Phonology meets ideology: the meaning of orthographic practices in British Creole.

Mark Sebba

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DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS AND MODERN ENGLISH LANGUAGE
LANCASTER UNIVERSITY
Lancaster LA1 4YT, England
e-mail: M.Sebba@lancaster.ac.uk
Fax: +44 1524-843085
Telephone +44 1524-592453 (direct); +44 1524-65201 (switchboard)

Abstract

This paper discusses the orthography of an unstandardised written language variety, the English-lexicon Creole used in Britain by people of Caribbean heritage. Examples are drawn from a corpus of written Creole produced in Britain by writers of Caribbean heritage. Orthography is viewed here as a set of *practices* engaged in by writers as they try to represent a language for which no conventional written representation exists. I argue that while the spelling of Creole is highly variable, writers are - perhaps unconsciously - choosing conventions which emphasise the differences between Creole and Standard English. I argue that orthography, like literacy after Street (1984) can be approached in either of two ways: on the basis of an "autonomous" model or an "ideological" one, and that it is only by taking an ideological approach to orthography that we can understand the orthographic practices of contemporary British Creole writers.

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Introduction

Orthography is often treated as a question of language planning, but in this paper, I will view orthography as a set of *practices* engaged in by writers as they try to represent a language for which no conventional written representation exists. The language discussed in this paper is the English-lexicon Creole used in Britain by people of Caribbean heritage. Even in the absence of standardised norms and institutional support, there is a large body of written Creole[1], both in Britain and the Caribbean. Since no norm is imposed on writers when they are writing Creole (as opposed to English), they are relatively unconstrained in how they choose to represent the forms of the language. It thus makes sense to speak of writers' orthographic practices, either at the individual or group level. "Practices" here can be interpreted to mean patterns of choices that writers make about what to do with the alphabetic means at their disposal.

The fact that no orthographic norm currently exists for writing British Creole makes it a kind of laboratory for studying the relationship between orthographic practices and the ideologies which underlie them. I shall argue that while the spelling of Creole is highly variable, writers are - perhaps unconsciously - choosing conventions which emphasise the differences between Creole and Standard English. Rather than the creation of a standard Creole, we may be witnessing the creation of an "anti-standard".

In the rest of this paper, I first discuss some of the problems surrounding standardisation which apply to creole languages in particular as they try both to develop themselves and differentiate themselves from their lexifiers. I then go on to discuss how this relates to orthography in Caribbean creoles and in the "Anglophone" Caribbean in particular. I then describe the situation of Creole in Britain today, and the source of my data - the "Corpus of Written British Creole". There follows a discussion of the orthographic practices found in the data, and of how the writers themselves respond to questions about their practices.

In the last part of this paper I argue that orthography, like literacy after Street (1984) can be approached in either of two ways: on the basis of an "autonomous" model or an "ideological" one. Within the autonomous model, orthographic choices are seen as ideologically neutral. The "best" orthography would be one that balanced competing demands in terms of phonemic accuracy, learnability and (where relevant) transitional literacy for the intended community of users. In an ideological model, orthography can be seen as the site of potentially intense struggles over identity and power, in which issues like the purpose of literacy and the status of languages are central, and orthographic characters (say, letters of the alphabet) may be imbued with a symbolic meaning which makes their phonemic symbolism and learnability of secondary importance. I argue that it is only by taking an ideological approach to orthography that we can understand the orthographic practices of contemporary British Creole writers.

Standardising Creole languages: some special problems

Creole languages are languages which come into being through language contact, typically between the language of a socially dominant (usually European) group, and one or more other languages spoken by peoples enslaved or colonised by them. In the majority of cases, the socially dominant language provides the bulk of the basic lexicon of the creole language, and is therefore known as the lexifier.

Historically most creole languages have been identified by non-linguists, including speakers of the languages themselves, as inferior or substandard varieties or “dialects” of the Standard varieties of the lexifier language. In spite of linguists’ advances in understanding the origins of creole languages and ample evidence to show that creoles are languages in their own right, with grammar, phonology and lexicon distinct from their lexifiers, creoles generally remain low in status and with a few exceptions lack official status and are not used for “high” functions such as education or administration. Where creoles are used in the media (for example in broadcasting) they tend to be positioned in such a way that they are clearly less valued than the official language of the country concerned[2].

If many creole language varieties suffer under the long colonial shadow of a cognate standard language which relegates them to "low" functions in a situation of diglossia, English-lexicon creoles suffer doubly, by virtue both of the global importance of Standard English and their lexical similarity to it. Both official and popular discourses in countries where Creole is spoken tend to treat Creole as a "dialect" of English. Where creole languages remain in contact with their lexifiers - for example, in most of the so-called “Anglophone” Caribbean where English is the official language but a creole is the first language of the majority of the population - the status of the creole is typically even more problematic than elsewhere. The tendency to treat the creole as a “broken” form of the lexifier is reinforced by constant opportunities for comparison with the Standard, at the same time as the high status of the Standard is being reproduced by its association with functions such as education and government.

The above description holds for many Caribbean territories such as Jamaica and Guyana, where Standard English remains the only language recognised in official domains, including education. The creole which is the language of the majority of the population is not normally acceptable in these domains. In particular, both Jamaican Creole and Guyanese Creole are predominantly *spoken* languages, and only a very limited amount of writing, in a restricted set of genres, exists in these languages. One reason for this may be the absence of any agreed standard form of the creoles concerned, and in particular any standard conventions for writing them.

In fact, a number of creoles have been more or less successfully standardised, and have achieved some degree of use in domains such as education and the media. One such creole is the Spanish/Portuguese-lexicon creole Papiamentu, spoken in Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao in the Caribbean. Another is the French-lexicon Haitian Creole, which will be discussed in more detail in Section 3.1. However, the English-lexicon creoles of the Caribbean have notably failed to develop in the direction of standardisation, either in grammar or in orthography. Why should this be so?

According to Joseph (1987), standardisation of a vernacular necessarily takes place with respect to an already existing standardised model, normally the community's current H ("high") language in the diglossic model of Ferguson (1959). As the vernacular develops along the path of standardisation, it will eventually equal its model in status and range of functions, and possibly replace it. In the case of creoles, the natural candidate for this model is the lexifier language, especially in communities where the lexifier remains in contact with the creole. Joseph sees this fact as the basis of the special difficulties facing creole languages attempting to standardise. In his argument he draws on two notions developed by Kloss (1967, 1978). *Ausbau* (“development”) refers to the elaboration of a written language for specific "high" functions. *Abstand* (“distance”) refers to linguistic distance from other, similar languages.

Ausbau languages include “dialects whose speakers would certainly be reported by linguists as constituting a single linguistic community if they were at a preliterate stage” (Kloss 1967) but which nevertheless follow different paths of elaboration to become two or more separate literary standards, thus becoming recognised as “different languages.” Kloss (1967:29) describes an *Ausbausprache* as being “called a language by virtue of having been reshaped.” Kloss gives as examples Scots Gaelic and Irish Gaelic, Gallego (Galician) and Portuguese, Danish and Swedish, Czech and Slovak. An *abstand* language is “a linguistic unit which a linguist would have to call a language even if not a single word had ever been written in it.” In other words, Abstand languages are distinct from each other before they even develop written standards.

