

Variation and Change in Postcolonial Contexts

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Edited by

Rita Calabrese, J. K. Chambers
and Gerhard Leitner

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

“FULLING DI SPIES”:
PROMOTING BILINGUALISM IN JAMAICAN
NEWSPAPERS AND BLOGS

ELEONORA FEDERICI
AND MANUELA COPPOLA¹

Introduction

Our paper intends to investigate the promotion of bilingualism in Jamaica through the use of online newspapers and blogs. In the last two decades, scholars such as Hubert Devonish (1986) and Velma Pollard (2003) have discussed the need to recognize Jamaican as a language, not only for ideological issues, but mainly for practical reasons. The bone of contention is the great difficulty of standardizing written Jamaican English, which still seems to be an oral form of communication. An important step in phonetic transcription was the system created by Frederic Gomes Cassidy in 1961 which, however, has not been extensively utilized. In the second part of the essay we will analyze the example of Carolyn Cooper, one of the most active promoters of a bilingual language policy in Jamaica through the use of new media. A distinguished professor at the University of Mona, Jamaica, Cooper has widely popularized the use of written Jamaican in her bilingual column on the newspaper *Jamaica Observer* and currently writes a weekly column on the *Jamaica Gleaner*, both in print and online version. A contrastive analysis of her articles on the *Gleaner*, which have stirred much debate on the propriety of her language choice, and her blog, “Jamaica Woman Tongue”, will reveal the controversial use

¹ The paper has been discussed by the two authors: Eleonora Federici has written section 1 and 2, Manuela Coppola section 3, 4 and 5.

of Jamaican in the Press and how Cooper's pedagogical stance is more easily carried out in new textual typologies like blogs.

Fullin' di speis

The title of our paper outlines our intention to take into consideration the gap among experts (linguists and scholars) and users in the perception of Jamaican Creole use in written communication. "Fulling di space" refers to the visible space between educated people/scholars and speakers of JamC and to the new technological 'space' of internet which can be filled in a more informal and personal way. Can these spaces be filled? In which way is this act of 'filling' is connected to bilingualism in Jamaica? Why were newspapers and blogs chosen as the corpus of our analysis? Is bilingualism promoted through newspapers and blogs and how?

In his study on *Code Switching on the Web* (2006) Lars Hinrichs affirms that what is needed is: "a more realistic description of the reality of language use in society in Jamaica" (Hinrichs 2006, 10). What he is talking about is to what extent Creole has challenged English in the public space and how. Hinrichs has studied a corpus of private email by Jamaican University students and explored the functions of JamC in computer-mediated communication. In his perspective the social network of Creole writers is defined not only by cohabitation of a geographical space but more importantly, of shared social practices. Hinrichs's work can be read as an example of the "Third Wave Variation Studies" proposed by Penelope Eckert who affirmed that:

building on the findings of the first [quantitative] and second [ethnographic] Waves of Variation Studies, the third Wave focuses on the social meaning of variables. It views styles, rather than variables, as directly associated with categories, [...] In so doing [...] it views variables as located in layered communities. Since it takes social meaning as primary, it examines [...] any linguistic material that serves as social/stylistic purpose (Eckert 2005).

What is interesting is that Eckert shifts the focus from speaker categories to the construction of personae, social types located in a specific social order. From her point of view,

the individual constructs an identity – a sense of place in the social world – in balancing participation in a variety of communities of practice, and in forms of participation in each of those communities. And key to this entire process of construction is stylistic practice (ib.).

