ORIGINAL PAPER

De facto language education policy through teachers' attitudes and practices: a critical ethnographic study in three Jamaican schools

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Abstract   Using Jamaica, a former British colony where Jamaican Creole (JC) is the mass vernacular but Standard Jamaican English is the official language, as an illustrative case, this critical ethnographic study in three Jamaican schools examines the theoretical and practical challenges of language education policy (LEP) development and implementation in English-lexified Creole contexts where official recognition of the mass vernacular is absent and politically contentious; standard language ideology is pervasive; language boundaries are blurred; linguistic self-identification does not match actual language use; and language attitudes are deeply entrenched and contradictory. Data were collected and analyzed through classroom observations of six teachers over 9 months, interviews, demographic questionnaires, and curricular documents. Findings reveal conflicting teacher attitudes towards JC, and classroom practices heavily influenced by national examinations, that created a de facto LEP. Teachers simultaneously resisted and appropriated dominant linguicist ideologies in a Creole-speaking environment in response to actual vernacular language use in classrooms, adding a more complicated agentive dimension to Shohamy's (Language policy: hidden agenda and new approaches. Routledge, New York, 2006) framework linking ideologies to LEP through institutional structures.

Keywords   Jamaica · Creole · De facto language education policy · Attitudes

Introduction

The persistent academic underachievement among Creole-dominant speakers worldwide has been well documented (Christie 2003; Craig 1983; Nero 2001;

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Siegel 2007). In the US and especially in New York City (NYC), home to a large number of Creole-dominant speakers from the Anglophone Caribbean,[1] predominantly Jamaicans (NY Department of City Planning 2004), the problem has been particularly acute. Over the past 20 years, educators in NYC schools have struggled to find appropriate placement and instruction for a growing number of Creole-dominant speakers from Jamaica and other Anglophone Caribbean countries who publicly self-identify as native speakers of English, but whose productive abilities in standardized English are below grade level (New York City Department of Education website).

To date, policy initiatives to address the language and literacy development of English-lexified Creole, nonstandard English, and World English speakers within the US have been barely, inconsistently, or ineffectively implemented due to (a) confusion about whether to consider Creoles separate languages or dialects of English; (b) lack of resources and appropriate teacher training; and (c) insufficient knowledge of the language policies and practices to which Creole-speaking children are exposed in their home countries. In fact, a significant lacuna in the field of English language teaching more broadly has been an in-depth examination of language education policy in English-based Creole-speaking contexts (with the possible exception of Hawai'i).

The present study[2] addresses this gap by enhancing the knowledge base on language education policy (LEP) and practices in schools in one Creole-speaking country—Jamaica. Like other former British colonies in the Caribbean, Jamaica is an illustrative case of the theoretical and practical conundrum for LEP development in English-lexified Creole contexts. Although Creoles are recognized by linguists as languages in their own right, they are not recognized as such by most of the populations that speak them for historical and political reasons. Additionally, the boundaries between English-lexified Creoles and English are not clearly defined. What transpires in actual language use in Creole contexts is a continuum of speech varieties ranging bidirectionally from the *basilect* (most conservative creole) to the *mesolect* (mid-range mix of Creole and English) to the *acrolect* (a local standardized form of English) (Alleyne 1980; DeCamp 1971). Furthermore, because English is the official language and the medium of instruction in schools, and Creole, the mass vernacular, is stigmatized, the population is brought up to believe that they are native speakers of English only, despite actual language use. This study therefore attempts to understand the complexity of LEP development and implementation in Creole contexts such as Jamaica where official recognition of the mass vernacular is absent and politically contentious; standard language ideology[3] is pervasive; language

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[1] Anglophone Caribbean (commonly known as the West Indies): Includes all of the following island nations: Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Caricou, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, Montserrat, Nevis, St. Kitts, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, as well as the mainland countries of Guyana in South America, and Belize in Central America, where English is the official language and the medium of instruction in school on account of a shared history of British colonization.

[2] This study was conducted in Jamaica as part of a Fulbright Research Grant.

[3] Lippi-Green (1997) defines *standard language ideology* as the pervasive belief in the superiority of an abstracted and idealized form of language, based on the spoken language of the upper middle classes—the

boundaries are blurred; linguistic self-identification does not match actual language use; and language attitudes are deeply entrenched and contradictory.

Over the past 20 years, Jamaica has been engaged in major education reform, including the development of a draft LEP by the Jamaican Ministry of Education (MOE) (2001). This document became an important tool in the present study, which was a critical ethnography of its implementation in three Jamaican schools. The study revealed a lack of awareness of the draft LEP and instead a de facto LEP based on a confluence of contradictory teacher attitudes and practices that revealed a tension between pragmatism and adhering to standard language ideology within the complex linguistic realities of a Creole environment described above.

Overview of research on language education policy

Research on language policy (LP) and language education policy has evolved relative to the approaches to the policies and the methodological stance of various researchers. Early research focused on the restrictive power of language policies, where they were seen as top-down edicts in national language planning to solve "language problems" (Fishman 1979; Haugen 1972). It was presumed that such policies were filtered down uncontested to the classroom level. Later scholarship took a more critical approach to LP and LEP, exploring the ways in which language policies create/and or perpetuate social inequities, and subjugate language minorities in education, characterized as an ideology of *linguicism*[4] (Skutnabb-Kangas 1988).