Ausbau and *abstand* are not opposites: Kloss describes languages like English, French and German as “both abstand and ausbau languages” by virtue both of being reshaped *and* of intrinsic difference from other languages (Kloss 1967: 29). However, for a “dialect” to gain independent linguistic status from its “standard language” it will be necessary both for it to develop in such a way that it can support “high” functions (*ausbau*) and to establish itself as different from its “competitors” (*abstand*). According to Joseph (1987), this is the crux of the creole standardisation problem:

> when a creole grows in Ausbau, developing in the direction of its superposed model, it must simultaneously shrink in Abstand, since that H model is the same 'target' language from which it needs to establish its independent validity. (Joseph 1987:55)

Thus creole languages like Jamaican and Guyanese are trapped in a kind of vicious circle. They can only establish independence by becoming less like Standard English (*Abstand*). Yet they can only elaborate themselves as Standard languages by becoming more like Standard English (*Ausbau*). The result is a kind of stalemate in which the respective H and L languages maintain their distance (“Creole” and “English”, sometimes expressed in creole linguistics as “Basilect” and “Acrolect”) but also remain sharply distinguished in terms of status and functions.

Orthographic problems and solutions for Caribbean Creoles

Orthographic conflicts in non-English-lexicon creoles

Although the possibility of writing a language does not by itself imply standardisation (indeed, "many non-standard dialects have been written alphabetically for centuries" (Joseph 1987:65)) writers such as Milroy and Milroy (1985) and Joseph (1987) are agreed on the crucial link between writing and language standardisation. Therefore, it will be useful to discuss issues of creole orthography within the context of standardisation.

Orthography, potentially the most *visible* representation of written language norms, often turns out to be one of the most contested aspects of standardisation. For many users, after all, "the language" is the standard *written* language and that alone. If "codification" of the orthography is a matter for linguists implementing a phonological theory, persuading governments and the general public to adopt a spelling system is a highly political act. Ideology, not phonology, turns out to be the key factor in adoption of an orthography.

This emerges clearly in the discussion of competing orthographies for Haitian by Schieffelin and Doucet (1994). In Haiti, there has been an official orthography for Haitian Creole since 1980, with a number of other competing orthographies available and the subject of a national

debate, which focusses on such issues as whether the phonemes /w k y/ should be written <w>, <k>, <y> as in the International Phonetic Alphabet or by means of "French" characters and digraphs <ou>, <c>, <qu>. In the Haitian context, opponents of <w>, <k> and <y> have characterised them as <Anglo-Saxon< imports or even instruments of American imperialism. The "French" <ou>, <c> and <qu> on the other hand have been seen by some as reinforcing colonialism and a subordinate mentality.

As Schieffelin and Doucet write (1994:176):

> [...] arguments about orthography reflect competing concerns about representations of Haitianness at the national and international level, that is, how speakers wish to define themselves to each other, as well as to represent themselves as a nation. Because acceptance of an orthography is based more often on political and social considerations than on linguistic or pedagogical factors, orthographic debates are rich sites for investigating competing nationalist discourses.

Papiamentu (also spelt Papiamento), the creole which is the native language of almost the entire population of the “Netherlands Antilles”, Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao, is one of the most advanced creoles in terms of its acceptance as a written medium. Several daily newspapers and other regular publications (including some published in the Netherlands for the Antillean community there) mean that there is no shortage of reading matter for Papiamentu speakers. According to Holm (1989:312), Papiamentu enjoys unusually high prestige for a creole language: it is spoken by all social classes in many settings and is widely used in the media.” Yet Papiamentu, despite its small number of speakers (perhaps 200,000: Kouwenberg and Muysken 1994:205), has two distinct orthographies. One, the more “etymological”, following the conventions of Spanish, is used in Aruba (an island which maintains a separate political status from the other islands, and is closer to the Spanish-speaking mainland); the other, which is more “phonological” (Kouwenberg and Muysken 1994:205), is used on the other two islands, Bonaire and Curaçao. Once again, the phoneme /k/ has a disproportionate significance: in Aruba, it is spelt <k> in words of Dutch origin, but <c> or <qu> in words derived from Spanish. In Bonaire and Curaçao, /k/ is consistently spelt <k>.

Here too, there is a political subtext: Aruba is the closest of the islands to the (Standard) Spanish-speaking mainland (Venezuela is only 20 kilometres distant) and its variety of Papiamentu is more “Hispanised” than in the other islands. More to the point, its speakers have chosen to emphasise the relationship with Spanish by adopting a different official orthography from the other two islands.

In this section we have seen that even in two cases of relatively successful standardisation of creole languages, orthography has been an important and divisive issue; furthermore, much of the debate boils down to a dispute over a small subset of the total number of written characters.

Orthography in the “Anglophone” Caribbean

While orthography is the subject of heated debate in “Francophone” Haiti, in the "Anglophone" Caribbean, there is no official orthography to debate. Proposals for a standard creole orthography have come almost exclusively from academics, and discussion of orthographic issues is confined mainly to academic circles.

This is not to say that the English-lexicon creoles of the Caribbean remain unwritten. On the contrary, there is a large body of published writing in English-lexicon creoles, in a range of genres: poetry, song lyrics, plays, newspaper columns, short stories and novels (though in the last two, the creole is usually confined to dialogue, unless the narrator has a “creole” voice). There is probably a good deal of unpublished personal writing as well.

For English-lexicon creoles too, there is potentially a choice between a modified Standard English orthography and one based on strictly phonemic principles, or some combination of these. The orthography proposed by Cassidy (1978), similar to that used by Cassidy and Le Page in the *Dictionary of Jamaican English* (1967/1980), is the only serious contender in the "phonemic" category. Yet in spite of its use in a number of dictionaries and many linguistic texts, it has so far not been used in any publications for a general readership (though Devonish (1986b), which is not addressed to linguists, gives an example of a phonemic text).

In some ways, it is not surprising that the phonemic orthography has not been taken up by writers, since it requires a conscious effort to learn and is unfamiliar to most potential readers. Nevertheless, linguists who have an interest in the matter are almost without exception in favour of a phonemic orthography. In this case, we find that all the arguments are in favour of creating a system as *distinct* as possible from the standard lexifier language. Cassidy, for example, writes (1993:136):

> The more the creole differs phonemically from the lexicalizing language (English, French, Dutch - whatever), the more it must differ in its orthography. It should be taught and learned as a system of its own. There is no learning advantage in having it reveal its etymological relationship to the European or other lexifier. Paramount should be a phonemically accurate, consistent, autonomous system.

