An Investigation of the Speaking and Writing Behaviours of Five Dialect Speakers

of Caribbean Creole English

by Junette Holder

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Abstract

This study examines how speaking a non-standard dialect of English affects people's ability to acquire literacy in Standard English. The study addresses the role that code-switching plays in the lives of individuals. Participants were five Caribbean Creole English speakers. Participants were interviewed, written artifacts were collected, and observations about their speaking and writing behaviours were made. Conversation analysis as described by Wei (1999) was used to analyze transcripts. Conversation analysis assists individuals to identify the purpose and intent of language alternation. Written documents were analyzed using a measure of lexical density as described by Halliday (1989). In addition to this participants' writing was also examined for characteristics of written Standard English taught in schools as described by Cummings (1984). Written Standard English taught in school should be logically connected; it should use established grammar, syntax, phonics, and spelling rules; and display a logical synthesis of appropriate components of information. The results of the study suggest that code switching occurred in the spoken language of all participants. The participants who had significant early literacy experiences in Standard English were better able to recognize the appropriate language to be used in writing situations. Implication for educators includes guiding pupils to recognize appropriate language and code switch to the appropriate language for different situations.

Acknowledgements

Dedication

To my mother Sheila Boney Augustine (deceased)
and my father Carl Augustine (deceased).

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Chapter I

Introduction and Background

"How allyuh goin ah glad tuh be here." (How are you? I am glad to be here.)

The sentence above is the way I would greet you if we were in my hometown. It is a non-standard dialect of English called *Caribbean Creole English*. I have spoken this dialect all my life and always thought it was English; I thought there was only one type of spoken English. Only within the last ten years have I found out that there were different dialects of English. This knowledge stirred in me the desire to find out more about the various dialects of English. In this first chapter I begin with a narrative of myself to establish the nature of my dialect and my reading and writing activities. Then I will describe the context of the study. Following this I discuss the purpose of the study and then the research questions. Next I discuss the significance and then the scope of the study. Last of all I define terms that are important to the study.

This study begins with me, and so I will tell about my self and exactly what prompted me to carryout this investigation. In qualitative research a narrative presents incidents in the form of a story (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). Personal narrative is an important part of qualitative research (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). When communication is being studied, the researcher is a part of what is being studied. As a result, the researcher's reflections can be accommodated and integrated into the research. Narratives

produce stories that are real. Personal narrative creates a study that is more personal, collaborative, and interactive between the researcher, the subjects, authors, and the readers. For these reasons I begin my study with my narrative.

My Narrative

I am a *Caribbean Creole English* speaker. I am from Trinidad and Tobago in the West Indies. I was born and grew up in Trinidad. Trinidad and Tobago are two small islands northeast of South America. They are ruled by the same government and considered as one country. Trinidad is the larger of the two. The population of Trinidad is mainly made up of individuals of African and East Indian decent. There are also a small number of individuals who are of European decedent (dominantly English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese). The predominant language spoken is English (Carrington, 2001; Roberts, 1988). There are primarily two types of English dialects. *Standard English* is the dialect of government, politics, the writing system, the media, commerce, and education in my country. A non-standard dialect of English, which Nero (2000) refers to as *Caribbean Creole English,* is the main, spoken dialect and is considered to be the population's mother tongue. Trinidad and Tobago's non-standard dialect is only a spoken variety of English. It is not written.

This dialect of English differs from the *Standard* variety of English in (1) vocabulary, (2) grammar, and (3) pronunciation (Solomon, 1993). Vocabulary is different in that there are some words that are unique to my dialect of *non-Standard English.* Two examples are "zaboca" and "crapaud" which mean "avocado" and "frog" in *Standard English.* These terms are adopted from French and are examples of some of the mixed