More recent scholarship has taken a nuanced, agentive stance, foregrounding the dynamic, contested process from policymaking to implementation (Canagarajah 2005; Hornberger and Johnson 2007; Ramanathan 2005; Ricento 2006). Hornberger and Johnson (2007), for example, have called for more "ethnographies of language policy" which, they contend, "offer unique insights into LPP [language planning and policy] processes through thick descriptions of policy interpretation and implementation at the local level" (p. 511). In the same vein, Menken and García (2010) argue that "at each level of an educational system, from the national ministry or department of education to the classroom, language education policies are interpreted, negotiated, and ultimately (re)constructed in the process of implementation" (p. 1). This study answers Hornberger and Johnson's call by attending to the agentive, complicated process from policymaking to interpretation and practice with respect to speakers of Creoles and nonstandard varieties of English.

Footnote 3 continued

"standard language" (p. 64). This bias towards one language variety is imposed and maintained by the dominant groups in society who speak that variety, but is often internalized by everyone else as well.

[4] Skutnabb-Kangas (1988) defines *linguicism* as ideologies and structures that are used to legitimate, effectuate, and reproduce unequal division of power and resources (both material and nonmaterial) between groups that are defined on the basis of language.

Policy initiatives for speakers of nonstandard varieties of English and Creoles

A significant body of research on policies addressing nonstandard English speakers has centered on speakers of African American Vernacular English (AAVE). They include a landmark document put forth by the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) in 1974 entitled "Students Right to Their Own Language" (SRTOL), which sought to validate students' home language, especially in school. In addition, work by scholars such as Labov (1981), Rickford (2006), Smitherman (2000), Adger et al. (2007), and others have sought to not only document and validate the history and rule-governed nature of AAVE, but also to argue that its speakers have a right to use their language in school, and build on it for language and literacy development.

In the US, where assimilationist, monolingual (English-only) tendencies permeate public discourse, policies that seek to validate nonstandard language varieties in school are highly controversial (Perry and Delpit 1998). The most recent evidence of this was the national brouhaha that ensued in the wake of the 1996 Oakland Unified School District School Board Resolution, which sought to take AAVE (Ebonics) into account in the literacy development of African American children. The response reflected the public's negative attitudes towards, and misunderstanding of, nonstandard language varieties, particularly their role in school. AAVE, other ethnic varieties of American English such as Appalachian or Southern English, World Englishes and Creoles are viewed as inferior dialects of English by most of the public, several policymakers, and teachers, despite linguists' attempts to educate otherwise. Owing to such attitudes, guidelines for teaching speakers of these varieties such as those proposed in Temple Adger's TESOL Professional Paper (1997) have largely gone unnoticed or not yielded much concrete change in practice vis-à-vis these speakers.

Linguists have long established Creoles (spoken in the Caribbean, Hawaii, and elsewhere) as languages in their own right (Bickerton 1981; Devonish 1986; LePage and Tabouret-Keller 1985; Rickford 1987), but the reception to that research has met with varying degrees of resistance, particularly as it relates to the acceptance of Creoles in schools. Thus, policies to address the linguistic needs of English-based Creole speakers in schools such as those put forth by New York State Education Department (2011) or the Hawaiian Board of Education (Hawai'i Board of Education 1987), both of which sought to recognize the validity of Creole and use it as a basis for literacy development, have also met with outright resistance, skepticism or under resourced implementation. It is not a coincidence that these policy initiatives all relate to groups that are marginalized racially/ethnically and socioeconomically; hence, the stigmatization of their language. Jamaica is a poignant example of this.

The Jamaican context

The colonial history of plantation slavery in Jamaica, controlled by the British, left a rigidly socially stratified society in which the wealthy, lighter-complexioned minority upper class had access to better education and upward mobility, while the poor, dark-complexioned masses were deprived of access to education beyond the basic level,

and therefore trapped in a cycle of poverty (Sherlock and Bennett 1998). Although this state of affairs has improved in the post-independence era, with more access to primary and secondary education for the masses (Márquez 2010), Jamaica remains a socially stratified society. Not only is there greater income inequality relative to the US, but the colonial legacy has forestalled social mobility for masses of poor people because of blatant classism and deterministic educational policies and practices.

Nowhere is social stratification more evident than in Jamaican schools. Students from the upper middle and upper classes, who tend to be more proficient in Standard Jamaican English (SJE), attend the best primary schools (both government-run and private), which prepare them for high-stakes standardized tests, the results of which lead them into traditional academic secondary schools known for high scholastic achievement. On the other hand, poor children from Jamaican Creole (JC)-speaking backgrounds are disproportionately tracked into overcrowded, low-resourced, underperforming primary schools, which means they are less well-prepared for, and perform poorly on, standardized tests that lead to admission into traditional academic high schools (Evans 2001). Thus, they are by default "streamed" into what is known as a "Primary Junior High School," a low performing combined primary and junior high school that goes from grades 1–9, or an "Upgraded High School," a lower level academic high school that goes from grades 7–11 (Jamaica Ministry of Education, MOE).

Jamaican teachers, on the other hand, come from a range of social classes and speak a mixture of JC and SJE, depending on their level of education. Most teachers receive little or no training in the specific language needs of JC speakers, despite having to teach in schools with JC-dominant populations. They are therefore left to rely on general pedagogical principles taught in their teacher preparation programs, their own language experience and attitudes, and educational goals set by the MOE to deal with JC speakers in school. Unfortunately, many teachers' experiences, attitudes, and practices are strongly influenced by the aforementioned classism, which ultimately reinforces social stratification and outcomes in the classroom. Thus there appears to be a strong link among socioeconomic class, language, education, and academic achievement (Nero 2009).

