of speech, genre, medium situation, degree of formality, type of speech and their significance.

Elizabeth Closs Traugott and Mary Louise Pratt discussed about the varieties of English and their use in different regional, social and ethnic group in their book *Linguistics for Students of Literature*. There are some methodological problems in studying language variations. The study of language variability based on introspection is infectious since any individual controls only some of all possible varieties of a language. So, to find out what different kind kinds of regional or other varieties there are, one must use data collected through questionnaires, interviews, and tape recordings of free speech. But this method is also not free from problems such as one

can never be sure that the collected data is complete or incomplete. The data is always skewed by the presence of the person collecting it in which people's spontaneity and informal speech habit get self-conscious and formal when they know that they are the parts of linguistics inquiry. In such case the study becomes what they ought to say that what they really say. Similarly, postal questionnaires become more formal as writing opts for formality and in oral questionnaires, the speakers become more conscious than in normal. Generally, the questioner's pronunciation influences the answer like in 'how do you pronounce **wash**?' The better way to approach the problem is asking for relevant lexical data, such as 'what is another term for laundry?' Moreover, the extensive discussion is often needed to capture the stylistic difference of slight meaning differences. Various research methods are developed to overcome such problems under the influence of William Labov like his study of 'r fullness', the study of the presence or absence of [r] after vowel as in 'car', 'barn' and 'farmer' in association with social prestige.

Labov asked sales personnel for location of the shoe department at three storey large New York department store. He in disguise of different client observed the [r] presence in high class variety as the matter of high prestige and middle class [r] is less frequently used and hardly found [r] in lower class variety. He adopted interviewers' anonymity but it has only the impressionistic results because his method is also largely avoided the speaker's social, regional, educational backgrounds. Labov however claimed that lengthy interview, reading passage, casual conversation, and questions related to sensitive matters like life, death and love can be the better approaches. Since the more emotionally involved the speakers, the closer they came to the variety most natural to them. Similarly Labov found out the task of identifying language varieties is not so easy though data collected is reasonable because variety is

matter of frequency rather than complete presence and absence in different levels of language. So, language study should be on the basis of frequency rather than in norm. In this light, stereotyping of certain form as presence and absence is just linguistic stigmatization. Similarly, the regional varieties intermixed with social are called dialects which should be considered as inferior and nonstandard. Dialect can be used different in forms too but accent is the pronunciation variation. (Traught, Pratt 310-312)

Born in Joplin Missouri, James Langston Hughes was member of an abolitionist family to parents Carrie M. Langston and James N. Hughes who were separated soon after his birth. He was raised mainly by his mother and childless couple, the Reeds. He attended public schools Kanasas and Illinois and upon graduating elementary school, Hughes was named class poet, although he had never even written a poem. That title sparked an interest in writing poetry. Hughes graduated from high school in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1920. His high school companions, most of whom were white, remembered him as a handsome 'Indian looking' youth whom everyone liked and respected for his quiet, natural ways and his abilities. He won an athletic letter in track and held offices in the student council and the American Civic Association. In his school Hughes was introduced to the works of poet Carl Sandburg (1878-1967), another poet from Mid West. Also at this time, Hughes himself began writing poetry and developing his unique style.

Hughes spent the year after high school in Mexico with his father, who tried to discourage him from writing. But Hughes poetry and prose were beginning to appear in the *Brownie's* book, a publication for children edited by W.E.B Dubois (1868-1963), and he was starting to work on more ambitious materials for adult readers. The poem "A Negro Speaks River" which marked this development appeared in the *Crisis*

magazine in 1921. Hughes returned to America and enrolled at Columbia University in New York City. Meanwhile, the *Crisis* printed several more of his poems. Finding the atmosphere at Columbia unfriendly, Hughes left after a year. He took odd jobs in New York, and in 1923 he signed on to work on a freighter. His first voyage took him down the west coast of Africa; his second took him to Spain. In 1924, he spent six months in Paris, France. He was relatively happy, produced prose and experimented with what he called 'racial rhythm' in poetry. Most of the verse (poetry) appeared in African-American publications, but *Vanity Fair*, a magazine popular among middle and upper class women, published three poems.

Later in 1924, Hughes went to live with his mother in Washington, Dc. He hoped to earn enough money to return to college, but worked as a hotel busboy paid very little, and life in the nation's capital, where tension was fierce, made him unhappy. But he was able to write many poems. "The Weary Blues" won first prize in 1925 in a literary competition sponsored by Opportunity, a magazine published by the National Urban League. *The summer* one of his essays and another poem won prizes in the *Crisis* literary context. Meanwhile; Hughes had come to the attention of Carl Van Vechten, a novelist and critic, who arranged publication of Hughes's first volume of poetry, *The Weary Blues* (1926). This book projected Hughes's lasting themes, established his styles and suggested the wide range of poetic talent. Meta Du Ewa Jones affirms this critical assessment in his article "Listening to What the Ear Demands: Langston Hughes and His Critics" published in *Callaloo*:

Records compilations such as *The Voice of Langston Hughes and The Weary Blues* album will enrich our understanding of the poetic techniques, content and performance possibilities of his jazz infused poetry. Hughes centrality to the idiom of jazz poetry in America will be



explored through a comparative analysis of poetry recitation and music performances which explicitly or implicitly allude to his compositions. Thus, my analysis emphasizes the epistemic value of musical and verbal interplay in poetry and performance. (1146)

Hughes transformed the bitterness which such themes generated in many African-Americans of the day into sharp irony and humor. His casual folk like style were strengthened in his second book, *Fine Clothes to the Jews* (1927). Hughes had resumed his education in 1925 and graduated from Lincoln University in 1929. *Not without Laughter* (1930) was his first novel. The relative commercial success of this novel inspired Hughes to make his living as an author. In 1931, he made the first of what became annual lecture tours. The following year, he took trip to Soviet Union. Meanwhile, he turned out poems, essays, book reviews, songs, lyrics, plays, and short stories.

