

## Collaborative Research: The Comparative Morpho-Syntax of Appalachian English

### 0. Introduction

This project aims to study morpho-syntactic variation within Appalachian English, as well as between Appalachian English and other varieties of English, including Standard English. Appalachian English is a group of language varieties spoken in areas of the eastern United States. The geographical area roughly coincides with the central and southern part of the Appalachian Mountain range, which includes areas of southwestern Pennsylvania and Virginia, West Virginia, eastern Tennessee and Kentucky, western North Carolina, southeastern Ohio, and northern Georgia and Alabama (Algeo 2003).

Examination of a number of sociolinguistic studies of Appalachian English (AppE) reveals that there is significant morpho-syntactic variation not only between Standard English (SE) and AppE, but across regional varieties of AppE as well; in other words, AppE does not constitute a single dialect (Montgomery, to appear; Wolfram 1984, 2003). This variation is not just *quantitative* (with some varieties showing a higher propensity for a particular grammatical feature than others): there are significant *qualitative* differences between individual AppE varieties as well. For example, if we look at Hackenberg's (1972) description of AppE spoken in West Virginia, we see there are varieties of AppE in which so-called subject contact relatives (relatives without a *wh*-operator or *that*; e.g., *I got some kin people lived up there*; Hackenberg 1972) are apparently restricted to presentational contexts (see section 2.3 below for details); but Wolfram & Christian (1976) and our own preliminary fieldwork on different varieties of AppE have turned up instances of subject contact relatives which are clearly not in presentational contexts. Similarly, there is *qualitative* variation between AppE and other varieties of English. For example, Henry (1995) reports that lack of number agreement between a third person plural subject and the finite verb is possible in Belfast English only if the finite verb does not invert with the subject; but the pilot study we conducted in preparation for this project application showed that in AppE, even inverted finite verbs can fail to agree with the subject in number.

From the point of view of the syntactician, the findings in the studies referred to above are of paramount interest: not only do they broaden our knowledge of the range of syntactic variation possible in natural language, but they also present a potential testing ground for a number of research questions. Since these varieties have many properties in common, they make it easier for the researcher to isolate and examine their differences and test specific hypotheses that particular syntactic properties are linked to one another.

We thus propose to pursue a study from the perspective of generative grammar, a theoretical framework which complements that used in the sociolinguistic studies cited above. In particular, the research project proposed here combines an in-depth study of a relatively small subset of the morpho-syntactic differences discussed in previous sociolinguistic studies and a comparison of the variation of these morpho-syntactic properties across individual varieties of AppE. This approach will (a) allow us to tease apart and pinpoint the variation reported across Appalachian varieties, (b) substantially enhance our understanding of the details of these differences within AppE and between AppE and other varieties of English, and (c) provide us with a particularly fruitful opportunity to assess their implications for the theory of grammar. Furthermore, the approach taken and the research questions posed in this study promise to yield heretofore undisclosed data, something that the generative approach has proven successful in doing, which ultimately can be shared by the entire scientific community.

Funds are requested (i) to support two graduate students who, after training, will do fieldwork on varieties of AppE and assist the project leaders in the dissemination of the materials collected, and (ii) to facilitate the creation of an electronically accessible database of syntactic variation in AppE — a service to the linguistic community at large aimed at enhancing future research on syntactic variation in English. The project leaders will also report on their results and those of other researchers working on related topics through publications in international linguistics journals.

In section 1 we give a very brief overview of the literature on AppE and other varieties of English on which our project will build, pointing out that our goals are complementary to those of the existing literature. Section 2 subsequently gives a general characterization of syntactic variation between AppE and

other varieties of English, and singles out two case studies which will serve as the backbone of our research — two domains of study that are both well-delineated and of central empirical and theoretical significance. Section 3 discusses theoretical and practical issues regarding the project’s research methodology, as well as the work plan for the project. Section 4 discusses the benefits of the research project.

## **1 Building on the existing literature while setting different goals**

There are numerous published works describing various morpho-syntactic properties of the English spoken in different areas of the central and southern Appalachian region, such as the sociolinguistic studies produced by Hackenberg (1972) and Wolfram & Christian (1976), which are invaluable gold mines of thorough description combined with linguistic analysis. In a class of its own is the recent grammatical description of Smoky Mountain English by Montgomery & Hall (2004). Primarily a dictionary, the introductory chapter of this work provides a meticulously detailed record of morpho-syntactic variation found in Smoky Mountain speech, recorded by Joseph Hall primarily in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. The level of detail in our research questions would not have been possible without the seminal works of Hackenberg, Wolfram & Christian, and Montgomery & Hall (M&H). Our investigation will build on these works, as well as on those which compare the features found in AppE with those found in other dialects, such as Wolfram & Fasold (1974), Christian, Wolfram & Dube (1988), Hazen (1996), Montgomery (1997), Wolfram et al. (1997), Wolfram & Schilling-Estes (1998), Wolfram, Hazen and Schilling-Estes (1999), and Wolfram (2003).

Our goal in this project is not to characterize a certain variety in contrast to others, but rather to gain a deeper understanding of the nature of morpho-syntactic variation. Thus, the fact that certain morpho-syntactic properties appear in varieties other than AppE (including Ocracoke, Ozark, Scots and Irish varieties, and AAVE) is potentially very helpful for a full investigation of the phenomena under study. Comparing varieties which differ minimally from one another creates the potential of having a lab-like setting, in which the environment remains constant and what varies is only the variable under investigation. Suppose, for example, that subject verb agreement is found in a certain variety only with pronominal subjects, and not with lexical subjects, and that we formulate a hypothesis that accounts for this contrast. If we then find a variety which shares most syntactic properties with our original one, except that subject verb agreement is also mandatory with — let us say — quantificational subjects, then we have the potential of gaining a deeper understanding of the grammatical factors which underlie this phenomenon.

While building on the observations and findings of the sociolinguistics literature, this particular project and its goals are different. Our goal is to formulate a precise hypothesis concerning how a particular morpho-syntactic feature can be incorporated into an abstract model of native speaker knowledge. This is a fundamentally different goal, complementary to that which drives research on variation in sociolinguistics. With this goal attained (i.e., after our project has established a deeper understanding of the morpho-syntactic variation under investigation), our findings will have the potential of paving the way for a ground-breaking result: the integration of a generative analysis of the morpho-syntactic phenomena in question with the variationist approaches to the data (see section 2.5 below).

