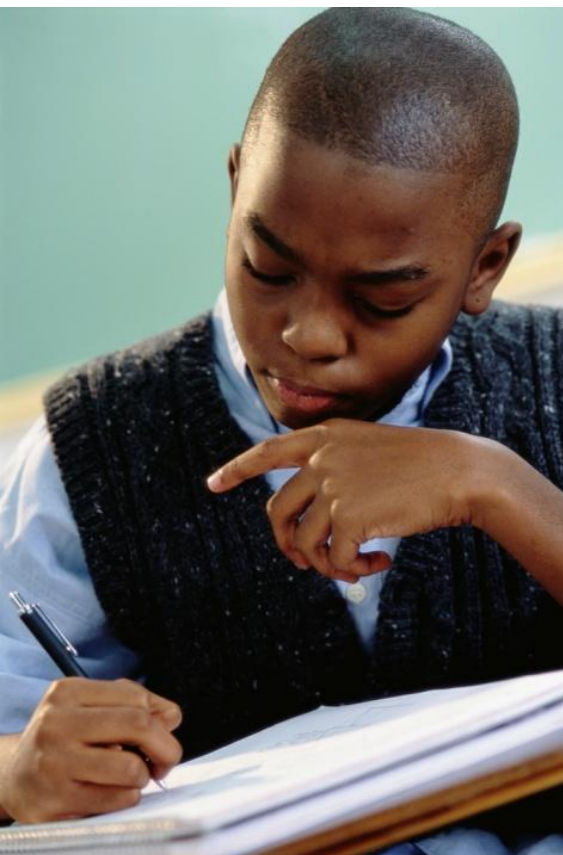


# Biennial Conference of the UWI Schools of Education

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**Presentation Title:** *The sociolinguistic influence of text messaging on writing English*



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A hand is writing text on a whiteboard. The text is written in a cursive, handwritten style. The hand is holding a black marker. The background is a plain white wall.

btw - by the way  
brb - be right back  
ttyl - talk to you later  
lol - laugh out loud  
2day - to day

# Introduction

- “The popularisation of writing in text-messaging style, coupled with students’ failure to read widely has been credited at least in part, for the poor results of this year’s Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) English Language examination across the region”  
(Jamaica Observer, August 26, 2012)

<http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/magazines/career/-Texting-threatens-writing-in-English-12312145>

# Introduction

- "The text-messaging style is a very big problem; it comes over into students' style of writing. Instead of writing 'you', they write 'u'; they can't get out of text-messaging mode. I appreciate that while texting you abbreviate for speed and so on, but you have to appreciate the difference between the two and adjust to what is required at the time",  
(Jamaica Observer, 2012)

# Sociolinguistics

There are several possible relationships between language and society. One is that social structure may either influence or determine linguistic structure and/or behaviour.

(Wardhaugh, J, An Introduction to Sociolinguistics, Wiley, 2005)

# **THE STUDY**

“children as linguists”

**THE DATA ANALYSIS**

# Data Analysis:-

## “Children as Linguists”

- Phonological Reductions
- Homophones
- Symbols
- Abbreviations
- Jamaican Creole
- English

Phonological reductions, homophones, symbols, Jamaican Creole  
and abbreviations

## **TODAY'S FOCUS**



# Data Analysis-Phonological Reductions

1. Spelling reduction
2. Spelling reduction + rebus
3. Spelling reduction + Jamaican Creole
4. Rebus
5. Rebus/Jamaican Creole
6. Quasi reduction

# Spelling Reduction

Reduction in the spelling of English words.

## Sample instances in data

- Awy -----Away
- Bathrm-----bathroom
- Bcuz-----because
- Njoyable----enjoyable
- Xcited-----excited
- Xplain-----explain

# Quasi Reduction

The number of letters in the words remain the same, but the word is spelt differently.

## Sample instances in data

Fare----- Fair

Eventualli-----Eventually

Famili-----Family

# Spelling Reduction/J amaican Creole

Reduction in the  
spelling of English  
words.

## Sample instances in data

- Wusn't-----wasn't
- Jum-----jump
- Meri-----merry
- Skool-----school
- Ocajon-----occasion
- Ting-----thing

# Rebus

Use of numerals or symbols instead of corresponding word

## Sample instances in data

- c ----- see
- innoc¢ ----- innocent
- N --- and

## Rebus/Jamaican Creole

Rebus principle applied to JC pronunciations to produce abbreviations, involves replacing the sound value of JC words with letters, numbers or symbols

### Sample instances in data

- d-----the
- e-----he
- 3-----tree

**HOMOPHONES**

# Homophones/English

Replacing an English word with another that is pronounced the same, but different in meaning and spelling.

## Sample instances in data

- Meat----Meet
- An---And



## Homophone/Rebus/ Numeral

Rebus involving a numeral to represent a syllable

## Sample instances in data

- 4-----for
- B4-----before
- 2marrow---tomarrow

## Homophone/rebus/ etter/Numeral

Rebus involving the use of a consonant letter for the onset, and a numeral for the vowel + coda, quite a sophisticated intra-syllabic representation

## Sample instances in data

- L8-----late

## Complex Homophone/Rebus

Complex rebus involving 4 for 'f' and the non-contiguous vowel /o/ with two consonant /r/ and /m/ intended to be separated by that non-contiguous vowel.