As in the case of Haiti, interested parties take up ideological positions. Devonish (who argues (1986a, 1986b) for Creole to be made an official language in the Caribbean) and Hellinger (1986) are both strongly in favour of a phonemic orthography. Hellinger summarises the benefits of the latter:

> A genuinely creole orthography will strengthen the structural and psychological identity of the creole; it may in fact initiate or support a recreolization process; it will provide a source for higher prestige and may therefore facilitate native speakers' identification with the creole language and culture. (Hellinger 1986:67)

By contrast,

> If at this point it was decided to introduce and officially support a creole orthography based on English conventions, it is likely that the effects would include the following:
>
> - the widespread conception of the creole as an inferior variety of English would be strengthened;
> - an English-based orthography would obscure and eventually help to eradicate much of the creole's linguistic (phonemic) authenticity;
> - in no way would linguistic creativity (as in the field of word formation) receive momentum [...]
> - the decreolisation process would accelerate. (Hellinger 1986:67)

Seen in the light of Joseph's discussion of the creole standardisation problem, we could interpret the arguments of Cassidy, Devonish and Hellinger for phonemic orthographies as attempts to put *distance* (*Abstand*) between the creole and its lexifier. Whether at the same time the creole can elaborate a literary standard without modelling itself on the lexifier, thus growing simultaneously in terms of *Ausbau* and *Abstand* (*pace* Joseph) is an empirical question - one which cannot be answered unless some serious attempt is made to introduce a standard variety for at least one of the English-lexicon creoles.

An alternative approach to this issue would be to study the practices of writers using an English-lexicon creole, with a view to looking for evidence of *Ausbau* and *Abstand* produced informally by writers themselves. In the next section, I describe such an attempt.

Written Practices in British Creole

Creole writing in Britain

In Britain, British Creole - which for these purposes means essentially a British variety of Jamaican Creole, (see Sebba (1993)) - can certainly be said to be a "written language"[3]. There is by now a substantial body of written literature wholly or partly in Creole (also known as *Patois* or *Nation Language*) and published in Britain. This includes a variety of written genres, especially poetry (some of it originally recited against a musical background - "dub poetry"), plays and novels. Some prose fiction is written partly in Creole; it is rare, however, for the Creole to extend beyond the dialogue to the narrative.

In the absence of any official orthography or even a public language debate about alternatives, every writer wanting to use British Creole in writing is free to - indeed, *has* to - make up his or her own set of conventions. Since it can be assumed that anyone writing Creole in Britain is familiar with the written conventions of Standard English, which they will have learnt at school, we would expect some variant of Standard English spelling conventions to be the basis for whatever conventions they adopt. One possible outcome, in theory, would be that most writers actually arrive at similar conventions. Reasons for this might be that one or two writers had influence over the rest and were therefore used as models, or that these conventions were in some way felt to be the "obvious" ones to follow. Another possible outcome would be a high degree of variability, with little consistency among writers. This would indicate that there was no explicit or implicit model or norm which writers felt they should follow.

Familiarity with the range of different writers' styles suggests the second outcome is the actual one. While different individual writers may have their own reasonably consistent style - for example, preferring either to use or to omit apostrophes marking "missing" letters[4] - there is no norm for the spelling of most words. Even when there is only one non-Standard English variant spelling, it is likely to alternate, even in the same text, with the Standard English spelling of the same word or a similar word which contains the same sound. The variability is well illustrated by extracts from a well-known poem by Linton Kwesi Johnson, *Sonny's lettah*, reproduced in Appendix 1 (originally a dub backed by music, recorded on the *Forces of Victory* album (1979)).

Version A is the printed version which appears in the book of collected poems, *Inglan is a bitch* (1980). Version B appears (apparently hand-lettered) on the cover of a 12" disco version of the record (i.e. a record containing only this poem on one side, and intended for use in a disco rather than for general sales).

In both versions, there are numerous nonstandard spellings to signal pronunciations different from (most) British varieties of English. However, Version A is much more liberal in its use of apostrophes to signal letters omitted (A: *t'ump, mout'*; B: *tump, mout*), and also uses other unconventional spellings like *grung* (B: *groun'*) and *murdah* (B: *murder*). In addition, both versions use a number of unusual spellings which do not, apparently, reflect Creole pronunciations substantially different from British English ones: for example, *dhu*, *tuff*, *y'u*. Here too, A has more apostrophes signalling omitted letters: *he'd, le'd, de'd* and (from an earlier part of the poem) *hus'le, bus'le*.

This example indicates that substantial variation in spelling between writers is possible even when the Creole text being written is the same.

A Corpus of Written British Creole

In order to investigate the spelling practices of writers using creole to find out what they actually are doing, in 1995 I established a Corpus of Written British Creole including samples of writing from different genres. The Corpus was to include only texts written by Caribbeans who were either British-born or who had spent much of their lives in Britain and whose writing related to mainly British rather than Caribbean themes.[5] Since authors were not always easy to trace and those who could be traced did not always give permission for their texts to be made machine-readable, the computerised Corpus represents only a fraction of all the texts available, and is small (about 27000 words). In spite of this, the Corpus shows that there is a large amount of variation in spelling. Examples are shown below in Tables 1 to 3. The tables show different types of words according to etymology and phonology. Spellings which appear in the tables in **bold** are attested in the machine-readable Corpus of Written British Creole; the others are attested elsewhere at least once.

Table 1 shows words which apparently derive from English sources but which have a distinct grammatical function in Creole: thus speakers of Creole may or may not identify them with a similar word of Standard English. *Table 2* consists of words which have no apparent cognate or source word in Standard English - words for which there is no Standard English model which writers can follow. All the words in *Tables 3 and 4* have Standard English sources but potentially differ at the phonetic or phonemic level. Words in *Table 3* are different from their British English equivalents at the phonemic level. There may be a difference in the phonemic composition of the word, for example, the /j/ after initial /k/ in /kyaan/ and /w/ after initial /b/ in /bwai/, or neutralisation of a phonemic contrast which exists in British English, such as the /d/ ~ /ð/ and /t/ ~ /θ/ distinction, or the /ɒ/ ~ /æ/ contrast which makes *block* homophonous with *black* (both /blak/) in basilectal JC (see Wells 1982:576).

Words in *Table 4* are examples of words which have non-standard spellings in the Corpus of Written British Creole, but do not belong in any of the other categories. These words are different from British English *at most* at the phonetic level, in other words they contain the same phonemes in both Creole and English but the phonetic realisation of these may be different.

The words chosen for inclusion in these tables are only a subset of all the possible words in the categories represented by each table, and the alternative spellings listed are almost certainly not an exhaustive list of those to be found. Nevertheless they give a good indication of how much variation there is.

