

Sociocultural Perspectives on Orthographic Practices: Implications for Standardisation in *Naijá*¹

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Abstract

Naijá Langwejí (NL) (a.k.a Nigerian Pidgin), as creolised variety that co-exists with its exoglossic lexifier English, is essentially a spoken language that is yet to have an accepted standardised orthography. This paper explores the emerging orthographic practices of NL speakers arising from the increasing use of the language variety as a written language. These practices are characterised by non-standardised conventions and highly variable spellings, although certain aspects appear to be standardised. This paper discusses the significance of these orthographic practices and their contributions to the standardisation of NL's orthography. Examples from written texts in NL (e.g. literary texts, sports commentaries, and social media posts), like previous studies (e.g. Deuber and Hinrichs 2007), show that the conventions used in these written texts are typically etymological, following the orthographic conventions of English in contrast with a phonological system of one character per sound. The implication of this competing views in the light of Kloss' (1967) concepts of *ausbau* (distance) and *abstand* (elaboration) in NL's context are discussed. The study confirms the view that issues of orthography, especially for Pidgins and Creoles, are issues of ideology that go beyond linguistic considerations (Sebba 1998a, 1998b, 2007). From an ideological perspective, the findings illustrate the social value of orthographic practices by the new meanings and social identities they index for their users. Similar to other creoles like Jamaican creole (e.g. Hinrichs 1994) some aspects of *Naijá*'s orthography that are becoming standardised as a result of mainstreaming of users' orthographic activities, is indicative of a bottom-up approach which can be adopted for developing an alternative orthography for NL that reflects users' orthographic practices.

Keywords: *pidgins and creoles; Naijá; language ideology; standardisation; orthographic practices*

Introduction

Despite their relatively short history of writing practices, the growing use of pidgins and creoles in written texts is a development that has engendered the discourse about their standardisation (e.g. Sebba 1998a, 1998b, 2007, Romaine 2005). As written languages, pidgins and creoles encounter issues having to do with differentiation from their exoglossic lexifier especially where they co-exist, and highly variable spellings that characterise the orthographic practices. Sebba (1998b) observes that issues of cultural and political disputes have characterised a number of attempts to provide standardised orthographies for creoles (e.g. Haitian creole, Papiamentu, Jamaican creole). The issue has to do with whether the orthographic conventions of pidgins and creoles should follow their lexifiers or a separate set of conventions that based on phonemic representations should be developed. In Haitian creole for example, Schieffelin and Doucet (1994) use the choice to represent the phonemes /w, k, y/ with English conventions <w>, <k>, <y> in line with the IPA, or with French conventions <ou>, <c>, <qu> to illustrate the debate in HC in a context where French and English traditions co-exist. The problem lies in the perception that adopting French orthographic conventions will give HC as a kind of sub-standard (or inferior) version of French or as an autonomous language. In such situations where pidgins and creoles co-exist with their lexifiers, they tend to be heavily dependent on their exoglossic lexifiers in terms of lexicalisation, and this reinforces misconceptions about them as substandard forms or as 'dialects' where the lexifier is seen as a 'standard' variety. Thus, pidgin and creole languages are faced with the dilemma of the need to create distance from their exoglossic lexifiers as a condition for their standardisation, and at the same time to develop and gain prestige by association with the same exoglossic lexifier from which they seek to distance themselves (Romaine, 2005).

Using Kloss' (1967) concepts of *abstand* (distance) and *ausbau* (elaboration), studies have analysed the relationship between related language varieties in the context of standardisation (e.g. Joseph (1987), Sebba (1998a), and Romaine (2005)). In Joseph's (1987) view, a creole that grows in elaboration will diminish in distance to its exoglossic lexifier. Similarly, Romaine (2005) notes that pidgin and creole languages can only establish independence by becoming less like the exoglossic lexifier and yet they can only elaborate or develop themselves as standard languages by becoming more like the lexifier. In support of pidgins and creoles as independent languages, linguists are known to promote phonemic approaches to orthographic issues over etymological approaches as a condition for creating distance from the lexifier, even

though the orthographic practices of users is typically etymological and do not subscribe to phonemic approaches (e.g. Romaine, 2005).

A second issue concerns variable spellings that characterise users' orthographic practises in pidgin and creole languages. According to Sebba (1998a: 223) although 'orthography is only an aspect of standardisation, it is an important one' because 'languages can differentiate themselves by means of their orthographic practices as much as their grammar and phonology'. In the absence of accepted standardised orthography, orthographic practices in pidgins and creoles are characterised by highly variable spellings. By orthographic practices, Sebba (1998a: 19) refers 'to a set of practices engaged in by writers as they try to represent a language for which no conventional written representation exists'. He argues that these practices constitute 'patterns of choices which are reflective of issues having to do with ideology and identity than with linguistic considerations. It is important to note that as with other pidgin and creole contexts, speakers who are engaging in orthographic practices in NL are also the ones who are literate in English.

The first part of the paper presents literature on issues arising from standardisation in pidgin and creole languages especially where they co-exist with the exoglossic lexifier. It is followed by a description of in the light of the orthographic issues facing pidgins and creoles, and the spelling choices observed in the data corpus that make up users' orthographic practices. In the last part of the paper, following Sebba (1998a, 2007), the concept of orthography as social practice is adopted for the analysis of orthographic practices in NL and issues regarding its standardisation. For example, there is the issue of competing views having to do with the implication of adopting either a phonemic or an etymological system. Linguists, (e.g. Elugbe & Omamor 1991) who are mostly in support of phonemic systems, are of the view that an etymological approach using English orthographic conventions reinforces the perception of it as a sub-standard form of English. They argue that the use of a separate set of orthographic conventions based on the principle of one sound per character will help to establish it as a language in its own right. However, in view of writers' orthographic practices and lessons from elsewhere (e.g. Papiamentu, Haitian creole, Jamaican Creole), the study advocates that writers' orthographic practices should be taken into consideration in the standardisation of pidgin and creole orthography.