Language in Jamaica

In Jamaica, two dominant forms of language, JC and SJE, have co-existed, with the latter variety being the official language and carrying more prestige (Alleyne 1980; Carrington 2001; Christie 2001). Historically JC and SJE have been positioned along a continuum mentioned earlier. In everyday language use in Jamaica, "pure" forms of JC or SJE are rare. Rather, there is a seamless mixing of both forms, with a greater proportion of the population more JC-dominant.

There has been a long history of JC-dominant speakers being ostracized in schools, their language, commonly referred to as "Patois," treated as deviant or "broken English" in need of repair or even eradication. Several studies have discussed the linguistic difficulties faced by JC speakers in schools (Craig 1983; Evans 2001; McCourtie 1998; Nero 2001; Pollard 2001). McCourtie's (1998) study shows that over the course of a century in Jamaica, the challenge of successfully

educating speakers of JC persists. At the heart of the matter is the fact that for JC speakers, SJE is neither a mother tongue nor a foreign language, creating a unique language learning/teaching typology.

JC has also been tied to low socioeconomic status and poor education, despite its use in all strata of Jamaican society (Bryan 2010; Devonish and Carpenter 2007; Robertson 1996). This negative attitude towards speakers of JC and other low status languages has been termed by Ruiz (1988) as a "language-as-problem" orientation, i.e., the language spoken by children who do not speak the dominant language is framed as inherently a "problem." Attitudes towards JC, however, are complicated and often ambivalent, characterized by some researchers as "schizophrenic" (Kachru and Nelson 2001). For example, although there has been greater tolerance for the use of JC in the public sphere over the last 20 years as a marker of true Jamaican identity, especially among the young (Jamaican Language Unit, UWI, 2005), the role and treatment of JC in school are still fiercely debated. Still, despite the complex linguistic landscape in Jamaica, SJE remains the primary medium of instruction, and developing proficiency in SJE as a basis for success in school and beyond is taken as a given. The question then becomes how best to accomplish this goal in a Creole-dominant environment where (a) most people speak a language they don't write, and write a language they don't speak; and (b) a significant disparity in academic performance among different types of schools, continues to be cause for concern among Jamaican educators and the public at large (MOE 2011).

Language education policy in Jamaica

Policy directives with regard to language in Jamaica date back to the colonial era (Circular Despatch 1847, cited in Augier and Gordon, 1962). Several regional and local policy statements were put forth in the last two decades of the twentieth century (NATE 1989; CARICOM 1997), as well as proposals for: (a) making language education policy more consonant with the broader goals of education (Robertson 1996); (b) transitional bilingualism (Carrington 1976; Craig 1980; Simmons-McDonald 1996); and (c) full bilingual education (Devonish and Carpenter 2007).

In 2001, the Jamaican Ministry of Education drafted a LEP, the first attempt in the post-independence era to create a comprehensive blueprint on a national level to guide language and literacy education practice in Jamaican schools in a linguistically informed, consistent, and constructive manner. Responding to the persistently poor performance in language and literacy among many Jamaican children, the goal of the draft LEP is to "provide direction for the treatment of language issues in the Jamaican educational context, in order to improve language and literacy competencies" (LEP, p. 6). The draft LEP proposes an approach of transitional bilingualism to address the language situation in Jamaican schools. It takes as its premise that Jamaica is a bilingual country with SJE and JC being the two languages in operation, with a fluidity of usage between the two varieties. Specifically, the key principles of the draft LEP are:

1. acknowledge that Jamaica is a bilingual country and maintain SJE as the official language;
2. promote oral use of the home language in the early primary and secondary years, using bilingual teaching strategies, while facilitating the development of literacy in SJE;
3. employ strategies of immersion in SJE through wide use of literature, content-based language teaching, and modeling the target language in the classroom;
4. ensure that children are competent in the use of SJE and reading at grade level by the end of grade four (LEP, pp. 23–25).

The draft LEP was not formally ratified owing to a refusal by the Jamaican Parliament to accept its central premise that Jamaica is a bilingual country. This means giving JC the status of a language like SJE, a position that was (a) not accepted by many in Parliament; (b) politically contentious; and (c) likely to spark public outrage, all of which reflect the colonial history, attitudes towards, and controversial place of, JC in schools. The draft LEP was therefore never officially disseminated to schools, but remains on the website of the MOE, with little to no knowledge of its existence among classroom teachers. However, in this study, it was used as a tool to help uncover teachers' ideologies with regard to language teaching and learning in a Creole-speaking environment.

The study

This nine-month critical ethnographic study in three Jamaican schools during the 2011–2012 academic year was guided by three research questions:

1. What are teachers' understanding of the draft language education policy once they are made aware of it?
2. What are teachers' attitudes towards Jamaican Creole?
3. What are the differences among teachers' language practices, and instructional approaches to language and literacy development in different types of schools?

Research methodology and researcher's stance

A critical ethnographic approach was chosen for this study because it allowed me to capture the dynamics of social stratification as they are played out in Jamaican schools, as well as critically examine the underlying assumptions, beliefs, and attitudes of stakeholders with regard to language and literacy in a Creole context, and how these are revealed in practice. Madison (2005) asserts that the critical ethnographer "takes us beneath surface appearances, disrupts the *status quo*, and unsettles both neutrality and taken-for-granted assumptions by bringing to light underlying and obscure operations of power and control" (p. 5).

As a critical ethnographer and native of an Anglophone Caribbean country myself, I am particularly implicated in this study. I have experienced first-hand the ways in which language, socioeconomic class, education, and power are intricately

linked in these contexts, and play out in practices. Thus, I am uniquely positioned in this research as an "insider/outsider" in my analysis of the power dynamics and assumptions at play as I examine language education policy and practices in schools.

