

Call for Proposals:
“African Language, Literature, and Culture Since 1990: Exploring the Dynamic Role of AAVE”

ChLA session for MLA 2025 (non-guaranteed)
January 9-12, New Orleans, LA

Abstract:

This convention session aims to delve into the vibrant landscape of African language, literature, and culture since 1990, with a particular focus on the significance of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) in children’s literature, education, and culture. By examining the evolving literary works, cultural expressions, and linguistic nuances of African communities, this panel aims to shed light on the dynamic interplay between AAVE and African languages, highlighting the importance of AAVE as a distinct and powerful linguistic variety within the broader African cultural context.

Session Description:

This panel will focus on the socio-cultural, political, and linguistic shifts that have shaped African language, literature, and culture since 1990. It will, ideally, explore the emergence of new voices, themes, and genres in African literature, as well as the impact of globalization, technology, and migration on cultural production and linguistic dynamics.

One key aspect of this session will be the examination of the role of AAVE within African cultural expressions. AAVE has long been an essential part of the African American experience, reflecting the resilience, creativity, and identity of African Americans. This panel will invite papers that address the unique linguistic features, grammatical patterns, and cultural resonances of AAVE and its integration into contemporary African literature and cultural movements. Papers may also explore how African writers, both within the African continent and in the diaspora, have incorporated AAVE into their works to capture the essence of African American experiences and to bridge the linguistic and cultural divides that have historically separated African communities.

This session will also provide an opportunity to examine the challenges and controversies surrounding the use of AAVE in literature and cultural expressions. Papers may explore the ongoing debates around cultural appropriation, linguistic profiling, and the need for authentic representation. By critically examining these issues, this panel aims to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of the complexities surrounding AAVE in the African context. Other paper topics might include the potential implications and benefits of incorporating AAVE into African language education and literacy programs. Such papers could explore how the recognition and celebration of AAVE as a legitimate language variety can enhance language acquisition, promote inclusivity, and empower African communities, both linguistically and culturally.

Papers for this session may also offer reflections on the future trajectory of African language, literature, and culture, including the evolving role of AAVE. Papers should explore how emerging

writers, scholars, and cultural activists are pushing boundaries, challenging linguistic norms, and reshaping narratives, ultimately contributing to a more diverse, inclusive, and vibrant African literary and cultural landscape.

Expected Outcomes:

- A deeper understanding of the evolving dynamics of African language, literature, and culture since 1990
- Increased awareness of the role and significance of AAVE within the African cultural context
- Critical examination of the challenges and controversies surrounding AAVE in literature and cultural expressions
- Exploration of the potential implications and benefits of incorporating AAVE in African language education and literacy programs
- Insights into the future of African language, literature, and culture, with an emphasis on the evolving role of AAVE

Submission Guidelines: We invite scholars, researchers, and practitioners to submit proposals (approximately 400-500 words) by March 1, 2024. Please send your proposals to Shakeema.Funchess@snhu.edu. Scholars from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds are especially encouraged to contribute.