Building on previous studies and findings, the present study carries out a qualitative and quantitative analysis of users' orthographic practices in NL with the view to identify variability and patterns that characterise users' spelling choices. Based on the premise that users' orthographic practices should be taken into consideration, the occurrences of such variability in the data are identified and analysed in terms of frequency and types of variability. Finally, it discusses the implications that variability in spelling choices of NL users have for the standardisation and suggests a model of orthography for NL.

Literature review

Linguists have studied the phenomena of variable spellings that characterise orthographic practices in various pidgin and creole languages. Classified also as non-standard spellings, they are found in various domains of written discourse. These studies highlight a common theme of 'spelling choices as a communicative resource used for different purposes according to each social and cultural context of orthographic practices' (Sebba 1998a, Androutsopoulos 2000). This is the case for British creole texts (Sebba, 1998b); Hawai'ian creole texts (Romaine, 2005); Jamaican creole computer mediated texts (Hinrichs 2007); and Haitian creole texts Schieffelin, B. B. and Doucet (1994). For British Creole, Sebba found that users have devised ways of distancing the creole from British English such as making phonetic differences to draw attention to where there was no difference, using a different graphemic character to represent the same sound. Thus, he argues that the non-standard spellings are 'anti-standard', conscious attempts by users to challenge the officially recognised standard, British English. In this way, the orthographic practices, characterised by variable spellings, often index certain and identities like anti-standard views in opposition to dominant standard lexifiers and national identities (Sebba 1998a). In order to accommodate varying representations, Devonish (1986 cited in Sebba 1998a) recommends a view that sees intermediate varieties of creole as a continuum, all of which can be considered as acceptable forms of the creole and identify the forms which are the most common among them for recommendation for use to writers and media practitioners. For NL, Deuber (2005) suggests an 'ethnophonemic' orthography, a hybrid of phonemic and etymological orthography by which phonemes that are common to both the Creole and its lexifier would be represented etymologically while non-English phonemes would be represented phonemically. Using computer-mediated corpus from online posts and emails, Deuber and Hinrichs (2007) note that unlike Jamaican creole and indeed Caribbean creoles, NL not only co-exists with its exoglossic lexifier English, but also with several indigenous languages. They

argue that orthographic practices of Nigerian users are guided by two basic principles: First, they tend to spell words etymologically following English conventions, which sound alike and mean the same thing in English and NL. Second, non-English words are spelled following phonemic orthographic conventions used for Nigerian indigenous languages. They also note that some aspects of users' orthographic practices had become conventionalised by reason of widespread use and general acceptance.

Issues in Standardising Pidgins and Creoles

One dilemma facing pidgin and creole languages in the context of standardisation, is in the ideological issues that are involved in determining what model to adopt for their orthography. This dilemma arises from a need for pidgin and creole languages to establish independence from their exoglossic lexifiers in order to not continue to be seen as a sub-standard variety, and at the same time, seeking to develop by elaboration and gain prestige by association with the same exoglossic lexifiers they are trying to be independent of. Arguments in favour of either etymological or phonemic models to orthography are based on which model will elicit positive attitudes towards the pidgin or creole and status. Sebba (1998b: 227) characterises the views on creole orthography in terms of those held by most linguists (e.g. experts) who 'are almost unanimously in favour of a creole orthography which resists standard English conventions' and those held by 'users' whose practices favour etymological orthography following standard English conventions.

Experts (e.g. linguists) are known to prefer phonemic based orthographies while users use etymological based orthographies. For example, Elugbe & Omamor (1991) advocate for the independence of the Nigerian creolised variety by calling for the adoption of an autonomous model that adopts a phonemic approach to its spelling conventions and norms. In their opinion, it is the only way for NL to be seen and accorded the status of being a language in their own right. Mufwene (1997), on the other hand, argues in support of pidgins and creoles like NL being classified as varieties of English because in his view, to do otherwise is to deny them of the prestige and status that will accrue to them by association. However, the sociohistorical experience of the Nigerian creolised variety suggests otherwise. In Omamor's (nd.) view, to refer to NL as a variety of English and lay undue emphasis on its contact history, especially when it has since developed to become the mother tongue of some and the first language of many others, is not in its interest (paraphrased) as this reinforces perceptions of it as sub-standard variety of English. The above illustrate Sebba's (1998a) view that ideology, and not linguistics is a major consideration in the development of an orthography for pidgins and creoles. According to him, orthography, as the most visible aspect of written language norms, is a sociopolitical matter, and although its codification may be a linguistic matter, getting users to adopt a spelling system is not. While there is a general consensus that good orthographies should meet the principles of systematic soundness, precision, and economy, these criteria determine the success of an orthography only to a certain extent (Coulmas 1989: 226). Therefore, orthographies are not free from sociolinguistic realities as they participate in the indexing of ideological based loyalties and identities (Sebba 1998b).

Only a few creole languages have been standardised, and have achieved some degree of use in the 'high' domains of education and media. For example, Papiamentu spoken in Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao in the Caribbean; Haitian Creole is spoken in Haiti; and more recently, Jamaican Creole in Jamaica. These creoles have competing orthographies that reflect two models of orthography, *phonemic* and *etymological*. The phonemic approach, which provides for a spelling system that has one symbol per phoneme, and therefore supports the view of pidgins and creoles as independent language in their own right, is mostly used by experts. The etymological model, on the other hand, which supports the use of spelling conventions and norms of the lexifier with some modifications, characterises users' practices.

