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English Language Teachers’ Perception of their Role and Responsibility in three Secondary Schools in Jamaica
Engelsklärares syn på deras roll och ansvar vid tre högstadieskolor i Jamaica

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Abstract

This descriptive research paper looks at English teaching in Jamaica, and examines what perceptions upper secondary school teachers have of the teaching mission, the teacher role and the responsibility that comes with the teacher profession. The paper also examines the teachers’ attitudes towards Jamaican Creole and Standard Jamaican English and the relation between these two languages.

The paper discusses inequality connected to language diversity in Jamaica and aims to explore attitudes, language ideologies and educational policies, in relation to English teaching in a Jamaican Creole speaking classroom.

The study was carried out with a qualitative approach where semi-structured interviews were conducted with five teachers at three public upper secondary schools in Jamaica. The collected data was analyzed with an explorative approach.

The main conclusion drawn from this study is that English teaching in a Jamaican Creole speaking classroom is affected by a number of factors. Firstly, the teachers expressed an ambivalence opinion about what language is or should be the first and second language. Secondly, teaching English in Jamaica is difficult due to the absence of a standardized written form of the students’ vernacular. Lastly, the teacher role is not limited to teach a first or second language, the teachers’ role is extended to include a great responsibility for the students’ future life.

Keywords: literacy, orality, creole, standard Jamaican English, English teaching, L1, L2, diglossic, bilingualism, identity, language ideology
Preface

We would like to express our gratitude to the Jamaican Language Unit and especially to our supervisor Dr. Karen Carpenter at the University of the West Indies, Mona, who helped us locate and get access to the schools and interviewees concerned. Thank you for your time and guidance. We would also like to express our gratitude to all the participants in this study. Lastly we also thank the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) who generously awarded us with a Minor Field Study scholarship.

This paper was written jointly, and the parts that were written separately were done with support and feedback from both authors. Jakob wrote the bulk of section 1 and 2, while Andreas wrote section 3. Section 4 and 5 were written jointly, as we formulated and wrote the result and the concluding discussion together.
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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

According to the Jamaican Ministry of Education, Youth & Culture (MOEY&C) there is an unsatisfactory performance of students in language and literacy (Language Education policy, 2001). An adverse long-term effect of low language competence is that the potential for human development in the Caribbean region is hampered. One reason for this situation is the co-existence of both Standard Jamaican English (SJE) and Jamaican Creole (JC). Low literacy and massive failure in English language examinations at all levels may explain the ambivalent attitude towards using JC in school and in society, and the inaccurate use of both languages. It is also recognized that this language conflict has negative effects on various aspects of daily life in Jamaica including social injustice.

The World Bank estimates that approximately 2 percent of the Jamaican population lives on less than one US dollar a day (2004) and that 9.9 percent lives under the national poverty line (2007). At the same time 14 percent of the populations from the age of 15 and above are illiterate (2009). The poverty in the country is said to be connected to the country’s low productivity. Jamaica has struggled with decreasing growth the last decades and today the GDP growth rate is -3.0. Understanding and acting on the factors behind Jamaica’s low productivity is considered important for creating conditions for poverty reduction in the country.

The results of the Country Economic Memorandum in Jamaica 2011 shows that low productivity is caused by a combination of high levels of crime, deficiencies in human capital and a depraved budget. The World Bank suggests that low educational attainment and low levels of training contribute to an overall low quality of human capital, which hinders productivity. The World Bank recommends improving the quality of human capital by investing more in education. Several attempts have been
made to increase the literacy among children and young adults. Reformation of secondary education and resources has been allocated to schools and teachers to enhance literacy to improve the quality of teaching (Report No: ICR00001238, The World Bank, 2010). The political and economic agenda for increasing literacy can nonetheless be seen as system for maintaining a linguistic and social injustice. The ideological and political struggle is the reality for many Jamaicans. Many peoples’ first and home language is viewed as users of illicit speech that differ from the society’s standard. It is particularly true in postcolonial countries where formerly enslaved and dominated populations’ speech and language reflect their history of oppression (Watkins, 2008).

1.2 The language situation

A correct form of SJE symbolizes high status and prestige. At the same time a correct form of SJE is the language of a small minority. JC, or “incorrect” varieties of SJE, on the other hand is the language of the majority of the Jamaican population and has traditionally had little status and no acceptance in official or formal contexts. Wardhaugh (2010) describes SJE as superior to JC. This is problematic since the overwhelming majority of the population speaks JC (Language Education policy, 2001). Wardhaugh argues that Jamaican teachers consider JC to be inseparably associated with poverty, ignorance, and lack of moral character. Furthermore he states that most teachers continue to treat this ""dialect problem"" as if it was a problem of speech correction and that they profess the superiority of SJE. MOEY&C also shows reports of societies that reject SJE as a language to be taught in school.

Stockwell (2002) argues that if the pressure from a powerful social standard is sufficiently strong, Creole can become decreolized, stigmatized and associated with illiteracy and ignorance. Creole can ultimately disappear and eventually lose all its speakers. JC and the language situation nevertheless challenges the political, social and educational agendas and it is therefore of utmost importance to investigate the linguistic relationship between SJE and JC and how it is interpreted and implemented by teachers in Jamaican schools. The Jamaican English teachers are in a way in the focal point of the debate on illiteracy and they can be seen as the governmental upholders and
guardians of MOEY&C language policies, shaping, affecting and determining how people should speak and write

MOEY&C recognizes Jamaica as a bilingual country with SJE as the official language but JC as the language most widely used by the Jamaican population. It has therefore been decided to maintain SJE as the official language and to promote basic communication through the oral use of JC in the early years, while facilitating the development of literacy in SJE (Curriculum guide grades 7-9, Ministry of Education and Culture, Kingston, Jamaica, 1998).

1.3 Purpose of the study and research questions

The purpose of our research is to investigate the ideas, methods and activities that are used in the teaching of SJE in secondary school classrooms, and look at the teachers’ perceptions of their English language teaching, and how it influences the teaching and learning process. We will also problematize bilingualism and discuss the social and political reasoning behind the English teaching policies in Jamaica, and what roles English teachers and schooling play in an environment where they have no access to a fully functioning language of education. This study was financed by the Swedish International Development Cooperation (SIDA) and can serve as a basis for deeper understanding of the connection between attitudes towards speech and language use of Jamaican students and social justice, and the complex process of English language teaching in a post-colonial and unique bilingual context which can be found in a developing country such as Jamaica.

Our field study is based on one main research question and one subordinate question.

- How do five Jamaican secondary English teachers’ perceive English teaching in a JC speaking environment?
- How do they look at their role and responsibility as Jamaican English teachers?
2 Theoretical context

2.1 Jamaican Creole

The Spaniards were driven out from Jamaica by the British in 1655 and during the first 200 years of British rule Jamaica became one of the world's leading sugar exporting and slave dependent nations. It was the slaves need to communicate with the British rulers that led to the establishment of the JC. Creole is a dialect or language which is the result of contact between the language of colonizing people and the languages of colonized populations (Roberts, 2007). It becomes a Creole as soon as it is learnt as a first language of a new generation (Stockwell, 2007). Until today JC has been used alongside with English and is also known as patois (or patwa) and sometimes also referred to as broken English or even slang. JC is an English lexicon Creole and derives from a RP speaking middle class from southern England and the accent has West African origins (Stockwell, 2007). Today JC, or varieties of JC are the everyday vernaculars of the majority of the Jamaican people. JC is primarily an oral language and it is used in homes, at the workplace and in almost every other place where ordinary Jamaican people interact informally with each other. JC has a consistent phonology, vocabulary and grammar and has been used as a means of communication for at least 300 years in Jamaica (Christe, 2003).

Literacy can be defined as a social and functional skill and depending on discourse students can operate with different literacies (Stockwell, 2007). No official JC writing system has been developed and therefore written JC can vary widely. Although most of the Jamaicans are able to speak SJE, many are not literate in SJE. Cassidy and Le Page were the first to create a spelling system for Caribbean English lexicon Creole, which is a part of SJE, and their work *The Dictionary of Jamaican English (1967)* is an attempt to establish a conventionalized orthography for all variations, including Creole, of
English that has been used in Jamaica since 1655 (Cassidy & Le Page, 2003). JC has no standard form and no books are written entirely in JC (Christe, 2003).

The MOEY&C recognizes that Jamaica has two languages and that JC is the one language most widely used. The language policy also states that language learners in the Jamaican language environment need to develop positive attitudes to whatever language they speak and to be able to make distinctions between JC and SJE. This should be done under the guidance of linguistically aware teachers who can appreciate the importance of JC and give opportunities to utilize a variety of indigenous forms, and expose a significant amount of JC material with culturally relevant content - songs, poems, stories (Language Education policy, 2001).

The question of the level of official recognition and establishment to be given to JC, language awareness in terms of the distinction between SJE and SJ, and the use of JC as a medium of instruction and literacy in the education system is all very current. According to Siegel (2006) JC is not inferior to SJE. It has its own grammatical rules and potential to be standardized and used in education. It should be noted that in England, five hundred years ago Latin was the standard language of education. English was not standardized and not considered appropriate for use in education.

2.1.1 The Creole continuum

As explained the JC has its own phonemes, a large vocabulary, and a complex syntax that makes the language useful in every Jamaican context and enables the speakers to express all their requirements. However, sometimes English lexicon Creole such as JC comes under pressure from a powerful local English speaking standard. The process of distinguishing and stratifying the different forms of JC is called the post-Creole continuum (Stockwell, 2007). The continuum spans between fully fledged form of Creole which is spoken by illiterate manual workers (basilect) to the form of Creole that is very close to standard British or RP (received pronunciation) which is used by the social, political and economical elite (acrolect). In between the two directions of the continuum there are a range of Creole varieties (mesolects). Many Jamaicans are not aware of the range of varieties of JC that is heard around them and through unconscious choices many Jamaicans think they speak English when in fact they speak JC (Christie, 2003). Now, the acrolect that is used by the elite can sometimes evolve into a new form of English. SJE is an example of a new English that has developed from acrolect
speakers of Creole. If the pressure from the powerful acrolectal speaking elite becomes too strong the Creole can be decreolized which means that the basilectal and mesolectal varieties become stigmatized and associated with illiteracy and ignorance. The government and schools will then promote an SJE and teach against JC by describing the use of Creole as improper (Stockwell, 2007). Although the majority of the Jamaicans use and understand JC, acrolectal varieties or SJE are used when Jamaicans want to signal their membership of higher social class and to distance themselves from those who speak the lower forms of the continuum (Christie, 2003). Consequently there is a small privileged group in Jamaica that can linguistically move across all strata and enjoy all benefits from using an acrolect variety which approaches an idealized form of English. The majority of the Jamaican population, however, can only use a basilectal variety of JC and are viewed as less educated and as members of a lower class (Christie, 2003).