## **2 Issues in the syntax of Appalachian English**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The works cited above (and in the remainder of this proposal), together with several research trips to the *Archives of Appalachia* at East Tennessee State University (which houses Joseph Hall’s recordings) made by PIs Bernstein and Tortora, and a pilot study on a specific AppE variety conducted by co-PI Bernstein (see <http://scholar.library.csi.cuny.edu/~tortora/AppalachianSyntax.htm>), serve as the basis for the present project. These studies have initially identified and reliably reproduced a number of salient syntactic differences between AppE and SE — including (a) negative concord (the multiple occurrence, in a negative sentence, of morphologically negative constituents that do not cancel each other out; e.g., *He wouldn’t never charge nobody a dime for nothing like that*), (b) complex ‘floating quantifiers’ (as in *We don’t any of us need anything* and *We can every one sing*), and, most significantly for our purposes in this application, (c) differences in the domain of number agreement between the subject and the finite verb. These last-mentioned differences are apparent both in sentences with a referential subject (*The boys {are/is}*)

*late*; here, AppE shows well-known parallels with other varieties of English, including Scots English, Irish English and Ocracoke English — see Henry 1995, Hazen 1996, 2000) and in *there*-existentials (where SE *there* is frequently replaced with *they* in AppE; cf. *They is not so many there now* vs. *They are another one down the street*; Montgomery & Hall 2004; Montgomery, to appear; Tortora, to appear). In future work we hope to develop a comprehensive project that can address all of these phenomena in depth. However, for this project, our two main case studies are concerned with the syntax of subjects. The two case studies we have selected as our point of departure for our research are (i) the position of the subject of finite clauses, and (ii) the analysis of so-called ‘subject contact relatives’ (henceforth, SCRs: subject relative clauses lacking an overt relative operator or complementizer, such as *There’s a man at the door [wants to talk to you]*). The discussion of (i) naturally includes an analysis of subject–verb agreement; we will argue that it also has significant consequences for (ii).

## 2.2 The syntax of subject-verb agreement in Appalachian English

Wolfram & Christian (1976:83) observe that in AppE, on average 59.1% of non-pronominal plural subjects fail to show regular agreement with the finite verb (thus, (1a) and (1b) alternate in AppE), while the percentage of *pronominal* non-agreeing subjects (cf. (1b)) is extremely small (0.1% with non-*be* verbs; 0.7% with present-tense *be*). Similar results have been found for other varieties of English, including Belfast English (BelE; Milroy 1981, Henry 1995), Scots English (see e.g. Adger & Smith’s 2005 study of the Buckie corpus, and also Hazen 1996, 2000), and Ocracoke English (Hazen 1996, 2000).

(1a) The girls {like/likes} pizza.

(1b) They {like/\*likes} pizza.

In seminal work on the morpho-syntax of BelE and its relationship with SE, Henry (1995) analyzes this contrast between pronominal and non-pronominal subjects by exploiting the two subject positions provided by the expanded, Pollockian structure of the clause (see Pollock 1989, Chomsky 1995:Ch. 2,3), arguing that while BelE non-pronominal subjects can stay in SpecTP, pronominal subjects must raise to SpecAgrSP. By adopting the assumption that SpecAgrSP is the locus of subject agreement, Henry can then account for the fact that only pronominal subjects are forced to agree with the finite verb. Her hypothesis predicts (on the assumption that adverbial modifiers are adjoined to maximal projections) that adverbs should *not* be able to intervene between a *non-agreeing* subject and a *verb raised to T* (finite auxiliary *be/have*), though they *should* be able to occur between a non-agreeing subject and a finite lexical verb, which (in English) always stay in VP. This prediction is borne out: (2a,b) (whose structure is represented in (4a)) are ungrammatical while (3a,b) (analyzed in (4b)) are well-formed. When the subject does agree with the verb, it is assumed to be in SpecAgrSP, as shown in (4c,d). Here there is space for adverbial adjunction between the subject and the finite verb regardless of whether the latter is non-lexical (*are*) or lexical (*like*). This accounts for the grammaticality of the examples in parentheses in (2) and (3), with *agreeing* subjects.

(2a) \*The children *really is* late. (versus: The children *really are* late)

(2b) \*The girls *probably has* left. (versus: The girls *probably have* left.)

(3a) The children *really likes* pizza. (also: The children *really like* pizza.)

(3b) The girls *probably likes* coffee. (also: The girls *probably like* coffee.)

(4a) [<sub>AgrSP</sub> — [<sub>AgrS</sub> AgrS [<sub>TP</sub> *the children/girls* (\**really*/\**probably*) [<sub>T</sub> *is/has*<sub>j</sub> [<sub>VP</sub> *t<sub>j</sub> late/left*]]]]]]

(4b) [<sub>AgrSP</sub> — [<sub>AgrS</sub> AgrS [<sub>TP</sub> *the children/girls* [<sub>T</sub> *T (really/probably)* [<sub>VP</sub> *likes pizza/coffee*]]]]]]

(4c) [<sub>AgrSP</sub> *the children/girls*<sub>i</sub> [<sub>AgrS</sub> AgrS (*really/probably*) [<sub>TP</sub> *t<sub>i</sub>* [<sub>T</sub> *are/have*<sub>j</sub> [<sub>VP</sub> *t<sub>j</sub> late/left*]]]]]]

(4d) [<sub>AgrSP</sub> *the children/girls*<sub>i</sub> [<sub>AgrS</sub> AgrS (*really/probably*) [<sub>TP</sub> *t<sub>i</sub>* [<sub>T</sub> *T (really/probably)* [<sub>VP</sub> *like pizza/coffee*]]]]]]

Further support for the view that the non-agreeing subject is in SpecTP in BelE comes from the fact that the subject can be a negative polarity item (NPI), but — crucially — only if it does not agree with the verb, as the contrast between (5a) and (5b) shows.

(5a) Any animals isn’t coming.

(5b) \*Any animals aren’t coming.

(5c) [<sub>AgrSP</sub> *agreeing subject* [<sub>AgrS</sub> AgrS [<sub>NegP</sub> [<sub>TP</sub> *non-agreeing subject* [<sub>T</sub> [<sub>VP</sub> ]]]]]]]

These facts (from Duffield 1993, Henry 1995:27-29) follow on the assumption that the negative element heads a NegP projection which is structurally located between AgrP and TP, that is, in between the two subject positions, as schematically illustrated in (5c). From this intermediate position, negation c-commands the non-agreeing subject in Spec,TP but does not c-command the agreeing subject in SpecAgrSP. Hence it follows that an NPI, which must be c-commanded by negation, can occur as a non-agreeing subject but not as an agreeing subject.

The discussion in the preceding paragraphs zoomed in on BeE, on the basis of which Henry's (1995) analysis was developed; but in AppE as well non-pronominal plural subjects may fail to agree with the finite verb. From Henry's perspective, this suggests that these subjects may stay in SpecTP and raise no higher. That subjects can indeed stay below SpecAgrSP in AppE is suggested by the fact that, in negative concord constructions, a negative subject may surface to the right of the finite auxiliary (hosting *-n't*), producing a subject-auxiliary inversion pattern (see Sells et al. 1996). Note that, unlike SE subject-auxiliary inversion, this word order characterizes a certain class of declaratives and manifests itself even in relative clauses, as shown in (6c) (data from M&H and Wolfram & Christian (1976:113)):

(6a) Didn't nobody get hurt or nothin'.

(6b) Wasn't nothin' but acorns on the ground ... and wasn't nobody there.

(6c) It had this room that wouldn't nobody stay in.