Therefore, variation constitutes a social semiotic system. Eckert's idea that variation constructs social meaning and is a force of social change is reiterated and developed by Hinrichs, who highlights the importance of writing in JamC and demonstrates how Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) has opened up new horizons for the use of Creoles. As a matter of fact, written Creole has always been used only experimentally by writers in their works or in newspaper columns with creolisms, direct loans and 'wrong' spelling. With the emergence of CMC, a domain became available in which writing the vernacular code of Jamaica was more acceptable. In personal communication like emails, blogs or forums, writers began to use both English and Creole in their writing, alternating between the two in meaningful strategies of code-switching. Also, in CMC genres the conventionalized "orthographic regime" (Sebba 2003) is permissive enough to allow forms that are clearly related to, but intentionally different from, standard English spellings (cfr. Hinrichs 2012). If, in the new textual genres which resulted from digital revolution – such as electronic-mail messages or postings in internet discussion forums – the co-existence of Creole and English in a strictly diglossic relationship is eroded, Jamaican Creole demonstrates its vitality and adaptations to different expressive resources, as we will see in websites and newspapers.

Crystal's idea of language revitalization through CMC and the development of signs of informality/low formality and written stylization of speech, can be helpful also in this analysis. There are three main issues to keep in mind: 1) a change in the function of Jamaican Creole 2) If CMC language is not written spontaneously (differently from speaking Creole) it is clearly influenced by rhetorical processes of meaning creation. 3) JamC in the written form of orthographic variation can be considered as a semi-otic resource through which social issues and relations among classes are expressed and created.

JamC: prestige, behaviour, language rights

A central debate in the web on the use of JamC is language prestige and behaviour. As Craig has underlined, JamC in writing is perceived negatively by some speakers. First of all, there is disagreement among linguists on questions pertaining the Jam situation: is JamC a language and therefore Jamaicans are bilingual, or not? Is Jamaican Creole a dialect of English inferior to the standard? In the sociolinguistic situation of Jamaica, Jamaican Creole is usually thought as an oral language. It co-existed throughout its history with its lexifier language, a standard English. The local variety of English is used as the formal code while JamC as the most

informal code. Various have been the publications on Jamaican Creole since the 1960s: Bailey's *Jamaican Creole Syntax* (1966); Cassidy's *Jamaica Talk: Three Hundred Years of the English Language in Jamaica* (1971); Le Page and Tabouret Keller's *Acts of Identity. Creole Based Approaches to Language and Ethnicity* (1985) and recent publications which have taken into account the JamC of the diaspora, like Patrick's *Urban Jamaican Creole* (1999) or Sebba's *London Jamaican* (1993). These publications report and analyse a post Creole continuum in which a Creole (JamC) coexists with a local variety of English (JamE). JamC is closely related to English at the lexical level with strong influences from West African languages in syntax, morpho-syntax and phonology. However, in the continuum,

JamC and JamE are two of a large number of lects in the cline from standard to increasingly Creole speech: the acrolect (English) and the basilect (Creole). Between these two extreme poles of the continuum there are imputationally ordered, mesolectal forms of speech (Hinrichs 2006, 9).

We have therefore a degree of creoleness/standardness, already outlined in 1971 by De Camp according to whom in the Creole continuum model any speaker commands more than just one lect.

Another important issue to be considered is diglossia where the high language variety is used in a public formal domain and the low language variety is spoken in private informal interactions. In the Jamaican diglossic situation English is the only language speakers have been told to write so that the H language is the language through which literacy is taught. This is why Devonish has linked diglossia to socio-political phenomena of dominance and subordination: "class conflict expresses itself in diglossic situations by way of the distribution of functions between the two language varieties involved" (Devonish 1986, 9). He affirms that the ruling class prevents the lower classes from acquiring the H language channelling the access to power, technology, information (Devonish 1996). As Lalla and D'Costa have outlined, already in the 1960s the textualization of JamC in literature, music and folklore and the process of nation building after Independence called for a debate on the standardization of the Jamaican vernacular. The function of writing in the Creole language becomes central, it is the exclusion from this domain that should be fought.