European dialect in Caribbean Creole English. Rules that govern the manner in which words are ordered in a sentence (syntax - grammar) are also different. For example, interrogative sentences in my non-standard dialect of English are said like statements with a question intonation. Moreover, words are also pronounced differently. The pronunciation "gyas" and "tin" are used for the *Standard- English* words "gas" and "thin". These pronunciations are blended English spoken with French-based pronunciation. As a result of these differences, the dialect that I spoke was considered as incorrect English by many individuals. I spoke this dialect most of the time and was repeatedly told that my English was incorrect or "bad English". However, I felt that I also spoke *Standard English* at times because individuals often said that I did; therefore, my discourse conveyed a combination of both the *Standard English* and my non-standard dialect of English which I used interchangeably. I did not differentiate between these two spoken dialects and was not aware of code-switching. Now that I have more knowledge of dialects and based on my personal experience in adjusting to a dominantly Standard English environment, I believe I confused one for the other, maybe using my non-standard dialect when I thought that I was using Standard English.

Standard English.

The *Standard English* dialect used in textbooks is guided by certain principles (Simmons-McDonald, 2001). I felt that I never fully understood these principles while I was growing up. I had difficulty in spelling, in using the correct words to convey my ideas, and in correctly arranging words into meaningful units. I made well-formed letters that were clear and recognizable most of the time; however, from what I can recall, I

could not associate certain sounds with the correct letters to spell them. For example, I knew the word I would like to write but could not correctly spell it. I also had difficulty saying the correct sounds for certain letters, so I would write words and not correctly sound them out, As a result, words were spelt incorrectly. Another problem I experienced was in using the correct word in a particular sentence to convey a certain meaning. I had a lot of ideas in my head but did not know the correct words to use to express these ideas. I was not communicating the way I thought I could with more information. Arranging the words in a sentence in a correct or organized manner was also a problem. I did not know how to organize my ideas. I was not sure where to put certain words and how, exactly, to use punctuation marks. My teachers always said that my writing could improve, but I did not fully understand what this improvement entailed. I only saw the words "incorrect," written in red letters and only heard "improvement needed," and felt very discouraged and humiliated. In addition, I also felt no one was showing me exactly how to correct the mistakes that I made as I wrote; they were just telling me that I was incorrect. My reading was another area where I experienced difficulty but no one seemed to know how to help.

As I was growing up and going to school, I continually found that I really liked to read because books took me into a perfect world where everything was wonderful. However, sometimes when engaged in the process of reading, I could not pronounce some words, and I did not always understand the ideas in books. As I read, I saw words that I felt I pronounced correctly but had no idea what they meant. Even in instances where someone helped me with the pronunciation, the sentence still made little sense. In addition, I often encountered words that I knew I could not pronounce, and in such instances I would simply choose to ignore errors as it was inconvenient to constantly ask

for help. In this instance, continually asking individuals for assistance to make my

understanding of books easier would certainly result in my losing interest in the literature.

As a result, if a book were lengthy, I would read several pages without fully

comprehending its content and fill in my own understanding for areas that did not make

sense. In addition to experiencing problems with pronunciation, I did not understand all

the ideas presented in books. In instances where I could decode all the words in a

sentence, the ideas did not fully make sense to me. I felt that this problem occurred a lot

when I read non-fiction passages. My teachers said I could also improve in my reading. I

did not understand what improve meant in this instance, either. As I reflect on my past

life, I realize that throughout my education, I experienced a lot of difficulties in reading

and writing *Standard English*. Later on in my teaching experience, I encountered a lot of

children who experienced many of the same difficulties. Even today, I often question

why this was so. Why are so many dialect speakers in my country experiencing such

difficulties in English, a language which we claim as our own? This is how my study

began.

Things that Influenced My Literacy Learning

   My parents' literacy achievement. I began to reflect on things in my past life that

influenced my literacy development. The term literacy involves the ability to read and

write, but it goes beyond that to include the necessary and desirable attributes of one's

culture that are linked to reading and writing (Venezky, 1990). In addition to the ability

to read and write, Venezky believes that mathematical skills along with the ability to

process documents are also involved in literacy. He identified two levels of literacy: *basic*

literacy or knowledge of the essential underlying of literacy skills on which literacy can be built and *required literacy* or the literacy level required by any social context. Required literacy can also have different levels and can change over time. Venezky believes that any level of literacy above the basic level which allows individuals to adequately function through print is functional literacy. From these distinctions I concur that an individual can be functionally literate but not have the required literacy ability required in certain social contexts. I believe that my parents were functionally literate but may not have had the literacy competence to function in many social contexts.