Jeff Westover highlights on the key issue of Langston Hughes Poetry; Afro-American's dream which has been deferred many times due to many socio-political reasons in his article published in *Collaloo Journal*. He states:

Hughes chapter produces a poignant testimony to both his own alienation from the Africans whose acceptance he sought and to the colonial rape of the continent. He brilliantly conveys the pain of his exclusion and the devastation wrought by western imperialism in his repeated references to the drumming he hears, his carefully understated report describing the prostitution of the frightened young girl, and the striking image of the "Tall black sinister ship, high above water," all of which come to head with his simple closing statement announcing his inability to sleep. The passage articulates a consciousness that is

profoundly troubled by the various divisions caused by neo-colonial conquest. (1215)

Langston Hughes was a prolific writer. In the forty years between his first book in 1926 and his death in 1967, he devoted his life to writing and lecturing. He wrote sixteen books of poems, two novels, three collections of editorial and documentary fictions, twenty plays, children poetry, musicals and operas, three autobiographies, a dozen radio and television scripts and dozens of magazine articles. In addition, he edited seven anthologies. The long and distinguished list of Hughes's fictional works includes: *Not without Laughter* (1930): *The Big Sea* (1940): *I Wonder as I Wander* (1956). His collection of poetry include: *The Weary Blues* (1926): *The Negro Mother Reaction* (1931): *The Dream Keeper* (1932): *Shakespeare in Harlem* (1942): *Fields of Wonder* (1947): *One Way Ticket* (1947): *The First Book of Jazz* (1955): *Tambourines to Glory* (1958): and *Selected Poems* (1959): *The Best of Simple* (1961). David Chintz elaborates *The Blues Poems* of Langston Hughes in his article "Literacy and Authenticity, the Blues Poems Of Langston Hughes" published in *Callaloo* journal states, "Blues use number of stanza forms but three lines AAB stanza is so ubiquitous as to have become the standard form which all others are seen as deviating. This form is generated by single line which is first repeated, often with minor impromptu variation, and then rhymed in a like that elaborates on or answers it"(177).

African-American poet, novelist, and playwright, who became one of the foremost interpreters of racial relationships in the United States,. Influenced by the Bible, W.E.B. Bois and Walt Whit man, Hughes depicted realistically the ordinary lives of black people. Many of his poems written in rhythmical language have been set to music. In the 1950s, Hughes published among others *Montage of a Dream Deffered* (1951), which included his famous poem *Harlem, Pictorial History of Negro*

*in America* (1956) and edited *The Book of Negro Folklore* (1958) with Arena Bontemps. For Juveniles he did a series of famous biographies beginning with *Famous American Negroes* (1954). His popular comic character Jesse B. Simple appeared in columns for the Chicago Defender and the New York Post. Hughes had met the prototype of the character in a bar. The ironic comments of the street-wise Harlem dweller were first collected into *Simple Speaks His Mind* (1950). In the last Simple collections, *Simple's Uncle Sam* (1965), Hughes wrote, "My mama should have named me job instead of Jesse B. Simple. I have been underfed, underpaid, undernourished, and everything but undertaken- yet I am still here. The only thing I am afraid of how is that I will die before my time" (Nelson 2)

Hughes received numerous fellowship, awards, and honorary degrees including the Anis field-Wolf Award (1953) for a book on improving race relations. He taught creative writing in two universities; had his play produced on four continents; and made recording of African-American history, music commentary, and his own poetry. He was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Science and to the National Institute of Arts and Letters. His work, some of which translated into a dozen languages, earned him an international reputation. Forty-seven volumes bear Hughes' name.

The research is organized in three chapters. In the first chapter, the researcher gives general introduction of the topic, elaborates the methodology as well as quotes different critics' view. The second chapter analyzes ten selected poems of Hughes from the sociolinguistic perspective. Finally, the third chapter concludes with language as indicator of social system, values and practices.

## **II. African American Racial Consciousness in Langston Hughes Poems**

This chapter analyzes selected poems of Langston Hughes where sociolinguistic indicators are envisioned. Hughes uses different sociolinguistic indicators such as colloquial contraction, frequent topic dream, African American images, euphemism, hyperbole, ambiguous words, irony, dialogue, reported speech, montage, double negation, homonymous words which foreground racial consciousness. Racial consciousness is an awareness about own and race and that of others' race too. In his poetry, Langston Hughes is conscious of his own African American race and White race as well. Different sociolinguistic indicators in Hughes poem create awareness among African American people about their history, culture, tradition and particularly their race. Racial consciousness is the understanding of the uniqueness one's race compared to other race. Hughes poems show the uniqueness of African American culture compared to the Whites' culture. Sociolinguistic indicators of each poem are discussed minutely below to explore different issues such as music, dream, hybridity, migration, alienation in general and racial consciousness in particular.

### **Racial Consciousness in "Dream Boogie"**

The poem, "Dream Boogie" consists various sociolinguistic indicators such as colloquial contraction, jive talk, repeated topic dream, ambiguous word "beat" and the blues which foreground the African American racial consciousness about the dream which has been deferred many times. This poem is mainly about the double consciousness of African Americans who are afflicted even in their happiness. Double consciousness is a concept that Du Bois first explores in his book *The Soul of Black Folks*. He states, "It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the

tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder"(9).

Hughes uses colloquial contraction in most of his poems including this poem "Dream Boogie" to give regional taste and to give sense of realism. From the point of view of language ideology, it evokes rather than transcribing African American English by using just a few conventional and fairly widespread English colloquial terms like "ain't" and 1930's African American jive talk 'dady' in the very first line of the poem. Hughes is depicting the then society of America and valorizing his own native language and culture and at the same time expressing the African American scorn towards the whites for their misbehave. Jive talk is distinctive slang which was developed in Harlem and adopted more widely in the U.S. society peaking in the 1940's.

Most often in Hughes poetry, the word "dream" does not refer to dream in a literal sense, but in the metaphorical sense of hope and aspirations. In this poem too, through the title "Dream Boogie", the poet asks the African American people whether they heard the boogie-woogie rumble of deferred dream. Initial lines of this poem end with discrete units musically and linguistically. Third line runs on to fourth line and together the two lines more directly reproduce the fluid boogie woogie musical line. In Hughes's poem, the immediate utterance of English syllable is both linguistic and musical. After line 7, the syntaxes become more ragged yet still approximates boogie woogie cadence. The poem's alignment of musical rhythm and verbal content also calls attention to the difference between boogie woogie rhythms and house party dancing and the possible motivations for those musical activities- 'a dream deferred'.

The phrase recurs throughout Hughes' collection as a kind of transtextual refrain, making minority aspirations which remain to be realized within dominant Anglo white culture.

In the second and third stanzas, the speaker demands that the reader pay closer attention to the sound, the rhythms and their significance. The poet uses the ambiguous term "beat" and asks whether the beat is happy or not. Here, beat means both the sound of parade or music and beaten or punished at the same time. The poem's imagined reader, always already different from actual reader, is indefinite perhaps an imagined white pleasure seeker coming to Harlem,

You think

It's a happy beat? (7-8)

or, perhaps a less political conscious African American or some more generic reader.