The issue of prestige is strictly linked to another one, the position of Creole language rights. Devonish's studies on official language policies are strongly connected to the issue of education which also produced a stigmatization of Creole (Devonish 1983 and 1986). He asked for a modification of language policy in favour of Creole speakers who did not have

competence in the standard language. Together with Velma Pollard he supported the adoption of a bilingual approach to language teaching. Linguists at the University of West Indies in Mona created a “language Unit” conducting a pilot project in bilingual education for primary education (grades one to four). The Bilingual project addresses: the writing system issue; the literacy materials; the political and social attitudes associated with the use of JamC as a means of instruction. In the Draft Language Education Policy of 2001 the Jamaican language situation could not be declared bilingual nor was it possible to ascribe equal status to StE and JamC on the grounds that there is no agreed orthography for Jamaican Creole. In 2007 Ronald Morren and Diane Morren published “Are the goals and objectives of Jamaica’s bilingual education project being met?” a report on the outcome of an external, formative evaluation of the Bilingual Education Program and affirmed that JamC was not officially endorsed as a medium of instruction.

Devonish proposed the official recognition of JamC as a language and a range of related measures such as the adoption of an official spelling system. The choice of writing system and orthography became a socio-political issue. In so doing in fact, it is possible to: 1) dis-associate the spelling of a language with other orthography traditions; 2) represent a language/nation; 3) legitimate JamC as a separate language because orthography is used as a symbol of standardization. From this perspective orthography becomes a social practice. In fact, as Hellinger underlines, “A Creole orthography will strengthen the structural and psychological identity of the Creole; facilitate native speakers’ identification with the Creole language and culture” (Hellinger 1986, 67). The choice of a writing system and orthography is certainly a sensitive socio-political issue in diglossic areas, as Schiefflin and Doucet emphasise regarding the Haitian situation: “it is a way of imaging the past and the future of a community” (Schieffelin 1998, 285).

Devonish referred to Frederic Gomes Cassidy’s transliteration system, a phonemic spelling system where JamC vowels and consonants are represented (1961). It is a morpho-phonemic orthography based on a closer phoneme/grapheme correspondence codified in a Dictionary (Cassidy 1961) which has not been used in preference to an English-oriented spelling. The so-called ‘sociolinguistics of spelling’ has pointed out that in vernacular writing, both the choice of a spelling variant that is supplied by the standard variety, and the choice of a spelling that departs from an existing standard version in some way, constitute ‘social action’ (Sebba 2007, ch. 2), i.e. they transport social meaning by either complying with or breaking existing norms. The vast majority of users of written Jamaican

Creole, however, borrow the standard English spellings or more creatively, invent spellings of Creole words for which neither an English model nor any other convention is available. As Mair (2002, 6) has outlined,

most Creole elements in written texts are sealed off from the dominant English context by quotation marks which indicate that what is reported is not the writer's own speech but that of some social inferior, by other metalinguistic signals of distance, or by genre conventions which allow the Creole to appear in personalized glosses, in blurbs in cartoons, or in proverbs, but not in the more serious, objective or information-based genres.

However, something is happening. JamC has been increasing its prestige and becoming acceptable to use in domains where only English was used. Shields-Brodber talks about:

a functional dethronement of StE as the exclusive language of public formal domains [...]; an increased audibility and visibility as well as legitimacy in public/formal contexts which are accruing to JamC or about the productive bilingualism of educated communicators who traditionally, would have chosen to project a monolingual – in –l English-identity (Shields Brodber 1997, 64).

A similar approach has been presented by Christie (2003) and by Wasink who has foreseen “seeds of change” in changing attitudes towards Jamaican Creole. Similarly Mühleisen (2002) has dedicated part of her volume to the increasing prestige of English-lexifier Caribbean Creoles. In her study Sand (1999) has focused on creolisms, direct loans and wrong spelling in newspapers. In their comparative analysis of Nigerian Pidgin and Jamaican Creole, Deuber and Hinrichs (2007) have suggested the possibility of adoption of different orthographic systems for different purposes. In 2010 Migge, Leglise and Bartens analysed how much creoles are publicly accepted and sanctioned in education in different geographical areas including Jamaica. In 2011 Hinrichs and White Sustaita affirmed that writers living in Jamaica prefer using spelling choices to mark code-switches between English and Creole, and thus to construct symbolic distance between the codes.

Language practices, and the use of Creoles, find their meanings in situated social and spatial environments in which they are interpreted and developed. These environments are in constant change and so is the use of written language especially in the new media. The emergence of written JamC can be seen as a performative social act (cfr. Pennycook 2010).