Some experts (linguists) (e.g. Devonish 1986, Hellinger 1986, Cassidy 1993, cited in Sebba 1998a) highlight the advantages of a phonemic based orthography in terms of: the positive impact it is likely to have on attitudes towards pidgins and creoles in terms of emphasising its distance from English; it frees users, learners in particular, from the being burdened with the inconsistencies of English spelling; and users do not have to be literate in English to be able to read in the pidgin or creole. Other scholars who underscore the disadvantages of promoting an etymological based orthography argue that it assumes that users are literate in English; requires different principles for writing non-English words; and reinforces widespread misconception of the creole as an inferior variety of English (Hellinger 1986:67; Elugbe & Omamor 1991). However, the implementation of a phonemic based orthography is equally problematic in view of: already existing writing practices among users that are etymological; the difficulty in getting people to adopt a writing system that will require learning; and the general negative attitudes towards vernacular literacy. Papiamentu

for example, has competing orthographies that are distinguished by their association with Spanish and English orthographic conventions. The debates regarding aspects of the orthographies though linguistic, have political undertones in that the choice of English conventions over the Spanish is seen as having Anglo-saxon sentiments that reinforces a colonial mind set.

The writing activities of users account for a large body of written material whose activities are responsible for aspects of the orthography that is standardising (Deuber 2005); and whose orthographic practices (Sebba 1998b), in the absence of standardised norms and official recognition, signal certain ideologies. Following Street's analysis of approaches to literacy, Sebba (2007: 14) argues that the views reflected in the literature about models of orthographies for pidgins and creoles, autonomous and orthography- as- practice models of orthography, are both ideological because they are based on theories about the nature of society. Although autonomous models treat orthography as 'neutral technology that can be detached from specific social contexts', 'an account of orthography-as-practice must be sociocultural in nature'.

Following Sebba (1998, 2000, 2007), this study adopts the view that certain ideologies govern orthographic practices especially in the absence of orthographic conventions and norms and that the variability observed in Creole spelling is an attempt (conscious or unconscious) by writers to distinguish between the Creole and Standard English. It is in this regard that the paper argues that users' orthographic practices should be taken into account in the development of orthography for NL.

Profile of *Naijá Languej* (NL)

Historically, NL is one of the sociolinguistic outcomes of contacts between the indigenous people of Nigeria and Europeans on the Atlantic coast; and it has subsequently been shaped by the country's colonial history and multilingual context. With an estimated population over 180 million, the scope of NL is a reflection of its status that has evolved from a trade language in the pre-colonial era and into a language of inter-ethnic communication and prestige during the colonial era, and into a language of integration and identity in the post-colonial era (Ofulue, 2012). It is spoken as a first and second language by speakers that cut across Nigeria's geographical, multiethnic, and socioeconomic class in Nigeria and in the Diaspora. According to Faraclas (2013), 'with a speech community of over 75 million, NL is not only the African language with the largest number of speakers, but also the most widely spoken pidgin/creole language in the world'. It is in the light of its increasing population of first language speakers that NL is viewed by some as a variety that is creolising, especially in coastal parts of the country (e.g. Mafeni 1971, Marchese & Schnukal 1982, Donwa-Ifode 1983, Elugbe & Omamor 1991, Ofulue 2004).

English was introduced into Nigeria twice at different times and in different ways, first as spoken by the British traders in contact with indigenous groups from which NL emerged, and second as a language of education in the colonial era (Mufwene 2009). NL, which coexists with English and the indigenous languages, functions as a lingua franca and is predominantly spoken in the southern region and in urban contexts, although with speakers that cut across Nigeria's geographical, multiethnic and socioeconomic class terrain. Deuber (2005) characterises the status of NL as a 'full-fledged language in its own right' with 'sufficiently stable norms for continued spread of second language varieties', and as the speech of an urban educated population outside of its core geographical area, despite its co-existence with English. She describes NL's position in relation to the other languages as a triglossic language situation in which it is in a 'broad diglossic' relationship with English, but it is also distinct from the indigenous languages. NL and English are functionally complementary as it currently functions as an 'unofficial national language' but is distinct from English at the level of grammar, and its vitality resides in its role of indexing 'a culture' (Deuber, 2005:208).

Since the independence of Nigeria in 1960, NL has been rapidly expanding from its original place along the coastal shores of the South south, to the rest of the country. Co-existing with English, its exoglossic lexifier, and indigenous languages, NL has developed over the last 30 years to become the most important, most widely spread, and perhaps the most ethnically neutral lingua franca used in the country today. Its status, which was previously associated with the uneducated and lower class during the colonial era, has been redefined in the post-colonial era. (Agheyesi 1983, Oloruntoba 1992). It has expanded into formal contexts such as information dissemination by government and non-government agencies, Christian religious practices, and schools especially in urban areas, even though it is still excluded from the educational system. However, the expansion of *Naijá* into formal domains that involve written texts such as radio and television news broadcasts, political campaigning, bible translation, fictional writing, poetry, advertisements, and ICT

and new media (Internet and social media) platforms by a predominantly young and literate demographic exposes the language to the influence of English writing conventions.

Written texts in *Naijá*

Despite its non-recognition by the government, NL has continued to gain recognition and acceptance as an indigenous Nigerian language, expanding in geographical coverage, spreading into more formal and non-traditional domains, and acquiring ‘high’ functions. Its users who had previously comprised mostly uneducated speakers now include educated users as well, especially the youth who have extended the functions of NL beyond interethnic communication to include the indexing of identities (cf. Olorunfoba 1992, Ofulue 2012). Beyond the typographical representation of NL in literary texts (e.g. Achebe’s *No longer at Ease*, Aig-Imoukede’s *Pidgin Stew*) and religious texts, the significant increase in orthographic practices, to a large extent, has been popularised by traditional, new media and technology² (cf. Ifukor 2011, Durodola 2013). There is also an attendant expansion of NL into the non-traditional domains of Information Communication Technology (ICT) and new media (e.g. the Internet and social media) where a predominantly young literate audience engage in the written medium domain on social media platforms. Speakers not only use NL to perform communicative, integrative and expressive functions, they are expanding the functions of NL to meet needs in the written medium within ICT and new media domains.