In any case, the imagined reader is dialogically positioned as at least misunderstanding and possibly natively racist. The implied speaker challenges the observer/ reader to listen closely and to look more deeply into the psychological contexts for African American experiences and dreams starting with the boogie woogie rhythms of the poetic line.

Hey, pop!

Re-bop!

Mop!

Y-e-a-h! (18-21)

Langston Hughes uses this musical imagery; scat music to express emotion of the characters in the poem. It is supposed to express the only thing that they have which is music. The scat music also shows that he is trying to make a happy face and say that everything is okay, even when it is really not. At the end of the poem, the speaker

replies that sure, I am happy and his duplicity here is not exactly sarcasm or obfuscation. He is happy just, that even his happiness is tainted with pain.

### **Place and African American Imagery for the Colored and the White in "Theme for English B"**

This poem is written by the only black student in the class with a white instructor. Throughout the poem, the difference between being colored and being white is discussed with the various sociolinguistic indicators including two sociolinguistic communities, African American imagery and place imagery.

The title of the poem sets the stage for its educational tone. Hughes constructs a conventional African American speaker, drawn partly from his own life experiences to dramatize the context between dominant and minority speech and writing in the university writing course. The speaker of the poem meditates between two sociolinguistic communities: the African American student, the only black man in his class and white writing teacher, whose professional role always already reproduces dominant language ideology as a presupposition of the teaching position he or she occupies. Significantly, the poem begins with the speaker's report of the writing teacher's assignment, marked on the page in indented italicized written language.

The instructor said,

Go home and write

a page tonight.

And let that page come out of you—

Then, it will be true. (1-5)

The assignment, typical of many in language or writing classrooms, includes a command, an exhortation and a prediction or promise. The teacher's reported speech also identifies the written page with the writer's inner self; that is the assignment

presupposes truth to be grounded in the personal expression of selfhood. The teacher's assignment also reproduces a fundamental misrecognition of the politics of language and language ideology.

Langston Hughes brings different African American place imagery such as "Winston- Salem" in line 7, "Durham" in line 8 and "City College" in line 9, which is associated with African American history and life style. Winston-Salem is the city of North Carolina as south was the origin of black; the poet depicts the situation of African American in northern part of America. Durham University is the University of Northern Carolina where black people like narrator of the poem suffered from racial biasness. Further, going through the line 1-5, one get that the poem is an assignment. The exact language of the assignment is even included. Even if we don't agree with the possibility of doing what the assignment says, though we have to at least admire this English instructor a little. He is taking a risk by giving an assignment that's different from your average five paragraph essay. Line 8 and 9 tell us where the speaker went to school. He is young, we know, so we can see that school has been an important part of his life so far.

Further, it is presented in the poem that the speaker starts his assignment. It is somewhat impressive that he is launching into right way and not podcasting. May be, for all his doubts, he is intrigued by this assignment. In line 27, though speaker's thoughts have strayed for almost this full section, he has returned to thinking about his assignment in this line. This line has a little wordplay between the white page that has assignment is to fill, and the white race. Further lines of the poem say that the speaker's assignment will be part of his instructor. This speaks to the relationship between the student and the instructor and their potential to affect each other. Most importantly, in line 37 and 38, we get some wordplay with the idea of learning. We



know that the speaker is in class, formally learning from the instructor. Yet, he claims that the instructor is learning from him too. They are learning from each other as student and teacher, yes, but also as black and white, as young and old, each a representative of their race and culture. In last line, the speaker ends the poem by referring back to the original assignment. This line rings with a little bit sarcasm, we know that this page may be just an assignment, but it also grabs at some universal truths that seem a little out place in simple assignment for English class.

As in "Dream Boogie", the speaker in "Theme for English B" evokes a difference from Standard English usage with a few colloquial constructions characteristics of spoken language, notably contraction, staggered syntax and junctures to mark phrase and clause boundaries. None of the poem's lexical or phonological elements directly reproduce African American English as eye dialect. Moreover, most of the poem's features of spoken English are situated within 'the theme for English B', the written text embedded within the poem. The 'page' the speaker produces in the narrative discourses of the poem includes colloquialism and features of spoken language and poetic form. These spoken features are retexted as writing which the 'page' within the poem. At the same time, these features are parts of how the speaker questions the assumptions of the writing teacher's assignment and re texts those assumption in textualized responses injected into the English writing classroom from the perspective of minority student. The Columbia university writing classroom is not an alternative educational space, but the student's composition, a response to an assignment, interrupts the convention of that institutional space by asking questions about its presupposition and expectations. What we do not read in this poem is the writing teacher's response to or uptake the student's written text.

**"The Ballad of the Landlord" as a Revolt against Social Discrimination.**

This poem is trying to show the extent of social injustice in America with excessive use of different sociolinguistic indicators and figures of speech such as; hyperbole, euphemism, rhetoric question, irony, narrative montage of reported spoken dialogues, capital letters at the last line. This poem is subtle charge against the racial discrimination in the United States of America. In the USA, ordinary events of life like the relationship between landlord and tenant- the white tends to discriminate against the black. So, the African American poet, Hughes is inspired to pour his anger through the medium of the poem. He ironically gives the title of the poem "The Ballad of the Landlords". Hughes presents precise details of insignificant events like the leakage of roof and broken steps. He is mocking at the very idea of communal equality in the USA.

Hyperbole is used to convey the desired effect of the poem to indicate the tenant's anger and the landlord's unwillingness to make the necessary repairs to the apartment. The tenant, in order to be heard, feels that he must exaggerate, that is use of hyperbole.

Police! Police!

Come and get this man!

He is trying to ruin the government

And overturn the land! (21-24)

The tenant's threat to call the police appears to be hyperbolic at first. That is, you might think that he never actually intends to call the police, but as you find later in the poem, he really does call them. However, the statement that the statement that the tenant makes to police about the landlord is trying to "ruin the government" is hyperbolic. The intense desire of white landlords to dominate African American tenants is apparent.

Euphemism is a device that substitutes an offensive, or in this case, less aggressive statement for the unpleasant meaning that the statement actually conveys.

You ain't gonna be able to say a word

If I land my fist on you. (20-21)

This is meant to tell us that the tenant is threatening to break the landlord's jaw, not merely to prevent him from talking. Here, these lines show the aggression of African American against the white suppression and dominance. A rhetoric question is one which the speaker and listener already know the answer. These kinds of questions are used in place of a statement to give greater expressive and persuasive force.

Ten Bucks you say I owe you?

Ten Bucks you say is due? (9-10)

The tenant has obviously heard the landlord and already knows the price of rent.

These questions are much more forceful than statement. Next,

What? You gonna get eviction orders?