TABLE 1. Words with (apparent) English source but distinct grammatical function in Creole

/de/	**deh**, **dey** (locative marker)
/fi/	**fi, fa, fah**, **fe** (preposition/infinitive marker)
/hafi/	**haffi**,**affi**, haffe, hafi, ("have to")
/ina/	**inna**, **ina**, eena, een (preposition)
/no + a/	**naah**, **nah**, **naw**, **nar** (negative + continuous aspect marker)
/se/	**seh, sey, sae** (complementiser)

TABLE 2. Words with no Standard English cognate/source

/unu/	**Unuh**, **Oonoo**, **unnu**, **unna**, **unu**, ouno, ("you"-plural)
/pikni/	**pickney, picknies** "child/ren"

TABLE 3. Words with Standard English cognate/source but different from British English in phonemic structure

/bwai/ "boy"	**bwoy, bwai, bowy**
/kyaan/ "can't"	**cyan, cyaan, cyaant, caan, , kean**, kaan
/di/ "the"	**de, di**
/tru:/ "through"	**troo**, **thru**
/notin/ "nothing"	**notten, notin, nutting, nutin, nutten, not'n'**, notin'
/nɒ/ "no" (RP /nəʊ/)	**nuh, nah, noh**, nu
/kraas/, /nat/ "cross, not" etc.	**crass, nat**, **gat, eedyaat**
/a(v)/ "of"	**a, ah**, af
/migl/, /likl/ "middle, little"	**miggle, likkle, lickle**
/duon/ "don't"	**doan, down**
/ja/ "here"	**yah**, **ya, ?'ere**, **?ear**
/-ʌŋ/ ~ /-ɔʊn/ "down" etc.	**roun, grong, dong, dung**

TABLE 4. Other words/morphemes with nonstandard spellings

turn (RP /ɜ:/, JC /ʌ/)	**tone**, **tu'n**, **tun**
enough/tough (RP /ʌ/, JC /ɒ/)	**'nuff, enuff, tuff**
love	**luv**
you	**yuh, yu**, **y'u**
do	**du**, **dhu**, duh
-er	**gangsta, bettah, odder**
where	**whe'**, **wey**, **'weh**, **whey**

Key: **bold** words attested in computerised Corpus of Written British Creole (27000 words). Words not in bold are attested elsewhere.

In Tables 1 and 2 we find a range of variant spellings. This is entirely to be expected, as these words, at least in the ways they are being used in the writing represented here, are not part of "Standard English" and therefore there is no prescribed Standard English spelling for them.

In Table 3 likewise we find a range of variants, reflecting the fact that these words as well as being phonemically different, are also different *phonetically* from their British English equivalents. In terms of a model of dialect accommodation developed by Trudgill (1986), certain features of the accent of dialects other than the speaker's own are more noticeable or salient than others, and it is to these that an individual learning a new dialect will adjust first. Of the factors which make a feature salient, the most important (Trudgill 1986:37) are *surface phonemic contrast* and the *degree of phonetic difference*, in that order. In other words, for someone learning the phonology of a new dialect of their first language (i.e. learning a "new accent"), the most salient features will be those involving a phonemic contrast - points where the sound systems of two varieties, rather than just the sounds themselves, are different. Of lesser importance will be points of pronunciation where the systems themselves are not different, but the sounds representing a particular phoneme are substantially different.

If we take Trudgill's model to represent more generally speakers' level of awareness of differences between their own phonological system and that of a language which they perceive as related in some way - for example, a variety of British English[6] and Creole - then we would expect writers' orthographic practices to reflect a similar hierarchy of salience. We would expect to find writers drawing attention to "surface phonemic contrasts" in their respelling of Standard English words. This is just the kind of contrast shown by the words in Table 3, which account for a large proportion of nonstandard spellings used by Creole writers.

Table 4 is the most interesting from the point of view of this discussion. The pronunciation of the words in this table differs from British English pronunciation very slightly if at all. In Trudgill's (spoken language) model, these differences are less salient to speakers than those involving a difference in phonological structure. Frequently such differences are not signalled at all in orthography, unless they had greater salience (e.g. represented phonemic contrasts) at an earlier stage in the history of the language in question.)[7] So it is especially striking that exactly these kinds of differences *are* sometimes signalled by writers using Creole.

For example, since most British English speech is non-rhotic, it would not seem to be necessary to mark the lack of /r/ in *where*, or the *-er* ending of *better*. Nor is there any substantial difference between the British English and Creole pronunciation of /u:/ in *do* and *you*; although the Creole vowel is "firmly monophthongal, without the diphthongal allophones commonly found in the accents of the United States or England" (Wells 1982:571) it is striking that writers have found the distinctions salient enough to warrant flagging through nonstandard spellings such as *yuh, yu, dhu, duh*[8].

Even more strikingly, while the spelling *tuff* for *tough* may be more logical than the conventional spelling, it does not mark any real difference in pronunciation of the final consonant /f/[9]. I shall return to this point later.

Generalising from the data in the Corpus of Written British Creole, it is possible to say that most writers pay attention to some or all members of a set of *phonetic* differences between British English and Creole and try to signal these in some way.

The most important of these are:

- the plosives /d,t/ where BrE generally has fricatives: *dem, wid, ting, mout*.
- the use of half-open monophthongal vowels in words like *make*, [mɛk], *say* [sɛ], *go* [gɒ], *no* [nɒ], where BrE has diphthongs. Of these, *seh* has become almost a conventional spelling for *say*. By contrast, *no* has several variants.
- the presence of a glide /j/ after velars and /w/ after bilabials, when a low vowel follows: *cyaan*/*kean*, *bwoy*.
- loss of final consonant in clusters: *bes'*, *an'*; in addition, *roun(d)* and its rhymes have a more Creole pronunciation sometimes written *rung*, *grung*, *dung* (for *down*).
- the Creole vowel /a/ which corresponds to short /ɒ/ in RP and most BrE accents: *crass, nat*, for *cross, not*.
- velar plosives /k, g/ in medial positions where BrE has alveolar /t, d/: *miggle*, *lickle*.
- the non-pronunciation of postvocalic /r/ (as in *start*, *work* and *mother*) is signalled in various ways: *staat*, *tun, maddah* for *start, turn, mother*.
- the diphthong /uo/ (RP /əʊ/, Jamaican Creole [uɔ]) is sometimes written *oa*, as in *doan* (*don't*).

It is notable that very few writers mark any one of these phonetic differences consistently. The one most consistently marked is probably /d, t/ for orthographic *th*, but even within one text this may sometimes be marked and sometimes not. Other phonetic differences from BrE tend to be marked very unevenly, with writers marking an idiosyncratic selection of features, and then not always consistently. This is generally in accordance with the findings of Hellinger (1986:62) for texts in Creole produced in the Caribbean. It is also, of course, in accordance with the variable pronunciation of the items in question, which may have, at different times, a "Creole" pronunciation, a "Standard" pronunciation and a local British (e.g. London) pronunciation in the speech of the same person (see Sebba 1993).

Abstand *and* Ausbau *in British Creole writing*

Just *why* should writers be so concerned with marking specific phonetic features of Creole? Standard English is spoken with a large variety of accents. Many British and some North American accents share features of phonology with Jamaican Creole but do not indicate these by distinctions in orthography. The existing spelling system of Standard English is "broad" enough to cope with them, mainly because - in spite of what most users of English probably believe - it is not a truly alphabetic system, but has "reverted to a partially logographic state" (Joseph 1987:66). The individual letters which make up a word do not necessarily tell the reader how that word is pronounced, in *any* accent.