## Sample instances in data

- 4rm-----from

# Homophones/numeral/Engli

sh

## Sample instances in data

The use of a numeral to represent a number concept, rather than the equivalent word in English.

**0---None**

**K is** Abbreviation for 'kilo' - thousand

**2k10----2010**

**30K----30,000**

# Homophone/rebus/Jc

For JC 'wan', i.e. both rebus and JC, reflected in the English translation 'a'

## Sample instances in data


**1boy----a boy**

# **SYMBOLS**

## Symbols

Usually used to represent the writer's state of mind ( :@-- shouting), but in this study were used to replace English words.

## Sample instances in data

• -----heart

• @-----at

# **ABBREVIATIONS**



## Abbreviations

These were use in place of both English and Jamaican Creole expressions.

## Sample instances in data

- LOL----Laugh Out Loud
- Bbsot ---Buss out  
[Buss Out A Laugh]

Data Analysis cont...

**JAMAICAN CREOLE (JC)**

## Jamaican Creole

A spelling change which has no sound value relevance. The 'z' spelling is intended, by contrast with the 's' spelling for English, to signal Jamaican.

Modification of spelling to a more phonemic model for Jamaican, using /ons/ which directly represents a Jamaican pronunciation, by contrast with the English spelling, with its use of 'c' and a silent letter 'e'.

## Sample instances in Data

- Az-----as
- bons abot ----bounce-about

## Jamaican Creole

The omission of 'n' deviates from JC and English pronunciation, but produces one less letter, i.e. this is a product of texting abbreviation.

A reduction in letter numbers which is a result of the texting medium. The use of 'u' here is consistent with the spelling of the same vowel in the English word 'cut', and seems aimed at spelling Jamaican phonemically, i.e. in a consistent manner, similar to 'cum' ` went previously.

## Sample instances in Data

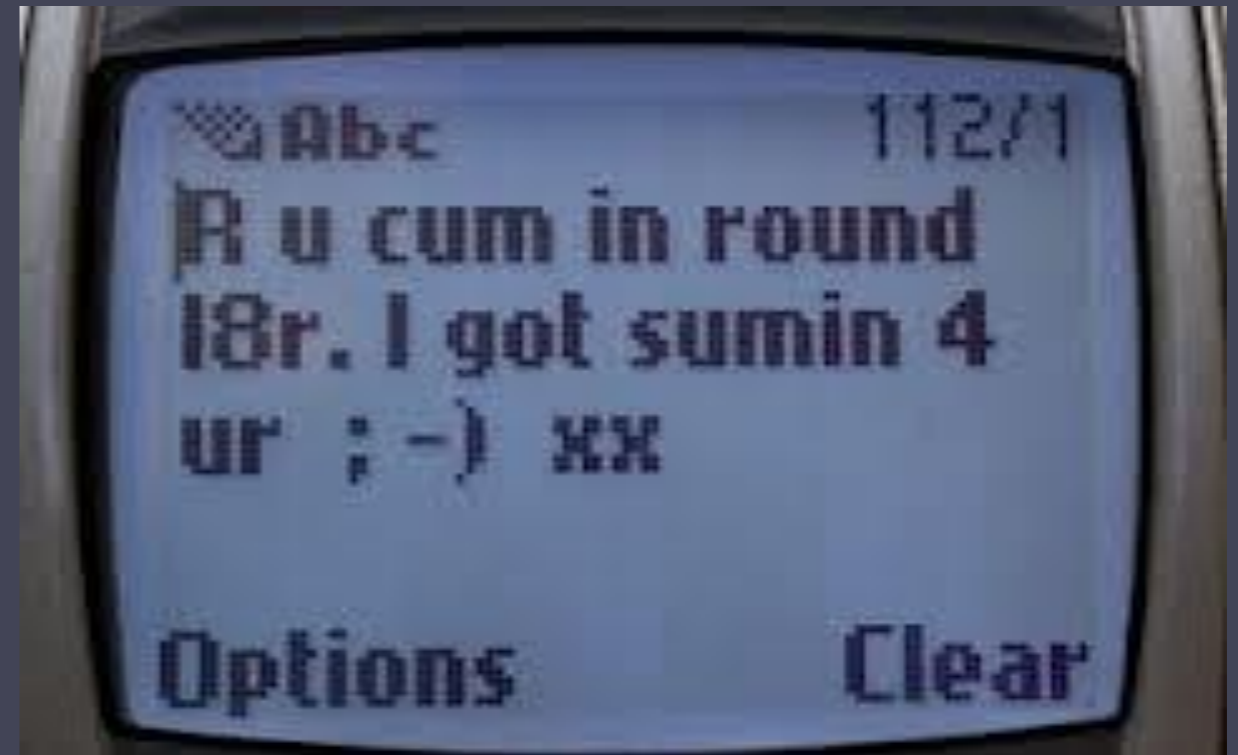
- dace—dance
- cumpar----compare

# Conclusion

- Educators are turning a solution into a problem: Text messaging qualifies as a New Literacy because it is based on a communication medium, Language Choice and the use of orthographic conventions in a diglossic situation.
- The text messaging style of writing requires use of a range of linguistics and literacy skills, which are not necessarily required by regular writing.
- The texting medium is fairly new, but is an integral part of the digital world.

# Recommendation

- The Caribbean education system needs to find ways to use this writing system in the teaching learning process as the skills that it requires are the same ones that educators say children need to hone, if they are to be considered functionally literate citizens.



# Questions