Both of my parents attended elementary school. I am not sure of the grade that my Father completed, but I am aware that my Mother went as far as becoming a monitor in her school. A monitor was similar to a student teacher. At that time (the 1940s), students who displayed high academic achievement and an ability or willingness to teach could become a monitor (in elementary school), and then they would be appointed to a teaching position later on. My Mother's principal felt that she could become a teacher and encouraged her guardian to allow her to pursue the necessary studies. Her guardian, at that time, felt that this was a waste of time and money because the social norm at the time was that blacks were not allowed to get certain jobs. For this primary reason, my Mother's education went no further than elementary school. My Mother did not become a teacher, but I felt she had a lot of knowledge about teaching as she taught us, her children, and assisted us to value some reading and writing skills.

My Mother, I thought, was a good-literacy-role model. I always thought that my Mother read and wrote quite efficiently. She had many pen pals, and she was always writing letters to them. She also regularly played the role of secretary in church, and as a

result, she always wrote notes in a notebook. On the other hand, I always felt that my Father did not have as good a command of *Standard English* as my Mother since he would always seek my Mother's help with grammar and spelling. My Father had a very distinctive hand-writing, and he wrote a lot of notes for work and occasionally a letter or two. I also remembered sentences he would say that I knew were not "correct English," according to what I had learned about correctness in school and through my Mother's example.

I knew that my Father attended elementary school and that he attended a trade school after elementary school. He did not share with us much of his experiences in his school life, but I believe that he did achieve some academic success considering the type of job he had. He held a very good position as the superintendent of one of the main departments at the Water and Sewage Company in Trinidad and Tobago. When he retired he held one of the senior positions at that company. He was also very successful at designing buildings and gave advice on the construction of buildings. I believe that these two achievements suggested that he had better than functional literacy. But reflecting on this, I do not believe that he had the literacy skills to function beyond that in every social setting because of his spoken language and writing ability.

My Father spoke a combination of *Caribbean Creole English* dialect and incorrect *Standard English*. Even today I can recall certain sentences that he said. He was quite financially successful in my country but never spoke or read publicly and had a secretary to do all his required writing. I believe now that the job he retired from in my country would presently require a university degree which he did not have. Despite this fact, he was so knowledgeable and skilled in the job that he did that even after he retired

about fifteen years ago. He continued to be employed by the company on a contractual basis. As a retiree he went into full-time architectural work until he became ill about seven years ago. He died three years after that.

As a result of my parents' input, I believe I have acquired very important knowledge and skills about the role that literacy plays in men and women's lives. I now wonder if the social construction of literacy in my family's life is what influenced my own literacy desires and influence the literacy desires of my children? I felt my Mother was a success at being a very good literacy role model for us. I felt that my Father also was a great success when he had someone to perform literacy functions for him.

Context of the home.

My Father's strong desire to pursue a particular career was driven by the dream of improving his financial situation. Moreover, he realized that, for his children to achieve financial stability, education must play a very important role in their development. As a result, education was always highly valued in our home. I believe that my Mother played a significant role in assisting my brothers and sisters and, to a lesser extent, me with our school work in elementary school. We all did very well in school, and all achieved high school certificates and were gainfully employed. I and six of my siblings went on to complete studies at the tertiary level. I feel that one of my brothers did not because he was gainfully employed and was satisfied with what he was able to accomplish financially.