Perhaps the best example of the impact of media and technology is the WAZOBIA³ radio station (and also Television station). As the first and only fully dedicated station to broadcasting programmes in NL on the African continent, WAZOBIA FM’s debut unto the radio broadcasting scene marked a major milestone in the development of NL in terms of its national and international reach via online streaming to a wider audience. Nationally, it has stations in four metropolitan locations, Lagos (southwest), Abuja (the Federal capital), Port Harcourt (south) and Kano (north) (cf. wazobiafm.com 2012). Its impact is demonstrated by the fact that it has established its presence on social media networks with a followership of about 300,000 on its Facebook and Twitter pages (as at 2013). The station’s presence on the Internet has also afforded it to acquire listeners internationally. The station’s audience demographic shows that a greater percentage are youth.

The significance of this development lies in the popularisation and especially the participation of NL in the technology space that WAZOBIA FM provides. In the absence of standardised orthography for NL, radio stations practice of free translation from English to NL. The writing practices are characterised by non-standardised, highly variable conventions with, although certain aspects appear to be standardised. Except for reference to these practices as non-standard forms, users’ writing practices have not been examined in terms of what they can contribute to the discourse of developing an accepted orthography for NL.

As part of efforts to facilitate the codification and elaboration of NL, the *Naijá Languej Akedemi* (NLA) was created⁴. A total of 28 graphemes made up of 23 single characters and 5 diagraphs make up the NLA’s phonologically based orthography that was designed as a standard orthography for everyday writing in NL (Ofulue and Esizimotor 2010). In addition, a version for use in scientific publications (uses sub-dots or phonetic symbols to mark +/- ATR for example) was developed. The phonemic principle of one symbol per sound was adopted and common core features of NL rather than specific regional or social dialects were identified. Following orthographic principles of simplicity, familiarity, and harmonisation, diagraphs and diacritics were adopted to represent sounds that are not in the Roman alphabet (e.g. ch, gb, sh, kp, zh). Words borrowed from English or other languages are written in alignment with NL’s sound and syllable patterns. Following the perspectives discussed in this paper, the NLA orthography, like other proposed orthographies before it (e.g. Elugbe & Omamor 1991, Faraclas 1996) faces the challenge of acceptance since it does not necessarily reflect users’ orthographic choices.

Table 1: *Naijá Languej Akedemi*’s standard orthography

Phoneme	Grapheme	Phoneme	Grapheme
A	a	L	l
B	b	m	m
ʃ	ch	n	n
D	d	o	o
E	e	ɔ	o
ε	e	p	p
F	f	R	r

G	g	S	s
gb	gb	ʃ	sh
H	h	T	t
I	i	U	u
ɔ̃	j	V	v
K	k	Y	y
kp	kp	Z	z

Methodology

A corpus of a total of about 20,000 words was obtained from written texts such as social media posts on programmes of WAZOBIA radio station, online sports commentary, and written texts of a translation of ‘Things fall apart’ and poems. Three call in/post in programmes on three of WAZOBIA’s radio stations in Lagos, Abuja and Port Harcourt were identified, ‘How una see am’ and ‘Tori for Town’. Threads of audience responses in form of posts totalling 90 posts and 3,454 words were harvested for analysis. The choice of WAZOBIA FM radio station is in view of its status as the only station that is fully dedicated to radio programming in NL. Data collection from this source was guided by a selection of radio programmes based on popularity and topic. Data on sports were drawn from an online Supersports commentary series, ‘Tori for Pidgin’ that comprises short stories written by Nigerians based in Nigeria, and are written for the Nigerian audience. A total of 71 stories written by 9 individuals make up the corpus of 16,524 words. The third set of data representing literary writing in the corpus, comprises an excerpt from a translation of Chinua Achebe’s Things fall Apart translated as ‘Katakata’ (meaning ‘scattered’) and 5 poems totalling 1,164 words. In contrast to earlier studies e.g. Deuber (2005) that is based on spoken material and which was transcribed by the researcher, the texts that constitute the data for the present study is drawn from written material by different people reflecting users’ individual practices.

Data and Analysis

Similar to data of previous studies examined, the data for this study was sourced mainly from online sources. Data used in previous studies include fictional writing (e.g. Sebba 1998 in British creole); bible translation text in Hawai’ian creole (e.g. Romaine 2005) Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) in Jamaican creole and NL (e.g. Deuber, 2005; Hinrichs 2004; Deuber and Hinrichs 2007). The users whose writing practices are examined in this study are literate in English since this demographic currently constitutes the population of those engaged in orthographic practices in NL, as such they have English orthographic conventions and norms as part of their repertoire. As second language users of NL who are literate in English, their orthographic practices are influenced by English. Nevertheless, the fact that they engage in writing in NL even though they can do so in English is quite significant for the study.

Samples of the data are presented in Table 2 below:

Table 2. Samples from the data

Posts on WAZOBIA radio stations	WAZOBIA 95.5 FM Abuja	WAZOBIA 94.1 FM Port Harcourt
WAZOBIA 95.1 FM Lagos		
Piolamah Patience:	Aare FiwajoyePhemyAbikau	Prince Okechukwu Ikeagwu:
Peter Good morring. Na waoh..d tin	Na watin dem dey tell us all d time b	my own be say, wetin fine for this
sweet my body o everywhere na ma	dat,even if dem add to bill wu go	woman body wey make men dey
goma go dey..e gud as d ey giv dem	arrest dem???i beg anytin wey dem	marry her? plenty fine fine gals dey
10 years it wil serve as lesson 2 odas	believe say e good make dem do am,	there, no husband. to me she dey
	God will provide money wey poor	irritating, i know no about una
	ppl go use pay am.	

‘Tori for Pidgin’

DR Congo wan enta Afcon final

04 February 2015, 05:56

Ogacoachi for DR Congo, Florent Ibengetok say hin belle go sweet am yafun yafun if hin team fit enta de final for dis year Nations Cup wey dey happen for Equatorial Guinea.