In spite of this fact, the degree of phonetic detail to which writers using Creole pay attention can be considerable. For example, the following is part of a description of a "battle of sounds" (discos) written in a London school by a boy from a Caribbean family (this narrative was produced, at the teacher's request, in two versions, "Standard" and "Jamaican" - this is from the latter):

> Dem soon start to warm up, *tes'ing* mikes and mekking sure dat all speaker an' ting was connect up an' working good. Meanwhile some o' de older de rudy was *buil'ing* up dem splif an' de smaller bwoy child dem try to capture off even if *i's* only a likkle draw. Everybody full up wid excitement and plenty people was arguing wid each aneddur 'bout who would win (McLeod 1982:436, emphasis mine).

Of this McLeod writes

> The "i's" seems almost pedantic, suggesting that the writer has given some thought to the use of "is" for "it is" and has decided that this is a contracted form, not a deletion of the pronoun "it". (McLeod 1982:436)

In fact, the writer of this passage has three times used the apostrophe to indicate the presence of a glottal stop (perhaps unrealistically in the case of *buil'ing*.) This is interesting as glottal stops in these positions are characteristic of London speech rather than Creole; they do not, however, have phonemic status and could easily go unnoticed, or at least unrecorded.

We also saw in the previous section that many writers use nonstandard spellings even for words where there is little or no difference in pronunciation between Creole and other relevant (i.e. mainly British) accents: for example, *y'u, yu, yuh* “you”, *dhu, duh* “do,” *tuff* “tough”. Noting a similar tendency in Caribbean writing, Hellinger remarks that

> speakers' readiness for a more radical departure from the dominant model becomes evident in numerous idiosyncratic spellings. (1986:62)

Rather than seeing this orthographic variation as simply “idiosyncratic,” however, we could see it as an expression of an "informal ideology" of language creation. Spellings like *y'u, dhu, 'hole* and *tuff* can be seen as wholly or partly conscious attempts by some writers to *subvert* and challenge Standard English spelling. Among the various components that make up the written language, orthography is one that affects *both* the visual aspect of the text and the phonetic interpretation which the reader will give to the words. It is thus potentially symbolic on both these levels. We saw that in the case of Haiti, great symbolic significance attached to orthographic choices. For the writer of British Creole, too, spelling is one means of establishing a symbolic difference from Standard English. Reinterpreting this statement using the terminology of Kloss, we could say that orthography is for British Creole writers a means of creating a symbolic *Abstand* - a “distance” from Standard English, while at the same time retaining the *Ausbau* "elaboration" of the Standard English orthographic system.

In establishing this “distance” between Creole and Standard English, it is of course true that grammar, lexis, and actual phonological differences play their part. Orthography is not the only factor. However, where orthography is different from the other factors is that it can establish *symbolic* differences which do not reflect real variation at any other level.[10] To illustrate this, Table 5 shows a list of words found in the corpus which have orthographic <k> where Standard English has <c>. In no case is an actual difference in pronunciation signalled by the use of <k>.

TABLE 5. Words with Std. Eng. orthographic <c> spelt with <k> in Corpus

kool	“cool”
ketch	“catch”
katch	“catch”
Jamaka	“Jamaica”
karry	“carry”
kean	“can't”
kum	“come”

Here the <k>/<c> distinction seems to be symbolic of the fact that the words concerned are to be interpreted as “Creole” rather than Standard English. It appears to have no other function.[11] As a further illustration, here is part of a poem by a Caribbean-heritage London poet, Sandra Mundle, which was published in 1995:

Ole Woman

Wha meck **yu** queeze up ina semi
pan yu own ana fret?
You nuh fraid a isolation
dampness an rain wet?

Ole woman yu me **pitty**
yu greying meck me sad
if only yu'd **pac** dat grip
dat alone meck me glad.
...
Ole woman me nar cuss yu
fah experience write pan yu face
me respec all me elders
so me nar call dung no disgrace.[12]

Once again, the choice of nonstandard spellings which do *not* represent pronunciation differences is striking. While spellings like *ole, meck* and *dung* (for /dʌŋ/ “down”) certainly represent real differences, *yu, pitty* and *pac* can be interpreted as having a mainly symbolic function.

There is an interesting parallel between the practices of British Creole writers and those writing in Lowland Scots, another language whose long relationship with Standard English could be held to have hindered the development of independent norms:

> In the absence of a distinct orthography for Scots, those wishing to write in the language have, since the seventeenth century, generally adopted the conventions of English spelling, modified to a greater or lesser extent according to the preferences of the individual writer: the theoretical unsoundness of this procedure has been obscured by a widespread failure to realise the true nature of the relationship between the two

> tongues (actually cognate dialects, but taken to be the 'correct' and 'vulgar' form of the same language). (McClure 1985:203)

Nevertheless, many individual writers exercise their preferences for "modifications", often using the spelling of earlier writers such as Burns as their model.[13] Writing about the popularity of local spellings in Glasgow which "improve on" the Standard[14], Macafee writes (1983:40):

> Many of the improvements on standard spellings coincide with common spelling errors, and this allows different writers to arrive independently at the same conventions. It also helps to give the system the character of an *anti-standard* rather than a local standard [emphasis mine].

An "anti-standard", then, is perhaps what is developing for British Creole in the absence of any planned standardisation.

What writers say they are doing

To complement a study of writer's orthographic practices we decided to ask writers, at the same time as asking their permission to include work in the computerised Corpus of Written British Creole, some questions about how they worked. The questions were sent out to writers together with a release form giving their permission to include a named piece of work in the Corpus database. The questions asked were the following:

1. *Do you consciously use a particular model for spelling Creole/Patois words?*

2. *If so, what is the model and where does it come from?*

3. *Do you intentionally spell words which exist in both Creole/Patois and Standard English in a non-Standard way, and if so, for what purpose?*

4. *Do you have an editor/reader who edits your work?*

5. *If so, do they have explicit guidelines regarding spelling?*

6. *Is your work ever written down from a recorded spoken version (such as dub), rather than originating on paper?*

To date only seven writers have answered, but these came from a range including some of the best and the least known, and writing in a range of genres. Question 1, which was aimed at finding out whether writers were consciously using some model as as a basis for their spellings. However, writers tended to interpret it as referring to a *spoken* model, so that answers to Question 2 tended to refer to Jamaican speech. To that extent, they were not illuminating about the sources of writers' nonstandard spellings, but seemed to indicate that writers had not really considered the possibility of using a written model other than Standard English.

Questions 4 and 5 were aimed at finding out whether any process of standardisation was going on under pressure from publishers: there was no evidence of this. Publishers' interventions at the moment seem to be limited to checking on spellings of *Standard English* words. Question 6 was intended to determine whether spoken or written forms came first for individual writers, to see what effect this might have: no generalisations can be made at this stage.

In spite of the small amount of data, the answers to Question 3 are interesting. The answers received are given in Appendix 2. Four out of seven respondents mention the words *sound*, *pronunciation* or *phonetic* as relevant to their written representations of Creole. Thus there seems to be a conscious focus on signalling phonetic difference from English. The notion of *difference* is made explicit in one response: “so that words cannot be confused with Standard English.” There is, however, no explicit mention of making Creole *look* different from English, or signalling Creoleness unless it is also present at the phonetic level. Yet this, as we saw in the last section, is something that writers (including those who responded to the questionnaire) are actually doing, even if they are not aware of it.