2.2 Standard Jamaican English

Countries in which English is the official, main or dominant language are considered to use a standard form of English. In Jamaica English co-exists with JC and inevitably there is interference between codes including lexical copying and grammatical structures repositioning the English structures. The characteristic accent and dialect of SJE derives from the time when the main settlement from Britain occurred. SJE is however a new English with its own lexicon and grammar.

To Jamaicans with no or little knowledge of SJE many avenues are closed. They are excluded from full participation in events and activities where written language is required (Christie, 2003). This is an example of a class system where speech and language is linked to structured inequalities. Class based language is not simple variation but reflects also the hierarchies. The consequence is that some languages are socially and culturally dominant in which success comes to those who speak the dominant language (Longhurst, 2008).

Some students have attained some measure of academic proficiency in SJE which enable them to pass the Common Entrance Examinations (CEE), but the majority is underachieving in the skills required for reading and writing. Teachers of grades 7-9 complain that most students lack the basic composing skills and the ability to read
fiction and non-fiction materials at varying levels (Curriculum guide grades 7-9, Ministry of Education and Culture, Kingston, Jamaica, 1998).

2.3 Language distribution and attitudes

The following table depicts the attitudes of Jamaicans towards the appropriateness of JC or SJE depending on the type of situation. However, the table does not show any ability to speak the two languages:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What languages do you speak?</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SJE</td>
<td>89,3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JC</td>
<td>88,9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>78,4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To whom do you speak?</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SJE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends/Family only</td>
<td>7,9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strangers/Co-workers</td>
<td>57,1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyone</td>
<td>26,2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No one</td>
<td>8,8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends/Family only</td>
<td>62,9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strangers/Co-workers</td>
<td>3,2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyone</td>
<td>28,5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No one</td>
<td>5,4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Sample Distribution of Languages Spoken (JLU, 2005, p. 8)

It is evident that SJE is mainly used in the interaction with people in which distance dominates the situation (strangers, co-workers, or everyone). JC, on the other hand, is mainly used in the interaction with friends or family members and with people whom they have a closer relationship. The Jamaican Language Unit (JLU) also found that SJE
is much more frequently attributed by positive features than JC. The respondents of the survey see speakers of SJE as more intelligent, more educated, and as having more money than JC speakers. This reflects the social reality since SJE is the official language and is the language of the political leaders and institutions of higher education but the survey also shows traditional prejudices such as the connection between intelligence and language use (JLU, 2005). However, according to JLU there has been a significant change in attitudes towards JC since the independence in 1962. Increasing linguistic research on JC, recognition and establishment of JC as language, and growing positive attitudes have considerably improved the image of JC (MOEY&C, 2001).

Cross’ (2003) study on Jamaican students perspective on SJE show that SJE is valued by the students but have very little use in the society. The students’ use of SJE is primarily for relational use rather than of cognitive reasons. The students do not use SJE to reason or creatively communicate. They use SJE as a means to avoid confrontation with authorities and JC is used at the market or in the street (Cross, 2003).

Nevertheless, this development has not led to more definiteness in the separation of JC and SJE. The rising acceptance of JC can be a factor that leads to more problems in separating the two languages. For example in school classrooms it is not uncommon for teachers to implicitly switch between varieties of SJE and JC (code-switching) more or less frequently in order to make themselves understood to students with a JC language background, who might not understand the issue otherwise (Morren & Morren, 2007). This can lead to confusion when it comes to the separation of SJE and JC.

### 2.3.1 Bad English

Many English teachers in Jamaica still think of JC as a deviant form of English and terms as bad, broken or incorrect English are common when describing JC (Siegel, 2006). According to Siegel one of the reasons for these attitudes towards JC is that SJE and JC share much of the same vocabulary and is thus assumed to be the same language. There is a belief that there is one English language and the form called standard English is the correct or proper way of writing and speaking it. Thus when different words are used or put together in a different pattern it is considered as bad English. Another reason for negative attitudes towards JC in comparison to e.g. British English is that the British English is standardized and JC is not (Siegel, 2006).
2.4 L1 or L2 teaching

English learner types in terms of first language (L1) and second language (L2) vary a lot in Jamaica. The language situation and the Creole continuum make it complicated to generalize about what type of learners the students actually are. Due to various factors the Jamaican secondary school students can be considered as having English as either L1 or L2. It is also known that literate students have written SJE as their L1 but at the same time have spoken JC as their L1. Thus the English teachers in Jamaica do not only have to adopt to multilevel language skills but also to the different levels of vernacular ability. Harmer (2007) states that it is highly probable that our identity is shaped by the language we learn as children and that the L1 helps students to shape their way of seeing and communicating in the world around them. Students’ natural inclination to communicate in their L1 is non-negotiable; it is just part of what makes them unique, even if that is sometimes politically uncomfortable. A more thorough explanation of the connection between language and identity is found in section 2.7.

In an English language classroom the students may communicate in their L1 or they may be translating their L1 into the target language. They are bound to try to make sense of a new linguistic and conceptual world through a linguistic world they are already familiar with.

A number of research studies have documented a strong correlation between bilingual students’ L1 and L2 literacy skills in situations where students have the opportunity to develop literacy in both languages. Cummins (2000) argues that reading and writing skills acquired initially through the L1 provide a foundation upon which English language development can be built. The relationship between L1 and L2 literacy skills suggests that development of primary language literacy skills can provide a conceptual foundation for long-term growth in English literacy skills. The problem is that many Jamaicans do not have any written form of their L1.

Harmer (2007) suggests that teachers can either make a strong case for the use of the students L1 or, at least, for an acknowledgement of the position of a L1 in the learning of L2.

Siegel (2006) argues that JC speaking students often are considered, by teachers, not as learners of a new language, but as careless or lazy speakers of SJE. This can of course be something that will be reflected in the way the teachers teach SJE.
2.4.1 Orality and literacy

As mentioned JC is mainly an oral form communication with no standard written form. According to Cummins (2000) orality does not involve reading and writing directly, but they reflect the degree of individuals’ access to literate or academic registers of language. Skourtou has provided a description of how the processing of experience through language transforms experience itself and forms the basis of literacy:

It seems to me that the entire process of language development both starts and ends with experience. This implies that we start with a concrete experience, process it through language and arrive at a new experience. In such a manner, we develop the main features of literacy, namely the ability to reconstruct the world through symbols, thus creating new experiences. Creating experiences through language, using the logic of literacy, whether speaking or writing, means that once we are confronted with a real context, we are able to add our own contexts, our own images of the world. (Skourtou in Cummins, 2000, p. 70-71).

Kramsch (1998) discusses the significance of written texts. Written language can be stored, retrieved and recollected and carries more weight and thus more powerful and prestigious. This is because it cannot be challenged immediately and the permanency of writing as a medium can also lead people to suppose that what is written in text is permanent too. She talks about an elitist or colonialist kind of literacy where a primitive-civilized dichotomy is implied by the theory of the division between oral cultures and literate cultures. According to her, literacy can be divided into literary literacy, press literacy, instructional manuals literacy, scientific literacy, etc. These literacies are masteries of social uses of print language. Thus to be literate means not only to code and decode the written word, it is also the “capacity to understand and manipulate the social and cultural meanings of print language in thoughts, feelings and actions” (Kramsch, 1998, p.56). Literacy as mastery of the written medium and literacy as social practice are inevitably connected to values, social practices and to educational institutions and Kramsch says that this can cause cultural conflicts. Kramsch suggests that education for bilingual students does not impart these multiple literacies.

Webster (2006) discusses if and how oral cultures embrace literacy. The implications of writing down words in a specific way tend to freeze the words in that form. In this way the act of language preservation, writing down words, creates stratification within languages, distinguishing a “standard” and a “non-standard” form. When doing that it gives legitimacy to one group of people and excludes or marginalizes other groups. Some oral cultures are eager for literacy and some are not. He also, like Kramsch,
suggests that literacy is not a single concept, approached everywhere in the same way. There are different literacies and they are made of ideological presumptions that are connected to the social and political environment. These ideals and settings vary from place to place, from one domain to another. Literacy must therefore be understood within a socio-politico-historical context (Webster, 2006).

2.4.2 Linguistic interference

Interference is defined as the inappropriate use of features of the L1 (here JC) when speaking or writing the L2 (here SJE). There are several reports showing that JC and other creoles have been kept out of classrooms due to the fear of interference (Siegel, 2006). This negative interference can be explained by the distance between the L1 and L2. The degree of typological similarity or difference between L1 and L2 and the confusion about the boundaries seems to be related to the interference. The more similar the languages are the more likely it is that interference occurs (Siegel, 2006). However, it is important to notice that there is no evidence that using JC in the classroom would worsen the interference or harm the students’ acquisition of a standard language. Studies show that students who have been taught in both JC and SJE achieved higher test scores and increased their ability in SJE and general academic performance (Siegel, 2006)

Siegel (2006) believes that keeping JC out of the classroom is not justified and states that creoles are legitimate and rule-governed languages, and when used in the educational process it is not necessarily taught, but is used to help students in their educational process.

2.5 Bilingual or diglossic classrooms

When a person speaks two languages it is called bilingualism. A person’s native language or mother tongue is the language that the person learnt as a baby and is the vernacular language. The vernacular is also referred to as their L1. If a person later in life develops an ability to speak fluently in L2 they will be compound bilinguals. However, if a person develops two languages simultaneously as a baby, and later masters the two languages, they will be coordinate bilinguals. When communities or
countries in which two languages are used by everyone, and there is an institutionalized functional divergence in the use of the languages, it is called diglossia. In a diglossic situation the language that is used in writing or in formal domains is known as the high variety and the other language as the low variety (Stockwell, 2007). According to Devonish and Carpenter (2007) SJE is treated as the high language variety and as superior to JC, which is considered as the low language variety. Now, the Jamaican elementary school student’s language usage is extremely inconsistent in terms of SJE and JC. The many language varieties that the students use and their skills in SJE depend on what school they go to and their home situation, and their socioeconomic background. Some students are fully bilingual, others are less bilingual and a significant part is JC monolingual. A national language survey of the Jamaican Language Unit (JLU) examined the distribution of competence in SJE and JC. The results show that 17.1% of the 1,000 subjects were categorized as monolingual in SJE, 36.5% as monolingual in JC, and 46.4% demonstrated bilingualism (JLU, 2007, p. 12). In a different survey from 2005, 89.3% of the 1,000 respondents answered that they spoke SJE, 88.9% spoke JC, and 78.4% were able to speak both languages. The two surveys examined different degrees of competence. However, the results show that it is difficult to make a detailed classification of the Jamaican language situation in terms of bilingualism or diglossia.