Na like play like play n ahin DR Congo take waka from Group B enta de lass 4 for dis competition.

DR Congo do dia bros, Congo bad thing for de kwata final becous na dem carry dem kommot for de Nations Cup.

De wahala wey kon dey now be say DR Congo go jam Ivory Coast today for dia semi final match, and de match go tough die for dem sake of say Ivory Coast too wan enta final.

Excerpt from Translation of Chinua Achebe's 'Things fall Apart' into Naijá

Who no sabi Okonkwo? For Umuofia reach Mbaino, na everywhere them dey talk about am because of im power. Na small pikin e still be when e fall Amalinze for ground. You no sabi this Amalinze en, na cat e be. Im back no dey touch ground. Na so e dey draw like okra for wrestling. E sabi wrestle well well. For seven years no body fit fall am reach Mbaino oh, reach Umuofia. Na Okonkwo only fit use im back touch ground. E be only 18 years when e do this thing. Okonkwo make im village people glad well well.

Wake up from yeye
 Man wey no get money for this country,
 Na look e come look for stadium,
 E be fan wey dey clap for them wey dey play ball
 Na so so clap be im work
 If im team win e go drink die
 If them lose e go fight to quench
 Whether lose or win the player go pocket im money.

Sources: www.supersports.com; www.wazobiafm.com

Following Sebba (1998b), and Deuber and Hinrichs (2007) a number of commonly used lexical forms and their variable spellings were identified in the texts. The corpus was examined for evidence of differentiation from and similarity to English as well as words that are unique to NL. In order to determine any discernable patterns in the writers' orthographic practices, the data were analysed into four categories: (i) words with English cognates or with English as source; (ii) non-English words; (iii) words with English cognates but spelled differently; and (iv) other words or morphemes that had non-standard or variable spellings. The number of occurrences was also determined as a means of identifying preferred orthographic choices. Examples in Tables (3) to (5) below show the different categories into which the words were analysed based on their phonological form and etymology. Phonological based spelling using IPA symbols and NLA orthography are provided for comparison with the spellings found in the texts.

Table 3 shows words of English origin that have a grammatical function in NL. The words in this table are mostly words that are multifunctional as content and grammatical function words (e.g. 'make' as a verb and as a subjunctive clause introducer). The variations in spelling found in the data are presented:

Table 3: Words with English cognates having distinct grammatical functions

IPA	NLA	Spelling variations	Gloss
/de/	dé/dè	de, dey	Copula, locative marker, imperfective aspect marker
/se/	se	say, sey	sub. conjunction
/we/	we	wey	that (relative pronoun)
/we/	we	we	2 nd pers. plu. subj. pronoun
/bi/	bi	be, bee	Be
/si/	si	si, see	See
/wan/	wan	won, want	Want
/mek/	mek	mek, mak, make	verb, subj. cl. Intro
/du/	du	do	Do
/dem/	dem	dem, them	3 rd pers. plu. obj. pronoun
/dis/	dis	dis, this	demonstrative qualifier
/dat/	dat	dat, that	demonstrative qualifier

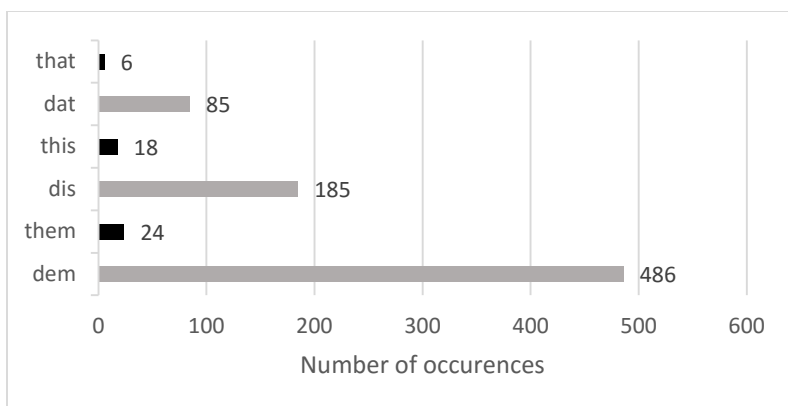


Figure 1. Spelling of words with English cognates with <th>

The words in Figure 1 have English cognates, hence the data has occurrences of them being spelled as English words. For example, <dat> occurs 85 times compared to <that> occurring only 6 times. Similarly, <dis> occurs 185 times while its English cognate <this> appears 18 times, and <dem> occurs 486 times while <them> occurs only 24 times. However, the spellings with the highest number of occurrences show <th> consistently spelled as <d> thus indicating that writers' recognise that in NL there is no <th>. Their choices also coincide with the phonological based spelling in Nigerian indigenous languages. This practice has more less become conventionalised especially in view of the number of occurrences, consistency in use and very few occurrences of the variations.