You gonna cut off my heat?

You gonna take my furniture and

Throw it in the street? (13-16)

Again, the tenant seems to be repeating the landlord's statement in the form of rhetorical questions. This could be the tenant making an effort to emphasize the unfairness of these actions. Whether or not the landlord is sympathetic, we can only guess.

Hughes title "The Ballad of the Landlords" can be read ironically. Often the traditional ballad titles the name the hero or betrayed lover or underdog hero. However, in Hughes' poem, the narrative represents in dialogue, reported speech, diagetic montage and embedded text, the triumph of the landlord over the tenant. The

underdog or disempowered character is done in by the powerful antagonist supported by lawful racial inequality. Of course, it is possible to imagine that the landlord is also African American, but that racial position is erased in the narrative and explicitly in the newspaper text in favor of the landlord's political and economic status. 'Landlord versus tenant' is different ideological and linguistic narrative from 'landlord versus Negro'. The tenant's speech is more specially identified with African American English; although with just a few conventional elements.

The frustrated tenant shifts back to statements and offers a conditional threat, in pragmatic terms, to the landlord for not maintaining the property in safe condition is the climax of the dialogue. Although the tenant acts heroically from the progressive point of view, fighting for tenant's right and fair housing, he lands in jail for talking back and threatening violence. The last section of the poem represents the legal narrative as a montage of objects and places whose sequence implicates a narrative of arrest, sentencing and jail time. The poem ends with the 'official' written report in newspaper 'Screamer' headlines:

MAN THREATENS LANDLORDS

TENANT HELD BAIL

JUDGES GIVES NEGRO 90 DAYS IN COUNTY JAIL! (31-33)

The capital letters visually suggest the hysterical response of the tenants' speech and actions have triggered as well as the alliance between the landlord's call for police backup and the court's decision supporting the landlord. The only concrete action reported and named in the newspaper headline is tenant's conditional threat. The landlord's failure to respond to the tenant's request and then demands and the landlords own threats and actions, as reported in the poem, go unreported in the monologic newspaper text. The poem embeds and retexts the newspaper text with in a

more encompassing dialogic discourse of economic and racial inequality.

### **Communal Interaction in "The Weary Blues"**

"The Weary Blues" is one of Langston Hughes' blues poems written in free verse with an irregular rhyme scheme, mimicking the natural patterns of speech and music. Linguistically, this poem is a communal interaction between singer and audience. Various phrases such as "ebony hands on each ivory key", double meaning words like "Raggy", and "down" and use of double negation give linguistic and cultural diversity of African Americans.

The speaker of Langston Hughes' "The Weary Blues" describes an evening of listening to blues musician in Harlem. With its diction, it is repetition of lines and its inclusion of blues music and gives readers an appreciation of the state of mind of the blues musician.

Droning And drowsy syncopated tune,

Rocking back and forth to a mellow croon

I heard a Negro play. (1-3)

The initial three lines create what grammarians call a dangling modifier, a sentence logic problem where in the clauses preceding the main subject and verbs of the sentence "Droning And drowsy syncopated tune" and "Rocking back and forth to a mellow croon" which precede "I heard" do not most logically refer to the subject of the sentence "I". Has Hughes simply made a grammatical error? Probably not, rather, he is using his sentence structure there to show the relationship between the singer and the audience, the dual effect of the music on a performer and on the listener. The singer is drowning and swaying as he performs, but so is the audience as it listens, thus they become conflated grammatically in the sentence that describes their interaction. Hughes suggests that the blues offer a sort of communal experience, that

the blues offer a sort of communal experience, that they express the feelings of not only the artist, but the whole community. In this regard, David Chinitz in her article "Rejuvenation through Joy: Langston Hughes, Primitivism, and Jazz" published in *Callaloo* journal states:

If jazz was perceived by its opponent not merely as a music but as a subversive force, Hughes and other supporters defended jazz not by disputing but by reaffirming that view. Hughes read jazz, like primitive itself, as an attractive and necessary corrective to prevailing American values: [J]azz to me is one of the inherent expressions of Negro life in America: the eternal tom-tom beating in the Negro soul, the tom-tom of revolt against weariness in white world, the world of a subway trains, and work, work; the tom-tom of joy and laughter, and pain swallowed in a smile ("Negro Artist" 4). Hughes readily accepted that jazz was savage music, and this assumption strengthened his attachment to primitivist concepts. As Steven Tracy points out, Hughes was never particularly well informed about the relationship between African and African- American music(67); he was satisfied to assume that blues and jazz were essentially primitive so long as traditional hierarchies could be inverted and the primitivity of African –American music seen as a positive distinction. (64)

“Down on Lenox Avenue the other night”, in this line, Lenox Avenue is a main street in Harlem, which is in terms of geography of New York, is north, or uptown. We might wonder why Hughes has written “Down on Lenox Avenue” rather than ‘up on Lenox Avenue’. We can guess about the identity of the speaker of the poem. Because Harlem was home mainly to African Americans and the parts of New

York city south of Harlem, referred to as 'downtown' were populated mainly by the whites, if the speaker were to perceive Lenox Avenue as 'up' from the place origin, we might assume that he is white.

During the 1920's and 1930's writings by African Americans about black identity and culture proliferated. This exceptionally fruitful period of extensive and brilliant literary production is referred as a renaissance. During the Harlem Renaissance, African American artists and musicians also gained recognition and currency in the white community; many wealthy whites who generally lived downtown took a strong interest in the cultural activities there in Harlem highlife and its artistic productions. Flocking northward to Harlem, where most African Americans lived, for the entertainment and introduction to new forms of music and art produced by African Americans there, white benefactors of those artists helped them to become known beyond their own community. But some of those patrons also threatened the autonomy and commercial viability of these emerging black artists, sometimes taking advantage of current racial attitudes and the discriminatory laws and social codes to exploit black musicians and artists for their own financial benefit. So, when Hughes speaker says he was "down to Lenox Avenue", we can assume that he is not white. Why does it matter whether we see this speaker as white or black? Certainly, people of all races have experienced the blues and musicians of all colors have played blues music.

Jazz and blues music must be considered original to African Americans borne out of the irresistible impulse of African Americans to create boldly expressive art of high quality as a primary response to their social conditions, as an affirmation of their dignity and humanity in the face of poverty and racism. We can see this important idea in these lines: "With his ebony hands on each ivory key" and "Coming from a

black man's soul". The image of black hands on white keys suggests the way in which black musicians have taken an instrument of white western culture and through it produced their own artistic expression.