This word order plausibly results not from movement of *wouldn't* to a position outside the inflectional domain (which is generally impossible in relatives; cf. *\*a room that under no circumstances would he stay in*), but instead from the subject failing to move up to SpecAgrSP, as in (7):

(7) [<sub>CP</sub> *Op<sub>x</sub>* [<sub>C</sub> *that* [<sub>AgrSP</sub> — [<sub>AgrS</sub> *wouldn't*<sub>j</sub> [<sub>NegP</sub> *t<sub>j</sub>* [<sub>TP</sub> *nobody*<sub>i</sub> [<sub>T</sub> *t<sub>j</sub>* [<sub>VP</sub> *t<sub>i</sub> stay in t<sub>x</sub>*]]]]]]]]]]

While (2), (3) and (5) may support Henry's 'two subject positions' approach to agreement and non-agreement and (6) may prompt an extension of the analysis to AppE, further investigation of the 'two subject positions' hypothesis and its applicability to AppE remains to be done. The structural representations in (4) not only accommodate the limited data set in (2)-(3), but also predict that agreeing and non-agreeing subjects should behave differently when it comes to the insertion of adverbs such as *really* to their left. The fact that it is impossible to place *really* to the left of a non-agreeing subject without comma intonation (*Really\*(,) the children likes pizza*; Henry, p.c.) is unexpected from the 'two subject positions' point of view. Also, in light of Henry's claim that finite non-lexical verbs are allowed (in BeE as well as in SE) to raise to T and no further, one is led to ask whether finite non-lexical verbs are ever in AgrS, and how one can tell: a 'subject – Aux<sub>fin</sub> – adverb' word order is derivable, on Henry's assumptions, by having Aux<sub>fin</sub> raise to AgrS across a TP-adjoined adverb, but it is equally derivable by adjoining the adverb to VP with the finite auxiliary sitting in T. Theoretically, the 'two subject positions' hypothesis needs to be reassessed in light of two important recent proposals, (i) the abolition of AgrP, and (ii) Cinque's (1999) detailed argument to the effect that adverbial modifiers are typically inserted in *fixed*, highly hierarchically stratified positions in the syntactic tree. Cinque's proposal is difficult to reconcile with Henry's assumption that adverbs like *really* and *probably* can be adjoined either to VP (as in BeE *The children really likes pizza*) or to TP (as in BeE *The children really are late*), without there being any apparent difference in interpretation. A re-evaluation of Henry's account of BeE with an eye toward addressing these issues will be an integral part of our research.

With specific reference to AppE, our object of study, research will need to be done to ascertain whether the different behavior exhibited by pronominal and other subjects indeed results from a positional difference between the two types of subjects:

- (Q1) What evidence is there, for AppE, to support the proposal that non-agreeing subjects are in a relatively low position in the tree?
- (Q2) What evidence is there, for AppE, for identifying this relatively low position as SpecTP or, instead, as the specifier position of some other VP-external category?

**(Q3)** What evidence is there, for AppE, to support a positional difference between pronominal and non-pronominal subjects?

The answers to these questions will not only advance our understanding of AppE syntax but also that of BeE, where the facts are by and large clear but the analysis still faces a variety of non-trivial questions. To the three research questions above, we can add a fourth that is specific to AppE:

**(Q4)** What explains the fact that pronominal subjects, while generally forced to agree with the finite verb, readily fail to trigger agreement with the *past*-tense form of *be*?

This specific question is prompted by M&H's observation that '[i]n traditional Smokies speech [a variety of AppE], *was* and *were* are used for both singular and plural [in all persons], but there is today and apparently has always been a strong preference for *was* in all persons and numbers' (p. 24), an observation that is strongly confirmed by Wolfram & Christian's (1976:83) figures.<sup>1</sup> They note that, in the variety of AppE they studied, plural pronominal subjects co-occur with the singular past-tense form *was* in 79.8% of all cases — a spectacular finding in light of the fact that only 0.7% of all plural (non-conjoined, monomorphemic) subject pronouns co-occur with present-tense *is* and just 0.1% of pronominal subjects were found not to agree with other finite verbs. (AppE differs conspicuously from many other varieties of English that show a 'leveling' of subject-verb agreement: for instance, in BeE and similarly in Scots English (Adger & Smith 1995 on the Buckie variety), *they was* is equally non-existent as *they is*.)

One may *a priori* entertain two hypotheses about the high propensity of non-agreement with *was* in contemporary AppE:

**(H1)** The past-tense form of *be* in AppE is *was* throughout the paradigm.

**(H2)** The past-tense paradigm of *be* in AppE features both *was* and *were*; the strong tendency to use *was* even when the subject is a plural pronoun is grammatically determined.

In order to account for those instances where *were* is found, a theory incorporating (H1) would postulate, along the lines of Kroch (1994), that the Appalachian speaker has two grammars (one yielding *was* and one that, as in SE, yields *were*) at his/her disposal and occasionally switches from one to the other. On minimalist assumptions (e.g., Chomsky 1995), the two grammars would differ in the feature composition of the functional head regulating agreement between the subject and past-tense *be*. The alternative hypothesis (H2) also localizes the variation between *was* and *were* in the featural properties of the functional head in question, but assumes that the oscillation between the two values of this functional category is determined *grammar-internally* (cf. the position occupied by the (non-)agreeing subject, along the lines of Henry's proposal), and could in principle lead to interpretive differences between sentences with plural subjects co-occurring with singular *was* and their counterparts with plural *were*. Relevant in this connection is the fact that, in many Germanic languages (e.g., Dutch, Icelandic), *indefinite* and *quantified* subjects occurring in a low subject position (Henry's SpecTP) receive an interpretation different from that of their counterparts in a high subject position: the latter show a robust tendency to receive a 'strong' quantificational reading (specific, partitive, generic), and to take wide scope *vis-à-vis* scopal material lower in the clause. Within a single grammar, two different values of one and the same functional category will likely give rise to different syntactic derivations; (H2) thus leads one to expect that plural subjects occurring with *was* and *were* have a different syntax, with concomitant interpretive repercussions (along the lines noted immediately above). The alternative 'parallel grammars' approach incorporating (H1) raises no necessary expectations of this sort: the '*was*-grammar' and the '*were*-grammar', being entirely inde-

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<sup>1</sup> This feature is not specific to AppE, as attested in the substantial literature on this phenomenon, which shows a high degree of complexity. As pointed out to us by S. Romaine, in S.W. England *were* is generalized for the affirmative and *wasn't* or *weren't* for the negative. In some US dialects, *was* is always used in affirmative clauses and *weren't* in negative ones. See Hazen 1996 and 2000, Schilling-Estes & Wolfram 1994, Tagliamonte 1998, Tagliamonte & Smith 1999, Wolfram & Sellers 1999.

pendent of one another, should in principle be able to deliver identical syntactic and semantic outputs, with the plural subject in the same position in the tree in both.

The literature on varieties of English has not, to our knowledge, reported any interpretive effects associated with the oscillation between singular and plural *be*-forms with plural subjects. In fact, Adger & Smith (2005) state explicitly that ‘the syntactic system gives the same semantic output with two distinct syntactic inputs’. Their paper does not investigate the behavior of *indefinite* and *quantified* plural subjects, however. We are not familiar with any studies devoted to the effect on the interpretation of such subjects in any of the relevant varieties of English; there certainly is no extant research of this sort on AppE. One of the contributions our research seeks to make is to ascertain whether or not there is such an effect. The answer to this question will, in light of what was said in the previous paragraph, provide us with one possible way of adjudicating between the hypotheses in (H1) and (H2).

We also envisage two purely syntactic ways of weighing the relative merits of these two hypotheses. One is based on Henry’s (1995:19) observation for BelE that non-agreeing subjects are impossible in subject–auxiliary inversion contexts such as yes/no-questions:

- (8a) {Are/\*is} the children here?
- (8b) {Have/\*has} the children arrived yet?