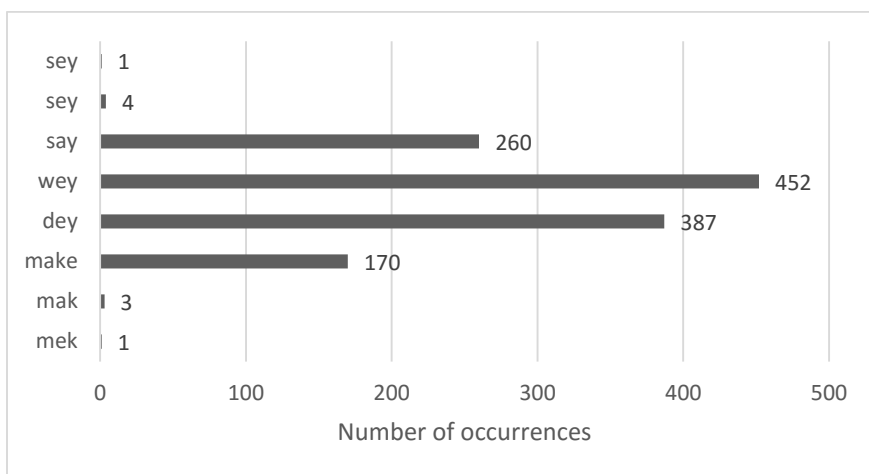


Figure 2. Spelling of words with English cognates <say>, <wey>, <dey>, <make>

Figure 2 shows the highest number of occurrences for the spelling of the relative clause introducer, <wey>'that/which', the imperfective aspect marker <dey>'am, are', and the subjunctive conjunction <say>'say that' as 452, 387, and 260 respectively. Note that in the data no distinction is made in the spelling of <dey> for the three different functional markers it represents. Although <de> as copula and as locative marker are distinguished by tone in the NLA orthography, it is not distinguished in data. While also attesting this in their data, Deuber and Hinrichs (2007) note that <dey> and <wey> (like the words in table 3) 'manifest a high degree of conventionalisation' but unlike the words in table 3, they are not phonemic representations of English cognates. Rather their endings appear to reflect English's diphthong <ei> in 'they' which does not occur in Naijá and is spelled as <ey> or <ay>. Even though the closest corresponding sound is <e>, writers prefer to represent the sound using English orthography, <ey>. Also, while writers make no distinction in spelling of <say> as a verb and as a subordinating conjunction, the inclusion of <y> is what differentiates between the spelling of the relative clause introducer <wey> and the second person plural pronoun, <we> as illustrated in these examples from the data:

(1)

Wen u ask dem go say na devil work ‘When you ask, they will say it’s the devil at work’

I think say de golkipa no suppose play futbol I think that the goalkeeper should not play football

E don tey wey we don dey dream about dis trophy Its been a long time that we have been dreaming about this trophy.

The word, <tey>‘long time’ in the last example is spelled using English orthography even though it is not of English origin i.e. <sotay> ‘until’; also <troway> ‘waste’. These spelling of the items in figure 1 and 2, though not phonologically based, they appear to have been conventionalised through use over a long period of time, and as such show consistency in their spelling with little or no variability in the data.

Table 4: Words with English cognates

IPA	NLA	Spelling variations	Gloss
/kɔntri/	<i>Kontri</i>	<i>contri, contry, country</i>	country
/pipul/	<i>Pipul</i>	<i>pipo, pipu, people</i>	people
/smɔl/	<i>smol</i>	<i>smol, small</i>	small
/wɛl/	<i>Wel</i>	<i>wel, well</i>	well
/hɛlɛp/	<i>helep</i>	<i>helep, help</i>	help
/wɔk/	<i>Wok</i>	<i>Work</i>	work
/bɔn/	<i>Bon</i>	<i>Born</i>	born
/bɔdi/	<i>bodi</i>	<i>bodi, body</i>	body
/mɔni/	<i>moni</i>	<i>moni, money</i>	money
/mari/	<i>mari</i>	<i>mari/marry</i>	marry
/hapi/	<i>hapi</i>	<i>happi/happy</i>	happy
/ɛnta/	<i>enta</i>	<i>enta/enter,</i>	enter
/matɛr/	<i>mata</i>	<i>matter, mata, mater</i>	matter
/bɛtɛr/	<i>beta</i>	<i>better, beta</i>	better
/bɛlɛ/	<i>bele</i>	<i>Belle</i>	belly, stomach

The words in Table 4 all have English cognates. However, writers maintain English orthography for some e.g. <for> and differentiate for others e.g. <enta>. Most of the words have one or two spelling variations. Some patterns that characterise the spelling choices are observed and they are discussed in figures 4 and 5:

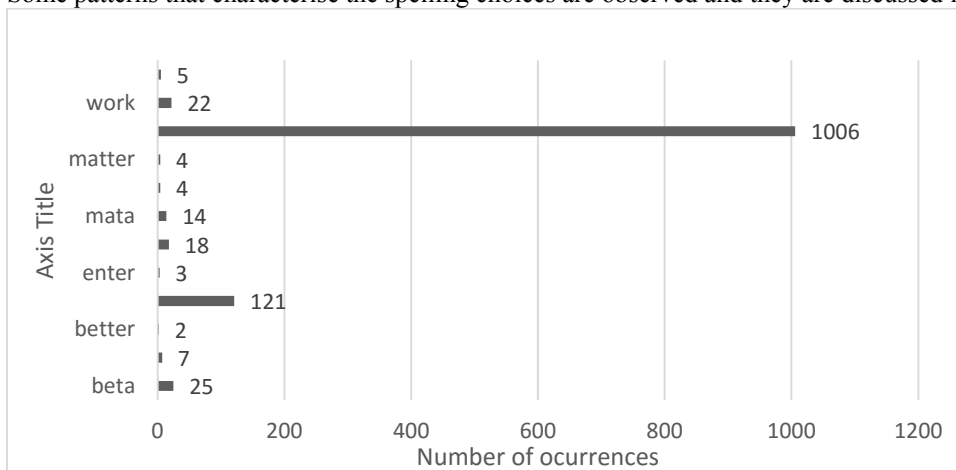


Figure 4. Spelling of words with English cognates with <or> and <er>

The predominantly high frequencies with no evidence of variability in the spelling of words that have English cognates with <or> and <er> suggest that writers’ practices of making a distinction between English and Naijá spelling of words like <enta> and <beta>, but not for <for> and <work> has become conventionalised over time. In the spelling of ‘matter’, the variants ending in <a> and not <er> have the higher frequencies in line with this practice. And although the spelling of words with <or> are not phonologically based they are orthographically consistent.