Research sites

The study was conducted at three Jamaican public schools, which represent a sample of the different types of schools that Jamaican students attend. The names of schools and teachers have been changed and abbreviated to protect their identities. See tables below: Tables 1 and 2.

Participants

There were thirty participants[5] in the study comprised of:

- 3 LEP developers
- 3 principals
- 6 teachers of English Language Arts (grades 5–9)
- 18 students (6 focal students from each school; 3 per class)

Data collection[6]

- Weekly classroom observations and field notes of the six teachers (two in each of the three schools).
- Questionnaires seeking demographic, professional experience, and language data on each teacher
- Two audiotaped interviews with each of the six teachers (one at the beginning and one at the end of the school year)
- English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum for primary, secondary, and Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC).
- ELA textbooks for grades 5 through 9.

Data analysis

Following Miles and Huberman's (1994) approach to qualitative analysis, data were first separated by research question, then coded for emerging themes using Nvivo 9 software. Interview data addressing research questions 1 and 2 were coded for in-case themes that emerged, followed by cross-case patterns among the teachers. Data for research question 3 were garnered from weekly classroom observations of the

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[5] For the purposes of this article, the focus is on the six participating teachers.

[6] The complete study also involved interviews with the students, principals, and LEP developers, and samples of student writing, which are not discussed in this article.

Table 1 Profiles of three Jamaican schools

School[a]	1. Kingston Primary (KP)	2. St. Andrew Primary and Junior High (SAPJH)	3. Kingston Traditional High (KTH)
Location	Kingston (capital city)	Suburb of Kingston	Kingston
Students' SES	Low	Low	Middle-upper middle
Population (2011–2012)	849	410 (grades 7–9 only)	1951
Academic standing[b]	Low achievement	Low achievement	High achievement
School hours	Shift system (two 5-hour shifts with different students per day)	Shift system	Regular school day

Sources [a] School data provided by the three school principals

[b] Data obtained from Jamaican Ministry of Education Student Assessment Unit (2011)

teachers. Patterns of teachers' and students' language use in the classroom were coded, although the focus was on the teachers. Students' language was analyzed to the extent that it affected how teachers responded to them. Teachers' instructional approaches were analyzed for emerging patterns, taking into account the level and type of their linguistic training and/or professional development stated on their demographic questionnaires. Teachers' stated views on language use in school, including their attitudes towards JC, were compared with their actual classroom practice. Finally, cross-case analyses between teachers at the same school and across schools were conducted.

Findings

Teachers' understanding of the ministry of education's draft LEP

My first research question sought to find out teachers' understanding of the draft LEP once they were made aware of it. Given that none of the six participating teachers was aware of the draft policy, I made a photocopy of the document for each of them, and asked them to read it prior to interviewing them. After reading the document, the teachers expressed a range of understandings of the policy: For example, Ms. L. from KP noted, "while we do speak Creole and English, they are more pushing for standard English per se" (11/9/11); Ms. V. of SAPJH saw the policy as "trying to sensitize teachers as to what are the expectations of getting students to use standard Jamaican English" (12/8/11), while Mr. J. of KTH said he liked the idea of being competent in SJE by the end of grade four, but worried that "if we start to dabble with Creole in the classroom, it means we have failed in teaching standard English" (10/19/11). Despite the range of responses, there was consensus among the teachers on the first key principle of the draft LEP, i.e., acknowledging that Jamaica is a bilingual country while maintaining SJE as the official language and the target language of schooling.

Table 2 Profiles of six participating teachers

KP	SAPJH	KTH
Ms. L. (grade 5)	Ms. V. (grade 8)	Ms. C. (grade 7)
Age: 33	Age: 35	Age: 31
Teaching: 13 years	Teaching: 15 years	Teaching: 4 years
Describes her language as English & Patois	Describes her language as English & Patois	Describes her language as broken English
Major in History at Teachers College	Majored in Ed. Admin.	Majored in English Lang.
No formal linguistic training nor professional development (PD) workshop in teaching JC speakers	Training at Teachers College in Structure of English Language; nature of language; some PD.	Training in linguistics, sociolinguistics, and language acquisition theories, at Teachers College. No PD
Ms. R. (grade 6)	Ms. D. (grade 9)	Mr. J (grade 9)
Age: 27	Age: 39	Age: 52
Teaching: 4 years	Teaching: 19 years	Teaching: 23 years
Describes her language as English	Describes her language as Creole and English	Describes his language as Standard English
Majored in Guidance Counseling; No training in linguistics nor PD.	Majored in Social Studies	Majored in English Lit.
	Training in English language structure while at Teachers College; no PD	No training in linguistics nor PD

Teachers' attitudes toward language (JC and SJE)

Teachers' language attitudes, however, were much more diverse. Given the historical stigmatization of Creoles and contentious nature of the debate of their role in school, an interview question that seeks to elicit a Jamaican teacher's attitude towards JC is highly sensitive, and by definition, political. Specifically, the teachers were aware of my role as both a researcher familiar with the debate on JC, and an insider to West Indian language and culture. Thus, the expressed attitudes in their interviews were, as Talmy (2011) argues, "discursively co-constructed" with me, as they tried to navigate between their own attitudes towards JC and what they thought I wanted to hear. The following two excerpts illustrate this:

(1) In this interview with Mr. J. (KTH, 10/19/11), we are at the point where he's comparing the students' language at his current school with that of his previous school:

Mr. J   1. The first day I stepped into [KTH], I noticed there was a stark difference
2. between where I used to teach and this institution. It seems as if the language
3. Standard Jamaican English is emphasized; they are encouraged to speak it

Me   4. How was that different from your previous school?