“Writing Jamaican the Jamaican Way”: new trends on the Web

This section, discussing a corpus from Carolyn Cooper’s articles from the *Gleaner*’s Digital Archive and from her blog, (W)uman Tong(ue), will suggest that the use of new textual typologies like blogs have not only demonstrated the full functionality of JamC in written domains, but have also helped to popularize the use of the standardized Cassidy spelling system in quality newspapers, thus reviving the cause of bilingual education in Jamaica. The Cassidy system has been considered by academics the crucial instrument to encourage literacy in JamC precisely for its neat ideological distancing from English spelling conventions. For this reason, in recent years a variety of tools, from bilingual grammars (Adams 1991) to blogs and websites, have been deployed to popularize the Cassidy System.

The bilingual website *Jumieka Langwij* (<http://www.jumieka.com>) represents an illuminating example of these efforts. Conceived, designed and maintained by Larry Chang, a native speaker of Jamaican, amateur linguist and philologist, this site provides useful tools to learn Jamaican and its history. Every section, from “Aatagrafi” to “Vokiabileri” and “Ischri” boasts its translated SE version (“Orthography”, “Vocabulary”, “History”), in compliance with its status of “Di wol fos bailinggual ahn muos kam-priensiv Jumiekan/Ingglisch websait”(The world’s first bilingual and most comprehensive Jamaican/English website). The site is in fact specifically designed to improve the knowledge of Jamaican and to teach it in a contrastive way by using the Cassidy system; it has a “Grammar section”, a Dictionary, a “Guide to Pronunciation and spelling”, a section “Idioms” providing a list of idiomatic expressions, riddles, and proverbs, and so on. However, it is quite significant that the only sentence in the website which has not been translated into SE is the website’s motto: “Piipl widoutn nalij a dem paas ischri, harijin ahn kolcha kom iin laka chrii widoutn ruut.” The quotation from Jamaican-born Marcus Garvey (1887-1940), the founder and leader of the “Back to Africa” movement in the United States, powerfully strengthens the importance of knowing one’s history, origin and culture; otherwise, people are just “trees with no roots”.

A further use of the Internet in the promotion of bilingual education in Jamaica is the commissioning of a dancehall song to promote the first commercial publication released by the Jamaican Language Unit (JLU). The handbook, *Writing Jamaican the Jamaican Way/Ou Fi Rait Jamiekan* (2009), is intended as “a guide to writing a language that is already known to the majority of its users”, (The Jamaican Language Unit 2009, 5)

structured in ten lessons and supported by a CD to supplement the writing tasks. The song, performed by Jamaican artist Gem Stone, combines entertainment and pedagogical purposes touching on issues of national identity via language. The lyrics call for the use of Jamaican Creole alongside Standard Jamaican English in schools and invite Jamaicans to be proud of their mother tongue, at the same time illustrating the Cassidy system. Moreover, the idea of using dancehall music to popularize the publication is further supported by posting the video on a Youtube channel, Jamaican Language company (JLC), that offers a variety of programming in Jamaican Creole ranging from news commentary and interviews in association with the Jamaican Language Unit.

Carolyn Cooper's (W)uman Tong(ue)

A distinguished Professor of Literary and Cultural Studies at the University of Mona, Jamaica, Carolyn Cooper has greatly contributed to the promotion of bilingualism in Jamaica by introducing JamC in written communication. In her 1993 study *Noises in the Blood*, for example, Cooper pioneered the use of the Cassidy system in written academic communication. In this case, she interestingly used it in one of the chapters to discuss the work of the Sistren Collective, a Jamaican women organization employing popular theatre techniques and personal testimonies to explore the social, political and legal condition of Jamaican women using both English and Jamaican in their experimental work *Lionheart Gal: Lifestories of Jamaican Women* (1986). JamC is here used as a critical medium to show that it can function in an academic domain, but orthography also plays a crucial role. In order to criticize the orthographic compromise of the collection's editors, Cooper shifts to JamC in her academic critique, polemically claiming that she will "use the Cassidy system which differs markedly from the English oriented orthography of the *Lionheart Gal* text" (Cooper 1993: 91).