This special behavior of subject–aux inversion constructions in BelE provides us with a potential testing ground for hypothesis (H2): if AppE turns out to be free to use *was* in contexts of the type in (8), this presents no particular support either way; but if one finds that in AppE, too, agreeing *were* has to show up in inversion contexts, it suggests that (H2) is correct and (H1) is false. The data on AppE available in the existing literature do not allow us to ascertain how AppE behaves with respect to subject agreement in inversion contexts: standard elicitation practice in sociolinguistic research is such that (yes/no-)questions are vastly underrepresented in the data sample. Our research will seek to fill in this important lacuna by employing a method specifically keyed to eliciting (grammaticality judgments on) questions.

The foundations for the second syntactic strategy for choosing between (H1) and (H2) are laid in the next section, which is dedicated to the distribution and syntactic analysis of ‘subject contact relatives’.

### 2.3 ‘Subject contact relatives’

Jespersen (1961:Vol. III, pp. 81, 132ff.) dubs the italicized portions of the examples in (9) ‘contact-clauses’; Doherty (1993) gives them the more specific label ‘subject contact relatives’ (SCRs), a term we will adopt here.

- (9a) There’s one woman in our street *went to Spain last year*.
- (9b) It’s always me *pays the gas bill*.
- (9c) I have one student *can speak five languages*.
- (9d) He’s the one *stole the money*.

Though (9a–d) are no longer part of standard English, they are perfectly grammatical in many other English varieties, including BelE (Doherty 1993, 2000, Henry 1995), AAVE, and AppE, our object of study. All examples in (9) alternate with standard cases in which there is a relative pronoun or complementizer to the left of the second finite verb in these sentences, as in (10):

- (10a) There’s one woman in our street *who/that went to Spain last year*.
- (10b) It’s always me *who/that pays the gas bill*.
- (10c) I have one student *who/that can speak five languages*.
- (10d) He’s the one *who/that stole the money*.

Despite the fact that SCRs systematically alternate with full-fledged relative clauses (RCs), there is good evidence, for BelE, to suggest that they are not in fact RCs with suppressed relative pronouns or complementizers. As Henry (1995:126) points out, ‘[i]n all those cases where subject contact relatives are possible, there is an alternative with an overt pronoun’; but this alternative is not available for full-fledged relative clauses with a relative pronoun or the complementizer *that* (cf. *I met a man he can speak five languages* vs. *\*I met a man who/that he can speak five languages* (see Henry for a discussion of why the former cannot be analyzed as two separate sentences); the latter is grammatical with *that*, not *who*, in

some varieties of English, as Corrigan 1997 notes). Moreover, in BeE, SCRs (but not other relatives) are restricted to presentational contexts (Henry 1995:126).

In AppE, SCRs initially appear to be restricted to presentational contexts as well (cf. (11); Hackenberg 1972; Wolfram & Christian 1976:121). However, our own preliminary fieldwork results have shown that AppE also produces subject-RCs without a relative pronoun or complementizer in clearly non-presentational contexts — see (12a–c) (of which (12a) is from Wolfram & Christian 1976:121, and (12b,c) from the *Dante Oral History Project*).

- (11a) I got *some kin people lived up there*.
- (11b) He's *the funny lookin' character plays baseball*.
- (11c) My grandma's got *this thing tells me about when to plant*.
- (12a) 'Cause they was this vampire that killed *people come in it*.
- (12b) At first, you wouldn't believe *the characters come knocked on my door*.
- (12c) But he tied the company up some way to get a royalty off *the timber was cut for the mines*.

Unlike the SCRs in (9) and (11), the examples in (12) do not involve matrix clauses that introduce NPs as new players on the scene of the discourse. (12a) is particularly interesting in this connection because it contains two restrictive clauses — one of them (*that killed...*) is an excellent SCR candidate (its matrix clause being a presentational *there*-sentence) but is not in fact an SCR; the other (*come in it*, associated to *people*) is an SCR but occurs in a context where BeE would *not* support one.

In sum, AppE and BeE both allow so-called SCRs, that is, subject relative clauses which lack a relative pronoun and a complementizer and are used in presentational sentences. AppE varieties allowing (12) differ *qualitatively* from BeE, and apparently from other varieties of AppE as well (cf. Hackenberg's (11)), in allowing subject relative clauses also outside of presentational contexts. This difference raises the following research questions (some empirical, some conceptual):

- (Q5)**
- a. What distributional restrictions exist in AppE on RCs without a relative pronoun and a complementizer (henceforth, with a null CP), and in particular on subject RCs of this type?
  - b. What is the proper analysis of the subject RCs with a null CP that are not restricted to presentational contexts?
  - c. Is that analysis (whatever it may be) also appropriate for SCRs, that is, those subject relatives with a null CP that are restricted to presentational contexts?
  - d. Why is the distribution of SCRs more restricted in BeE than in AppE? Does this difference correlate with some other morpho-syntactic difference between the two varieties?
  - e. What sort of distributional restrictions on SCRs are found in other varieties of English? If some correlation was found in AppE, do these other varieties exhibit it as well?

In addressing these questions, one line of investigation (among others not discussed here) leads us back to the discussion of the position of the subject and the analysis of agreeing and non-agreeing subjects.

Recall the remarkable discrepancy in AppE between *was* on the one hand, and *is* and other finite verbs on the other, when it comes to their co-occurrence with plural subject pronouns. Of the two hypotheses we entertained, (H2) holds the view that the special behavior of *was* is grammatically determined within the dialect. From the perspective of 'two subject positions' analysis entertained above, this hypothesis translates into the claim that subject pronouns (in AppE but not in BeE) can stay in SpecTP in the *past* tense, though not in the present. If this is correct, it has interesting repercussions in the domain of relative clauses with a null CP that are not restricted to presentational contexts.

The sentences in (12) all seem to have a verb in the *past tense*. For (12c) this is immediately apparent; for (12a,b) the reader should bear in mind that *come* is a past-tense form in AppE. Suppose that this is not an accident, but rather a significant fact about these examples:

**(H3)** Subject RCs with a null CP that are not restricted to presentational contexts are always *past tense*.

If so, an interesting line of thought ensues. Assume first of all the following standard claims regarding the analysis of relative clauses with null relative pronouns:

- (13) a. RCs with null relative markers involve null operators raising to the specifier position of a null C.

- b. Null operators are formally pronominal anaphors, which cannot be governed; hence they may not stay *in situ* in finite relatives.
- c. Vacuous movement (here defined as movement across no phonologically or semantically visible material) is disallowed (see Chomsky 1986 and Den Dikken 2005).

From these claims, it follows that in SE subject relatives with a null CP should be impossible, as null operators are systematically illegitimate in this context. Leaving the null operator *in situ* is impossible, by (13b). But raising the null operator to SpecCP is also impossible, by (13c), because it is vacuous: C is both phonologically and semantically invisible, and no other material is being crossed on the way to SpecCP. On the other hand, in dialects which license pronouns *below* SpecAgrSP in certain contexts, it should be possible to form subject relatives with a null CP via null operator movement. The null operator raises from its licensing position SpecTP into SpecCP across the projection that hosts affirmation or negation (Laka 1990), which we can assume to be present in all sentences between AgrS and TP. Since this projection has semantic content, null operator movement from SpecTP to the specifier of null C is not ruled out by (13c), because it is not vacuous.