Mr. J   5. Raw Creole!

Me   6. Was that a high school?

Mr. J   7. High school, RAW CREOLE. When you listen to them, raw Creole

Me   8. Even in the classroom?

Mr. J   9. Occasionally, but I get the feeling that raw Creole is used when the student
10. wants to express himself uh carefully, uh vividly

Me   11. Right

Mr. J.   12. They might resort to raw Creole

Me   13. That would be true in any situation, and do you sense the [KTH] kids uh use
14. Creole outside of school, or you don't know their language use beyond the
15. school?

Mr. J   16. I suspect seeing that it's a Jamaican context we'll find some Creole outside of
17. the walls of [KTH] but I would prefer to say they would use it (XXX)
18. Standard Jamaican English; that has been my experience for the 4 years I have
19. been here

Me   20. Mm hmm

Mr. J.   21. I'm sure you've noticed by now, I **hate** Creole; I don't like it, I don't use it, I
22. don't like it in school, I don't like it in church, I don't want my daughter
23. speaking it at home…you get my point

Mr. J's pointing out the "stark difference" between his two schools in line 1 shows his approval of the emphasis on SJE in his current school. When I gave him an

opportunity to elaborate on that difference in line 4, he seized on it: "Raw Creole," said in a tone of disdain, which he emphasized even more in line 7, particularly shocked at the use of JC in high school (perhaps implying that JC should be less tolerated at this level). His tone was so absolute that it gave the impression that JC was spoken everywhere in the school, including in the classroom. So, when I asked if JC was spoken in the classroom (line 8), he began a tempered response with "occasionally." This was a turning point. I sensed at that moment that Mr. J. felt his anti-JC tone might have been too harsh, so he offered a more positive role for JC—it is used "when the student wants to express himself…'vividly'" (lines 9–10). My agreement with him on this point (line 11) and my subsequently stating that such JC use "would be true in any situation" (line 13) exposed my position on the subject, i.e., I was nonchalant or at least accepting of JC being used to express language vividly. My position thus exposed then allowed Mr. J. an opening to counter it by suggesting his current students' language use was different. While he was willing to concede some JC might be used by his students beyond the school "seeing that it's a Jamaican context" (line 16), he "preferred to say" that they would use SJE. In other words, he did not want to think of his students as JC speakers. My non-verbal response ("Mm hmm") to his statement then allowed him to fill the silence by expressing his real hatred of JC (lines 21–23). The exchange reveals a delicate discursive dance between Mr. J. and me: his expressing disapproval of JC, first forcefully, then delicately, then forcefully again; my unsuccessful attempt to maintain some measure of neutrality on the subject; and our collective recognition that Creole is a reality in the Jamaican context.

(2) In the following excerpt, I am discussing with Ms. L. (KP, 11/9/11) the idea that students are encouraged to speak SJE in the classroom, but if they speak JC, they are asked to translate it into SJE or the teacher translates it for them. I asked her how she felt about this:

Me   1. So how do you feel about that?
Ms. L. 2. Ok, um I don't have a problem with it [Creole]
Me   3. Mm hmm
Ms. L. 4. Because Creole comes naturally, EVEN to me, yes it does
Me   5. So what do you define yourself first as? a Creole speaker? or English or do you
        6. feel you are bilingual? (both laugh)
Ms. L. 7. I would say yes, I would say yes because as I was explaining to you earlier, I
        8. WILL teach in the Standard English
Me   9. Right
Ms. L. 10. But if I'm teaching a concept and I realize that they not GETTING it, I will go
        11. down to the Creole or the Patois, and explain it as best and then say, "ok, do
        12. you understand it now?" because the truth in fact they do understand things
        13. better that way sometimes

In line 2, Ms. L. is forthright about not having a problem with JC, but then makes what appears to be a grudging confession that it comes naturally "even" to her, as if to suggest that this would not be expected of someone like her (a teacher). Her confession gives me the discursive space to ask how she defines herself linguistically (Creole, English, or bilingual speaker?—line 5), to which she offers a response that appears affirmative—"I would say yes" (line 7), but in fact, is quite nebulous, as we don't know which of the options she was saying "yes" to. She quickly follows this by reiterating that she "WILL" teach in Standard English, suggesting that she wanted to regain footing on the SJE ground. It appeared to me that she was reading my question as suggesting that she not only spoke JC, but taught in JC, a perception that she seemed to be resisting. Yet, in lines 10–13, she states with no prompting on my part that she would "go down" to Creole if students don't understand a difficult concept, adding that they understand ideas better that way.

Unlike Mr. J.'s strident disapproval of JC, Ms. L.'s attitude towards Creole is more ambivalent, consistent with attitudes in Jamaican society. Even as she admits speaking and not having a problem with Creole, paradoxically, she doesn't want to be framed as a Creole speaker, a perception that emerged from our interaction. At the same time, the pragmatic need to convey ideas to students forces Ms. L to use JC in class. Such were the attitudinal tensions around language. Overall, the teachers' attitudes ranged from embracing (Ms. R., KP) to accepting (Ms. L., KP & Ms. C., KTH) to tolerating (Ms. V., & Ms. D., SAPJH) to rejecting JC (Mr. J., KTH).