I am the sixth of eight children. My Mother was always involved in our elementary school life. She was the one who checked reports, visited teachers, and wrote

school notes. At night I heard her in discussions with my brothers and sisters over specific issues in the area of mathematics, grammar, punctuation, spelling, and reading. When my older brothers and sisters entered high school, I felt that some changes had taken place in the nature and level of the content of these discussions. The focus of these had become more general, mainly centered on teachers and their attitude toward them and basic knowledge in some language arts. I do not recall my Mother discussing topics like Latin, physics, biology, or mathematics with them. During this later period, their discussion about these subject areas was mainly amongst themselves. All my older siblings did very well in school, and all achieved their high school certificates and were gainfully employed. My oldest brother became an engineer in the United States; another of my older brothers became a pilot for a United States airline, and my other older siblings work for very established public companies in Trinidad. When my siblings were in secondary school, I noticed that my Mother began increasingly to convey a sense of inadequacy at assisting them in their school work. This was the point at which I entered elementary school.

In elementary school, I felt that my Mother may not have helped me as much because at that point in time she had five children to take care of. My situation was unique. My parents paid for a tutor from about third grade to give me extra help with my school work; yet, I cannot recall this being done for any of my older brothers or sisters. My Mother taught me a small amount of reading and some writing before I entered school, but after I entered school, a lot changed in our household. Just before I entered elementary school, my sister was born and my youngest brother was born about a year after. From this point onward my interaction with both parents was significantly limited.

Mother was always busy with household chores, and I did not see much of Father because he was working to support the growing family. Although my Mother continued to attend to the usual checking of report cards and sending of notes to teachers, I cannot recall much assistance from either parent relative to school work.

I always went to my Mother for assistance in spelling difficult words and to correct grammar; she did not seem to have the time to give any other academic help. She could always tell us children how to write or say a sentence correctly. I always believed that my Mother spoke a form of our dialect that was closer to *Standard English* or "good English" as it was called in school. Now, looking back, I questioned how much she really knew because as the years progressed and we children grew up, I realized that we were the only ones who assessed her knowledge. She never worked outside of the home, and she was always a very quiet and introverted person who did not speak much other than when she helped us or when she came to school functions and talked to our teachers.

My Mother was responsible for our school life in this way. She always kept in close touch with teachers. As children, we were always encouraged to do well and lectured about failing to achieve academically by both of our parents. My Father was especially harsh towards my older siblings particularly where school work was concerned. If an unsatisfactory report card was brought home, some form of reprimand would follow.

I grew up highly aware that school achievement was important. I was one of the babies in the home, so I was warned about the implications of receiving poor school reports by my Mother; however, my Father never really told me anything, instead focusing on my older siblings. Even though, over the years, my academic reports were

very poor in comparison to my brothers and sisters, my parents hardly ever scolded me about that. My Mother talked to me about it when she had the time, but I was never really reprimanded for it by my Father as much as my brothers and sisters were.

My Father was always attentive to purchasing all the school books required, for each of us, every year of our schooling. In my country all school texts had to be purchased; my Father spent hundreds of dollars over the years. There were always lots of books in the home. However, there were never a large variety of books available. My parents considered that some books did not contribute to our education and were therefore not allowed in the home. Although both my parents read, I cannot recall us having magazines, nonfiction books, children's story books, or novels at home. The books that were there were mainly basic textbooks for school. We also had a set of beautifully-bound colour encyclopedias. I loved reading these and sat looking at the pictures and reading small sections as often as I could. I grew up seeing my parents reading mainly the newspaper or the *Bible*. We also had a seemingly large, ugly Bible storybook, which my Mother on a number of occasions read stories from when we prayed as a family at night.

Another set of family experiences that I believed notably impacted our literacy experiences were family outings. I recall numerous family outings especially when I was quite young. We went to the zoo, to the botanical gardens, to historical sites, and on road trips. During these trips my Father would usually talk a lot, sharing historical, geological, geographical and scientific information about the sites that we saw. I cannot recall the exact time that these trips stopped, but I knew that I was still quite young. I believe that it was around the same time that we started to see less and less of him.