Cummins (2000) is concerned about bilingual children and the discourse regarding bilingualism and its implications and is very critical of how bilingualism sometimes is interpreted. Schlesinger says that bilingualism shuts doors and nourishes. He argues that using some language other than English dooms people to second-class citizenship in English-speaking societies and that monolingual education on the other hand opens doors to the larger world (Schlesinger in Cummins, 2000). Bryans (1997) investigation on primary teachers’ attitudes towards SJE and JC resulted in the conclusion that the use of JC should not be by default in English language teaching. JC should be approached only as a learning tool in the cognitive domains. JC is the language of the students and works as foundation on which the teacher can build bilingualism. Contexts for second language learning need to be consciously and consistently created and maintained in bilingual classrooms, to allow the opportunity for children to hear and generate more of the target language.
2.6 Language, culture and identity

The discussion about JC is of utmost importance. First, to most Jamaicans JC is their mother tongue, thus their language, which is profoundly interlinked with their personal identity. Secondly, it is important because of the fact that people use language to identify and divide people into different categories (Watkins, 2008).

How we speak and the languages we use serve to distinguish among nationalities, social classes and groups, educational levels, and to some degree, age and gender. History, culture, geography and other environmental factors [...] all influence what we say and how we say it [...] myths and misconceptions about language and negative attitudes towards language diversity are fostered in the school and perpetuated in the general populace by the public school experience. (Watkins 2008, p.2-3).

Language helps people to distinguish a range of predetermined stereotypes about another person. When doing this language does not only function as identification markers and a mean of communication, but also as a marker of status, or in some cases the lack of status. This is problematic, and Watkins (2008) argues that JC (and Black English in general) is often signified with someone who is “slow” or “illiterate”. When you denigrate someone´s language you denigrate them as humans. This kind of linguistic prejudice is simply class related, ethnic or racial prejudices in a subtle guise.

2.6.1 Resentment towards learning SJE

To be forced to learn another language to be able to execute everyday life chores, such as going to the bank or applying for a job, has led to a resentment of learning and using SJE. This stand can be seen as a statement saying; if I learn SJE I accept that there is an inequality between JC and SJE and that SJE is better than JC (Watkins, 2008).

Often the lack of Standard English is merely used as an excuse for rejecting people on racial, ethnic, or other grounds. Further, language is learned in response to needs felt by the language user. Unless students recognize a real opportunity to participate in a standard English community, they will not willingly learn its dialect. (Watkins 2008, p.8).

Watkins (2008) ties the issue of unsuccessful SJE acquisition to factors related to cultural and linguistic resistance. Cultural and linguistic resistance is a bigger problem when acquiring SJE than the ability to actually match sounds and symbols.

According to Watkins there is a common misunderstanding that Jamaicans must choose one of the two languages in operation, and that failure to do so would be at the
cost of fluency in both languages. She states that the Jamaican language situation does not present Jamaicans with a choice, the reality forces most Jamaicans to become bilingual and master both languages, thus becoming fluent in both JC and SJE. Finally she argues that in order to achieve change it is essential to stop the stigmatization against JC.

2.7 Ideology, politics and language policies

According to Watkins Jamaican primary and secondary schools are sites of struggle and contestation. In the schools the students become socialized to society’s norms and classifications of “good” and “bad” English (Watkins, 2008). The ideological and political struggle is a reality where many students whose first and home language is viewed as users of illicit speech that differ from the society's imposed standard. It is particularly true in postcolonial countries where formerly enslaved and dominated populations’ speech and language reflect their history of oppression (Watkins, 2008). Although the MOEY&C recognizes that some student’s conceptualization, thinking and talking may be best done in JC, and that both SJE and JC must therefore be used in the learning process (Curriculum guide grades 7-9, Ministry of Education and Culture, Kingston, Jamaica, 1998), the government wants the students to be fully literate in SJE by the end of their compulsory schooling. The government’s language planning is based on political ideology but in this study ideology also involves beliefs and assumptions that underlie the political decisions.

2.7.1 Language ideology

SJE was treated as the mother tongue during the colonial period and in the early years of independence (1962). All other language varieties and speech forms in Jamaica were considered as unworthy and had to be corrected. Speakers of non-standard languages may suffer the fate of others claiming to speak for them or of their own accounts of their situation being declared untrue or unworthy of attention. Longhurst (2008) gives an example when languages from former colonial countries have been declared not to be literature or literacy. Language is in this way a medium through which a hierarchical structure of power is maintained and the medium through which conceptions of truth, order and reality become established.
The ideology of the Jamaican education system is based on the notion that SJE should be the sole official language (Devonish & Carpenter, 2007). The first international conference dealing with the issue of the Jamaican languages took place in Kingston, Jamaica, 1959. The conference initiated recognition of JC as a language and argued for an increased visibility of JC. Speakers on the conference declared that JC should be treated as a vital part of the Jamaican society and that JC is a deeply integrated in a person’s cognition. The conference also concluded that Jamaican school teachers needed help to understand the linguistic difficulties in teaching SJE to JC speaking students, and to support the teachers with material and methods in order to show the students the precise differences between SJE and JC (Devonish & Carpenter, 2007).

The current official language policy has more support in terms of material and methods for helping the students to understand the differences between SJE and JC. Nevertheless the policy makers still only recognize SJE as the sole official language. Today the schools operate on the principle of a so called transitional bilingualism which entails acceptance of students’ first language, JC, and using the first language to facilitate comprehension in the early years of schooling. By the end of grade four all students should be competent in the use of SJE appropriate to the grade level. SJE and JC should be recognized as equally valid. By the time the students reach secondary school level they should be able to use SJE for a variety of purposes and be able to use and understand JC in oral and non-standardized written forms (Language Education policy, 2001). Transitional bilingualism basically means moving gradually from knowing two languages to only speaking one language. The students that are usually fluent JC speakers are encouraged to move towards SJE as the target language.

2.7.2 Paradox of Jamaican bilingualism

By the year 1980 Jamaica was categorized as a low or lower middle income country but primary school enrolment and attendance rates corresponded to those of many high income countries (Devonish & Carpenter, 2007). However, the literacy level of the students did not match the levels attained in high-income countries. The explanation was that “…it is the peculiar nature of the West Indian Creole-influenced language situation that is responsible for the paradox” (Craig, 1999, p. 23). The philosophical core of the solution of the paradox suggests that students with JC as their L1 cannot be
successfully educated in an “English as a mother tongue” method (Devonish & Carpenter, 2007, p. 16). The use of SJE in formal schooling creates problems for the L1 speakers of JC. Their native language becomes limited to home and outside the classroom situations and in the same time it restricts their ability to use SJE. According to Craig (1999) the students must recognize the distinction between SJE and JC, and keep the two separate, in order to develop strategies for learning SJE. He also argues that JC should be held in high regard and that the students should be encouraged to be confident and secure in using JC. Due to the different attitudes towards JC there is however no coherent positive attitudes associated with, or higher status given to, JC. The main problem with bilingualism in Jamaica seems to be the difficulty of acquiring written literacy in a language that is not the mother tongue.

2.7.3 Language hegemony

The Jamaican government has decided that English should be the official language and as explained earlier SJE is seen in many aspects as a superior language. Some would argue that this unequal distribution of linguistic power is institutionalized and a way of legitimating the inequality. Hegemony, the organization of consent based upon establishing the legitimacy of leadership and developing shared ideas, values, beliefs and meanings works through ideology.

Hegemony works through ideology, but it does not consist of false ideas, perception, and definitions. It works primarily by inserting the subordinate class into the key institutions and structures which support the power and social authority of the dominant order. It is, above all, in these structures and relations that subordinate class lives its subordinations. (Longhurst, 2008, p. 72-73)

The upper class minority in Jamaica that uses SJE in oral communication can be seen as a part of the dominant order. Longhurst (2008) raises the question how the subordinated status of the third world voices can achieve equality in a dialogue with those of the dominant order. In section 2.5 we saw that the two languages are used in different contexts and also have different ideas and attitudes attached to them. That indicates that the conceptualization in the two languages could differ. Western modern cultures tend to create the dominant images of the world. Western cultures set standards of humanity by which they are bound to succeed and others bound to fail. (Dyer in Rothenberg, 2002). The Jamaican students are kept illiterate in the vernacular and only literacy in English is promoted and subsidized by the government. There is thus no equivalent
literacy in the vernacular. The image of the world and the cognitive skills are maintained through English (Devonish & Carpenter, 2007). English is obviously a language stemmed from a western culture - from a former superpower – and can in this perspective be seen as something that has been imposed unfamiliar norms on the Jamaican people.
3.0 Method

In order to investigate how the secondary English teachers’ perceive English teaching in a JC speaking environment and to find out how they look at their role and responsibility as Jamaican English teachers we believe that the answers can be generated through human interaction. We have therefore chosen to use a qualitative method. A qualitative method aims at capturing the distinctive nature in individual and in that individual’s particular life (Holme, 1997). A qualitative research method is therefore particularly suitable when trying to take part of the teachers’ view on language teaching. From this point of view and in within the theoretical framework we are able to gain a deeper understanding of the teachers’ perceptions of English language teaching in Jamaica. The purpose of the interviews is to receive information about the teachers’ language ideologies, responsibilities and teaching practices and the theoretical framework will make the information in the empirical material comprehensible.

The research data is collected through in-depth qualitative interviews with five English teachers at three different secondary schools across Jamaica.

3.1 Interviews

We chose to work with interviews since we are interested in gaining information about the participating teachers’ values and preferences, knowledge and information and their attitudes and beliefs regarding our research topic. Interview can be defined as “Inter-view, an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest” (Kvale 1996 p.14). An interview is never entirely subjective nor objective, and each participant will define the situation in their own particular way. One can rather see an interview as inter-subjective, meaning that the participants can discuss and give their own interpretations of the subject (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2005). Olsson (2008) stresses the importance of open-ended questions, and that the interviewer should
provide conversational support during the interview. Therefore, to conduct this study we chose to use a semi-structured interview, where we had a set of pre-fixed open-ended questions, but with the possibility to ask follow-up questions and to change the order of the questions depending on the respondents’ answers. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2005) argue that semi-structured interviews are good as interviewing allows the interviewer to make clarification requests, to expand on the topic and to extend or elaborate the respondents’ replies. This gives the qualitative interview data responses richness, depth and comprehensiveness. When conducting interviews there is always a risk that the respondents answer the questions in a way that she/he thinks that the interviewer wants her/him to answer, or adapts her/his answer to satisfy school policy and thereby providing “correct answers”. To prevent this we did not let the respondents see the questions before the interview started.