Ideology meets phonology: "autonomous" and "ideological" approaches to orthography.

"Autonomous" and "ideological" models of literacy

The concept of "autonomous" and "ideological" models of literacy originated with Street (1984). For Street, the “autonomous” model is based “on the assumption that [literacy] is a neutral technology that can be detached from specific social contexts” (Street 1984:1). This model “isolates literacy as an independent variable and then claims to be able to study its consequences... classically represented in terms of economic ‘take off’ or in terms of cognitive skills” (Street 1984:2). An ideological model, on the other hand, focusses on the “specific social practices of reading and writing,” recognising “the ideological and therefore culturally embedded nature of these practices.” (Street 1984:1) Paradoxically, as Street shows, it is the “autonomous” model which is most fundamentally ideological. The claims made by proponents of the autonomous model, “as well as the literacy practices they purport to describe, in fact derive from specific ideologies which, in much of the literature, are not made explicit” (Street 1984:1).

I would argue that “autonomous” and “ideological” models are also applicable to orthography: that embedded within an autonomous view of *literacy* can be found an autonomous model of *orthography*, based in turn on a model of phonology which treats it as independent of social or cultural considerations. As in the case of literacy, the autonomous model is derived at least in part from ideologies which are rarely acknowledged or made explicit. It will be argued here that an ideological model of orthography, one which concerns itself with orthography as a set of cultural *practice*s, is preferable to the autonomous model on the grounds that it is both more honest - as it makes explicit its ideological basis - and more explanatory - as it takes into account the social and cultural context of orthographic practices.

The autonomous model of orthography: "reducing a language to writing"

Proponents of the autonomous model of literacy do not regard all writing systems as equally good. Instead, they have a clear preference for phonemic systems. In the *locus classicus* of the "autonomous" approach to literacy, Goody and Watt (1968) go so far as to specify the cognitive benefits of a phonemic writing system (here described as “phonetic”). According to them, “... pictographic and logographic systems are alike in their tendency to reify the objects of the natural and social order; by doing so they register, record, make permanent the existing social and ideological picture." However,

> phonetic writing, by imitating human discourse, is in fact symbolizing, not the objects of the social and natural order, but the very process of human interaction in speech: the verb is as easy to express as the noun.... **Phonetic systems are therefore adapted to expressing every nuance of individual thought**... [while logographic writing records] only those items in the cultural repertoire which the literate specialists have selected for written expression; and it tends to express the collective attitude towards them. (Goody and Watt 1968: 37-38)

It is worth a brief examination of the history of this belief in the superiority and neutrality of phonemic writing. Clearly it is grounded in the structuralist view of phonology which dates back at least to Saussure and the beginning of the 20th Century. During the 1930s and 1940s, the dominant American Structuralist paradigm viewed the phonology of a language as a self-contained system with a fixed number of contrasting elements. This could be interpreted to mean that the optimum writing system was one which had written symbols in a one-to-one relationship with phonemes, and this is precisely how many linguists of that school did interpret it. Indeed, any other kind of relationship between phonemes and symbols would not reflect the elegant symmetry of the phonological system, and could only confuse and hamper the user of the writing system. According to Pike (1938:87, quoted by Barros 1995), “the ideal alphabet should have one letter, and one letter only for each phoneme, or the learning process will be retarded.”

The learnability of a writing system was of importance because of the extent to which linguists at that time were focussed on providing orthographies for previously unwritten languages. Much of this linguistic work was carried out among indigenous peoples of the Americas in the context of Bible translation and literacy teaching. The most important of the organisations devoted to this kind of work was the Summer Institute of Linguistics, whose own members were among the proponents of the phonemic principle of writing. According to Barros (1995:282),

> The idea that every language has a limited set of sounds with intuitive value for native speakers led to the position that an alphabet could only be 'natural' and 'efficient' (Swadesh, 1940a, p.273) if it reproduced this psychological level of language, that is, its phonology (Swadesh, 1940b). The linguistic principle, **'for each phoneme only one symbol'**, became the basic rule of the indigenous alphabet (Swadesh 1940c: 289).

It is not coincidental that this orthodoxy was so much in keeping with the principles of American Structuralism, for many of the most influential American linguists (for example, Pike and Gleason) were also associates of the Summer Institute of Linguistics. Furthermore, as Barros points out (Barros 1995:285), the evangelical model of indigenous education in Central America (as put forward by the S.I.L.) became secularised by means of linguistic arguments which allowed it to be seen as “scientific”: since the phonemes of the language had psychological reality, a phonemic orthography (and hence “literacy skills”) could be acquired easily by the speaker of an indigenous language. “Thus, linguistics was used in support of the thesis of the naturalness of the literacy process in a non-written culture, since it considered the transformation of an oral community into a literate one as a neutral cultural process, depending exclusively on the existence of a phonological orthography” (Barros 1995:285)

We can see here the underlying ideological nature of the process whereby the phonemic principle came to be accepted widely both within linguistics and outside (for example, in the fields of education and literacy) as the only truly scientific answer to the problem of “reducing

a language to writing”. Having achieved this acceptance, it has not been seriously challenged within mainstream linguistics.

Choice of symbols

While the phonemic principle itself remains unchallenged, choices have had to be made regarding which symbols should represent which phoneme. At least for American and European linguists, the choice has principally been one between using symbols of the Roman alphabet either with values as assigned in the International Phonetic Alphabet, or as used in the conventional orthography of a European language which is used in the region where the newly-written language is spoken. This choice has itself been the subject of disagreements among linguists. For example, according to Barros (1995:282), Swadesh, a secular linguist involved in indigenous education, wanted indigenous alphabets to be “completely moulded” by the phonetic alphabet, for example, without using capital letters. On the other hand, the S.I.L. linguists argued that the alphabets for indigenous Central American languages should use the conventions of Spanish as far as possible.

We can see an echo of the S.I.L. position in the much more recent statement of Coulmas (1989: 233):

> Given that [transitional literacy facilitating later literacy in a language of wider communication] is a major objective of designing an orthography for a hitherto unwritten language, it is highly desirable that the new orthography differ as little as possible from that language of wider communication which is of greatest functional value for the speech community in question.

Clearly, there is an ideological agenda here underlying the choice of symbols for phonemes. If the “objective” of indigenous alphabetisation is transitional literacy, then it may well be “highly desirable” to use the conventions of the language in which “real” literacy will be acquired later. But *whose* objective is this, and who decides the objectives, linguists or the speakers of the indigenous language?