Further, Hughes plays with two ambiguous words "down" and "raggy" in this very poem. The word "down" refers to below and it might also refer to the architecture of Harlem, with its multi-storied apartment buildings looking down on the avenues, where the ground floors of building house business and people lived in apartments on the upper floors. "Down" might also refer to the emotional content of the music, the speaker will describe. We can see another connection to "Sonny's Blues". Remember when the narrator standing at the subway in Harlem, says to Sonny's friend, "You come all the way down here just to tell about Sonny?" Also notice the implicit opposition between the sorrow of the singer that bring him down and his desire to quit his "frowinin" and put his troubles up on the shelf. Hughes uses the word "raggy" in this poem. "Raggy" is not an actual word, perhaps we might interpret it as a combination of word raggedy meaning tattered or worn out and the word ragtime which refers to a style of jazz music characterized by elaborately syncopated rhythm in the melody and steadily accented accompaniment. Raggedy refers literally to a person who put on rags, who is poor and in need to fulfill the daily needs. But, one also thinks of idea of patchwork, a fabric constructed out of scraps of cloth or rags sewn together to make a new whole out of scraps departed parts, such as quilt. Music can be patchwork too and if one listens to jazz, blues and folk music, one will hear different threads or trends patched together in the music. African American blues music itself is a patching together of different and disparate influences.

### **Hybridity in "Cross"**

This poem focuses on the issue of hybridity in particular and other general



issues of racial segregation, poverty, Hughes' ethnic root and life of African Americans during 1920's. The use of the word "house" instead of home, "my old man" in place of father, "ma" instead of mother and use of binary oppositional words black and white make this poem sociolinguistically rich.

The title "Cross" is significant in the context that the narrator of the poem is a young mulato, who is the product of white father and black mother. Throughout the poem, he is expressing his agony of comparing his white father with black mother. The narrator of the poem is expressing his frustration at being both black and white but never fully belonging to either of the two races. He is not accepted by blacks because he is half white, and is shunned by whites because he is half black. The historical significance of is that, during 1920's in the USA, the cultural and racial segregation of African American and Caucasians was very defined and apparent. As such the narrator is stuck in a sort of purgatory, gray area or limbo, for he is deprived of the chance to be immersed in race due to racial pride. Thus, he is left in a state of confusion, suffering and identity crisis. He was no one with which he can identify himself. Hughes writes:

My old man's a white old man  
 And my old mother is black.  
 If ever I cursed my white old man  
 I take my curses back. (1-4)

As the narrator matures, he realizes that for his being hybrid, he cannot blame or hate his parents for who he is. It does not make any sense. At the end of the day, he will still be who he is, so why hate? Hughes in his poem states:

My old man died in a fine big house.  
 My ma died in a shack.

I wonder where I'm going to die,  
 Being neither white nor black? (9-12)

These lines suggest the poverty of the African American versus the wealth of the whites during the then period. The narrator says that his father died in a big house while his mother died in a shack. He still does not know how to categorize himself in terms of identity, but he accepts the issue as it is. Once he decides which path to lead life as a black man or life as a white man then he will know where he will die.

Hughes uses the term "house" instead of home. One knows that house and home are both places of dwelling and their definitions are almost entirely identical. However, what separate the two words are their meanings. When we say house, it is impersonal and objective, but when we say home, we associate things like family, warmth, safety with it. In title, the word "cross" has many connotations. It can mean particularly anything. Although, it is not directly written in the poem, the word encompasses the entire essence of the poem. The young narrator of the poem is multiracial, multicultural, mulato, cross-breed. His hybridity is burden, across to bear. This brings about the image of the crucifix, making the narrator or subject of the poem somewhat of Jesus figure. Like, Jesus, he suffers from constant persecution. He is at cross roads, which world does he fit into: white or black? He makes a crossover from his previous emotions. At first, the narrator admits that he was angry or cross at both of his parents, but he later lets go of that hatred forgives them both.

Finally, this poem is a commentary of the slavery and the long-lasting effects that it may have on future generations. As we well know, white slave owners often took advantage of their black female slaves, resulting in mulato children. Thus, the narrator can easily be the child of a former slave.

**Blues and BEV in "Bound No'th Blues"**

Hughes portrays the lonely journey of African Americans from the laborious struggle of the South to the relatively affluent North searching for the better life. Set in Mississippi, this poem comes as a blue song with different sociolinguistic features such as; colloquial contraction and excessive use of Black English Vernacular and image of a road leading away from Mississippi and South as more generally visible. The speaker's use of directions "down", "front" and "northern" functions as paradox.

The title sets Hughes up for analyzing and making an explicit connection to the blues. This is paradoxical because the blues is bound by strict poetic pattern. But then, the title is also an existential assessment of blues in the scene of pain, and this pain is not bound by anything because it is so overwhelming. This is ironic since the blues attempts to not control but express this axiom.

"Bound No'th Blues" is saturated with the blues and vernacular in each stanza. Many of the poems of Hughes celebrate the tenets of the Black Art Movement. One of these tenets was the emphasis on the vernacular as the preferred language of the majority of African Americans. Such an assumption frames the majority of blackness as essentially the same, an error that some scholars accuse Hughes of committing. The relationship of the vernacular to the political conditions many African American may have encountered highlights one of the central tensions contained in the blues. These tensions are racial, linguistic, gender based, economic and generational.

The use of dialect in this poem highlights the migratory hybridity hidden in dialect and the tension created when a writer uses the voice of dialect in the poem. The ambiguity of the title amplifies this. For the contraction "No'th" works as North and nothing. The first interpretation is a literal interpretation of migratory hybridity, suggesting that the poem works as an announcement: 'Bound North Blues' even though the first stanza:

Goin' down the road, Lawd  
 Goin' down the road  
 Down the road, Lawd  
 Way, way down the road.  
 Got to find somebody  
 To help me carry this load. (1-6)

This stanza emphasizes downward movement that contrast the mobility contained in the poem's title. Last two lines "These Mississippi towns ain't / Fit fer hoppin' toad." Supports the first interpretation because the speaker omits "r" in Northern which creates a rhetorical link of introducing and concluding with references to 'the' or 'a' 'northern road'.

This poem contains a loose landscape, but the speaker presents the image of a road leading away from Mississippi and the south as more generally visible. Some of Hughes' poems produced during the 1930's and 40's as evidence of as emboldened frustration when in fact a poem such as "Bound No'th Blues" locates the languished speaker in the poems of Hughes as present much earlier physical setting in this poem works a tertiary setting and the setting of the mind is more apparent. The speaker speaks with the intentional ambiguity that is honest without specifying the causes. The speaker's use of directions "down", "front" and "northern" function as a paradox. The directions do not lead leaders to more concrete, objective understandings of the speaker's internal turmoil. Instead, the directions work together as inward signifiers to the feeling of misery rather than the definition. The poem rests on the oxymoron of specific ambiguity, but the contradiction results from an underlying motif in Hughes poetry of recurring disappointment. The lens of African American identity is often a primary method for approving a poem, such as "Bound No'th Blues". The poem

reveals the community in transition as less racial and more human. Unlike race, migratory hybridity is more transparent phenomenon.