3.1.1 Interview guide

The guide was constructed as a guide and a reminder to make sure that we did not forget to ask any of our questions and as a tool to steer the conversation towards our topic. It contained a number of open-ended questions regarding English teaching in a Jamaican school. We chose to let the interviewees’ answers lead the way through the interview. The interview guide was structured around three dimensions, namely; teacher’s role and responsibility, pedagogical awareness and language awareness. This was done to be able to find out how the teachers’ viewed their roles as teachers, and the responsibility that comes with it. Further, we wanted to see how they argued for their teaching methods, what was done and why, and finally we strove to find out about the teachers’ language awareness. In the last part we focused our attention towards the relations between JC and SJE and the respondents’ view of what language that is their mother tongue and what language they consider to be their second language.

3.2 Procedure

The study started with a visit to our supervisor Dr. Karen Carpenter at the University of the West Indies (UWI). We asked Dr. Carpenter to establish a contact with a number of secondary schools. This was done because we needed UWI to send a request to the school in order for us to get access to the school. We chose one school in Kingston, the
capital of Jamaica, one school in a medium sized Jamaican city and one school in a rural area of Jamaica. Once a response arrived we went to the school and sat in and observed a number of English lessons after which we interviewed the teacher.

The interviewees were not handed the questions in advance, but they were informed about the topic of the interview. The interview was whenever it was possible conducted in a separate room. This was done to avoid disturbances from the outside and to get good sound quality on our recording, however in one of the interviews this was not possible since there were no available rooms. The interviews’ length ranged between 30 minutes to just over an hour and generated over 100 pages of transcription.

Linguistics students at the Jamaican language department at the University of the West Indies transcribed the material for a consideration. They used a transcription guide with clear transcription conventions.

At the next part of the study we organized the data into fields of interest. These are presented under the “Data analysis” chapter below.

The data was later analyzed and discussed. The analysis-process and the result of the analysis are presented in the next section of this paper. The result is an interpretation of reality but cannot be presented as hard facts, however this interpretation can according to Olsson (2008) give a valid presentation of reality.

3.3 Data analysis

To make sure that we did not miss any vital information due to lack of linguistic comprehension, we decided to hand over the recorded interviews to two linguistics students. As a mean to minimize the risk of information being lost in the process all transcriptions were made according to transcription conventions used by the Jamaican language department at the University of the West Indies. After reading through Holme & Solvang (1997) about how to decode our data we chose to divide our material into categories, and when analyzing the transcribed data we chose to let the data lead the way. Our aim was to learn from the data and to find patterns and explanations to our questions. The data analysis process involved moving back and forth between the statements in our transcription to try to interpret what had been said. This was done to gain a deeper understanding of our teachers’ responses. This first step was a rough analysis and the main aim was to organize our data.
When the data was organized we read through our material again and marked parts relevant to our investigation. At this stage we tried to capture patterns and similarities in the responses from our teachers. Responses that resembled each other were put together to form new categories. After reading through the responses in each category we saw a clear pattern and three main themes emerged. These themes are presented under section 4 “Results and Analysis”.

3.4 Sample selection

The selection of schools was done randomly. We asked our supervisor in field about schools that could be considered to be an “average Jamaican secondary school” and we got a list of schools. Many schools rejected our inquiry but three schools accepted our request.

School 1 is a public school located in downtown Kingston and has approximately 1200 students. The students mainly come from lower social and economic classes and SJE is not very common as mean of communication. According to the interviewees this school is not a “first choice school” and if you perform poorly at the entrance test for secondary schools this is the school that students likely will go to.

School 2 is a public school located in a medium size city in Jamaica with approximately 1600 students. The school has 81 teachers and an average of 45-50 students per class. School 1 offers comprehensive, technical and academic programs. The students at school 2 have a broad variation in socio economic backgrounds. The performance of the students range widely. There are students who fully manage SJE but also students who are low performing and struggle with even the easiest tasks in English. School 2 is a school prides itself with a student performs above average.

School 3 is a public school located in a rural area in Jamaica. Despite its location the school is the second biggest secondary school in Jamaica. It holds approximately 2450 students, and has 11 classes of each grade. The school has 117 teachers and an average of 48 students per class. School 3 offers comprehensive, technical and academic programs. The students at school 3 have a broad variation in background, with students from all social classes. The students are divided into classes depending on their result on SJE entrance tests.
3.4.1 Debora

Debora works at school 1 and is a 32 years old teacher who has been working as an English teacher ten out of the eleven years that she has been working as a teacher. She has a diploma in Teaching and a bachelor in Spanish/Literatures in English. Debora works in the capital of Jamaica in a technical high school located in the inner city. Her school holds approximately 1200 students. The students are primarily from the lower social classes and use JC as their mother tongue. She expressed that her school is not considered to be a “first choice school” by the students, which results in weaker students than the average Jamaican school. Debora teaches students between 12-19 years old.

3.4.2 Gemma

Our final respondent was Gemma. She works at school 1 and is 30 years old and has been working as an English teacher for the past nine years. She has a teaching diploma, a Bachelor of Arts degree and is presently doing a Master of Arts in Teaching. She works with students between the ages of 14-18 years. Gemma works as a teacher at the same school as Debra who was presented above in 3.3.4.

During the interview with Gemma we sadly experienced some technical problems, which resulted in the fact that only half the interview was recorded. The first part of the interview was written down and the second part was handled in the same way as the rest of the interviews.

3.4.3 Kadisha

Kadisha is 31 years old and works at school 2. She has been working as an English teacher for eight years, and she works in a school which is located in a medium size city in Jamaica with approximately 1600 students. The school has an average of 45 students per class and offers comprehensive, technical and academic programs.

3.4.4 Susanna

Susanna works at school 3 and is a 32 years old woman who has been working as a teacher for eight years and as an English teacher for five years. Susanna teaches students between 13 and 18 years old and she has a bachelor in Teaching. She works at
a school located in a rural area in Jamaica. The school is one of the biggest secondary one shift schools in Jamaica. It holds approximately 2450 students, and has 11 classes of each grade. The students at the school where Susanna is working have a broad variation in background, with students from all social classes in Jamaica.

The interview with Susanna was conducted in the teacher’s canteen and to avoid disturbances it was conducted after lunch hours.

3.4.5 Tamara

Tamara works at school 3 as a teacher of English language and literature and who also teach literatures in English from sixth grade and up. She mainly teaches upper secondary school and most of her students are between sixteen and nineteen years old. Tamara and Susanna are co-workers and the interview with Tamara was conducted in the same way and at the same time as the interview with Susanna.

3.5 Research ethics

We chose to follow the ethical principles handed to us by SIDA (Vetenskapsrådet, 2002). They contain of four main requirements. The first requirement is that all participants should be informed about what the study is about, and that it is the participant who decides if she/he wants to participate in the study. This information was sent out to the principal of each school, and in addition the participating teachers got the information from us and got the opportunity to ask questions about the study. The second requirement is that all participants must give their consent to be part in the study. Thirdly, we chose to anonymize all our participants. All interviewees and the names of the schools they work at have received new names in this text. This is done so that no one would be able to figure out who the sources is. Finally to fulfill the utilization requirements we are the only ones who have access to the collected data and will only use it for the purpose of which it was collected.
4. Results and analysis

When analyzing our data, three major themes emerged and this chapter is divided accordingly. The themes are also constructed in order to give best possible answer to our research question. Each theme is further divided up in subcategories that emerged during the analyzing process. The themes are ideologies, teaching mission and teaching practices. Ideologies involve how the teachers look on their students and the students’ abilities of learning English. It comprises the teachers theorizing on languages and on their language practices and includes their attitudes towards of SJE and SJ. It also covers their perception of their students’ attitudes towards SJE and SJ and whether the teachers look at the students as L1 or L2 English learners. Ideologies also take account of the teachers’ perception of the general societal attitudes towards the two languages and lastly the prerequisites in Jamaica for English learning. Teaching mission includes the teachers’ view of their role and responsibilities as English language teachers and what ideas they have about their responsibilities in school towards the students but also responsibilities towards the society in a wider context. Lastly the theme concerning teaching practices and implementations covers the teachers’ ideologies, theories and attitudes put into to action in an actual teaching situation. This theme also shows different obstacles when teaching English.

4.1 Ideology

4.1.1 Perception of L1 and L2

There are different opinions among the teachers about what language they consider to be their L1 and L2. Kadisha says that SJE is her and Jamaicans L1 and that it is problematic because it is not treated like that. “In Jamaica the first language should be English language, but it’s not. The Creole - you find that most students, they pick up on
that faster than the English language. English is what they should have. But because of what’s going on in their environment they just speak the patios” (Interview with Kadisha, September 23rd 2011). However she thinks that Jamaica is an English speaking country and SJE was what she grew up hearing, but she also acknowledges that it is a minority that actually speaks SJE. She explains that if you are Jamaican it does not necessarily mean that you can speak JC. She also thinks that JC is acquired faster by the students but SJE English is what they really should learn first. She states that SJE is more important than the JC and that JC should be a secondary language and not be standardized because the absence of a writing system. Kadisha thinks English is more universal and therefore is more important than JC. She does not consider JC as a language and thinks it is not like e.g. French, Spanish or Swedish.

Kadisha uses and teaches SJE based on the idea that it supports globalization. Even if JC were to be standardized and books produced in written JC and everything translated into JC she still does not think JC should be their L1. She understands the concept but says it is going to take a long time to do such language reformation. If the authorities changed JC into an official language and encouraged the population to use JC as a their L1 the transition would not be difficult because most persons are already in that mode, but Kadisha still would not agree with it. Kadisha is very critical of the idea of developing JC into a standard language and she also expresses negative attitudes towards the idea of having JC as the language of instructions in the early year schooling. She thinks that the children will not benefit from it and acquiring SJE will be more difficult. She also adds that that kind of decisions that are made on a political level and the dispute about the language situation and the opinions on and attitudes towards the languages depends on how you grow up and in what the region. It is also something closely related to your identity.

Even though Kadisha knows JC and can speak it she cannot spell JC words. JC is something that you share with your friends and not something that you use in public spheres. Even if JC is a beautiful and colorful language, and a distinguishing feature of Jamaica it should not be the L1. Based on her belief, background and experiences she teaches English in her classes as an L1.

Susanna and Debora are of another opinion and consider JC as their L1 and SJE as their L2. This is because it was the first language they learnt to communicate in. JC was the language of their parents and the surrounding environment was also to a great extent characterized by JC. However Susanna admits that the Jamaican people should be
equipped with SJE in order to function properly. She also expresses that “…we should be – we ought to be – we are expected to – we are… an English speaking country but only in terms of formal ceremonies and for formalities”. (Interview, September 16th and October 3rd 2011). Gemma agrees that the first language that most of her students come into contact with is JC. The assumptions that SJE is their L1 and that Jamaica is an English speaking country are false. “It’s wrong to accuse that they are English speakers. They have to be taught the English language” (Interview with Gemma October 3rd 2011). The challenge in teaching English is that the students’ mother tongue, JC, gets first preferences. Susanna states that she prefers to use JC when conversing with her coworkers at the school. JC in Jamaica has its place in informal socialization. If the setting is informal then you use JC but if the situation becomes formal then you change and speak SJE. Based on that perception Susanna thinks that Jamaicans are bilingual. She thinks English is not really a foreign language. It is not strange to Jamaicans but there are some elements that are missing. Debora thinks that there is a need for more oral tactics. When Jamaicans listen to the news they do not have any problems but when it comes to producing the SJE language it becomes a problem. In this manner Debora does not think that Jamaica is an English speaking country. They are English understanding but not English speaking, because the majority does not communicate in SJE. She believes that English is only the first language of the global economy and can agree that English is globally the first language.