One reason for the range in attitudes among teachers with respect to JC and SJE might be the level and type of language-related training of the teachers. Of the six teachers observed, all had Bachelor's Degrees, but only two (both at KTH) majored in English. Mr. J, who majored in English literature, and had the most negative attitude towards JC, took pride in what he characterized as his "old school" training in language and literature, which meant only SJE was acceptable in and out of school. Ms. C. of KTH had the most linguistic training with respect to JC speakers, and therefore displayed a greater understanding of bilingualism in Jamaica. The other four teachers had degrees in Guidance Counseling, Educational Administration, Social Studies, and History respectively. Thus two-thirds of the teachers observed were teaching ELA without the requisite level of expertise or formal training in the subject, nor the linguistic understandings necessary for language teaching in a Creole-dominant environment. The result of inadequate linguistically informed teacher training with regard to teaching JC speakers was an observed inconsistency in practice and outcomes in terms of developing students' proficiency in SJE.

One of the palpable ways in which attitudes towards JC and SJE also played out in practice was in the identities and expectations that were linked to students based on their socioeconomic background, oral language use, school type, class, and stream (streaming/tracking was practiced at KP and SAPJH, but not at KTH). It was observed that students' social background, reflected in their use of JC or SJE, is a significant factor in setting teachers' expectations of them. Evans' (2001) study of Jamaican schools revealed this troubling teacher attitude. In the case of KP and

SAPJH, schools with large JC-speaking populations from low socioeconomic backgrounds, teachers generally appeared more tolerant of JC use, and simultaneously had lower academic expectations of students. The exceptions were in the two top stream classes within these schools, where teachers assigned a "top stream identity" to students and expected them to differentiate themselves from the lower stream students by speaking and writing more SJE and producing "top stream" work. In the example below, Ms. L. at KP scolds a student in her top stream class (5P) in a combination of JC and SJE for not doing the homework at a level that she deemed acceptable for that stream:

Teacher   "This is **not** 5P work. You want to go name brand school? You have to give me name brand work. Dis kyañ go dere!" (10/18/11)

At KTH, a school with a larger middle class population, there was less tolerance for JC use in general, especially in Mr J.'s class (recall he stated that he "hated" Creole), and more teacher expectation of SJE use and high academic performance. These practices appeared to perpetuate a vicious cycle whereby students' socioeconomic background often correlated with their language use, which then influenced their teachers' instruction and expectations of their academic performance, which reinforced their socioeconomic background.

Teachers' language practices and instructional approaches

Despite the explicitly stated position among all the teachers in their interviews and in their classrooms that only SJE should be used in the classroom, I observed four instances among the teachers where they consistently switched from SJE to JC, with the exception of Mr. J, who never used JC in or out of class. See Table 3.

With the exception of "explanatory creole," which sought to explicate subject area content in JC after the teacher's unsuccessful attempts in SJE, all of the uses of JC in the classroom were linked to affective (emotional) situations.

By contrast, SJE was linked to learning domains and was dominated by a focus on the structure and rules of the language, typically followed by short answer grammar exercises, even when content was included. At times, the attempt to integrate content into ELA seemed forced or inauthentic, as the focus on learning SJE was, in fact, *learning about the rules of SJE*.

A visible pattern in oral language use was created both by teachers' requiring students' choral or individual reading of SJE texts, and by students' mainly using SJE to respond to the teacher, but not to converse with their peers. Taylor (2011) observed a similar phenomenon in her study of Jamaican classrooms, characterizing this discourse pattern as "Recitation script/completion chorus phenomenon (CCP)." This pattern was not the case at KTH, where students used SJE to converse with their peers in the classroom in addition to using it for oral performance.

Given that oral performance in class was so strongly linked to SJE, correct pronunciation and use of SJE words was emphasized and contrasted with pronunciation of JC, which by default, framed JC as badly pronounced SJE. By focusing on JC only at the level of pronunciation and vocabulary in comparison to SJE, teachers, especially at KP and SAPJH, were challenged when students spoke

Table 3 Four instances of Jamaican Creole

Scolding Creole	Affectionate Creole
Description	Description
The teacher scolds the child for an infraction using JC, mixed with some creolized English, spoken in a stern, emphatic tone. In the example below, the teacher scolds a student for sleeping at his desk:	The teacher switches to JC to bond with the student in an affectionate manner:
Teacher "A really need to call yu mudda. What time you reach home? Yu go to bed late and not do homework? Me got to call yu mudda tonight. Yu not goin for any lunch today. You'll smell the food and pretend yu eat!" (Ms. L., KP, 9/20/11).	Teacher "Rememba when granny tell you, "Wha' sweet yu a go sour yu?" (Ms. V., SAPIH, 5/17/12) [A proverb that means, 'what attracts you can also turn you off']
Mocking Creole	*Explanatory Creole*
Description	Description
The teacher mocks the student by repeating a JC sentence uttered by him/her verbatim in an attempt to elicit a rephrasing of the sentence in SJE:	The teacher resorts to explaining a new and/or difficult concept in JC if the students do not appear to be grasping the concept in SJE:
Student "Mis, im juk mi an mi na trouble im" [Miss, he poked me and I didn't bother him]	Teacher (explaining inverse numbers in a math class): "yuh just tun di numba upside dong." (Ms. R, KP, 2/28/12).
Teacher: (in a mocking tone): "Im juk mi an mi na trouble im" (Ms. R., KP, 1/17/12)	

entire sentences in JC to them. At those moments, the most common response by the teacher was to "correct" the "badly pronounced" word in the student's sentence (e.g., Teacher to student while reading aloud: "say **th**ree, not **tr**ee") or to recast the sentence in SJE for the student, or to request that the student or a peer rephrase the sentence in SJE. These requests for rephrasing were usually met with silence by the student or with an attempted response in SJE with varying degrees of success (e.g., the student might say "three" instead of "tree" following the teacher's correction, but then revert to saying "tree" five minutes later). Such *ad hoc* correction or request for rephrasing was observed as the predominant response to JC use in the classroom—an ineffective strategy as students, believing that they were speaking English, failed to notice the difference between their actual pronunciation and the target SJE pronunciation; hence, there was invariably no uptake.