Let us return now to AppE. Recall that (H2) translates (via Henry 1995) into an account of the distribution of subject pronouns which says that in AppE, pronouns can stay in SpecTP in the past tense (where they do not agree with the verb), while they must raise to SpecAgrSP in other tenses (where they do agree). This translation, coupled with the conclusion reached at the end of the previous paragraph, leads us to predict that AppE subject RCs with a null CP should be legitimate, as *genuine* relatives, in the past but not in the present tense. (This is because only in the past tense would the subject start out in SpecTP and move to SpecCP across the projection that hosts negation/ affirmation.) This is precisely what (H3) states. Thus the assumptions in (13), combined with (H2), derive (H3).

This account also has repercussions in the domain of agreement: since the account takes subject RCs of the type in (12) to result from movement of the null operator from SpecTP (i.e., out of a *non-agreeing* configuration), it predicts that subject RCs of the type in (12) should systematically feature a *singular* finite verb. These predictions are verifiable, which is what we are planning to do as part of our research — and if they are indeed verified, they support (H2) over (H1) and show that the distribution of agreement with *be* in AppE is in fact grammatically determined within the dialect.

On the theoretical level, if (H2) and (H3) are both borne out, we can treat SCRs not restricted to presentational contexts (like those in (12)) as genuine RCs featuring null operator movement and a null complementizer. More broadly, we also derive an explanatory account of the distribution of omission of relative pronouns and complementizers in English, one based on the assumptions in (13) — by and large standard but never, to our knowledge, applied *en bloc* to the recalcitrant problem of why subject RCs without *wh/that* are not possible in SE and why there is variation in this matter across dialects.

#### **2.4 General theoretical issues and implications**

On a more general plane, the discussion of subject agreement, subject placement and SCRs in the previous pages raises a number of important theoretical issues. First, recall that Henry's (1995) account of non-agreeing subjects in BeE (which we tentatively carried over to AppE, pending empirical verification) exploits the two subject positions provided by the expanded, Pollockian structure of the clause. To the extent, then, that this account is successful, it provides support for a functional geometry that is richer than the single-TP approach taken in Chomsky's most recent work (e.g., Chomsky 1995:Ch. 4 and subsequent publications). The latter approach is well known to be problematic in the domain of verb placement phenomena. Chomsky's strategy of relegating these verb placement problems to PF is unavailable for the BeE facts (the facts in (2) and (4) do not fit in with a single-TP structure of the inflectional domain of the clause). One of the objectives of the research project outlined here is to examine in depth the issue of subject placement and agreement, as well as its consequences for the functional geometry of the clause.

The above discussion also raises significant theoretical questions concerning the special behavior of pronouns. Henry's (1995) analysis of the different behavior of pronominal and non-pronominal subjects in the context of agreement assumes that pronouns are higher in the tree than full-nominal subjects (like Rouveret's (1991) and Den Dikken's (1999) accounts of related facts elsewhere). In the literature on the

Romance languages (especially Cardinaletti 2002), by contrast, precisely the opposite has been argued for: certain subject pronouns are *lower* than full-nominal subjects. This raises the following issues:

- (i) Do pronouns and full noun phrases occupy different structural positions in AppE? If so, which one is higher? Could there be room for variation on this point?
- (ii) What is it about (non-conjoined, monomorphemic) subject pronouns that makes them have a different distribution from full-nominal subjects?

The answers to these questions depend at least in part on the precise nature of the subject pronoun—in particular, the question of whether it is a ‘weak’ or ‘strong’ pronoun, in the sense of Cardinaletti & Starke (1999). The discussion of BeE in Henry (1995) does not address this issue in any detail, nor does the existing literature on AppE. Our research will go more in depth in the analysis of these data and will lead to a more precise characterization of the different properties of pronominal and lexical subjects. As for (ii), the literature generally assumes that it is something about the pronouns themselves which is responsible for this. Our research bears on this directly. For if (H2) is correct, and if it is right to think about the distribution of agreement and non-agreement in terms of the placement of the subject, this suggests that AppE subject pronouns are not *forced*, by way of an inherent property of theirs, to occupy a position different from the one occupied by full-nominal subjects: if the above premises hold, in past-tense contexts AppE subject pronouns are sitting in the same structural position as full-nominal subjects. If this leads us to discard the hypothesis that it is an inherent property of subject pronouns that makes them occupy a different position from full-nominal subjects, it of course also opens the search for an alternative account, perhaps couched in terms of the features of the functional heads in the inflectional domain.

## 2.5 *Integrating qualitative and quantitative studies*

The research proposed here seeks to inform syntactic theory on the basis of a careful and in-depth study of morpho-syntactic variation in AppE. The two specific phenomena chosen for study, subject-verb agreement and subject contact relatives, are ideally tailored to this purpose: the analyses of agreement and relative clause constructions are both under substantial debate in the current literature; the phenomena in question are connected in ways that were sketched above. Moreover, our review of the literature on these phenomena in AppE varieties, as well as our preliminary fieldwork, have shown that the phenomena are subject to important qualitative variation — recall in particular the remarks made on this point in the Introduction, as well as in section 2.3 (for more details on our preliminary fieldwork, such as a pilot study and sample questionnaire, see <http://scholar.library.csi.cuny.edu/~tortora/AppalachianSyntax.htm>). Our research will substantially deepen our understanding of the grammatical nature of the variation (what other variables are correlated with the variables under study? why are they correlated?), and will thereby strengthen the theory’s grasp of the phenomena in question.

Our research is thus complementary to that of variationist approaches to the same data. Of course, ultimately one would like to go beyond just taking a complementary approach, and attempt to integrate the two approaches to the study of non-standard varieties such as AppE. An integration of quantitative and qualitative approaches to the study of language has in fact been the goal of some very interesting recent work. Within phonology, some authors have explored how Optimality Theory can provide a way of integrating variation into a formal theory of grammar and even have gone as far as being able to predict the rate at which each form is to be expected (see Anttila 1997, to appear; Guy 1991; Guy and Boberg 1996; Reynolds 1994; Reynolds and Nagy 1994, among others). Within syntax, the pioneering work of Anthony Kroch has shown how the study of quantitative variation can inform the theory of syntax and in particular has made important breakthroughs in our understanding of diachronic change (see, e.g., Kroch 1989a, 1989b, Kroch and Taylor 1997). Fasold (2003) provides a thoughtful and insightful reflection on the points of contact and divergence between variationist and formal studies of syntax, and outlines which

issues need to be clarified and which avenues of research are likely to be fruitful.<sup>2</sup> Along these lines, we hope that ultimately our own work would lead to an integration of these two approaches to the study of syntactic variation. We have been engaging in conversations with colleagues in the field (see, e.g., Zanuttini 2005). However, in order for an informative integration of the variationist and generative approaches to materialize, a precondition that needs to be met is a thorough empirical and theoretical investigation of the syntax. It is this precondition that our research project aims to meet.

In sum, we believe that our findings will ultimately put us in a better position to understand how quantitative variationist approaches and the qualitative generative approach are to be integrated. As such, the current project opens the door for future research in this area.

### **3 Methodology and Work Plan**

In the previous sections, we have detailed some of the theoretical issues of interest to us and discussed the data that bear on these issues. How exactly will we gather the AppE facts relevant to our research, particularly those not yet previously studied (in depth)? This issue will be the focus of this section.