English teachers who supposedly know how to use SJE speak and comprehend the SJE language, but that it “is just not the language of choice” (Interview with Debora October 3rd 2011). When the teachers get in their little groups on an informal level they switch to JC. Nevertheless Debora stresses on that SJE proficiency is the key to social mobility and provides access to certain things in society. If you e.g. want to study at university level you must take and pass an English language entrance test.

Tamara is more ambivalent and thinks JC is the first language but that the first language moves to SJE when Jamaicans get some form of formal education which begins at approximately the age of four. She stresses on the importance to learn English and believes that English is the most important subject in school. English is the language of national and international communication and the widest spoken language in the world. English is used for academic purpose, in order to enter university studies, but also for specific purposes such as work within the tourism industry. She admits it is debatable but for Tamara JC is for the most part the L1. The SJE is a secondary
language and comes into play until the students get some formal education which not every child gets.

Tamara teaches English as a L2 because of the fact that the children and the young students are not familiar with English language concepts and rules and the students are not governing the grammar and syntax. She believes that unlike the English language where you have a standard syntax there is no standard for the JC. The way she teach English might be debatable she adds.

According to the JLU statistics and MOEY&C reports Jamaicans ought to consider JC as their L1. Theoretically and empirically JC should be viewed as Jamaicans first language. Both Harmer and Cummins emphasize the importance of using the L1 in order to successfully develop an L2. This is however only possibly in terms of oral language use since JC does not have any standard written form. What the Jamaican teachers or students consider to be their L1 and L2 is closely connected to their actual social class or the social class that they are striving towards. According to Christie (2003) it can be desirable for some Jamaicans to speak SJE as it signals a higher social status. This ambiguous perception of L1 and L2 can also be dangerous in a teaching situation. Siegel (2006) emphasizes the importance of teachers having knowledge about English learners and the differences between the languages as it may affect their teaching methods.

4.1.2 Perception of students language use and attitudes

Being aware of the students’ language use and attitudes towards the target language, and towards learning the target language, is very valuable when teaching English. Debora doubts that her students know sufficient SJE and only understand it to a certain extent and says that not many students can actually speak SJE. They know how to speak JC and they don’t have to think about how to use JC.

You teach the same things over and over and over and it’s still not registering I don’t know why. I guess they are not fully bilingual because they can’t use both languages well. They can use the patois [JC] well to communicate, to do whatever but English language not so well (Interview with Debora October 3rd 2011).

Depending on the students’ socialization but in general nine out of ten of Susanna’s students are not bilingual and she is very certain that SJE is not the students’ mother tongue or first language. Along with Gemma she thinks that the students’ mother tongue
is JC and SJE their second language. Susanna’s teaching is therefore based on ESL teaching. She gives the students sometimes leeway to use JC now and then because they will not answer sufficiently if they only use SJE. She says that they are not comfortable using SJE and in order to make the students focused on the target language she gradually filters in SJE and allows them sometimes to fall back on JC.

She also says that there are stigmas attached to speaking SJE. When her students try to speak SJE some students may comment; saying that SJE speaking students are only showing off. There are clearly strong attitudes towards speaking SJE: “you speak the Standard English and you – persons will probably look up on you as being gay” (Interview with Susanna September 16th 2011). Kadisha also says that some of her students will be labeled as nerds if or when they speak SJE. Debora statements are similar and says that if a JC speaker tries to speak SJE and he or she is not good at it people tend to laugh at and make fun of that person. Some students might curse at students that try to speak in SJE. She claims, “when you speak Standard English in Jamaica we say you’re “speaky spooky”’ (Interview with Debora October 3rd 2011). Her opinion is also that the students cannot speak nor write SJE. They might understand SJE but only business English.

Tamara says that her students are very good at expressing themselves in JC but when she asks them to say it in SJE they fail. “…he used Creole - only Creole - and I said to him ‘say what you just said in standard English’ and he said, ‘ miss I can’t say it in standard English I can only write it in standard English’ and he wrote it in standard English” (Interview with Tamara September 16th 2011). In opposition she also says that the situation can be different at other schools. Students that speak JC do it in a subdued manner among their peers because if others would hear them they might ridicule them. The attitudes seem to follow an order of precedence and depend on what language that is considered to be superior.

Kadisha has found out that most of her students adapt to the JC dialect easier than to the SJE. Gemma says that her students also find it hard to break from the JC. They are more comfortable using JC and the adaption to SJE is difficult and the difficulties lie in that JC is what the students grow up hearing. Susanna “urge them - preach to them - beg them – implore them to use and respond to your teachers and to classmates in SJE” (Interview with Gemma September 16th 2011) but says that they are more comfortable with using the JC unless they are socialized at home with SJE. Two out of ten students may have a good foundation for SJE acquisition and the rest are weak. She has also
found that especially boys are reluctant to speak SJE. They prefer to get the evidence of knowledge in SJE as a grade on a certificate rather than knowing and speaking it fluently. She gets the impression that the students believe that SJE is not something that is going to help them in their everyday life or when applying for jobs. SJE learning is just something they have to do in order to get a grade. SJE at her school is presently regarded just as a subject and not something that the students take outside of the classroom.

Kadisha thinks that the students should learn how to master the English language first and then they can learn the JC as a second language. JC is a language that the students can use to communicate with among their peers and not for a wider societal use. However, Susanna believes that you will not find an average Jamaican student that use SJE among their peers. She also states that you will not get a class where students are fluent in SJE.

Kadisha asserts that the JC used by the students is slang in which English words are compressed. Using JC, she says, will only lead to passivity and students “would become lazy” if they use JC in the classroom (Interview with Kadisha September 23th 2011). In order to use more SJE the students themselves have to be determined and willing to learn and use SJE. Since SJE does not come naturally the students have to force themselves. The present environment that the students live in has affected the students’ motivation. Kadisha has found out e.g. that that most of her students do not want to speak SJE and that they dislike to read English literature. She says that the students do not want to participate and you cannot reach them by asking them to read English literature. Debora says that her students think that SJE is only for some people which also Kadisha states; English teachers are often stereotypically conceived as only English-speaking persons that does not know or speak JC. The students “look at the English teachers in a certain way” (Interview with Kadisha September 23th 2011).

It seems like the teachers wants to keep JC out of the classroom. Most of them feel frustrated hearing that the students constantly fall back on JC. Siegel (2006) on the other hand argues that there is no evidence that supports that the use of JC in the classroom would harm the students SJE acquisition. This view is also supported by MOEY&C that declares that students’ thinking and talking may be best done in JC and that both languages must be used in the learning process.

The students’ different attitudes towards the two languages also show how the languages work as a tool for dividing people into social classes and educational levels.
Watkins (2008) believes that these attitudes are actually reinforced in the schools which can be found in the teachers statements.

4.1.3 Perception of students’ abilities and prerequisites

The teachers agree that there is a minority that actually speaks SJE. This will affect the language teaching, and Kadisha expresses that “most of the environment that most of these students come from patois is the accepted language […] it’s gonna be hard. You’re not gonna reach everyone” (Interview with Kadisha September 23\textsuperscript{th} 2011). She thinks that the difficulty in SJE acquisition lies in the students language use during the years when they were growing up. Growing up in a society where SJE is not favored and only be exposed to SJE for some few hours in the classroom is not enough to be bilingual. Peer pressure and the will to fit into the Jamaican crowd make the students want to speak JC. Speaking SJE is going “to set you apart and you’re going to be labeled as something you’re not. And she thinks that “the fear of that is great and at grade nine the peer pressure is high” (Interview with Kadisha September 23\textsuperscript{th} 2011). SJE is not being reinforced in the society and some of the students do not see the purpose of learning SJE. She says that the environment does not allow the students to speak SJE and that it makes her job twice as hard. She believes that students who speak SJE at home are better off than others who just know JC.

Gemma says that the first language that the students come into contact with is JC. Her opinion is that the assumption that Jamaica is an English speaking country is false. She says that it “is wrong to claim that Jamaicans are English speakers. The students have to be taught the English language” (Interview with Gemma October 3\textsuperscript{rd} 2011). The students are more comfortable with using JC unless they are socialized at home with SJE. Tamara also thinks that the SJE learning depends on where the students come from and how they are socialized. Other schools may not have that challenge because the students may be come from homes where the parents use SJE. Gemma summarizes it and says that the difficulty is that SJE is the official language and the society consequently assumes that the students know SJE.

Even if the MOEY&C has decided that Jamaica is an English-speaking country it seems like that decision is not deeply rooted in the Jamaican community. Most of the teachers’ students seem to come from environments in which SJE is not necessarily a natural part of their everyday life. Two languages are used by the students but only one
has an institutionalized function. The students’ prerequisites for learning SJE are affected by the diglossic situation in which the students must take a stand and choose one of the two. According to Watkins this does not facilitate the students’ ability to acquire proficiency in none of the languages. The two languages have completely different conceptual meaning and significance for the students. Cross’ study shows that SJE is valued by the students but it is perceived to have little use in society. It is also clear that the students’ abilities in acquiring SJE depend on which school they go to, their home situation and their socioeconomic background.

4.1.4 Teachers attitudes towards JC

Some of the interviewed teachers think of JC as a deviant form of English and terms as bad, broken or incorrect English. One of the reasons for these attitudes towards JC is according to Siegel that SJE and JC share much of the same vocabulary and thus assumed to be the same language. Another reason for negative attitudes towards JC is the comparison to e.g. British English which is the idealized form of English.

Gemma acknowledges JC as a different language from SJE and says that “nothing is wrong with the way that they are speaking they are just speaking a different language” (Interview with Gemma October 3rd 2011) and she believes that JC is a proper and unique language but she admits that many people are degrading JC by telling JC speakers to speak properly.

Almost all of the teachers describe JC with very positive adjectives and Kadisha says JC is colorful and lively, funny, exciting and that JC expressions are great but she says that most persons that are speaking JC cannot always find adequate choice of words to express themselves. Many Jamaican songs are performed in JC but she is convinced that the language in the songs should only serve entertainment purposes and people should not listen to the songs for learning purposes.