I felt that there were things that my Father, as the head of the house, did that may have had a negative impact on my ability to effectively communicate my ideas. For example, my Father was very domineering -- whatever he said had to be the rule or household law. This fact, together with the idea that children should "be seen and not heard" and children are not supposed to talk while eating, adversely impacted the level of communication between our parents and us. Our conversations with our Father were especially restricted to answers to questions, and there was absolutely no mealtime conversation. When children voiced their opinion, especially if it was different from that of parents, it was considered disrespectful. This action would predictably lead to severe punishment such as a stern rebuke or even a spanking. As a result, I felt we never questioned our parents about things that we read, never discussed ideas that we had, and held our opinions to ourselves.

As the years passed things changed a little. Our Mother became a little more willing to entertain our ideas. I believe that as we got older she opened up to us more, and we reciprocated. It seemed that at that point in time my Father was occupied more and more outside of the home. At this point his presence felt more like someone who visited occasionally than someone who lived there. Despite this fact, many of the rules that he established about education were still maintained and carried out by my Mother. My Father's influence over our academic life continued even when he was not around.

My academic life.

I started elementary school at the age of five. There I learned to read and write. I remember early "pretend" reading before I started school; I cannot recall doing any

writing. In elementary school most of my reading was from the school's reading book – the basal reader. The only other reading I did in school was reading comprehension passages to answer questions. We were not often allowed to read storybooks in class, and even when we were, I did not have any storybooks at home so I did not make a connection from home to school through storybook reading. Most of my home-to-school literacy connections were with informational texts.

Some stories in our basal reader were quite captivating, but I hated many of the stories. I am very dark in complexion; I mentioned this here because as far as I remember books that I read in my early school years represented blacks as being ugly, or hideous, with distorted features. I felt this affected my self-perception and made me feel uncomfortable and humiliated. I also did not like real pictures of whites either. In my country, when individuals died, they appeared quite pale. As a child I went to many funerals and saw the dead as they lay in their coffins. Real pictures of white individuals that I remembered looked very much like dead people to me. There were white people in my country, but they were always well-tanned and looked like very fair blacks. I did not understand that whites were a different ethnic group and that their complexion could represent many different shades of pale. To me, the pictures represented dead people. The manner in which white and black individuals were represented, at that time, in basal readers caused me to develop a dislike for reading and learning from certain books. I did not make cultural connections from the pictures, and the pictures were not used as points of discussion for comprehension.

Yet, I recall one very beautiful reading experience in my earlier years in elementary school that involved pictures. In this particular class, the teacher had a set of

colourful, fantasy storybooks; they were in the top section of her large cupboard. We looked at these books daily from afar. We longed for them but were not allowed to touch them. I remembered one day, for some reason, she took them down and allowed us to read them. To me this was like heaven on earth. I feel this memorable experience increased my desire to read books, but I do not feel I had many experiences that encouraged my writing.

In my elementary school year, I remembered writing only in school; my only writing was what was required. I did no other writing. I had no diary or pen pal at that time. I cannot remember liking to write very much. If I completed my work early in class, I drew in my exercise book or on a spare piece of paper. As far as I could remember, I only wrote in school because I had to; I never wrote for recreation but I really loved reading. I did not make the reading-writing connection at an early age.

There was a public library near to my school. I really liked the library and wished that many of the books were beautifully coloured like the bound encyclopedias that I mentioned before or the beautifully-coloured storybooks owned by the teacher. A few of the books in the library were stories of far away lands and fantasy stories like *The Arabian Nights* and *Madeline*. However, there were many storybooks that I simply did not understand, probably because many of the concepts represented in these books were foreign to me and a lot of the vocabulary was unfamiliar. In many of the books the pictures were quite drab, the buildings seemed peculiar, and the people dressed in odd clothes. I felt that this discouraged me from reading many books in the public library.

Although the public library was available, children did not like to visit it very often. One reason may be that the librarian was a huge lady with a very large wart on her

nose. She was always shouting at the children to behave or be quiet. It seemed as if she always had angry things to say, and when she spoke, the silence of the library would be disturbed and everyone would turn and look at whomever she spoke to. This drove the children away. I felt that this impacted my desire to remain as a member of the library while I was in primary school.

