Ebonics A Bridge To Help Black Students Master In Standard English. Essay, Research Paper

I feel that the discussion on Ebonics has gone beyond the original objectives of the program. Ebonics is a bridge to make Afro-American children understand more the English language. Mexican Americans use the code-switching technique to learn the language. A phrase is said in English, and the translation is given in Spanish. This is also how the Chinese and the Japanese learn English. As a quote from an article writes,

The real question is what happened to the good educational philosophy, which states that in order to teach a child you had to start from where the child is. The new Hispanic immigrants understand this and that is why we now have a move going on across this country for BI-lingual education. They demand, and get, teachers who understands Spanish and other Latin American dialects to teach their children English. They know that it does not matter if a child is African American, Chinese, Spanish, or Italian. For a child to learn they know you have to build on what that child knows. Therefore, if the child comes into the room saying ‘dis’ and ‘dat’, the teacher instead of frowning needs to know that ‘dis’ means ‘this’ and ‘dat’ means ‘that’ and responds accordingly not with a frown but with the proper words.1

Those who objects the introduction of English says that the introduction of Ebonics will assist those who do not fully understand standard English or who loses interest because they feel that the language of their community is being ignored. This is not about racism; this is a method of teaching. “What you need to do is teach the child how to move from ebonics to standard English.”2 said psychologist Robert Williams. Therefore, teaching ebonics’ origins could help children understand the differences from standard English. This is not too far fetched when you think about how millions of people travel to other countries these days with little computers in their hands that helps them translate another language to what they understand. When they want to say hello in French, Chinese, or Spanish they look up the word “hello” and the translation is given to them. Would they have been given the French words first without any hint of what it means? No way, they began with what they knew to find what they needed to know.

Many people may ask how should we teach ebonics with standard English? During my research I found out there were tons of researches and studies that stresses ebonics as a bridge to teaching literacy to Afro-American students, As Aubry, Larry writes in his article,

In a 1985 study at Cal State University Long Beach, 200 African American students in Black Studies composition courses were given a mini-course in ebonics during the first two weeks of class. The mini-course described the rule-governed nature of ebonics and its ten components: syntax, grammar and vocabulary, as well as world view, semantics, intonation, favored generes, learning styles, teaching styles, and speech acts (such as mocking). The students were then taught freshmen composition methods. Later, they tested higher than the white students on a written proficiency exam given to all freshmen composition students.3

This study and many other more can prove how ebonics could help solve the problem of illiteracy. The use of ebonics could solve many educational and economic problems. Students who are literate and proud will be able to survive through hardships in their daily lives, without the need of welfare. We need to understand, in order to teach, is to let one learn and not just forcing information into one’s brain. It’s true that this society requires everyone to speak and write correctly. We should not, however, throw the baby in cold water. Children can learn to distinguish between ebonics and standard English. The use of ebonics in the classroom offers teachers the wonderful opportunity to connect with their students, on a personal as well as educational level. In this open-minded environment, both teachers and students can learn from each other in a communicative way.

I see therefore that this is another way of looking at the Ebonics issue. It is a tool for the student’s in Oakland to learn standard English. The Oakland school board never intended on “dumping down” their students. I believe they are all very sincere and dedicated educators trying to help their students seek a way of success. The Ebonics discussion was not for those who can but for those who don’t. If not Ebonics, then what?