When dealing with JC, the impetus to focus mainly on words rather than sentence structure, and to frame it as badly pronounced English became problematic, as the main thrust of the difference between the JC and SJE is the syntax, which the teachers were not trained to explicate. For example, in Ms. V.'s class at SAPJH, a poem translation exercise from JC to SJE, a common attempt to engage JC in formal instruction, became confusing for the students. The teacher wrote on the board: "dem" = "them" to assist students with translation. However, there were instances in the poem where "dem" meant "them"; others where it meant "they"; and still others where it meant "their" (e.g., "dem a show dem bias" [they are showing their bias]).

The focus on JC only at the word level affected spelling issues as well. One day in Mr. J.'s class, a student wanted to include a few lines of JC dialogue in a piece of narrative writing. She asked Mr. J. how to spell the words, and he responded, "Spell it however you like; there's no standard way to spell Creole." The practice of accepting any spelling for JC comes from the belief that there is no standardized way of spelling JC words, which is tied to the belief that JC is not a legitimate language, or is simply misspelled English. This is not surprising given the colonial context of how JC evolved as a language subordinate to English, and that most teachers, students, and the general public are not aware that a writing system for JC was developed by linguist Frederic Cassidy in 1961, and recently updated by linguists at the University of the West Indies (Jamaican Language Unit 2009).

Different schools, different strategies

Current thinking on LEP implementation foregrounds the agency of stakeholders in shaping policy through their practice. It was observed that different schools enacted language and literacy practices to suit the needs of their respective populations and school goals. Although teachers at all three schools were not aware of the draft LEP before my bringing it to their attention, my observation of their practice showed that they all sought to "employ strategies of immersion in English through use of literature, content-based language teaching, and modeling the target language in the classroom" a key principle of the draft LEP. So, in a sense, they were unwittingly practicing principles of the policy perhaps by implicit or explicit curricular demands

from the MOE. How this was accomplished, however, varied significantly in different types of schools.

Teachers at KP and SAPJH adhered closely to the MOE's curriculum, and often tried to integrate content and language teaching. At times, interesting discussions in both JC and SJE transpired on topics in social studies, science, or thematic units, but the type and amount of writing relative to the depth of the discussion seemed inadequate. At the end of a discussion, writing was often limited to cloze exercises or short answers and paragraphs in relation to the topic. This practice led to the implication at KP and SAPJH that writing primarily means proper grammar and short answer exercises.

At KP, in order to encourage writing, Ms. R. introduced a school-based "publishing company" that publishes her students' writings that are deemed of high quality. This sends the message to students that good writing should be published and shared. Publishing students' work has a number of tangible benefits: (a) it forces students to write extended pieces beyond the short answers that are more common at KP; (b) it boosts students' self-confidence; (c) it provides a model of good writing for peers.

At SAPJH, in response to the problem of low literacy, reading was prioritized as a separate activity, as opposed to the integrated curriculum proposed by the MOE; thus, during the 2011–2012 school year, the school principal implemented a half-hour mandatory reading time each morning, led by teachers, which according to the principal, has been relatively successful thus far.

At KTH, by contrast, writing was much more extensive than at KP or SAPJH. In addition to grammatical and short answer exercises, teachers engaged students in regular practice with various genres of writing—descriptive, narrative, expository, etc. In both Ms. C.'s and Mr. J.'s classes, students were asked to write anywhere from two to four pages on various topics at least once per week. In fact, the English teachers at KTH collectively wrote their own school-based ELA curriculum, which went beyond the MOE's curriculum, demanding higher levels and a greater quantity of writing in SJE.

Teaching to the test

KTH, being a traditional academic high school, was heavily focused on preparing students for the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) exam, the major national exam that determines entry to university and the job market. For example, the types of writing assignments in Mr. J.'s 9th grade class often mirrored those on the CSEC English exam, made possible by the fact that Mr. J was himself a regular marker of CSEC exams, so he had access to the types of questions asked. The practice of test prep in ELA classes sent a strong implicit and often explicit message about writing and exams at KTH as follows:

- The language and format of standardized exams **is** the preferred variety for writing.

This message obtained at KP and SAPJH as well, especially in grade 6 at KP where students were preparing for the Grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT), and in

grade 9 at SAPJH, where students were preparing for the Grade Nine Achievement Test (GNAT). The examination-driven curriculum, which privileged writing as form rather than a meaning making activity, produced an overarching stance in all schools that written language should focus on form, good penmanship, grammatical correctness, and word limits.

Discussion

Language attitudes, practice, and policy

The foregoing observations of teachers' attitudes and practices created implicit policies in the three schools. Pulcini (1997) notes correctly that attitudes are a form of invisible policy. First, the teachers' own ambivalence towards JC were evident in the interviews—simultaneously celebrating and denigrating it; at once identifying and disidentifying with it—an ambivalence that carried over into their practice. The teachers thus explicitly and implicitly created rules and conditions about language use (both JC and SJE) in the classroom through their beliefs, attitudes, training, and actual classroom practice. Although the teachers were not initially aware of the LEP, some of their practices ended up being aligned with the key principles of the draft policy, even if not always successfully. For example, as expressed in their interviews, the teachers all agreed that proficiency in SJE is an important goal of schooling, and therefore tried to deliver the majority of their instruction in SJE while constantly attempting to "correct" students' use of JC towards SJE in the classroom. The strategy of correction or rephrasing of JC into SJE turned out to be largely ineffective because it was done in an *ad hoc* fashion, and did not emanate from a linguistic understanding of how language actually works. Students who were asked to rephrase JC into SJE were often incapable of doing so, or did so with only superficial attention, which did not result in internalization of SJE structures or pronunciation. At the same time, teachers at KP and SAPJH switched to JC in situations noted above such as "scolding creole" or "mocking creole," which reflected their own negative attitudes towards JC, and by extension reinforced a negative view of the language to students—a phenomenon also observed by Evans (2001) in her study of Jamaican schools.