I recall, especially when I was in primary school, that the children in my country were never encouraged to talk to learn. Cooperative working or activities which encouraged talk, discussions, and debates were discouraged in classrooms; I am not sure if at that time the value of these activities was realized. In addition, the adage "children should be seen and not heard" which was taught at home was reinforced in the school. Children spent most of their lives repeating facts that adults told them, and no other types of talking to learn were encouraged. This may have contributed to the dilemma of my being very quiet and introverted as a child.

When I entered secondary school, things changed a little, and I became a little more outspoken. Reading and especially writing became more appealing because more interesting content was available in the secondary school texts. English language texts then seemed to be a greater reflection of myself. The texts were colourful, and we learned more about ourselves. In addition, teachers liked me because, unlike many of the other teenagers who constantly made disrespectful comments, I was respectful and obedient. All this, together with the fact that my brothers and sisters were successful in school, caused me to want to learn more. However, there was one significant situation that I felt impacted my progress. My secondary school was very far from my home. I got up very early and took a long bus ride to school, and I arrived home quite late in the afternoons. I

was always tired and, consequently, sometimes fell asleep in class or was too tired to concentrate adequately on my work. In addition, I felt that this tired state also impacted the quality of homework that I did. My homework was in many instances incomplete or poorly done. Despite all this, there were times when I was able to work quite hard, and those times paid off well. I felt what motivated me was the praise of many teachers. I was highly praised when I excelled; and even in instances when I did not perform quite well, I was encouraged to improve. I seemed to be more successful in subjects that required more simple forms of writing or that mainly required just recall of facts learned.

In secondary school, the amount of reading I did increased. I read some of my texts when I was not too tired, and I began to read more novels that my sisters bought home from school. I also became a church, Sunday-school teaching assistant and had to read for the class that I was teaching. I knew that my oral reading was weak and I made an effort to rehearse every Sunday's lesson so that I was sure of the pronunciation of the words. As I did this, I would ask my Mother for assistance with any word that I was not sure of. I believed that this helped my reading to improve later on as well, since I began to develop an ear for pronouncing words correctly.

At this point in time, the amount of writing I did also increased because I started to write for recreation. I had a diary where I wrote about my innermost thoughts and feelings. Also, I wrote letters to a few people, like my aunt in England and a few pen pals that I had made on other islands. I told them about general things that happened in my life. My writing did not have to be well structured and organized to write these types of letters. I saw this recreational writing as separate from school writing, and I knew that I was not very good at academic writing. Over the years I increasingly developed a love for

writing simply because it was a way of expressing how I felt about things. Still, I believed that I did not write well. My form of written expression did not reflect a good command of *Standard English;* I knew this because of the many comments my teachers wrote in red when I wrote essays. I struggled to spell many words, the structures of my sentences were more of a simple form, and I remembered clearly that I avoided complex sentences as much as possible. I did not understand what the problems were in my writing at this point, and it seemed as if no one knew how to help me. In the secondary school course English Language Arts, I wrote only stories. We were advised, by teachers, if we felt that we were poor writers we should simply write a story just to pass the language arts secondary school examination. This strategy worked for me, but it also meant that I never developed a wider range of writing skills over the years, especially writing expository texts.

Despite my weaknesses in both reading and writing, I was able to successfully get my high school certificate and obtain a job. I was employed in a company in which my position involved statistical work, and I remained in this business for eleven years. The demands of the job mainly required writing numbers and adding very large numbers using a calculator. Other than this, very little writing or reading was done. I later left this employment and entered the teaching service as an elementary school teacher. I always loved teaching, and although my job at the company mentioned previously was financially fulfilling, I felt quite unfulfilled.