Table 3. Words with English cognates but with a different phonological and morphological structure

IPA	NLA	Spelling variation	Gloss
/gri/	<i>gri</i>	'gree	Agree
/dɔmɔt/	<i>domot</i>	domot	Entrance
/nɔtin/	<i>notin</i>	notin, nothing	Nothing
/waka/	<i>waka</i>	waka	Walk
/kɔmɔt/	<i>komot</i>	kommot, comot, komot, commot	leave, exit
/wetin/	<i>wetin</i>	waitin, wetin	what (lit. what thing)
/wɛldɔn/	<i>weldon</i>	weldon, wedon	well done
/sidɔn/	<i>sidon</i>	sit down, sit don, sidon	sit down

In Table 3, the words or the components that make them up are of English origin. They also show evidence of variations in spelling, an example of which is discussed in figure 5.

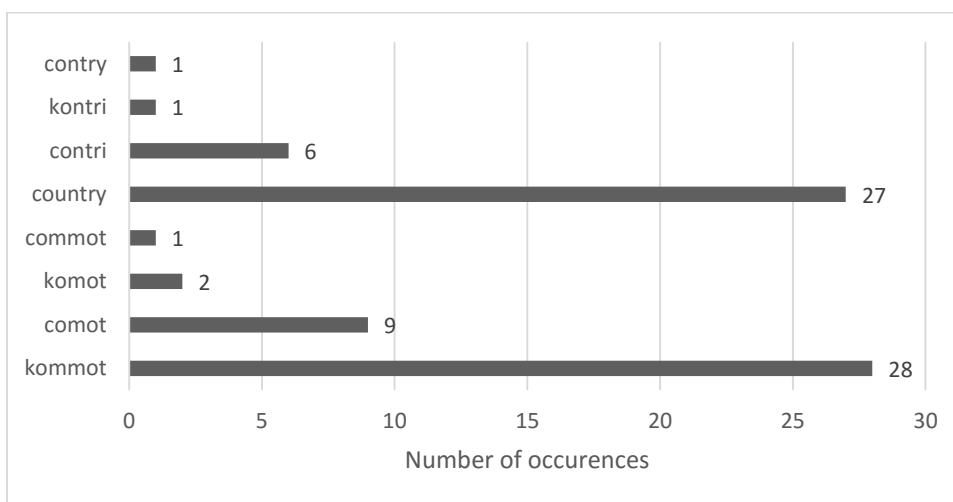


Figure 5. Spelling of words with English cognates <c> versus <k>

Figure 5 shows that there is a high degree of variation in the spelling of words with English cognates that begin with <c> as in ‘country’, and ‘come’. Phonologically, ‘country’ should be spelled with <k> but writers’ practices show a preference for the English spelling. On the other hand, the spelling variation with <k> in <kommot> has the highest number of occurrences. Derived from ‘come’ and ‘out’, it has a different meaning from the original two word forms. While some writers appear to have made this association with the word’s original component ‘come’ to inform the use of <c>, others have represented it phonemically instead.

There is also the issue of double consonants, e.g. <mm> ‘kommot’ or <tt> ‘matta’ observed in Table 3. The variant ‘kommot’ with the highest number of occurrences, (28) followed by ‘comot’ (9) while the phonologically accurate variant, ‘komot’ scored very low (2). Despite the fact that there is no double consonant in the word forms from which ‘kommot’ was etymologically derived, double consonant is an orthographic feature of English and is predominant.

Table 5. Words with no English cognates

IPA	A	Spelling variations	Gloss
/na/	<i>Na</i>	<i>na, nah</i>	copula
/una/	<i>una</i>	<i>Una</i>	you (plural)
/pikin/	<i>pikin</i>	<i>pikin, pickin</i>	child
/sabi/	<i>sabi</i>	<i>sabi, sabee</i>	know
/nawa/	<i>nawa</i>	<i>nawa, na wah</i>	expression of surprise

In Table 5, these last set of words have no English cognates. Of the five words listed in the table, only <una> the second person plural subject pronoun, does not have any variants. For example, the copula, <na> with 1348 occurrences, has the highest number of occurrences of all the words examined, and a variant, <nah> that occurs only twice in the data. Second, the word for ‘child’ in Naijá, which is phonologically spelled as <pikin> is a creole word that is found in other pidgins and creoles as well. In the data, there are 7 occurrences

of it spelled as <pikin> and 2 occurrences as <pickin>. <Sabi> is the third example- while its English equivalent 'to know' has the highest number of occurrences- 23, the frequency count for <sabi> is 19, and <sabee> is 17.

Discussion

Following Sebba (1998a, 1998b, 2007) with respect to an ideological approach to understanding variability in orthographic practices, the data was analysed for patterns that characterise writers' orthographic practices. The number of occurrences and consistency of spelling of particular variants over others were also determined. A number of observations can be made from the analysis.

First, it was observed that variants that recorded high frequencies in occurrences, and which are used consistently can be said to have more or less become conventionalised. For example, the predominance in the spelling of lexical items like <wey>, <dey>, <for>, <enta> with evidence of little or no variability observed in the data of this study confirms Deuber and Hinrichs' (2007) findings that some aspects of NL's orthography indicate a 'high degree of conventionalisation'.

Second, although a greater percentage of the words with the highest frequencies are etymologically derived, a significant number of orthographic practices are also phonologically derived. A number are also consistently applied to determine whether or not they have been conventionalised for subsequent incorporation as part of NL's orthography. Since the population of all who practice writing in NL are also literate in English, it is not surprising therefore that as Deuber and Hinrichs (2007) note, they 'rely primarily on the orthography of English and deviate from it where it is considered necessary'. A second strategy is to resort to the phonemic spelling of Nigerian indigenous languages. In this study, instances in which there are no discernable patterns of practice in terms of preferred orthographic choices suggest that such aspects may still be in a state of flux with a potential of becoming standardised later on in time. For example, based on frequency, writers' preference for the variant spelled with <c> in <country> and for <k> in <kommot> respectively shows that there is no clear pattern of orthographic practice for the spelling of these words.