Interestingly, in the relatively few cases in the literature on orthography where choice of conventions is explicitly the subject of dispute, native speakers of the language concerned have sometimes shown a preference for conventions *unlike* those of the “language of wider communication.” For example, Powers (1990: 497), in a rejoinder to a review of his book *Sacred Language: the Nature of Supernatural Discourse in Lakota* in which he was criticised for his choice of orthography, says this:

> The [University of Colorado] orthography, despite its ability to distinguish between phonemes, **is seen to be too similar to English**, and therefore confusing (where ph=f, etc.). Equally cumbersome is the diacritically overloaded orthography used in early linguistic anthropology [...] **These orthographies also are regarded as products of White, academic linguistics** frequently classified as a subset of White, academic anthropology. In this battle over correct orthography, the Lakota scholar still prefers "missionary" orthography over others, and I believe that Lakota speakers should be entitled to choose whatever orthography suits them, even when it doesn't correspond to the orthographic programs proffered by linguists. [Emphasis mine - MS]

In an unusual example of “action research”, Priestly (1992) invited speakers of the Slovene dialect Selsq (which has about 1000 speakers) to a meeting in a village hall, where he gave them the opportunity to vote for different alternative symbols to represent the phonemes of the dialect. Priestly based his alternatives on three principles: firstly, "orthographies must be

LEARNABLE" - in other words, not too complex for native speakers to use; secondly, "orthographies must be FAMILIAR" - based on what, if anything, speakers already know (in this case, how to write Standard Slovene and Standard German); thirdly, "orthographies must be PANLECTAL - i.e. they must they must take into account the orthography of related words known from other dialects and languages." In practice, there were only a few phonemes where a symbol needed to be chosen, as many Selsq phonemes could simply be written using the symbol for the cognate Slovene phoneme. However, in the case of /// , the local reflex of Slovene /k/, an overwhelming majority of those present preferred <q> to <k> to represent the phoneme. This was in spite of the fact that Slovene /k/ was regularly pronounced as [/] in Selsq, i.e. the difference was purely at the phonetic level. Priestly observes: “I was not able to investigate their motives, but believe (from my knowledge of the villagers) that the appeal to the "distinctive" character of the village and of the dialect was decisive" (p.308).

Similarly, in a vote to determine the representation of the phonemes /h/ and /x/, all but one villager chose, out of four alternatives offered, the "strictly local" solution (<h> for /h/, <ħ> for /x/) which was not compatible with either the German or Slovene conventions[15].

These two examples show that just as linguists often have an agenda which is ideologically driven - though not explicitly so - which puts emphasis on the application of the phonemic principle, native speakers of the language concerned bring their own social and cultural considerations to the choice of symbols to be used for writing their language[16]. If we can accept that the “neutrality” of the phonemic principle is itself a product of an ideological position, rather than a “hard fact”, it ceases to be surprising that characters of a writing system are “symbols” not merely in the narrow sense of representing phonemes, but in the wider sense of objects which have cultural meaning for their users.

Conclusions

An “autonomous” approach to the orthography of British Creole might find British Creole writers’ practices of little merit. To the basic structure of Standard English orthography, which already diverges from the phonemic principle, these writers haphazardly add unprincipled and inconsistent adaptations. Where these serve a purpose at all they are apparently intended to represent the sound differences which the writers perceive between Creole and non-Creole pronunciations of words. Sometimes nonstandard spellings are used even when there is *no* real difference in pronunciation. These are difficult to explain, except perhaps as due to a failure to understand (or inability to apply) the phonemic priniciple.

From the viewpoint of an *ideological* approach to orthography, on the other hand, we can see British Creole writers’ practices as products of a desire to emphasise that the language being written is different from Standard English. This is achieved both through a focus on actual phonetic differences between Creole and British pronunciations, and by taking advantage of the ambiguities and duplications in Standard English orthography (for example, the fact that both <c> and <k> can represent /k/), choosing, where a choice exists, the symbol which Standard English does *not* use. Thus by treating orthography as a set of cultural practices rather than simply a system for “reducing” speech to writing, we are able to account for writers’ choices in terms of an implicit ideology of difference (“*Abstand*”) between the creole and the lexifier.

The implications of such an approach are not confined to creole languages. Indeed, the orthographic systems of many other languages may warrant exploration and discussion in

terms of this approach, both where orthography has developed without the intervention of linguists - as in the British Creole case - and where linguists have “provided” the orthography - as in many of the cases discussed by Barros (1995). Such studies, rather than locating themselves within the spheres of phonology and/or language planning as is traditional, could be seen as part of the growing body of research into *literacy practices* (Scribner and Cole 1981). The development of *orthographic practices* in a community would thus become a necessary part of the study both of the history of its writing systems and the study of its contemporary culture of literacy.

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APPENDIX 1

SONNY'S LETTAH by Linton Kwesi Johnson (extract)

Version A:

Mama,
mek Ah tell y'u whey dem dhu to him:
dem t'ump him in him belly
an it turn to jelly
dem lick him pan him he'd
but it tuff like le'd
dem lick him pan him back
an' him rib get pap
dem kick him in him seed
an' it started to bleed

Mama,
Ah jus' could'n' stan-up deh
an' noh dhu not'n':

soh mi jook one in him eye
an' him started to cry;
mi t'ump one in him mout'
an' him started to shout
mi kick one pan him shin
an' him started to spin
mi t'ump him pan him chin
an' him drap pan a bin
an de'd.

Mama, more policeman come dung
an' beat mi to di grung;
dem charge Jim fi sus;
dem charge mi fi murdah.

Version B:

Mama,
mek Ah tel y'u whey dem dhu to him:
Dem tump him in him belly
an it turn to jelly;
dem kick him pon him back
an' him rib get pap;
dem lick him pon him head
but it tuff like lead;
dem kick him in him seed
an' it started to bleed.

Mama,

a jus couldn't stan up
an no dhu notin
so mi juk one ina im eye
an him started to cry
mi tump one ina him mouth
an him started to shout
mi kick one pon him shin
an him started to spin
mi tump him pon him chin
an him drop pon a bin
an crash an DEAD.

Mama
more police man come down
an beat mi to di groun'
dem charge Jim fi sus
dem charge mi fi murder

APPENDIX 2

(Written) answers to the question: *Do you intentionally spell words which exist in both Creole/Patois and Standard English in a non-Standard way, and if so, for what purpose?*

Yes, to lend *oral* authenticity to the *writing*, if the writing is in creole. (Poet/Novelist)

To indicate that *context* is non-English. (Novelist)

Occasionally yes, words that are prevalent in both, to emphasise pronunciation. (Novelist)

Sound (Poet/Dub artist)

I think that what I use to transcribe Jamaican patois is a partially phonetic system so as to try to reproduce the sounds of the spoken language as accurately as possible while at the same time keeping the spelling as close as feasible to what speakers of a non-Jamaican or non-Black background are used to. (Novelist)

Yes I do so that words cannot be confused with Standard English. I also expect the Black British Jamaicans to be able to identify with my poems and the words used. (Poet)

Writing my work down is a compromise for me, I have to spell words in a non-standard way. I want the reader to get a good idea of the "sound" and if possible to read the word aloud. (Poet)

Brief biography

Mark Sebba has been a lecturer in the Department of Linguistics and Modern English Language at Lancaster University since 1989. His interests include language contact, bilingualism, corpus linguistics and orthography. His previous publications include *The Syntax of Serial Verbs* (John Benjamins, 1987), a study of verb forms in creoles, West African and other languages, *London Jamaican* (Longman, 1993), on the language of young Caribbeans born in London and *Contact Languages: Pidgins and Creoles* (Macmillan, 1997).