Kadisha argues that JC is not a language in itself. It is a dialect that consists of slang words and some of the slangs may not be fit in the context they are using the words in. She wants her students to “use a clear and precise language that everyone can understand” because Jamaica is “an English speaking country that’s what they say” (Interview with Kadisha 23rd September 2011). This indicates that she trust the government’s language policy and the general assumption that Jamaica is (or should be) an English-speaking country. According to Kadisha JC does not sound right. It is like in
other words her trying to take on something that is not hers. The JC tone is more aggressive than the SJE. JC sounds bad if you compare it with English and also supports inequality between men and women. Kadisha gives an example: in JC they use the word “im” (him) to address everyone whether it is a male or female. The word “she” is more often used in an offensive way. If “she” is used to describe a male, it is used to disrespect the male and if “she” is used to describe a female it is normally used in a derogative way (Interview with Kadisha 23rd September 2011). When Kadisha hears students speak JC she believes that they don’t know better and she thinks that is disrespectful.

If the Jamaican government would change the official language to include JC, it would not be hard to change because most persons are in that mode already but Kadisha personally would not agree with it. She is of the opinion that the students need to acquire SJE in order to partake in the labor market and “it would be selfish if we were to just teach JC” (Interview with Kadisha 23rd September).

Tamara does not think that anybody really wants to develop a more profound use of SJE because JC is more colorful and useful, and there are some things that are better expressed in JC than in SJE. She says that she basically teach SJE only for academic purposes. The students learn SJE mainly to be able to make socioeconomic and academic progress.

Susanna thinks it is problematic to only know JC because there are no books or texts written in JC. In order to be able to read and understand e.g. newspapers the adolescences must therefore master SJE. She believes JC has its place but only in informal socialization. Kadisha agrees on this language restriction and means JC should only be used informally among peers.

As we can see the teachers have clear opinions about JC and their utterances are evidently in accordance with Siegels statements about JC as a deviant form of SJE. The fact that JC has a potential to be standardized and used in education is not even considered. JC should not be looked at as inferior according to the MOEY&C and Kramsch discussion on literacy comes here in to place in terms of the superiority of written literacy. It seems like the teachers attitudes are based on prejudices but also on the fact that JC does not have any standard written and thus is believed to be less valid. The social function of JC literacy is acknowledged but not reflected on as a medium of learning SJE.
4.1.5 Teachers attitudes towards SJE

Kadisha says that SJE is good to know because there are situations and domains where JC will not help you. She is therefore convinced that SJE is and should be the first language. She grew up with SJE and her parents drove her to speak SJE. JC was there but it was not the language they wanted her to speak. She remembers that she spoke JC to her parents or relatives during her childhood but was asked to rephrase the sentences in SJE. Kadisha is clearly influenced by her family’s pressure to speak SJE during the years when she was growing up. Her view on SJE can be explained as a passed on language tradition that dictates the idea of what language Jamaican people should speak.

Tamara is certain that English is the most important subject in Jamaican schools given that it is the language of international communication and one of the widest spoken languages in the world. Susanna places more emphasis on teaching English for its matriculation purpose.

She explains that SJE is taught for educational and business purposes and not for social purposes.

These excerpts show how some teachers see SJE as an important school subject and as vital aspect of succeed in the academic world. Stockwell argues that schools and governments promote the use of SJE and that they describe the use of JC as improper. There are no utterances about negative attitudes about SJE or teaching SJE. This can of course be explained by the fact that the teachers work as English teachers and have no motives for questioning their choice of subject or occupation.

4.1.6 Perception of the societal attitudes

Tamara lets us know that some of her students that try to speak SJE in their communities will be laughed at and humiliated. According to her a consequence is that they will be less willing to learn and speak SJE and thus mix the SJE with JC. “…the average Jamaican understands the standard Jamaican English, the problem is that we do
not practice to speak it but they do understand” (Interview with Tamara 16th September 2011).

Debora says that the students do not want to speak SJE due to the psychological impact that arises when communicating in SJE. The Jamaican society with its enormous class differences also contributes to a reluctance of speaking SJE. There is a common idea that it is only the rich and wealthy people that speak SJE. JC is for the common man and Debora’s students consider themselves as common men located in a regular community where they do not need SJE. Many students say that it is not necessary to know SJE because of the fact that there are job openings that does not require SJE, e.g. as a bus driver or open and run a local shop.

Tamara’s utterances also give evidence of similar reluctance of learning and speaking SJE in certain areas. In certain rural areas it is a norm to reject SJE. Students that grow up in communities where JC is widely spoken have experienced negative attitudes toward SJE. Tamara say that “when they do use standard English in their communities people say that they are showing off and stuff” (Interview with Tamara 16th September 2011). She is also concerned about the students’ parents who do not show any interest in their children’s language development. That is explicitly shown at the parent-teacher association meetings where a large number of parents do not attend. It seems that people love to speak and hear JC and therefore it is prioritized, she adds.

Gemma gives another side of the society’s perception of JC. She says that many people would degrade JC and that you can find persons saying to their children to speak proper SJE.

According to Kadisha people expect you to talk in a certain way and a lot of people judge you based on that, so she means apart from peer pressure in the high schools the prejudices against a certain language use are everywhere in the Jamaican society.

Watkins offers an explanation saying that language and identity are deeply interlinked. JC is a part of who you are, and to accept that you need another language in order to success in life is also to accept that JC is not good enough. Learning the SJE, the official language, becomes a degrading of one’s mother tongue. She states that the Jamaican language situation does not present Jamaicans with a choice, the reality forces most Jamaicans to become SJE speakers.

The fact that the mother tongue of most of Jamaicans is JC contradicts the societal attitudes towards JC. The majority speaks and accepts JC but the attitudes towards and prejudices against JC are still in some way visible thru peoples’ self-image. It seems
like the same people who speak JC express at the same time negative attitudes towards speaking it. We can assume that the political decision makers and other influential educational leaders in the Jamaican society are an acrolectal speaking elite. Their ideas and decisions, manifested in schools, businesses and other vital aspects of a society, cause the stigmatization of the JC speaking population. This kind of linguistic preconception is what Watkins would describe as class prejudice. Longhurst would call it language hegemony where the upper class minority is a part of the dominant order.

4.2 Teaching mission

4.2.1 Responsibilities towards the students

All the teachers agree that they have a certain responsibility to teach their students SJE, both in the oral and written form. They express that they feel great responsibility towards the students and towards their future ability to continue their educational journey. To be able to cope with the other subjects in secondary school and to be able to continue to higher education the students need to know SJE. The importance of teaching SJE is acknowledged by the teachers and they see SJE as the most important subjects in the Jamaican classroom. They admits that their role as a teacher also includes the role as a gatekeeper, and this is most likely one of the reasons why the teachers mainly teach to get the students to reach the goals of the national tests. Without a good preparation for the tests the students will not meet the matriculation demands and therefore not be able to move on to higher education.

During the interview with Kadisha she states that a part of her teaching mission is her responsibility to get the students to appreciate the SJE. It is taught so the students will be able to communicate with other people, not just their immediate family members and their community. She says that she want the students to have the possibility to leave Jamaica and be able to communicate with people who do not speak JC. Finally, she argues, it is important for the students to master SJE to be more employable when leaving school.

Kadisha also states that she wants the students to start believe in themselves and their ability to learn SJE and in her words; “to teach them how to manipulate the different form that the English language may take and to use it and use it well” (Interview
September 23rd 2011). Furthermore, the teachers express that they have a responsibility to explain the differences between SJE and JC with focus on explaining the importance of mastering SJE.

Susanna explains her role as a teacher and responsibility towards her students by saying:

> My role is to get them to proficiently manage the English language whenever it’s required whether speaking or writing and show them where the Creole has its place versus the English language. To get them to understand that it’s universal so it’s not limited to Jamaica or anywhere else. It’s universal so it’s one of the languages you better be equipped with in order to function properly (Susanna 16/9-2011)

To be able to reach these goals, Susanna expresses that a part of her responsibility towards her students is to make the lessons student friendly and to plan the lessons in such a way that the students get to practice the SJE. She stresses the importance of creating student friendly classroom and implement teaching strategies to match the students’ abilities. Kadisha says that she tries to:

> … incorporate everything they learn in class to be able to transform into the outside world because that’s where they’re heading to after this[…] I try to achieve something where they also know the language to help them with their daily lives. (Interview September 23rd 2011)

Even if some teachers explain their responsibilities as teaching a universal language that can be used outside Jamaica, it is evident that SJE teaching mainly is executed in order to follow the political and educational policies. The Jamaican English teachers are in a way gatekeepers and can be seen as the governmental upholders of the language policies. The purpose becomes limited to either get access to higher education or to communicate on a global level with people who do not speak JC.

> In Jamaica I wouldn’t even say the main purpose [to learn SJE] would be for communication because we have another language that we can communicate in. I would say the main purpose of teaching English is for secondary communication because of course if they have to go world-wide. Next thing it’s the official language of the country. So there is no way it’s the official language and they are unable to speak it. And then another very important issue which I would think is the underlined issue is that we teach English in preparation for an exam. (Interview with Debora October 3rd 2011)

Tamara argues that it is important to learn SJE for academic purposes so that the students will be able to move on after high school. According to both Debora and Gemma, the most important reason to acquire SJE is to be able to pass exams.
Although passing exams and being able to communicate in an international context which is major reasons for learning SJE the teachers also state that it is important to learn SJE so that you are able to use it outside of the classroom. Kadisha says that the purpose of learning SJE is to be able to “cope with real life” (Interview September 23rd 2011).

4.2.2 Responsibilities towards the society

Susanna states that it is crucial for Jamaican’s to learn SJE in order to function as good citizens. Without SJE they are unable to get themselves into particular institutions and higher education or even getting a job.

Debora’s view of the importance of learning SJE is closely connected to Susanna’s argument regarding employability. Debora argues that one of the primary responsibilities teachers have towards society is to make sure that the students master SJE. She says that this is important as Jamaican employers want employees that are able to communicate, not only in the working place, but also with other companies on an international level, and means that SJE is not limited to Jamaica.

Susanna explains that it is of utmost importance to get the Jamaican population to master a certain level of SJE. This is so that they can get information and read newspapers (which are written in English since there is no written standard in JC), and listen to the radio or watch television. She continues to argue that SJE is not only needed to comprehend news and information, but also to be able to communicate on a formal level and to function socially in different social classes. Her point is that without SJE Jamaican people will be unable to get themselves into certain institutions and domains.

Tamara has a slightly different view of a teachers’ responsibility towards the Jamaican society. She says that a teachers’ work never ends. Aside from the obvious responsibility, to teach the students English, Tamara expresses that she feel that she feels responsible for the general wellbeing of her students.