The colonial legacy in Jamaica that denigrates JC usage in school, and perpetuates standard language ideology, was repeatedly tested against the pervasive use of JC by students at KP and SAPJH. Thus, teachers in these schools were constantly challenged to enforce their own stated policy of "SJE only in the classroom," even as they themselves, paradoxically, switched to JC sometimes—a linguistically pragmatic way to connect with their students. Code-switching not only underscored teacher agency, but it also highlighted the power dynamic in the classroom where the teacher, being the authority figure in the class, gives herself permission to use JC while insisting that her students refrain from doing so. When I asked the teachers at KP and SAPJH about the contradictory dynamic of using JC to prohibit the use of JC, they often resorted to the answer of pragmatism, i.e., "it's the only way students 'get it.'" Teachers' code-switching in the classroom was less

prevalent at KTH, where students mostly spoke SJE. Therefore practices and on-the-ground language policies varied by type of school, those at KTH being far less conflicted—an example of the ways in which institutional structures and policies are mutually reinforcing.

Examinations: the linguistic elephant in the room

It would not be an overstatement to suggest that most, if not all, language teaching in the three schools was driven by the demands and format of national examinations. This meant that writing exercises were largely tailored to the format of national standardized exams, especially in grades where the exams were taken. These practices mirrored the findings of Menken's (2008) study, where standardized testing becomes de facto language education policy. In the context of Jamaica, high stakes national examinations at the primary and secondary level are one of the most deeply entrenched practices held over from British colonial education. They drive the public discourse on language education and education in general. Robertson (1996) contends that language education policy should be consistent with the wider goals of education. In Jamaica, this is certainly the case to the extent that passing exams has been and continues to be one of the primary markers and goals of education. This perpetuates social stratification, as the likelihood of passing exams is tied to gaining entry into particular types of (traditional academic) schools at an early age, which in turn is tied to socioeconomic class.

De facto LEP in a creole environment

The combination of conflicting language attitudes, and differential expectations and practices displayed by the teachers in this study must be situated within the language ideology of the postcolonial context in Jamaica. Despite the widespread use of JC in the public sphere, and especially by students of lower socioeconomic background in the classroom, JC is still framed as a "problem" in school. The instinctive practice is therefore to *correct* JC rather than *contrast* it with SJE. Given that SJE is the official language in Jamaica, the language of power, and education, the goal is to lessen the use of JC through educational structures—essentially an ideology of linguicism and an implicit policy of eradicationism. Teachers in this study, being implicated in this ideology, used their own agency and school-based practices to simultaneously minimize students' use of JC in the classroom and help them acquire SJE. But most of them did so by paradoxically using and restricting JC themselves. So the teachers' agency adds a new dimension to Shohamy's (2006) model of de facto LEP, which focuses more on the effect of structures (overt and covert mechanisms) than agency. Shohamy's model does not account for the complexity of language use in a Creole-speaking environment like Jamaica where the majority of the population speaks a stigmatized language. In this context, teachers use their agency to simultaneously resist and appropriate dominant ideologies in response to actual vernacular language use in classrooms. The findings from this study, therefore, call for a revision of Shohamy's model to illustrate the complexity of teacher agency in addition to institutionalized structures that shape
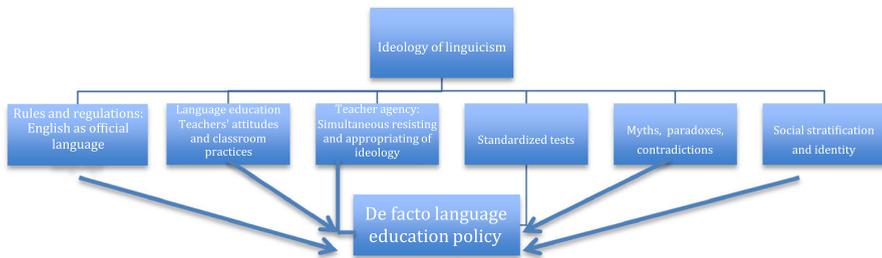
Fig. 1 De facto language education policy model in a Creole-speaking environment (adapted from Shohamy 2006)

LEP within the linguicist ideology of a Creole environment. I offer such a revision in Figure 1.

Conclusion

This study was spurred by the need for greater understanding of the language education policies and practices in a Creole-speaking environment. The picture of de facto LEP that emerges from the Jamaican context reveals the dynamic interplay of teacher agency (revealed in their language attitudes, practices, and strategies of resistance and appropriation), structures, and ideologies, constantly bumping against actual language use resulting from a colonial history. It is clear that any hope for the ratification of the Jamaican draft LEP must address the force of de facto LEP, seeking points of convergence, as the latter is symptomatic of the inherent challenges of LEP development and implementation in Creole-speaking environments where language attitudes and practices of the masses are riddled with paradoxes and steeped in the discriminatory legacy of colonialism.

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