In her "From Beowulf to Bounty Killers: Or How I Ended Up Studying Slackness", Dr Cooper continues her "experiments with Jamaican as a language of literary analysis", performing a written code switching from academic Standard English to JamC through the inclusion of an excerpt from her inaugural professorial lecture, "Professing Slackness: Language, Authority and Power Within the Academy and Without" (Cooper 2010a, 136). Quite significantly, although she claims her competence in the Cassidy system, on that occasion she chooses a "personalised orthography". As the oral delivery of the text required "absolute fluency in Jamaican," she crafted an idiosyncratic orthography that would prevent her from

“stumbling over the text” (Cooper 2010a, 136). Cooper’s choice significantly suggests that the Cassidy system is more appropriate for written communication, but apparently less suitable for oral performances.

In particular, in line with her commitment to strengthen Jamaican identity through Jamaican language, Cooper has called for the use of JamC as “a prime medium for reporting national and international news” (Cooper 2009). Her openly pedagogical aim to popularise the Cassidy system through bilingual newspaper articles represents the first deliberate attempt by an academic to introduce this system to a wider public (Sebba 2000, 185). Her collaboration with newspapers dates back to the 1990s, when she started writing a popular bilingual column called “(W)uman Tong(ue)” for the *Jamaican Observer*. She currently writes a weekly column for *The Gleaner*, Jamaica’s oldest newspaper founded in 1834, and her articles appear on the online version, thus considerably widening her target audience. Her predecessors can be considered Jamaican national poet Louise Bennett (Miss Lou), whose column of Jamaican verses in the 1940s in the *Gleaner* was a huge success, and Barbara Gloudon who, in her satirical ‘Stella seh’ in the same newspaper, wrote the first columns using Jamaican Creole on a regular basis through the 1960s and 1970s. Yet, however innovative, both columns confined Creole to satirical, humorous articles, and the writers consistently used the “traditional” modified Standard English orthography.

Both *The Gleaner* and *The Observer* have hosted in the past few years the debate on Jamaican Language Policy, publishing various articles by scholars and intellectuals. However, they were mostly written in SE, while occasional sentences in JamC were reported in inverted commas and written using the modified orthography. On the contrary, Cooper has been systematically including JamC in her articles, switching from SE to mesolectal and basilectal forms without any typographic mark signalling the distance of these forms from the “standard” language:

Until we admit that a child’s home language plays a fundamental role in shaping intellectual development, **nutten nah go gwaan fi whole heap a pikni who fa teacher a tell dem seh dem chat bad an cyaan learn nutten. An dat a wa wi ha fi change. Or all a dem Olympic medal naa go mean nutten much.** (Cooper 2008)

Switching is a “consciously employed stylistic strategy” (Hinrichs 2006, 38). However, Cooper is well aware that the valorisation of Jamaican as an autonomous language is more effectively conveyed through an autonomous orthographic system. For this reason, she has described the

anglicised orthography for Jamaican Creole as “colonialism inscribed” (Cooper 1993, 21).

As a consequence, the persistent stereotype of Jamaican Creole as a corrupt version of English has perpetuated a colonial image of Jamaicans and their language. As late as 1989, the white Jamaican journalist Morris Cargill wrote a column in the *Sunday Gleaner* titled “Corruption of language is no cultural heritage” in which he attempted to ridicule the arguments in support of bilingual education. Cooper’s response to Cargill’s contemptuous article was written in the ‘corrupt’ language and using the Cassidy orthographic system: “Cho! Misa Cargiill, Riispek Juu” (Cooper 1989, 8). While Cargill, trained as a lawyer, commenting on her response claimed that he “couldn’t make head or tail of the maze of phonetics”, Cooper has significantly argued that the postman in her neighbourhood, Andrew Sewell, “could certainly find his way through the ‘maze.’” Commenting on Cooper’s articles, Mr Sewell reportedly said that the Cassidy writing system “full di space of our real African language. It ful di spies af owa rial Afrikan langgwij.” This “fulling di spies” confirms the perception that the Cassidy system highlights and emphasizes the differences from Standard English. According to Cooper, in fact, “[t]he very strangeness of the orthography restores to Jamaican its integrity”.