### **"Dream Variations" as Nostalgic Lyrics**

Repeated term again in the title, the poem "Dream Variation" by Langston Hughes is a nostalgic lyric which poignantly expresses the singer's wish for a carefree life away from color persecution and racial discrimination. Hughes poems carry the voice of workers, roustabouts, singers and job hunters in different cities. Here, the poet again desires his dreams; the poet wants to enjoy different types of game in sunny place. He likes to move and dance until the end of the happy day. Then, in evening, he wants to rest under a tall tree until it is dark. Here, Hughes brings some sociolinguistic indicators such as African American images and use of simile where dream is associated with the darkness and blackness of the speaker simultaneously.

There is gap between his dream and reality. In reality, the poet wants to enjoy the sunny places, playing different games and dancing. He wishes to move and dance until the cool evening and when the evening stars, he desires to sit beneath a tree until dark comes. He compares himself with that gentle dark. But the reality is different as he mentions in the second stanza.

To fling my arms wide  
 In the face of the sun  
 Dance! Whirl! Whirl!  
 Till the quick day is done.  
 Rest at pale evening...  
 A tall, slim tree...  
 Night coming tenderly  
 Black like me. (10-17)

Meta Du Ewa Jones interprets this above given stanza in her article "LISTENING TO WHAT THE EAR DEMANDS, Langston Hughes and His Critics" published in *Callaloo* in this way:

Listening to the music while reading the accompanying poem, I am taken place struck by how little variation actually takes place in "Dream Variation" between Hughes text and the rhythm, space and tempo of McDonald's rendition of the poem on *Way Back to Paradise*. McDonald sings according to the reading conventions suggested by the poem's lineation, punctuation mark and stanzaic breaks. McDonald takes a slight, nearly one second pause between the line break at the end of each verse and the beginning of a new line; she lengthens the pause for dramatic six seconds between the line which concludes the first stanza, "That is my dream!" and the line "To fling my arms wide" which both begins the second stanza and repeats the poem's opening verse. The stanza break occurs forty-five seconds into the piece, not coincidentally, McDonald's singing of stanza two also takes forty-five seconds; she eventually paces her delivery of each stanza. (1168)

The reality is that he has to work in spite of the hot sun. He keeps on working as if he were dancing and moving round. Because he is very busy, the day passes so incomplete. His desire to find a tall, slim tree remains incomplete in the city. The night comes painfully reminding him that he is black not white, like the night which nobody likes. In this poem, the poet longs for the freedom of a less complicated world. This nostalgic look at Africa was typical of the work of many writers at that time.

The first stanza describes the poet's dream. He wishes for a carefree life away

from color persecution and racial discrimination. In his dream even, the night is not black, it is only dark. In the first dream, he is not in the city. He is completely engrossed in the rural area. But in the second stanza, he dreams after the tiring days work. The dream to take rest under a tree remains unfulfilled. The first stanza describes his nostalgic feelings which he enjoyed in the past. In the second one, his dream is incomplete. There are different types of dreams described in the poem. That's why; the poem is entitled "Dream Variations".

"Dream Variations" combines two distinct motifs that are evident in Hughes' poetry throughout his life time. It is written in a structure that copies the repetitions of American blues music, and it is aimed as many of his works were primarily at children. Published first in 1932, in the collection *The Dream Keeper and Other Poems*, "Dream Variations" imitates the overall structure of the blue music: the first, second and fourth lines of each stanza parallel each other in that they each have four syllable, while the third is extended, longer building to an emotional climax. Hughes was major figure in Harlem Renaissance, an artistic movement of the 1920's and 1930's, which brought the New York African American arts community into prominence. He used the blues structure because it was familiar to black who found no point of reference in standard literary modes. Using blues style also helped Hughes swiftly and efficiently conveys the mixed emotions of hope and fear that the poem brings together. Analyzing blues music, the mood of the blues is always despondency, but when they are sung, people laugh. This poem takes whatever the mental process is that makes people react to bleakness with laughter, and nudges it upward toward positive action. Hughes was a writer committed to his people, African American, who suffered under segregation and discriminatory laws. His concern for justice drove him to write in a number of literary genres, including poetry, short stories, novels, plays

and essays. His poems for children stress the potential in life encourage them to look for the good things that life has to offer, and to actively seek happiness. He was one of the few poets to state such simple ideas in the elementary language that his intended audience would understand raising undereducated readers up to noble thoughts instead of talking down to them.

### **"Let America be America Again" as Desire of African Americans**

This poem is about America and all the American people especially about the fifteen millions African American people. The title itself came as a discourse. This poem was composed in 1935 and published in Esquire Magazine in July 1936.

Decades later in 2004, Democratic senator John Kerry used the poem's title as his slogan for his presidential campaign while running against George W. Bush.

Throughout the poem, the poet is expressing the desire of African Americans. This poem is the voice which brings racial consciousness and cultural nationalism devoid of self-hate that united people of African descent and America across the globe.

The poem begins with Hughes yearning for America to be the America it once was; however, he comments sardonically, this image of America is patently false. The speaker declares that America should be America again, it should be the dream it once was for the pioneer on the plain who sought home where he could be free. The speaker says in aside:

(America never was America to me) (5)

He says America should not go back to being the dream that dreamers had and be a "great strong land of love". There should not be kings of tyrants or people being crushed by someone above them. The speaker repeats:

(It never was America to me) (10)

The speaker wants his land to embody liberty- not just by wearing a false



patriotic wreath on its head, but through pervasive opportunity and equality. The speaker claims that he was never experienced freedom or equality in America.

Say, who are you that mumbles in the dark?

And who are you that draws your veil across the stars? (18-19)

The speaker then responds that he is the poor disenfranchised white man, the “negro” slave and the “Indian” who has been driven off his land. He is an immigrant clutching onto shreds of hope that the weak may rise above the powerful. He is also, he claims, a young man full of hopes who aims to topple the structures of greed that blind him. In addition, he is a farmer who is tied to his soil and a worker stuck running a machine. He is a servant. The speaker represents every starving, poor and disenfranchised person who is struggling to survive in this “land of dreams”.