Our responsibilities are so wide because we have to be mothers- you’ll be surprised to see how much students come here on a day to day basis. They don’t have lunch money they don’t have bus fare – they come with all sorts of problem- some of them are on their own – some of them have personal problems at home – so you know the teacher’s role is never finished. (Interview with Tamara September 16th 2011)
The inequality and poverty in the country is said to be connected to the country’s low productivity. As stated in the introduction Jamaica has struggled with decreasing growth the last decades. The Country Economic Memorandum, Jamaica 2011, indicated that the low productivity is caused by a combination of incorrect distribution of taxes, high levels of crime and deficiencies in human capital. The World Bank connects low educational performance to the low productivity and has recommended that Jamaica should invest more in education. Resources have been allocated to schools and teachers to enhance literacy (Report No: ICR00001238, The World Bank, 2010) and it seems like the investments only covers SJE literacy. The teacher utterances indicate that SJE is believed to be an important piece in increasing the living standards for Jamaicans.

4.3 Teaching practices and implementations

Susanna lets her students know when, where and how JC is acceptable. This is done accordingly to MOEY&C policies and also based in Craig’s suggestion to recognize the difference between SJE and SJ as it supports SJE learning. To decide what is acceptable and is not acceptable can be problematic due to the creole continuum. The continuum spans from a basilect form of JC to an acrolect form. Thus it becomes very difficult for the teachers to decide what form of, and when, JC that should be acceptable.

Tamara does not focus on JC at all in her teaching because she believes that JC would interfere with the SJE learning. She means that if you spend time on emphasizing JC then the students get carried away and the teaching of SJE will fail. However she does use it sometimes when they are doing some lessons where they need to dramatize and if she wants them to enjoy the lesson. She is consciously trying to limit their use of JC and to tries to encourage more use of SJE. According to Siegel interference can occur. The more similar the languages are the more likely it is that interference will occur. We do not know for sure how similar the students’ JC is to the SJE but based on the teachers’ previous statements her students come from rural areas speaking a basilect form of JC. It should therefore not be any interference with the SJE acquisition. Gemma thinks it is difficult that many students are mixing both JC and SJE when they are writing which supports the idea of language interference. However, Cummins would say that this is a sign of cognitive progress and language development. The students use their experiences of the oral JC literacy and try to apply it in written SJE.
Debora interestingly likes to make translation exercises: “they say something in patois then you ask them how do you say that in English…” (Interview October 3rd 2011). This shows that she is aware of the two languages but also lets the students base their understanding of the SJE word thru their mother tongue which according to Harmer is vital for L2 learning. The students make sense of a new linguistic world through a linguistic world they are already familiar with. Debora is also trying to use translation as a learning method. She thinks that the students are more comfortable using JC: "If you say how do you say so and so? Spontaneously they are going to answer in patois [JC]. And then you have to say to them how do you relay that in English?” (Interview October 3rd 2011).

Gemma focuses on writing SJE in her teaching due to the written examination oriented society she works in and because of the fact that there are no oral examinations in SJE at the schools (Interview October 3rd 2011).

Regardless of methods the students seem to feel afraid because they are unfamiliar with the SJE grammatical structure and with the various uses of SJE expressions. The students are shy and not comfortable with using SJE, so therefore they rather do not say anything. Debora says that she basically has to force them to use SJE.

Tamara focuses on reading and speaking rather than writing because reading and writing improves the students’ vocabulary. According to Tamara it is more important to be able to speak SJE than to be able to write it. If the students are able to speak SJE fluently then the writing comes automatically. Kadisha also focuses on reading rather than writing. She lets the students read and allows them to see for themselves how words can form different images and impressions in their minds. According to Skourtou the process of language development starts and ends with an experience and is processed through written (or oral) language. Kadishas reading exercises must therefore be seen as an attempt to connect the SJE words to already experienced images. Devonish and Carpenter are questioning this because that image of the world and the cognitive skills are maintained solely thru the SJE which they mean is biased problematic.

4. 3.3 Identity and expression thru language

Naturally the teachers have different views on what it means to be a Jamaican; however they all say that language is an important factor when determining someone’s identity.
Kadisha’s excerpt below is a good example of why it is crucial for Jamaicans to know two languages. She expresses that there is a difference in status between speaking JC and SJE and says to be a Jamaican it does not necessarily mean that you are taught JC at home.

…it was reinforced from you were an early age. So you grow up speaking the language [SJE] amidst all the patwa -you learn the patwa – but you could only use it when you’re among your peers. You could not do it when you’re around your family because they would just thump it out of you. (Interview with Kadisha September 23rd 2011)

To be able to function normally in the society where Kadisha was brought up she needed to know SJE to be able to communicate with her family, and JC to be able to communicate with her friends and other people in her municipality. Even though Kadisha knows the two languages, she states that her primary means of expression is through SJE.

You’re Jamaican but that does not mean that you have to speak the patois […] You’re gonna find yourself in a situation where the dialect will not help you. Because there are some places in Jamaica that reinforces dialect but its just that in the communities and everywhere they go they interact and I don’t believe that we should try put the patois or the dialect on the forefront, because we need first and foremost to express ourselves. […] at the same time most persons using the dialect cannot find the choice of words to express themselves and most times in the dialect they use slang’s and some of the slangs may not befit for whatever medium you are using them in (Interview with Kadisha September 23rd 2011)

It is obvious that Kadisha see, or want to see, the world through SJE. She is one of few that can move linguistically between the different strata and enjoys the privileges of knowing both languages. She believes that SJE is a necessity for Jamaicans to express themselves. By managing SJE and identifying herself as a SJE speaker she also attains several positive attributes. The JLU survey shows that speakers of SJE are perceived by others as more intelligent, more educated and as having more money than those who speaks JC.

Kadisha is ambivalent regarding whether to recognize JC as a language or not, and often refer to JC as a dialect, however she also says that since the MOEY&C recognizes JC as a language the people are powerless in that question; “that means we have to take the order from the ministry. Now where does that lead us –and again its politics and it depends on your identity” (Interview with Kadisha September 23rd 2011). This quote shows alarmingly postcolonial structures that perhaps still are in operation. According to Watkins the political decisions affect all the Jamaicans who have JC as their L1 by an
imposed language standard that differs from their mother tongue. This is particularly true in former colonial countries where enslaved and dominated populations’ language use reflects a history of oppression.

Tamara, on the other hand, considers JC to be a part of her identity and express that some things are better expressed in JC than in SJE. This is something that she sometimes uses in class to make the students relax when she wants them to act naturally.

Creole is a very colorful language, very colorful and it tends to be more dramatic than the standard English […] there will be exceptions when I’ll allow them [the students] to use the Creole maybe say when we’re doing a role play or something like that where I really need them to be themselves (Interview with Tamara September 16th 2011)

The other teachers, except for Kadisha, say that JC is a big part of the Jamaican culture and means that JC is their language and that it is unique to Jamaicans. They assert that the JC subconsciously comes out when the average Jamaican speaks, thus it is a part of who they are. The MOEY&C recognizes that some students’ conceptualization, thinking and talking may be best done in JC but still want the students to be fully literate in only SJE by the end of their compulsory schooling.

4.3.4 Other educational, social and political impediments in English acquisition

Susanna stresses the importance of knowing SJE since it is decided that universities in Jamaica teach in SJE (with the exception of a few specific courses in and about JC). She says that it has to do with the absence of a standard written form of JC. She says that the students who want to attend university work very hard to get their SJE knowledge documented in terms of a high grade in SJE. Debora elaborates on the important role that SJE plays in Jamaica and asks herself how it would be if there was a university that taught and gave instructions in JC: “maybe you would find a lot of persons going there cause then everybody would understand and everybody would be at the same level but English now it’s almost like a FILTER” (Interview with Debora October 3rd 2011). This, again, corresponds well with the thoughts of Watkins who argues that the lack of a Standard English simply is an excuse to exclude someone or a group. She argues that this kind of discrimination can be compared to racism.
Tamara expresses that there is a problem with class sizes in Jamaican schools. Even though she has the knowledge about how to teach SJE she feels that due to of the lack of resources she is not able to reach all the students.

Our class sizes are quite large and so it will take time before you get to know individual students, but we try to do as much as possible and we keep records of students work. (Interview with Tamara September 16th 2011)

Kadisha’s opinion about the possibility to help every student is similar to Tamara’s opinion. They both say that there are not enough economical resources. In addition to the lack of resources Tamara mentions a range of other societal problems as obstacles for SJE acquisition. One problem is that some of the parents see school as a holding area for their children. Others do not seem to prioritize their children’s education.

I think that for the most part though parents need to play a more proactive role sometimes when students get assignments and when they come back you ask them did your parents - mother or father look at the assignment you got and they say no and so you realize there is not much of a vested interest in the child (Interview with Tamara September 16th 2011)

Tamara also says that she sometimes find that children or the children’s parents do not have enough money to buy students materials. Another obstacle that they face is the negative attitudes towards SJE from the communities. Susanna says that the negative attributes attached to SJE is more common for boys than girls. As mentioned earlier young male students who speak SJE might be accused of being homosexuals. One need to keep in mind that being gay in Jamaica is not only frowned upon, it is also illegal. Jamaican gay people are often subjects for both psychical and physical attacks.

To speak SJE may be seen as a desire to belong to a higher social class. Students, especially male students that are trying to attain proficiency in SJE might get ridiculed for doing that. This is something that Debora has noticed during her years as a teacher.

…when some students try to speak in English some others might try to curse them and say you are pretending as though you know English or you can speak English. They might ridicule that child so that child might still not want to continue to speak in [SJE] the language. (Interview with Debora, October 3rd 2011)

Tamara emphasizes that these kinds of attacks may differ depending on where on Jamaica you go to school. She says that there are stigmas attached to both languages and in some areas you will find that students who speak JC “have to do it subdued
manner so they’ll do it among their peers because then if others hear them they might scoff at them and so forth” (Interview with Tamara, September 16th 2011).