However, the editorial policy of the *Gleaner* did not allow her to write a whole column in Jamaican until recently, restricting her to no more than one paragraph per week. In order to overcome these restraints, in 2010 she opened a bilingual blog, *Jamaica Woman Tongue*, where she started translating her weekly column into Jamaican, hoping “that by reading this blog regularly many Jamaicans will become literate in our mother tongue” (Cooper 2010b). As Hinrichs notes, the “hybrid”, informal nature of blogs has fascinated linguists for its mixing of features of written and oral language. And yet he argues that apparently “oral” features are in fact the product of intentional, conscious linguistic acts. In this light, Cooper’s code switching and mixing in her blog fully explores the flexibility of the medium. Since new textual typologies like blogs (whose analysis however goes beyond the scope of the present article) clearly allow more space for experimentation, Cooper’s language policy has thus been carried out more easily and with fewer restraints. As examples from the blog posts illustrate, Cooper has not limited herself to simply translating from one language to the other, but she has also often mixed SE with JamC – written both in modified orthography and in the Cassidy system – comfortably and unpredictably shifting between the two codes.

In the same text, as the example below illustrates, Cooper uses different codes and different strategies to signal the switch. While at first she

uses brackets to signal the direct speech of her conversation with her interlocutor (a Rastaman selling in Papine Market) interrupting the StE, she ends the paragraph with two sentences where there is no typographic sign marking the shift to JamC:

So wat we a get outa it?” That’s the question I was asked by a rather sceptical Rastaman, Raymond, who sells in Papine Market. He seemed to think that VW of America, Inc. owed Jamaicans something for the viral super bowl ad which has gotten two million more hits since play day. Well over twelve million in all! “How yu mean?”, I asked. “We can’t stop people from trying to talk like us!” The man just **kiss im teeth**. Obviously, I was a big **eedyat**. (Cooper 2013a)

When Cooper needs to describe the gesture of the Rastaman, the typical “teeth kissin”, or “sucking”, she resorts to JamC smoothly incorporating it in the StE text. “Kiss-teeth”, or “suck teeth” is an African-derived oral sound “produced by a velaric ingressive airstream involving closure at two points in the mouth: against the velum (using the back of the tongue), and farther forward.”² Although it is considered rude, this phenomenon is widely used across the Caribbean as an effective non-linguistic form of communication expressing the speaker’s reproach, contempt, annoyance, impatience and a variety of other (generally) negative feelings. As a pragmatic system, it is often accompanied by a set of paralinguistic gestures which convey the distinctiveness of the Creole speech community. To further illustrate the man’s reproach, Cooper spells the word “idiot” as “eedyat”, using a modified Standard English orthography.

While her blog provided much more freedom, the promotion of the use of Jamaican in written communication has predictably been quite controversial, stirring much debate on the propriety of her language choice. In 2010, for example, some readers reacted to two articles containing a whole paragraph in Jamaican posting outraged comments on the online version of the *Gleaner*. The comments angrily focused on the “inappropriate” language choice for a newspaper. The upset readers argued that they had no problem with Jamaican, as long as it was *spoken*: but they found it unacceptable that articles in the *Gleaner* should be written “like that.” While the attitude of these readers of Jamaica’s first quality newspaper testifies to the longstanding prejudice attached to Jamaican Creole, some comments interestingly blamed Cooper’s “elitist” choice, which excludes all those who are not familiar with the written form of the language. The point

² For a detailed analysis of the practice of “kiss teeth” see E. Figueroa-P.L. Patrick (2002).

made by these readers is paradoxically that the language used by Cooper is not accessible to the majority of Jamaicans. Both positions are summed up in the following comment:

Columnists should think about their audience when they are writing. If Carolyn is trying to reach out to the ordinary Jamaicans, I know for sure they will not waste their time to read this as they will not be able to follow it. This is absolute rubbish. Your intellect should tell you that the Jamaican dialect/patois is effective only when someone is listening to another person speaking it. This article is suited for one of your university lectures or some other public forum where you are required to deliver a speech, definitely not *The Gleaner*. (from *the Gleaner's* comments page)

Apparently, JamC has been considered acceptable in oral communication *and* in academic and literary contexts, but definitely not in the press. In her reply to the *Gleaner* readers, Cooper counters the first argument (i.e. Jamaican as an exclusively oral language) by stating that Jamaican has been a written language for years, quoting the studies of Barbara Lalla and Jean D'Costa (1990). As for the second, she contends that this is precisely the problem she is trying to address: namely, that most Jamaicans cannot read and write in their mother tongue. As she blames the illiteracy of Jamaicans in written Jamaican on the language policy that has ignored the importance of bilingual teaching, the scholar suggests that her articles strive to make written Jamaican more familiar, even in supposedly “official” spaces, addressing her efforts particularly to those people who proud themselves in being unable to read “Patwa”.

Such hostility towards the use of JamC in formal contexts testifies to the persistence of the social stigma attached to the supposedly L variety. However, in recent years the extensive use of JamC in CMC has evidently exposed the limits of the classic diglossic model. As Susanne Mühleisen has argued,

the model of diglossia with its simple dichotomy of H- versus L-language and its respective allocation of different functions proves too narrow a concept to capture contemporary interactions and changes within domains and (macro)-functions (Mühleisen 2002, 215-16).

Since “diglossia provides a description according to *functional* criteria” (Hinrichs 2006, 10) the changing functions of JamC cannot be accounted for according to this model. As JamC is increasingly gaining ground in the electronic mass media, “the diglossia of the past is being eroded” as Brodber-Shields suggested as early as 1997. In fact, although diglossia has been seen as an ideological tool to claim the independent status of JamC from

StE (see Sand), the erosion of this limiting model is nonetheless contributing to the use of written JamC in supposedly formal textual typologies, thus legitimating its status as independent language.

The third way: “chaka chaka”, “prapa-prapa” and the English translation

A further step in Cooper’s pedagogical intent to teach Jamaican Creole has been the recent decision of the *Gleaner*’s editors to allow Cooper a whole column per month in Jamaican as part of a five-month experiment. As a result, on 18 March 2013 she wrote her first article on the ghost of Chavez visiting the present Prime Minister of Jamaica, Portia Simpson Miller (Sista P), in three different versions (Cooper 2013c). The first is the ‘chaka-chaka’ (i.e. “untidy”) version, based on modified Standard English orthography; the second is written in what she calls “prapa-prapa”, the specialist phonemic system designed by Cassidy. Interestingly, the two Jamaican versions are followed by an English translation. In her words, the pedagogical intentions are very clear: “Adventurous readers will get a chance to learn the ‘prapa-prapa sistim’” (Cooper 2013b).

An analysis of the titles of the first four articles written so far shows a significant predominance of JamC (3 vs 1) and a totalizing presence of “chaka chaka” spelling:

1 Date	2 Title	Spelling type	
3 June 16 2013	4 JTA Bark An Bite	chaka chaka	
4.1 May 19 2013	4.2 <i>Every Hoe Have Dem Stick A Bush</i>	chaka chaka	
5 April 21 2013	6 Alpha Boys’ School Get New Logo	chaka chaka	absence of marker for the third singular person
7 March 18 2013	8 Chávez Duppy Dream Sista P	chaka chaka	

The publication of the three versions, the “prapa prapa” spelling opening the article, followed by the “chaka-chaka” and the English versions, undoubtedly functions as a pedagogical tool to initiate the readers to the unfamiliar Cassidy System. The comparative reading of the three versions in fact allows the reader who is literate in English to come to grips with the challenge of a spelling system that distances from StE orthographic

conventions. Moreover, the English translation may also prove useful for those readers who are not only unfamiliar with the Cassidy orthographic system, but also with written JamC. However, the analysis of an excerpt from the first article, “Chávez Duppy Dream Sista P”, provides some elements for the discussion of the flexibility of the “prapa prapa spelling”.