#### **3.1 Theoretical issues in methodology**

In this subsection we review the question of methodology in syntactic research, and how it differs from, but nevertheless complements, the kind of methodology (which is driven by a different set of theoretical questions) used in sociolinguistic research. We do this with an eye towards giving a background context for the approach we will use in our own work.

Linguists have long had an interest in studying non-standard varieties, with different traditions and approaches prevailing in different parts of the world. In the U.S., work on non-standard varieties was initiated by sociolinguists (consider, e.g., Labov's extensive work, incl. Labov 1968). In Europe, by contrast, scholarly work on dialects since the nineteenth century has focused not on sociolinguistic study but on grammatical description (typically concentrating on lexical, phonological, and morphological description, ignoring syntax — a purely historical accident; Benincà 2003/2004). Since the development of generative grammar, European scholars have been engaging in fieldwork on syntactic variation across non-standard dialects in a systematic way. Various syntactic dialect atlases have been being developed across the continent, such as the SAND (*Syntactische Atlas van de Nederlandse Dialecten*) in the Netherlands and the ASIS (*Atlante Sintattico Italia Settentrionale*) in Italy. The methodology used to collect data for these atlases has been determined by the nature of the theoretical framework, through which hypotheses are formed regarding the syntax of particular constructions (and their relationship to the syntax of other constructions). The predictions that emerge are tested through well-defined elicitation techniques. For the ASIS, syntacticians conduct judgment and translation tasks, adapting the techniques, depending on various factors (e.g., the literacy level of the informant). For the SAND, either syntacticians or dialect speakers trained by syntacticians conduct interviews. Cornips & Jongenburger (2001) and Cornips & Poletto (2005) describe other types of elicitation techniques; these will be discussed in more detail below.

This thriving research in the syntax of non-standard varieties in Europe has been enormously successful, producing volumes of data that have driven much published work, which has informed numerous areas of syntactic theory, including clause structure and clause types (e.g., Benincà 2001; Munaro 2003; Poletto & Pollock 2002; Poletto & Zanuttini 2003; Zanuttini & Portner 2003), the structure of the noun phrase (e.g., Bernstein 1991), the nature of negation (e.g., Zanuttini 1997), the nature of functional heads and the grammaticalization of verbs of different types (e.g., Benincà & Poletto 1994; Cardinaletti & Giusti 2003), clitic placement (e.g., Tortora 2002), and (complementizer) agreement, pronouns, subject doubling, ellipsis phenomena and sluicing (in, e.g., Van Craenenbroeck 2004; Van Craenenbroeck & Van Koppen 2000, 2002a, 2002b; Van Koppen 2005).

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<sup>2</sup> Cornips (1998) provides an interesting example of how to integrate sociolinguistic and formal results in the study of a dialect of Dutch, and Bender (2001) explores how the data of variationist sociolinguistics can be integrated into a theory of competence with the study of copula absence in AAVE).

In recent years, various syntacticians have begun analyzing, within the generative framework, the extensive collection of data from non-standard American varieties gathered by decades of intensive sociolinguistic research. Notable in this regard is the work developed by Lisa Green on syntactic and semantic theories of tense and aspect, based on data from a variety of AAVE (e.g., Green 1998a, 1998b). Generative syntacticians such as Green (and similarly, Sells, Rickford, & Wasow 1996 and Martin 1992) have been as successful as the European dialect syntacticians in using the kinds of elicitation techniques (e.g., judgment tasks) necessary in this particular theoretical framework (see, e.g., Green 1998b:133-135, where she describes in detail her judgment elicitation techniques with native speakers).

Our own interest in this project on non-standard American varieties stems from three sources: (a) our belief in the success and promise of the European model, (b) our own experience working with non-standard European varieties, and (c) our own preliminary research on AppE. We are further motivated by the success of work emerging from other American dialect generativists, such as Green, and the emerging view that different approaches to the study of related varieties is necessary in furthering our understanding of linguistic variation (Cornips & Corrigan 2002).

### **3.2 *Practical issues in methodology***

This said, we are mindful of some issues regarding elicitation tasks (see, e.g., Schütze 1996, Cowart 1997, Labov 1996). For example, native speaker attitudes towards a variety can play a role when eliciting judgments. In fieldwork on non-standard Romance varieties, Bernstein, Tortora, and Zanuttini have each independently found that the most desirable, and reliable, informants are those with a strong sense that their dialect is a legitimate variety with an autonomous history and grammar. Such informants are unlikely to view the standard variety as “grammatical” and the ‘dialect’ as “ungrammatical” or stigmatized. We are aware, however, that some native speakers of Appalachian varieties may not share these attitudes. For them, simple questions such as “Can you say X,” “Is it OK to say X,” may not be straightforward, since some speakers may be inclined to consider anything Appalachian ungrammatical. This attitude can of course be compounded by the presence of a “foreign” field worker conducting interviews using a variety perceived to be standard. However, Benincà (2003/2004) points out that even Italian dialect speakers have not always felt comfortable with their own varieties; she in fact suggests that it has been the extensive and ongoing linguistic fieldwork in Italy (which even in the nineteenth century involved elicitation techniques) that has generated among dialect speakers the sense of their own varieties as legitimate. We are hopeful that our project can also positively affect linguistic attitudes in Appalachia.<sup>3</sup>

Of course, we remain aware of the potential problem just discussed. For this reason we will rely on our consultant Billy Ward II, who is a native of eastern Tennessee and has previously worked with Bernstein. Mr. Ward understands the nature of our work and has proven to be excellent at selecting and training informants. As part of the interview protocol (see Wolfram & Christian 1976: Appendix), Appalachian informants will be asked open-ended questions intended to generate spontaneous unselfconscious speech. (These interview sessions will be recorded and later transcribed and made accessible; see section 4). This step serves three important purposes: (a) it allows informants a chance to “get comfortable” with the interviewers, (b) it allows the researchers to listen to informants’ spontaneous speech and determine its relevance, and (c) it allows the researchers to determine the consistency between spontaneous speech and elicited judgments (see Sells, Rickford, and Wasow 1996). In the second part of the interview, after a brief training session, informants will be asked to judge a series of sentences (along the lines of McDaniel & Cairns 1996). The fact that Billy Ward is a native speaker will also play an important role in avoiding the problem of the “foreign” speaker influencing the informants’ assumptions about their own variety.

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<sup>3</sup> It is interesting to note that Kirk Hazen’s *West Virginia Dialect Project* (<http://www.as.wvu.edu/dialect/>) states as one of its goals “The WVDP hopes to educate people about what dialects really are and how they work. Maybe then people can be proud of this important piece of their cultural heritage.” This goal is consistent with Benincà’s claims.

Working in this way, Bernstein has already elicited reliable data from informants (for a pilot study, see <http://scholar.library.csi.cuny.edu/~tortora/AppalachianSyntax.htm>).