The data also shows that users retain or use double consonants e.g. <belle> 'belly' and <kommot> 'exit'. While the double consonant in <belle> is a retention from its English cognate, that of <kommot> is not, rather users extend to it an orthographic practice of doubling consonants. However, it is expected that users will not have great difficulty accepting the phonologically based representation especially since no patterns of occurrence could be established for this practice in the data, and double consonants are phonologically redundant in Naijá. Elsewhere, writers use <c> and <k> to represent the same sound in words that are of English origin in Papiamentu and Haitian creole, where writers have to make choices regarding what orthographic conventions to use in representing certain phonemes that have phonemic equivalents in French. In such instances where frequency in the number of occurrences does not indicate a clear preference or choice, this study argues that those spellings may still be undergoing the process of becoming conventionalised.

Third, previous studies like Deuber and Hinrichs (2007) offer some perspectives regarding the motivations for the variability observed in users' spelling choices. They include the perceived need to differentiate NL from English for various reasons such as to mark identity, group, social or national identities. For national identity, Ifukor (2011: 206, 207) argues that the practice is motivated by ideology and technology. In the specific instance of the variable spelling of 'Nigeria' (*Naija*, *9ja*, *Nig*, *9jeria*, *Nija*) in the context of Computer Mediated Communication (CMC), Ifukor states that the data indicates that rather than see them as errors, users' choices are deliberate choices made to define 'their Nigerianness', a means of ideological struggle, and resistance to officialdom. However, this study offers an alternative view in which identified patterns of spelling choices and practices of users can inform standardisation of NL orthography. Bamgbose (1998) suggests five principles of measurement of the degree of standardisation of linguistic innovations namely, demographic, codification, geographical, and acceptability. Of these, he considers codification and acceptability most important, which in line with the findings of this study may be used as criteria for standardising NL users' orthographic practices. However, the bottom-up approach or 'grassroot' (cf. Deuber and Hinrichs 2007) is what Devonish (1996) describes as 'unconscious efforts at language reform' and the role of the language planner (linguist) is to 'strengthen and add long term vision to the processes which are already taking place' (1996:111).

Recommendations and Conclusion

In view of the fact that some aspects of NL's orthography have become standardised in terms of acceptance and use, and many more are on their way to becoming standardised, this study proposes the development of a users' based orthography in addition to a phonological one that is being promoted by experts (e.g. Ofulue and Esizimeteor 2010). The users' based orthography can be used by those who are already engaged in orthographic practices in NL, most of whom are literate in English. This position finds support in previous studies (e.g. Deuber and Hinrichs 2007) and the present study with respect to the high degree of conventionalisation of some aspects of users' writing practices. Although motivated by different ideological views, most of the Caribbean creoles have dual orthographies.

Furthermore, since the orthographies take many years to stabilise, there will be a need to establish a corpus for NL that will be continually updated for the identification of spelling choices that are becoming conventionalised and accepted by most, for standardising writers' orthographic practices. The view espoused in this study aligns with Bauer's (1983) concept of institutionalisation, and also Lipka et al (2004) as, 'the integration of a lexical item with a particular form and meaning into the existing stock of words as a generally acceptable and current lexeme' which involves the general acceptance by a community, and establishment of new word forms by means of frequent use, thus precedes lexicalisation. It is in this regard that standardising users' orthographic practices as an alternative orthography will require the creation of a corpus of written texts in NL, processes such as for establishing what constitutes users' orthographic practices in terms of patterns of occurrence as illustrated by the case of <komnot>, and criteria for identifying existing and adding newly conventionalised words.

This study examined users' orthographic practices and their role in standardising NL's orthography. Like previous studies, it noted that some aspects of NL's orthography had become conventionalised, that is they have been generally accepted and have been in use for some time, thus indicating that a bottom-up approach to standardisation is in place. Following Sebba (1998), the study was based on the premise that the choices that writers' make in representing NL in writing are informed by certain ideologies and identities. Analysis of the data showed that although the orthographic practices of writers are typically etymological for example, 'for' as <for>, they also utilise a phonological model in some aspects for example, 'them' as <dem> or 'enter' as <enta>. The etymological based spelling choices is mostly words that have English cognates although there are exceptions. In view of the patterns of choices and practices observed, I have argued that the writing practices of the rapidly growing number of NL users should be taken into consideration as an alternative orthography to phonological based models in developing a standard orthography for NL.

Notes

¹The name *Naijá Langwej* (NL), was adopted by the *Naija Langwej Akedemi* (NLA) to enable the language shed the stigmatisation associated with the traditional meaning of the term pidgin, and to project its current status as a creolised variety.

²The use of NL for broadcasting in Nigeria, which began when the National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) introduced *Safe Journey*, a drama series in NL introduced into its programming in the early 1970s, that grew into 'universal acceptance' (Kolade 2013:105). Elugbe & Omamor (1991) and Oloruntoba (1991) report on the use of NL for the news on the former Benin Television (BTV); and Deuber (2005) reports on its use for news broadcasts on Radio Nigeria. Not all the stations do a written translation of the news in NL. For example, BTV, now Edo Television (ETV) has adopted a free, off-the-cuff translation of the news into NL from English.

³WAZOBIA FM radio station (and television station), a subsidiary of AIM Group Limited, is Nigeria's first and only fully dedicated radio station to programmes in NL. WAZOBIA was founded on November 1, 2007 in Lagos. Its target audience is reflected in its slogan, 'the people's station' (cf. wazobiafm.com 2012).

⁴The *Naija Langwej* Academy was created at the first conference on Nigerian Pidgin in 2009. The academy fulfilled one of its mandates by producing a phonologically based standard *Naijá langwej* orthography. From the perspective discussed in this paper, NLA's proposal is a first step and it can be modified further in view of the fact that standardising orthographies is a process that can take several years.

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