Zusammenfassung

Wo Phonologie und Ideologie einander treffen: die Bedeutung onthographischer Konventionen im Britischen Kreol

Dieses Artikel behandelt die Orthographie einer unstandardisierten schriftlichen Sprachvarietät, des Kreol, mit primär Englischem Lexikon, das von Britishen Schriftstellern mit karibischen Vorfahren verwendet wird.

Die Beispiele stammen von einem Korpus schriftlichen Kreols, der von in Großbritannien lebenden Schriftstellern mit karibischen Erbe produziert wurde. Orthographie wird hier im folgenden Sinn verwendet: eine Anzahl von orthographischen Praktiken die Autoren verwenden, um eine Sprache zu repräsentieren, für die es keine standardisierte Konventionen gibt. Ich argumentiere, daß, obwohl die Rechtschreibung des Kreol stark varieiert, die Schriftsteller/Verfasser der Texte - möglicherweise unbewußt - - wählen, die die Unterschiede zwischen Kreol und Standard Englisch hervorheben.

Ich argumentiere daß, man sich Orthographie, wie *literacy* nach Street (1984), auf zwei Arten nähern kann: auf der Basis eines “autonomen” Modells oder eines “ideologischen”. Ich argumentiere weiter, daß man die orthographischen Praktiken zeitgenössischer Britischer Kreolschriftsteller nur unter Annahme des “ideologischen”Modells verstehen kann.

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[1] "Creole" here is used as a convenient cover term for the related English-lexicon Creoles of the "Anglophone" Caribbean (but not including, for example, Sranan Tongo, spoken in Surinam, which has diverged from English over the course of three centuries.)

[2] See, for example, Devonish (1986:23-24).

[3] From this point onward I shall use the term *British Creole* to mean the British variety of Jamaican Creole unless otherwise stated.

[4] Winer (1990:247) discusses the use of apostrophes to signal both genuine differences from more standard pronunciations (e.g. *an'* "and") and to create a kind of eye-dialect where there is no real difference of pronunciation to signal (e.g. *bac'* "back"). She notes that "in some cases this practice reflects a view of vernacular as a deviant, debased, deformed or broken kind of standard English."

[5] This work was supported by a British Academy Small Personal Research Grant, No. BA-AN1735/APN2007. Much of the work of collecting the texts, and all the work of transferring them to machine-readable form and marking-up, was done by Sally Kedge, to whom I am indebted also for many extremely useful insights.

[6] There is of course no one “standard” pronunciation which corresponds to written Standard English. Writers based in Britain seem to treat Standard English orthography as an approximate representation of British English pronunciation.

[7] See, for example, Allerton (1982:59): “The phonetic differences which are really significant for the alphabet-maker are those which affect the number of phonemic distinctions a speaker makes or which relate to the actual words in which he uses each of his phonemes. The precise phonetic value he gives his phonemes (or, better, his allophones) in each of the various phonetic contexts in which they occur is only of minor importance.

[8] These differences seem to be of an order comparable to the different pronunciations of a Standard English word in different parts of England, for example the vowel sound of *grey* as pronounced in the accent of Manchester (/ɛ:/) as opposed to London (/aɪ/) (Allerton 1982:61).

[9] There is, however, a difference in the vowel of the British English and Creole pronunciations of this word, which is [ʌ] in Southern British English but [0] in Creole. This difference never seems to be flagged by non-conventional spellings (the attested spelling *luv* for *love* may be an exception.) Interestingly, this difference is also one which apparently is not salient for speakers wanting to produce adaptions of London English to make it sound like Creole; cf. (Sebba 1993:53) “it does appear that for some speakers, this point of difference between LE and JC falls below a "salience threshold" which leads it to be ignored for adaptation purposes.”

[10] A grammatical analogue of the choice of nonstandard spelling would be the phenomenon usually called *recreolisation*, which in the case of British Creole speakers involves a process of focussing on Jamaican Creole as a norm maximally distinct from Standard English. (See Sebba 1993:44).

[11] It could be argued that “k” is used in “catch”, “can’t” and “carry” to signal a front glide which characterises the Jamaican Creole, but not British English, pronunciation of these words: /kjach kjaan kjari/. This explanation cannot be used for “cool,” “come” or “Jamaica.” In some cases, it may be that the respelt character is not itself the one that is pronounced differently, but functions as a kind of diacritic, e.g. Jamaka = /jamieka/ (the vowel of the second syllable is a falling diphthong in Jamaican popular speech - Wells (1982:576). Likewise in *tuff* and ‘*nuff* it is the vowel (RP /Z/, JC /#/) rather than the final consonant which is pronounced differently in the two language varieties.

[12] Some of this may be hard for readers to interpret if they are not familiar with Creole. Free translation: Old woman, why do you squeeze up in a semi (i.e. semidetached house) on your own and fret? Aren’t you afraid of isolation, dampness and wet? Old woman, I pity you, your greying makes me sad, if only you would pack that grip, that alone would make me glad...Old woman, I’m not cursing you, for experience is written on your face. I respect all my elders so I’m calling down no disgrace.

[13] However, writers publishing in the 1990s are tending to develop their own nonstandard conventions, cf. the following representation of Edinburgh Scots from Irvine Welsh, *Trainspotting* (Minerva, 1993):

> - Ah'm gittin a boatil ay J.D. n eight cans ay Export. Ah might git Lorraine tae fill up a couple ay draftpaks n aw.
> - Thill be a couple ay draftpaks gittin well filled up oan the train gaun doon, he sais.

[14] Macaffee also notes (1983:40) that "the attention focussed on orthography by some writers provides in addition many *ad hoc* spellings, sometimes representing detail at the level of phonetic realisation".

[15] The Selsq phoneme /x/ is written "h" in cognate words in Standard Slovene, "ch" in German. Selsq /h/ is the reflex of Slovene /g/ (written "g") or German /h/ (written "h"). The "local solution" for Selsq involves a new symbol with a diacritic "9" for /x/, and the symbol "h" for /h/, which is in keeping with the German but not the Slovene convention.

[16] There are many other examples in the literature which illustrate the same point. For example, in an episode reminiscent of the Haitian spelling debate, Rothstein notes (1977:229) that "for some this challenge to Polish cultural traditions [i.e., the reformed orthography] was a threat from the East [i.e. the communist Soviet Union] while for others it was a Jewish plot." Garvin (1954:129) observes of his efforts to produce an orthography for Ponape: "The problem of devising an acceptable spelling system, which initially might have appeared purely, or at least primarily, a linguistic matter, upon closer inspection thus turned out to be a language and culture problem par excellence." Herrero Valeiro (1993) and Alvarez-Caccamo and Herrero Valeiro (1996) give accounts of the ideological battles over Galician orthography.