Prapa Prapa Spelin	Chaka-Chaka Spelling 9	SE translation 10
<p><i>Querida</i> Portia, mi glad fi si yu kom a mi fineral. Rispek dyuu! Bai di wie, yu fi taak tu di Prezident a yu Senet. Im no redi. Mi no laik ou im dis di Jostis Minista. 11</p>	<p><i>Querida</i> Portia, mi glad fi see yu come a mi finaral. Rispek due! By di way, yu fi talk to di President a yu Senate. Im no ready. Mi no like how im diss di Justice Minister. 12</p>	<p><i>Querida</i> Portia, I was so glad to see you at my funeral. Rispek due! By the way, you should have a word with the President of your Senate. He’s not on top of things. I didn’t like the way he dissed the Justice Minister. 13</p>

In the excerpt foreign words are signalled by the use of italic. The word *Querida* (“Dear”), used to mark Hugo Chavez’s linguistic identity, is present in all three texts. However, the English translation presents another sentence in italics. “Rispek due” is in fact a Jamaican expression for “paying respect”; its inclusion in the StE text signals a code mixing that is made very visible through the typographic mark of italics. By contrast, in both versions of the JamC article this example is smoothly incorporated in the text, leaving no trace of the mixing.³

On the other hand, the slang expression “he dissed” significantly presents no typographic sign to differentiate it from the StE text. “To diss” is in fact a verb originating from the JamC and AAVE for “to disrespect” and has now been incorporated in the slang. This testifies to the existence of “a very relaxed and informal variety modeled on colloquial AmE” (Hinrichs 2006, 44) within the English code. These examples thus illustrate how both “Jamaican versions” reduce the possibilities of code mixing that, on the contrary, the StE translation can fully explore.

³ The same instance can be found in the April trilingual article, “Alpha Boys’ School Get New Logo” (Cooper 2013d).

Cooper has always been conscious of the limitations of the Cassidy system. While she has recognized that its consistency and rigidity might represent “a drawback for readers literate in English”, reproducing the idea of Jamaica as an “unnatural” language, it is also evident that its regularity represents a limitation to the creative potential of written codeswitching.⁴ However, this recent experiment foregrounds new possible directions in the controversial use of Jamaican Creole in the press. In the May article, for instance, “Every Hoe Have Dem Stick A Bush”, in the comment section of Cooper’s blog a reader has raised the doubt that serious issues like the one dealt with in the article may not be taken seriously “because we/I have been socialized to believe that reading (as opposed to speaking) patois is for entertainment purposes or for amusement” (Cooper 2013e). This comment evidently highlights a crucial issue. Since Jamaicans have been “socialised” to believe that JamC is relegated to informal oral conversation or humorous written communication, they can similarly become familiar with the new function of the language. While Hinrichs contends that, despite the new impulse given to orthographic standardization, the advent of CMC “will not lead to the Creole establishing itself as a written language independent from English,” (Hinrichs 2006, 43) the work of Carolyn Cooper on the internet has undoubtedly contributed to revive the debate on bilingual education in Jamaica and has opened up new possibilities for the exploitation of CMC in the popularization of the Cassidy system and the related ideological issues. The “hybrid” tool of blogs, in particular, halfway between formal and informal writing, may serve as a bridge to popularize the use of a language traditionally associated with orality and a writing system generally perceived as difficult and hostile. For this reason, the recent “permission” allowed to Carolyn Cooper can probably be seen as reflecting a change in the perception of JamC in the press and, as a consequence, a next step in the promotion of bilingualism in Jamaica.

⁴ See for instance the degree of spelling creativity in CMC, dub poetry, or in the Corpus of British Jamaican Creole investigated by Mark Sebba, in which writers experiment with the possibilities offered by the modified standard English orthography.