Finally, the teachers believe that media and new technology may be a significant obstacle when it comes to the student’s desire to acquire SJE. Text messaging and American English culture are mentioned as factors that negatively interfere with the students SJE acquisition. Music plays an important role in the Jamaican society, and a lot of the students’ role models are artists or DJs. Kadisha mentions that the DJs on the radio do not perform or speak SJE. JC is all the students hear in terms of popular music. Tamara also says that politicians in parliamentary debates, broadcasts on TV or radio, will start to talk in SJE but “if someone interrupts them they lash out in some creole” (Interview with Tamara, September 16th 2011).
5. Discussion and conclusion

The purpose of our research was to investigate perceptions of teaching of SJE in secondary schools in Jamaican English classrooms. We wanted to know how the teachers’ perceptions of their English language teaching is, and discuss how it can influence the teaching and learning of SJE. In order to do this we first sought knowledge about the teachers’ attitudes towards the two languages. Our research is based on the assumption that JC is a proper language and that it differs in many ways from SJE. JC has a consistent phonology, vocabulary and grammar and has been used as a mean of communication for a very long time. JC has a variety of written forms but there is no unified standardized form. Our findings show that this may be one of the reasons why teaching SJE in a JC speaking environment is problematic. Teaching SJE in Jamaica might be more difficult than elsewhere, not only because there is not standardized written form of the learners’ vernacular, but also because there is an ambivalence opinion about what language is or should be the first and second language. On one side the politicians has decided that SJE should be the L1 but clearly there is strong opinion against that. The teachers say that they are expected to use SJE as their L1 but in reality JC is considered by the majority of the Jamaican to be the L1. Teaching English is thus something that must be individually adjusted in order to meet the students’ different language prerequisites. Even though SJE is the official language in the country it is in many cases regarded just as a school subject and not something that the students can use outside of the classroom. The teachers find it hard to motivate and get the students to understand the importance of mastering SJE. All the teachers state that they teach SJE in order to create functional citizens. According to the teachers the learning of SJE is a condition for a functional life in the Jamaican society. We found that finding particularly interesting due to the fact that they and many academic reports show that JC is spoken by the majority of the Jamaican people. Thus learning and mastering SJE would not be that important in terms of functioning properly in the society. However we believe that the importance of SJE expressed by the teachers more
has to do with the importance of written literacy. It is not the SJE itself that is important to manage in order to function in the society; it is managing a written form of a language that is important. From this point of view we believe that any standardized and recognized form of written language can be used. The teachers express that the use of JC negatively influences the SJE learning and teaching. Based on Kramsch’s ideas of orality and literacy we think that the use of JC itself is not problematic. Our analysis shows that the teachers’ negative perception of the use of JC in SJE learning has to do with JC not having have any standardized written form that could be used in e.g. translation exercises or other language exercises where a written form of the L1 is required.

The teachers’ experienced that they are often conceived as persons that try to impose a language structure and norms that the students are not familiar with. Our findings show the teachers’ perception and attitudes towards the two languages are strongly connected to their own backgrounds. The language they were surrounded with during their childhood and adolescence has in many cases formed their beliefs about what language that should be considered as the L1. We draw the conclusion that their view on L1 and L2 is rooted in their upbringing. The rich and wealthy population of Jamaica tends to speak and favor SJE or an acrolect form of JC. As Jamaica is very segregated in terms of rich and poor we also conclude that the teachers perceive that they indirectly represent the wealthier population. Not only because they speak and teach SJE but also because the actual teacher profession is a typical upper or middle class occupation. At least it is perceived as that, and not rooted in the lower classes. The attitudes are in many way formed by what social and economic class you belongs to. The interviewed teachers teach at public school which means that most of the students come from a lower social and economic class. They all gave examples of different obstacles of teaching SJE based on the students attitudes towards and resentment of speaking or learning SJE.

Another difficulty for SJE teaching can be connected to unawareness of the creole continuum. The teachers have clear opinions about JC and their utterances were evidently in accordance with the idea that JC is a deviant form of SJE. None of the teachers mentioned the different varieties of JC that exists among Jamaican students. To classify the students only in terms of SJE or JC speakers is problematic. The language disposition cannot be explained in these two terms solely. There are many more language varieties in operation in Jamaica. Students who manage SJE but use a dialect
are maybe prejudicially seen as JC speakers. The lack of knowledge about the students’ use of JC and different perceptions of embracing and using JC in classroom lead to different ways of teaching. Some teachers focus more on writing and speaking and others on reading. Irrespective of teaching method there was one shared pedagogical idea expressed by the teachers. They all wanted to keep JC out of the classroom. JC was seen as an obstacle for SJE acquisition. There is little evidence that supports that the use of JC in the classroom would harm the students SJE acquisition. Many teachers want to limit the use of JC to be spoken only informally outside school even though MOEY&C and other academic reports state that students’ thinking and talking may be best done in JC and that both languages must be used in the teaching. We believe that students’ ability to switch between the different languages should be encouraged.

The two languages seem to have completely different conceptual meaning and significance for the students. SJE is said to be valued by the students but it is perceived by the students to have little usefulness in society. We conclude that the MOEY&C upholds SJE as more important mainly because it has a written standardized form. The fact that JC has a potential to be standardized and used in education is not even considered by the teachers. JC should not be looked at as inferior according to the MOEY&C and Kramsch discussion on literacy comes here into place in terms of the superiority of written literacy. It seems that the teachers’ attitudes are based on prejudices but also on the fact that JC does not have any standard written form and thus is believed to be less useful. We are prepared to say that the teachers and students are struggling with language learning in a diglossic environment where one language is seen as more important than the other. The teachers gave evidence of students who culturally express themselves better in JC. When working with music, songs, drama and such the teachers allowed JC to be used.

One of the reasons why JC is considered to be inferior to SJE could be, as mentioned earlier, the lack of a standardized written form. It appears that the teachers’ attitudes towards JC to some degree are based on this fact. As seen in the results the teachers express positive attitudes towards SJE and they consider it to be a vital subject in Jamaican schools. This is aligned with government and school policies. However, it does not reflect a homogenous stance in the Jamaican society; some consider SJE to be the language of a minority that belongs to an elitist group of people with strong economical resources and political power (Longhurst, 2008). Our findings suggest that these attitudes towards SJE have been formed in a JC dominating environment and
people that talk SJE may be ridiculed. The teachers’ positive attitudes towards SJE may
be related to the fact that they are English teachers. We also need to keep in mind that
their attitudes towards SJE are based on thoughts and believes passed along from their
academic experiences, and in some cases as a social heritage from parents belonging to
the a higher social class.

The different attitudes towards SJE and JC are a direct result of whose attitudes that
were expressed. As identity and language are closely interwoven one’s self-image will
be reflected when expressing thoughts about either language. To some JC may be a big
part of who they are and the language of their closest friends and family and to others
JC may be considered to be the language of people of an uneducated lower social class.
The latter view is not only the view of people belonging to the higher social classes, but
can be seen as general societal attitudes towards JC. Prejudices against JC are expressed
through the way people see themselves, and it seems like people who speak JC
sometimes express negative attitudes towards speaking it. Policy makers and people in
power in the Jamaican society speak SJE, or an acrolectal version of JC. Their world
view and decisions are manifested at schools and other fundamental parts of a society,
which in turn can contribute to the stigmatization of the JC language. As an English
teacher in Jamaica one has to be aware of, and be able to attend the background to these
different attitudes.

The teachers express that student’s attitudes towards SJE affect their motivation to
acquire the language. As discussed above, language and identity are connected. To be
forced to learn a new language can then be perceived as a statement saying that the
language you speak is not good enough, thus you as a person are not good enough. This
is a factor that may lead to some students feeling resentment towards learning SJE and
these attitudes are something that needs to be discussed in the Jamaican English
classroom. It is crucial that the students can find reasons why it is important for them to
acquire SJE and find out what they have to gain from it. In this case we recognize a
number of things such as having a written standard, being able to participate in
communication across the national borders. Achieving a higher status and moving up
the ladder of classes are other reasons for SJE learning according to the teachers. We do
not agree and mean that irrespective of language use everyone should be entitled to the
social benefits, education and finally have the right to enjoy a better living standard. It
should not be a question of what language you use.
According to the Country Economic Memorandum (2011) the poverty in the country is said to be connected to the country’s low productivity. The World Bank connects this to deficient education and recommends that the Jamaican government should invest more in education in order to increase literacy (Report No: ICR00001238, The World Bank, 2010). It seems like the investments only covers SJE literacy. The teachers’ utterances indicate this; that SJE is believed to be an important piece in increasing literacy and the living standards for Jamaicans. In opposition Dr. Hubert Devonish at the JLU and other Jamaican scholars argue that the education language can be JC (Devonish & Carpenter, 2007). Devonish led a project on bilingual education where students were instructed in JC and material written in JC and JC SJE dictionaries were provided. The results of the project are not yet published but Devonish coworkers told us that the results pointed towards no significant change in SJE learning (ibid.). However the project showed an increased self-confidence among the students mainly manifested in the area of cultural expression. Rather than investing in different ways of increasing SJE literacy we think it would be of interest to see the results of investing more on JC literacy. We are aware of that this is a brave idea and we do not want to make any claims or assumptions but rather point out potential effects of having a written form of JC. In our research we have seen that many perceptions of JC are rooted in the absence of a written form.

The excerpts show how some teachers see SJE as an important school subject and as vital aspect of success in the academic world. The teachers express the importance of teaching SJE in order to enter higher education. Some teachers mainly teach SJE in order to make the students qualified for university enrollment. This can be seen as an excluding system in which many students are denied higher education just because their failure to pass the English exams. The teachers are in a powerful position and function in a way as gatekeepers that guard and uphold the language policies. Their role as teachers is not limited to teach a second (or first) language. The teachers’ role is extended to also include a selective role in which great responsibility for the students’ future is a part. Bilingualism or pass English exams in order to get access to higher education are parts of many countries and educational systems and not something special for the Jamaican educational system. What differs is that the vernacular among many Jamaican students has no significant or sufficient recognition by the authorities.


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Appendix I: Interview guide

Teachers’ role and responsibility
How would you describe your role as an English teacher?
  - Do you see the teacher’s role as an instructor/facilitator/manager of learning?

How would you describe your responsibility as an English teacher?
  - Why did you choose to teach English?

What do you consider to be the main purpose of teaching English?
  - Why is it important for Jamaicans to acquire English?
  - For academic use or real life usage?

English as ESP (English for Special purpose) or EAP (English for academic purpose)?

How would you describe the students’ language usage in the classroom?
  - Code switching

Pedagogical awareness
How do you think students successfully obtain proficiency in English?

How is English taught in a diglossic (SJE and JC) classroom? What are the challenges?

Would you say the students are fully bilingual by grade 9 or are they still in a transitional state of bilingualism? How does this affect your teaching?

Are there varying stages of language development among the students?

How do you deal with this multilevel situation?
How would you describe a successful English lesson?

**Language awareness**

Is your teaching focusing on writing or speaking? Why?

In what way are you working with the students’ language awareness?
- In separating SJE from JC?
- Differences between SJE and JC?
- Language ideology/attitudes/stigmas?

What language (JC or SJE) would you say is your L1 and L2? Why?
- Do you find it difficult to distinguish the two languages in terms of L1 and L2?

Do you consider Jamaica to be an English speaking country? Why?
- Do you consider your English language teaching as EFL (learn English in a non-English speaking country) or ESL (when students resides in an English speaking country)?
- Why?

Are you familiar with the MOEY&C’s curriculum guide and language policy?
- To what extent are you using the policy documents? How?
- How do you implement the policy?