The speaker then claims that he is the one who dreamt of a free land while living under the oppression of a king in the "Old World." This dream was so strong that it drove him and his people to build America brick by brick. These dreamers who built America fled persecution in Ireland, Poland, and England; they were torn from their homes in Africa, and they built the "homeland of the free" with their hands. The speaker takes pause and repeats “the free?” He backtracks, saying that he could not have said "free," citing the millions of Americans who are on relief, being shot down, and struggling to make ends meet - despite their hanging flags, singing songs, and dreaming big. All they get in return for their efforts, though, is a "dream that's almost dead today." The speaker then turns from his lament to a call for action. He wants America to be the America where all the dreamers built it can flourish. After sweating, bleeding, keeping the faith, and enduring such pain, it is up to these disenfranchised dreamers to reclaim their America. The speaker does not mind being called names, especially as he fights for freedom from the "leeches" who feed on

people's lives. Even though America has never been the "America" of his dreams, he is determined to make it so. He proclaims that "we, the people" must lift America out of the death, rape, and lies in order to redeem the country's land, mines, rivers, and other natural beauty - that is what needs to happen before this land is "America" again.

Through out the poem, Hughes contrasts his hopes for America with the reality of life for those outside of the socially and economically dominant, racial, religious and social groups. He evokes the fervent dreams of those who came to the United States of America because they saw it as heaven where they could be safe from the persecution they endured in their homelands- but those dreams of America never come true.

The poem exemplifies the ambivalence and alienation that many African American felt in the Pre-civil Right era, but also encourages them to rise up and reclaim their land because they deserve it as much as those people in power.

### **Negritude and African Theme in "Negro Speaks of Rivers"**

Hughes' poems can be divided into several categories: protest poems, social commentary, Harlem poems on African and negritude themes, and miscellaneous poetry on various other non racial subjects and themes. This poem centers on African and negritude themes. This poem is in free verse published in the June 1921 issue of Crisis, the magazine of the National Association for the Advancement of colored people. It is written in free verse incorporating other sociolinguistic variations like, first person narrative, African American setting of Mississippi, Euphrates, Congo, Nile etc and use of refrain too.

"Negro Speaks of Rivers" is perhaps most anthologized poem written in the first person voice, the poem begins:

I've known rivers:

I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the

Flow of human blood in human veins (1-3)

“I” is collective voice of black people from ancient times to the present. The narrator’s voice speaks of bathing in the Euphrates, building a hut near the Congo, raising pyramids by the Nile, and watching the sun set in Mississippi. The setting of Euphrates, Congo, Nile, and Mississippi are linked with the African American people.

The refrain “My soul has grown deep like the rivers” links the movement and endurance and power of the great rivers to black history. The repeated “I” beginning seven of the ten lines focuses the reader on the narrator, the black person who speaks of the tie between his history and rivers.

Hughes writing always shows identification with Africa. Through the images of river, Hughes traces the history of the African American from Africa to America. The muddy Mississippi makes Hughes consider the roles that river have played in human history. The first three lines introduce the subject of the poem. The primary image of water symbolically represents the history of humanity, acknowledging the fact that rivers are more ancient in the history of earth. Hughes was deeply concerned with the history and social condition of people. "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" reflects the poet’s interest in both topics. This poem also speaks of mystics union of blacks throughout the world, for it traces their history back to the creation of the world, giving them credit for spanning time and for founding the greatest civilization that humanity has ever known. This poem can also be regarded as a diasporic poem which is explained in Jeff Westover article "Fragmentation and Diaspora in the work of Langston Hughes". In *Callaloo*, Westover writes:

Like "The Jesus", Hughes early "The Negro Speaks of Rivers"

powerfully counteracts the alienation and disunity of "Afro-American Fragment," but it does so by imaginatively realizing an ideal diasporan unity (rather than national one) through the emergence of its annunciatory "I". The poem is an example of Hughes' successful evocation or "performance," of the African diaspora, for its Whitmanian speaker maps truly global geography of rivers in the confident epistemology of its opening sentences. In this regard, it (like "The Jesus") offers an important counterforce to the speaker's isolation in "Afro-American Fragment". The poem insists on the historical reality of the African diaspora, for the memory it conveys is geological, "older than the flow of human blood in human veins". But as a speech act, the printed transcript of an oral chant, the poem calls into being a diasporan consciousness. (1221)

Hughes received the inspiration for this poem as he crossed the Mississippi river by train, feeling melancholy yet drawing pride from thoughts of the rivers that played a part in the history of his race. The images of beauty and death and hope and despair, all fused in his adolescent sensibility, causing him to create one of his most beautiful poems. The use of word such "soul" and "rivers" allows Hughes to touch the deepest feelings and spiritual longings of his own soul and souls of his people. With the use of the words "deep", "flow", "dusky" and "ancient", Hughes describes the actual rivers that were involved in black history, all the while emphasizing the long and glorious history of his race. With this poem, Hughes often called the poet of his people plunges into the deep well of African American history, uniting it with global African history.

The poem, with its allusions of setting sun, human blood and deep, dusky river suffuses the images of death as it speaks of the river.

### **"Mother to Son" and African American Striving**

The simple straightforward title of the poem, "Mother to Son" by African American poet incorporates various sociolinguistic characters such as colloquial words, dramatic monologue, free verse, extended metaphors of life central image of the poem "crystal stair" and other images "tack", "splinter", "boards", and "carpet" to represent the struggle and repetition of words.

Well, son, I'll tell you: (1)

The very first line of the poem is typical of the rest of the work in its use of phrasing that is colloquial, that is, in this case phrasing that implies one person speaking to another. Yet the phrasing is also colloquial in the sense that it is ordinary, unpretentious and informal. By beginning with the word "well" the mother sounds as if she is responding to a question from her son, while the use of generic word "son" sounds as if she is responding to a question from her son, while the use of generic word "son" sounds ironically more affectionate than if she had used the son's proper name. By using the word "son", the mother also makes their relationship seem universal and archetypal as if this might be any mother speaking to any son.

Life for me ain't been no crystal stair. (2)

This line continues the emphasis on colloquial phrasing. The word "ain't" for instance is clearly informal and unpretentious, implying either that the speaker has not been educated in a conventional way or that she is unconcerned with the necessities of formal education. The fact that the second line is almost as twice long as the first; nine line syllable versus five suggests that the poem will not have a rigid, prepackaged formal structure and indeed a glance at the shape of the poem as it moves down the pages suggests that it follows no preplanned, predictable scheme, either in meter or in rhyme. Part of Hughes talent as a poet involves his ability to

mimic the rhythms and diction of actual speech and clearly that talent is on display in this particular poem. The phrase “crystal stair” is intriguing. It can be found in a variety of texts from the nineteenth century, some religious and some secular and it is often used to suggest the glorious connection or procession from earth to heaven. A “crystal stair” implies a stairway that is special, unusual, beautiful, finely wrought and symbolic of wealth. However, the speaker’s stair or movement through life has been associated with few of these traits. Instead, it has been actually or potentially painful.

