

The Emergence of Writing in Multilingual Settings

Comparing Two Case Studies

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Goals of the study

- To explore the emergence of written forms of formerly unwritten languages in two historically and geographically different multilingual settings: **Are there common practices and motivations?**
- To investigate both similarities and differences of writing practices and orthographic choices: **Which linguistic and sociocultural aspects guide the authors' orthographic choices?**

The case of Guinea-Bissau Creole: GBC / Kriyol

Language emergence and multilingual setting

Where? Guinea-Bissau (West Africa)

When? end of the 15th century

Emergence in a **colonisation scenario**:

- Superstrate language: Portuguese
- Substrate languages: most likely Mandinka (Mande) and Wolof (Atlantic) – Niger-Congo linguistic family

Today, more than 20 national languages in Guinea-Bissau!

- Portuguese: only **official language**, spoken by ¼ of the population
- Kriyol: **lingua franca** between different ethnic groups; since the War of Independence (1963-1974), **language of national identity**

Writing emergence in Kriyol

Since the 1980s:

- comic books by local authors, stories, and poems
- translation of the Bible (1999)
- private communication** (social networks, chats, text messages, etc.)

Standardisation and codification

- mid-19th century-1960s: first grammatical sketches
- since 1975: growth of scientific interest (language descriptions and studies; dictionaries)
- no official role in the educational system (except for a few projects of bilingual teaching, e.g. in Bubaque, Bijagós)
- 1987: orthographic **proposal** of Ministry of Education of G-B
 - i. **phonological spelling based on |A| rules** - *International African Institute*
 - ii. used in some publications, but **not** in comics, poems, private communication

Orthographic issues

- Phonographic** spelling for both Portuguese-derived and African-derived words
- Introduction of special characters such as velar nasal /ŋ/ for African words (e.g. *ŋoroto* 'sickle')

Ferreira, Diogo et al. 2009.

Estórias do Chão de Urok – Pasadas di con di Urok.

Kuma ku tabanka di Ambô diskubridu

Na tempu antigu, con di Bijugu ka moradu ba. Storiya ta kontanu kuma un diya, irans ta ba na un kanuwa. I staba la dus jorsons: Orakuma ku Ogubani. E say di sul di no tera ku sedu con Nalu pa buska kau di mora. E toka Orango, e say di Orango e toka Unu, e say di Unu e toka Karas, e say di Karas e yentra Formosa. Purmedu riu ke yentra i riu di Ankapanja. Kil dus jorsons ku staba na kanuwa i mankaba weto ku ronkomamembanja (ku sedu dunu di tabanka). Ekinera, Ukanti, Esuru ku nopoko.

Julio, Manuel. *Ntori Palan.*



The case of Pennsylvania German: PG / Deutsch

Language emergence and multilingual setting

Where? South-eastern Pennsylvania (USA)

When? 1780-1800

Emergence in a **migration scenario**:

- L-varieties: several middle and upper German dialects spoken by the immigrants; Deutsch evolves through a levelling process
 - H-varieties: German (ingroup) – American English (outgroup)
- Today, speech islands in several States (US and Canada):
- minority/ heritage language** without a recognised official status
 - 2 main varieties: Plain vs. Non-Plain PG (mutually intelligible)

Writing emergences in Deutsch

around 1845-1860 in PA (Non-Plain variety)

- humorous texts (dialect columns in newspapers)
- poems

around 1990 in OH (Midwestern Plain variety)

- Bible translation

Standardisation and codification

dictionaries (since 1885), language descriptions & studies (since 1887), grammars (since 1942): almost exclusively Non-Plain PG
no role in public school education (minor degree in Kutztown University)
2 different fully fledged spelling systems (+ many ad hoc spelling forms):

- Buffington-Barba (1939; mostly used in PA – Non-Plain variety)

Do in die Wadde-Scheier finnt mer all die Wadde versammelt, ass mer **vielleicht** schunt kennt. Mer kann **awwer** aa deel anre Wadde finne, ass mer vielleicht schunt **vergesse** hatt, odder wu net glei **eifalle** welle, odder aa **neie un nitzliche** Wadde, ass mer vielleicht nie net **gheert** hat.

- Hershberger-Wycliffe (1993; mostly used in Midwest – Plain variety)

Do in di Vadda-Sheyah finnsht du all di vadda eiglagaht, es du **fleicht** shunn kennsht, **avvah** aw feel vadda, es du **fagessa** hosht, addah vo naet glei **eifalla** volla, addah aw **neia un nitzliche** vadda, es du noch nee **kayaht** hosht.

<https://pdc.wikiptedia.org>

Orthographic issues

Der Liberale Beobachter. 30.6.1840
German newspaper – Fraktur typeface

“Deß biet’ der Betrel awer seh—far ich hab nix kleneres as en halwe Sent alle weil. Ich wünsch doch, weil sie Igels un Dahler un so Sache mache thun, daß sie a thäte a wennig vertel Sent Stücken, un Millß mache, und so weiter ’runner. Awer anyhau, ich will an den anre Stohr noch froge, un wenn ich den Láp net wöfler friege kann, will ich zurück kumme un mit Euch handle, weil Dir en ziemlich cleverer Kerl scheint zu sein.”

The Stark County Democrat. 16.9.1875
English newspaper – Roman typeface

BRIEF FUM SAMMY SCHNITZLER.
DUNNEN'S BARRICK, Sept. der 13t, '75.
Mister Drucker:
Husht du di laya yeamohls der alt Yankee Doodle g'kent? Mer hen an buch im house mit picters un so rimelin fum Yankee Doodle. According tzum picture/hut ar uf 'ma pony g'huekt, mit shtrafliche hussa aw un an grosser weiser hoot uf 'm kup, un aw an grossy brass watcha-ke aw henka g'hot. Un si rime-

Conclusion

Official LPP is lacking in both scenarios. Language vitality and writers' attitudes towards language status have a heavy influence on text types and (±systematic) orthographic choices. Interest in language description and codification seems difficult to emerge from inside a stigmatised community, but enhanced by particular perspectives (endangerment: PG; outsiders' viewpoint: GBC). Orthographic choices are highly context-sensitive and influenced by writers' (and readers') multilingual knowledge (≈educational level).

References: please find all references at <https://univaq.academia.edu/BarbaraHansBianchi>, in the “Posters” section

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- The English-Deitsch Translation Corpus. A corpus-based investigation of language contact in translation (starting in 2019).