In the case of the Romance varieties investigated by Bernstein (Walloon), Tortora (Borgomanerese), and Zanuttini (various Northern Italian dialects), the varieties under investigation were significantly different from the standard. In contrast, the Appalachian varieties in question are relatively similar to the standard variety. Thus, one might think that, in contrast with the case of “bilingual” Romance speakers (where it is assumed that it is easier for speakers to identify forms as either “standard” or “dialect”), Appalachian speakers might not be able to “access” the relative acceptability of closely related forms so readily (despite the fact that there may be many features of Appalachian varieties that native speakers themselves recognize as unique). However, Benincà (2003/2004) discusses cases where native speakers demonstrate an ability to distinguish between varieties that are closely related in form. So, while it is true that a “dialect” may differ from the “standard” to a greater degree in Italy, it is also true that different varieties “in between” the dialect and the standard are very similar (e.g., the provincial and the regional varieties). Yet despite this similarity (which is analogous to that between Appalachian varieties and standard English), Benincà notes that speakers are able to judge which forms are part of which variety.

Work done on the SAND project at the P.J. Meertens Institute for Dialectology of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Sciences offers us a way to address issues of relative acceptability. Like the situation found with Appalachian English, the Dutch dialects are closely related to Standard Dutch. The elicitation techniques used in the SAND project (discussed in Cornips & Poletto 2005 (C&P)) may be adapted for our project. C&P suggest, for example, to avoid questions that ask for judgments of absolute grammaticality, and to ask for judgments of indirect and/or relative grammaticality (Schütze 1996), which may be effectively assessed through a rating scale (see Cowart 1997). It is important to note in this connection that such elicitation techniques are also being used by some sociolinguists (cf. Wolfram 1982 and Fasold in his recent work, e.g., 2004). Our elicitation of data will thus involve these techniques (a preliminary questionnaire can be found at <http://scholar.library.csi.cuny.edu/~tortora/AppalachianSyntax.htm>).

### **3.3 Work Plan**

In the following subsections, we provide an overview of how we will undertake the research proposed here. In particular, we detail the process for selecting Appalachian-speaking informants, the regions of Appalachia we will concentrate on, the timeline for our research, and the roles to be played by four PI collaborators, two graduate students, and a regional consultant.

#### **3.3.1 Selection of informants**

Based on our own previous fieldwork experience, including Bernstein’s 2003-2004 ACLS research on AppE (and also consistent with C&P), we have developed certain criteria for the selection of reliable informants. How do we judge whether a particular informant’s intuitions are reliable? An informant’s judgments tend to be reliable when: a) they exhibit internal consistency (i.e., within a particular speaker); b) they are consistent with an informant’s spontaneous production; c) they exhibit external consistency (i.e., across speakers); and d) they closely match patterns previously described for the region.

Who are the speakers most likely to produce such reliable judgments? Such speakers tend to be over 60 years old and have lived in the same community for almost their entire lives; this ensures that their variety is characteristic of the community and the region. They tend to be from rural communities and have had less contact with people from outside the region; they also tend to exhibit metalinguistic awareness, and so are better able to separate out what they say and accept from what other speakers (including standard speakers) say and accept. We will avoid speakers who have attended university, because they may be more likely to alter their speech to conform to what they perceive (or have learned) to be standard American English, and also because university attendance usually involves years outside the community. Finally, we will be thrilled to find speakers who already exhibit positive attitudes about their linguistic and cultural heritage.

#### **3.3.2 Regions to be included**

As a first step, we plan to interview informants from two specific communities in Appalachia: Dante, Virginia and Mountain City, Tennessee. We have chosen Dante because some of the data on subject con-

tact relatives (from section 2.2) were gleaned from recordings of speakers from Dante. We plan to interview speakers and ask follow-up questions. We expect to find reliable informants in Dante, since many older speakers will conform to the guidelines we just described (background information provided for the participants in the Dante Oral History Project underlie these expectations).

We will also interview speakers from the vicinity of Mountain City, Tennessee. The selection of this rural community is not accidental. Our regional consultant Billy Ward II is a native of Mountain City. Bernstein (accompanied by Billy Ward) has already interviewed several members of the community and discovered general curiosity and interest in the project. Mountain City is conveniently situated near the border of North Carolina, allowing extension of our research into this area if time and resources permit.

### **3.3.3 *Timeline for the research and roles of the collaborators***

We plan to devote the first year of funding to the study of subject agreement (see section 2.2) and the second year to the specific issues relevant to an understanding of subject contact relatives (see section 2.3). We anticipate that the results of the first year of research will significantly inform the second.

During the Fall semester of the first year of funding (i.e., Fall 2006), we will refine our inventory of test items that will shed light on our questions about subject agreement. Building on our own questionnaires and those in the literature, we will include items designed to gather data on the following: subject-verb agreement in finite declaratives and in *yes/no* and *wh*-questions; subject-verb agreement with negative polarity items; the position and interpretation of adverbs with respect to agreeing and non-agreeing subjects; the effect of tense (present vs. past) of the copula; and differences between simple pronouns and full noun phrases (including other, polymorphemic, pronominal forms). These items will be developed by the PIs in collaboration with the graduate students. In consultation with Bernstein, the regional consultant will review and revise the completed questionnaire with an eye toward including lexical items and themes that will be natural and familiar to people in that region of Appalachia.

In the meantime, the regional consultant will begin to locate and set up appointments with informants and the PIs will train the graduate students at their respective institutions (den Dikken and Tortora will train the CUNY graduate student in theory and fieldwork; Zanuttini will work with the Georgetown graduate student, already trained in field methods, on relevant theoretical issues). The graduate students will practice administering the oral questionnaire and digitally recording the sessions with volunteer subjects at their home institutions. During this semester (Fall 2006), the CUNY graduate student will travel to Appalachia and, accompanied by the regional consultant, administer the oral questionnaire to Appalachian speakers (either in Dante or in Mountain City). The Spring semester of the first funding year (Spring 2007) will be devoted to analyzing the preliminary results, which will undoubtedly raise new questions about the construction types listed above. The PIs, in collaboration with the graduate students, will develop a follow-up questionnaire designed to address these questions. Following the same procedures as above, the Georgetown graduate student will travel to Appalachia in Spring 2007 to administer the questionnaire with the regional consultant. The analysis of preliminary results will be submitted for the Comparative Germanic Syntax Workshop and/or the Southeastern Conference on Linguistics (SECOL). The PIs will devote the summer months to reviewing the results from the preceding year and determining their relevance for the topic to be covered during the second funding year. They will also plan for the dissemination of the research results at various conferences.

The research activities of the second year of funding will closely resemble those of the first, except that the focus will shift to subject contact relatives. In the questionnaires we develop, we will include test items designed to shed light on the status of the following: relative clauses (both object and subject) with a complementizer/relative pronoun, subject contact relatives that are not restricted to presentational contexts, subject contact relatives in presentational contexts, subject-verb agreement in relative clauses, and the effect of tense in these relative clauses. In Fall 2007, the questionnaires will be revised, piloted, and administered to Appalachian informants by the CUNY graduate student (accompanied by the regional consultant). Follow-up questions will be incorporated into questionnaires to be administered in Spring 2008 by the Georgetown graduate student (again, accompanied by the regional consultant).

Throughout the funding period, the PIs will guide the graduate students' work so that they may develop their own lines of research. They will also develop one or more manuscripts that focus on broader issues related to the nature of subjects and that incorporate data from the project. The manuscript(s) will be submitted to a journal such as *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory*, *Journal of Comparative Germanic Linguistics*, or *Journal of English Linguistics*.