The anonymous mother in the poem may be suggestive of the African American woman of predepression America encouraging their sons to strive for success. The poem is written in the form of a dramatic monologue in black dialect. The idiomatic style of the speech is invoked in the context of the courage, endurance and sense of duty of the African American race. The language also imparts a charged colloquial element to the poem. As the poem opens with “Well son, I will tell you”, it is possible that the son has asked or said something before which she is responding. In the next line, she says that her life “ain’t” been “crystal stair”. The use of double negation in this second line makes clear that she is African American woman. “crystal stair” is symbol of smoothness, beauty, and luster. Hughes further writes:

It’s had tacks in it,  
 And splinters,  
 And boards torn up,  
 And places with no carpet on the floor-  
 Bare. (3-7)

“Tacks”, “splinters”, “boards torn up” suggests hurdles of life. Tacks are nails and splinters are small fragments to wood which make it hard for the person to step.

Boards torn up symbolize unsteady or rough grounds leading to uncertainty in the

person's mind. "Bare" suggests scant furnishings. He states:

I'se been a climbin' on,  
 And reachin' landin's,  
 And turnin' corners, (9-11)

"I'se been a climbin' on", "reachin' landin's", "turnin' corners" suggests movement and therefore signifies an ascent that is inspiring. "and sometimes gon' in the dark/ where there ain't been no light" makes this poem a story of dark times. The dilapidated staircase is also representative of the poor living conditions of the African American under the tyranny of the whites.

This poem is suggestive of the effect of racism and oppression on lives and experiences of the African Americans. However, the piece of advice from any mother to any son, anywhere in the world without keeping the historical background in mind, in the next five lines the mother urges her son not to "turn back" or "set down on the steps" or "fall" when he recognizes life for the never ending drudgery that truly is. She does not want him to lose courage and start descending or get tired, sit down to rest and not resume climbing. She also does not want him "fall" which may mean literally tumbling down the steps unable to take the pressure or it may be associated with the Biblical fall which in the context may mean resorting to criminal activities and unfair means to accomplish his ends. In last three lines, she reveals her own strength and perseverance as she says "I'se still goin' honey/ I'se still climbing/ And life ain't been no crystal stair". She tries to pose as a role model for the boy and insist strength and courage into his mind that will help him undertake life's laborious journey in the best possible way.

This chapter concludes bringing various themes such as racial consciousness, African American imagery, communal interaction, hybridity, blues and jazz music,

nostalgic lyric, desire of African American people, negritude attitude, African American striving which are discussed above. Among all themes, racial consciousness is most striking and relevant themes for this project. After the analysis of selected poems by Hughes, what can be concluded is that the poet has awareness about his own race and culture as well of others too.



### **III. Language as Indicator of Social System, Values and Practices**

This project deals with the selected poems of Langston Hughes in which sociolinguistic indicators are envisioned. Sociolinguistic indicators like, colloquial contraction, frequent topic dream, African American images, euphemism, hyperbole, ambiguous words, irony, dialogue, reported speech, montage, double negation, homonymous words foreground racial consciousness. Sociolinguistic is a tool for analyzing Hughes poems to underscore language as indicator of social system, values and practices.

The finding of the research is that language as indicator of social system, values and practices. Sociolinguistic is the study of the relation between language and society. The language used in Langston Hughes poetry is about African American music, hybridity, alienation, migration, inequality and history of African American people. The images used in the poems are also of African American society, which create racial consciousness as well as pride to the African American people. With the use of Black English Vernacular, the African American readers felt that the poet's language in the poem directly explored their lives, their hopes, their fears, their past and their dream

Colloquial contraction is a widely founded sociolinguistic indicator which indicates the regional accent of African American people and also the sense of realism. Hughes uses slang language and jive talk to express his anger towards White for their misbehaves. Further, Langston Hughes uses the term "dream" repeatedly in a metaphorical sense of hope and aspiration. Musical imagery, place and African American imagery are other indicators which indicate the social values and practices of African American people. Jazz is a genre of music that originated in African American communities. Hughes use jazz and blues in his poetry which has distinct

and expressive tone, often depicting tales of sorrow, alienation and loneliness. The uses of different place imagery in the poem are associated with American history and life style. Winston Saleem, Durham City of North Carolina is place where African American people like Hughes suffered a lot.

Different sociolinguistic indicators and figure of speech like hyperbole, euphemism, rhetoric questions, irony, reported spoken language in poem show the African American way of living. Hyperbole, euphemism and irony are used in the conversation between people of two different sociolinguistic communities: White and African American to show the tension among them. Hughes presents the communal interaction between two sociolinguistics communities in his different poems. He presents communal interaction between singer and audience in "The Weary Blues", landlords and tenants in "The Ballad of Landlords", teacher and students in "theme for English B".

Hybridity, poverty and racial segregation are the rampant social issues of America during 1920's which are presented in Hughes poetry with the help of sociolinguistic indicators. For example the title of the poem "Cross" is significant title in the context of hybridity. Poverty is shown through different African American characters such as mother persona in the poem "Cross" who is black in color and she suffers from poverty and other discriminations. In the same poem, the father is presented as happy and rich, being white in color. The narrator being both black and white is expressing his frustration. Being hybrid was one of the curses at the time of Hughes so he presented the then social system of America through his poems.

The research envisioned the sociolinguistic indicators found in Langston Hughes poetry which celebrate linguistic and cultural diversity of African American people and raise a kind of racial consciousness among people. Hughes poetry created

consciousness of own African American race and that of others race too. The language by Hughes portrayed the social system, values and practices of African American people and showed that how the African American people are concerned about their dreams, history, culture and tradition.

With the aid of the analysis, I discovered that racial issues in the U.S.A. had significant meaning for Langston Hughes. Hughes does not want African American to remain as an oppressed race and by writing the poems, he wants to demonstrate how the society in the U.S.A. behaved towards the African American people. I have also discovered that Hughes also gave hope, aspiration and racial consciousness among Americans. In nutshell, the finding of this thesis is that, the language used in Hughes poem foregrounds the social system, values and practices of the U.S.A. I hope, in future this thesis will incorporate in finding sociolinguistic elements in African American poetry and other genres too.

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