Both funding years will also involve the development of an electronic database, where the CUNY graduate student will enter data and update the database throughout the course of the two-year project. At the end of the funding period, the PIs will make this database accessible via the internet. In addition, the graduate students will transcribe tapes from all interview sessions. At the end of the funding period, these tapes will be placed at ETSU's *Archives of Appalachia*, where they will be accessible to researchers and members of the general public.

Finally, Tortora and Bernstein plan to participate in the bi-annual *Appalachian Scottish and Irish Studies* summer program to be held at ETSU in the summer of 2007 in order to share some of the general research results with scholars interested in Appalachian language and culture.

For a full discussion of what each collaborator brings to this project, and thus what makes the participation of each necessary to the project's success, see [Collaborators' Background](http://scholar.library.csi.cuny.edu/~tortora/AppalachianSyntax.htm) at <http://scholar.library.csi.cuny.edu/~tortora/AppalachianSyntax.htm>.

#### **4 Benefits of the research project**

The graduate students participating in this research project will benefit by working directly with native speakers and with the project leaders on a number of empirically and theoretically significant questions via an in-depth investigation of one particular (set of) dialect(s) of English, and by gaining experience with fieldwork and the electronic dissemination of its results. The fact that funding is made available by the project for at least one PhD student at the CUNY Graduate Center is particularly significant in light of the fact that funding for PhD research is very limited at this institution.

Another important benefit of the project will be the accessibility of the collected material, which will be disseminated in several ways: (i) The taped interviews (consisting of audio CDs and transcriptions) will be placed in the Archives of Appalachia (ETSU), where they will be available for examination and/or borrowing; (ii) The electronic database of syntactic variation will be available via the world-wide web; and (iii) The analyses of the data will be presented at conferences and published in journals.

Through the dissemination described, the reach and significance of the project expand. The materials collected will certainly be of interest to syntacticians, who will be primarily concerned with the patterns uncovered and their relevance for syntactic theory. But they will also be of interest to a wider community of scholars. The interviews aimed at collecting unselfconscious speech will elicit linguistic samples of a variety of registers and styles which are of interest to linguists studying sociolinguistic variation and discourse analysis. Various colleagues with expertise in these fields have already expressed an interest in our project and a willingness to collaborate in making sure that the data we collect is viable for research in these areas (e.g., Leonie Cornips, Ralph Fasold, Anthony Kroch, Deborah Schiffrin, Natalie Schilling-Estes). Finally, the narratives collected could also be useful to folklorists and anthropologists interested in Appalachian culture.

This brings us to a general point about the importance of documenting and preserving data from a set of possibly endangered minority dialects. Linguistic study of non-standard, and often stigmatized, varieties promotes the legitimacy and recognizes the heritage of these varieties and their associated cultures (see footnote 3). Lending a sense of urgency to this particular project is the fact that native speakers of the most vernacular forms of AppE, who tend to be elderly, are becoming increasingly scarce. The dwindling number of speakers is due, in part, to the low prestige of the variety (which often results in both unconscious and forced dialect suppression).

Finally, we note that the study of closely related linguistic varieties has particular scientific merit and promise. As pointed out in much recent work by R. Kayne, comparing languages that differ minimally from one another allows the researcher to conduct experiments in which everything is held constant except for the variable under investigation. This is precisely the case with the varieties of English under dis-

discussion. They share many properties (for example, they require overt subjects, do not raise lexical verbs as high as auxiliaries, have the same set of adverbs), and yet can clearly differ (for example, in whether or not a full noun phrase in subject position must agree with the verb). This controlled situation allows the investigators to narrow the set of hypotheses to be tested (in this example, variation must be related to the kind of subject or to the kind of verbal agreement) and thus come closer to a precise identification of the loci of possible grammatical variation. Progress towards identifying as precisely as possible where closely related grammatical systems can differ means progress towards understanding the nature of grammar and, in turn, issues such as language change and the relation between languages and dialects.

## 5. Results from Prior NSF Support

Here we briefly report on results from prior NSF support.

(A) NSF Grant #BCS 0414145 (PI: Marcel den Dikken; co-PI: Christina Tortora), *Comparative Germanic Syntax Workshop*, \$10,581 (06/01/04–05/31/05). The award supported the 19<sup>th</sup> *Comparative Germanic Syntax Workshop* (CGSW19), held at the CUNY Graduate Center June 2–5, 2004. In addition, the award resulted in the 2005 publication of the book *The Function of Function Words and Functional Categories* (in the *Linguistik Aktuell* series), co-edited by Marcel den Dikken and Christina Tortora (Amsterdam: John Benjamins). The book is a collection of 8 peer-reviewed articles, which were developed and selected from the 18 workshop presentations.

(B) NSF Grant #BCS 0234278 (PI: Paul Portner; co-PI: Raffaella Zanuttini), *Clause Types: Form and Force in Grammatical Theory*, \$206,664 (02/1/03–10/31/05). This grant supported the training of a graduate student (Mauck) and a post-doctoral fellow (Pak). The central hypothesis under investigation was that clause types are differentiated within the grammatical system by components of semantic meaning that are represented in the syntax. The functions of the clause types are then determined by the interaction between these meanings and the structure of the discourse context. The major findings in support of this hypothesis are (findings and publications not involving Zanuttini are not mentioned here): (1) Exclamatives cannot be defined in terms of a single structural or semantic feature. Rather, they arise from the combination of two key components of meaning, factivity and widening, which are represented in the syntax [1, 2]; (2) Languages differ in the relationship between the imperative subject and the addressee. All languages have imperatives in which the subject refers to the addressee. Many (perhaps all) allow the subject to quantify over the set of addressees. Some allow the subject to be disjoint from the addressee, but still place responsibility for the action on the addressee [3]. Given these empirical findings, we proposed that the syntactic representation of imperatives contains an element that brings in reference to the addressee. We implemented this idea via a functional projection with person features, which enters an Agree relation with a nominal constituent in its c-command domain [4]; (3) Some languages have imperative-like constructions in which the subject is not related to the addressee at all. We studied Korean promissives in detail and proposed an analysis that captures the similarities and differences between imperatives and promissives and relates it to broader differences between Korean on the one hand and English and other Indo-European languages on the other [5, 6].

[1] Zanuttini, R. and P. Portner (2003) “Exclamative Clauses: At the Syntax-Semantics Interface”. *Language*, Vol. 79.1:39–81.

[2] Portner, P. and R. Zanuttini (2004) “The Semantics of Nominal Exclamatives.” In Elugardo, R. and R.J. Stainton (eds.), *Ellipsis and Non-Sentential Speech*. Kluwer Academic Publishers, pp. 57-67.

[3] Mauck, S., M. Pak, P. Portner and R. Zanuttini (2005) “Imperative Subjects: A Cross-Linguistic Perspective”, in Brandstetter, C. and D. Rus (eds.) *Georgetown University Working Papers in Theoretical Linguistics*. Pp. 135-152.

[4] Zanuttini, R. (in prep) “Addressing the Addressee: Imperative Subjects in English”.

[5] Pak, M., P. Portner, & R. Zanuttini (2004) “Deriving Clause Types: Focusing on Korean”, in *Proceedings of Linguistic Society of Korea 2004*. Yonsei Institute of Language and Information Studies. Hanshin Publishing Company. Pp. 359-368.

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