The only qualification required to enter the Trinidad and Tobago's teaching service was a high-school diploma. When an individual enters the teaching service, they are called assistant teachers, but are placed in front of a class to perform the same duties

as a teacher – sometimes with very little help or supervision. Teaching assistants are sent from time to time for in-service training. I believed that this was where I experienced the greatest test of my reading and writing skills. I had to teach reading and writing, and I experienced a lot of difficulty in both areas. Now I met many children who were experiencing the same difficulties, and I could relate to their frustration. Many of the children that I taught could not pronounce many of the words they encountered in texts and did not understand exactly what the reading passage meant. Others could not spell many *Standard English* words, or constantly wrote *Caribbean Creole English* words and sentences when they felt that they were writing *Standard English*. Although I was given advice on resources that I could buy and was sent to a few in-service training sessions, I felt that this did not help a lot. I still did not fully understand what my major problem was in the area of reading and writing, and I felt frustrated because I did not know how to help the children that I taught. Although I had been exposed to *Standard English* all of my life, it was unclear why I encountered such difficulty in understanding, differentiating, and interpreting the two main varieties of English that existed in my community.

After three years of teaching, I was sent to Trinidad and Tobago's Teachers' Training College. I think of this Teachers' College as a crash-course in teaching because students in the college were taught about all the subject areas in only a two-year period. I met other individuals who also experienced problems in the area of reading and writing at College. Though I learned a lot about reading and writing in Teachers' College, it was not sufficient to rectify my weak areas. I graduated from Teachers' College with a teaching diploma but with still so many unanswered questions about my weaknesses in

reading and writing. I wanted more knowledge about reading and writing, and as a result,
I decided to pursue a degree in education at the University of the West Indies. At this
institution, I was presented with information on dialects in one of our courses. For the
first time, I felt that I had answers to some of my questions. I coped with knowing that
the information that I received on dialects was not enough. This has led me to pursue
further studies in Canada where I have been residing for the past two years as a graduate
education student at the University of Manitoba.

After undertaking a review of literature in the field, I realized that there are
different dialects of English which subsequently led me to identify two key preliminary
questions for this study: (1) Which dialect is my English? and (2) How does my English
affect my ability to speak and write *Standard English?* I felt that to effectively address
these questions I needed to investigate the speaking and writing behaviours of *Caribbean
Creole English-speaking* individuals. I needed to probe into the effect that spoken
language has on writing and also to examine some of the issues that are present for a
person who speaks two dialects of a language.

Context of the Study

Caribbean Creole English speakers are speakers of two different varieties of
English: *Standard English* and a non-standard variety (Nero, 2001). The English spoken
by developed nations such as Australia, Canada, England, New Zealand, and the United
States is considered to be the best usage of English and is called *Standard English*
(Wolfram & Christian, 1979). Other English dialects are judged by comparison and
contrast to *Standard English.*

There are many *Caribbean Creole English* speakers who live in different regions in Canada. The study took place in the city of Winnipeg, in the Province of Manitoba, Canada. This City has a population of 656, 200 (Conference Board of Canada, 2006). Visible minorities make up 12.5% of this population (Statistics Canada, 2001). *Caribbean Creole English* speakers are a visible minority in this city and country. They make up about 7% of Manitoba's population.

Caribbean Creole English-speaking individuals have many differences and some commonalities (Roberts, 1988). These individuals can be defined by a diversity of English dialects, ethnicity, religions, and socioeconomic and political backgrounds. Despite these differences, they still see themselves as one people who share a similar history and some similarities in their ways of life.

Canada has two official languages: English and French. However, in Winnipeg the majority of the population speaks English. The English spoken in Canada is similar to what Nero (2000) describes as "Standard American English." Standard American English is also considered *Standard English* (Fogel & Ehri, 2006). This is also the language of instruction in schools and the language of textbooks in Canada. In addition,, this dialect is also the language of the curriculum, the text, and the language of instruction in the West Indies (Carrington 2001). For this reason, I thought that the Caribbean Creole English speaker has faced similar challenges in the educational environment in Canada as they faced in the West Indies. They have also encountered other challenges as they adjust to a *Standard English* speaking environment. For this study, I selected five individuals who identified themselves as Caribbean Creole English. The data collected describes their experiences in a Standard English-speaking environment.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to shed light on non-standard dialect of English speakers' oral language and literacy practices to observe how the use of an oral non-standard English dialect impacted the ability to acquire literacy in Standard English. The study has provided insight into the literacy practices of *Caribbean Creole English* speakers who live in a *Standard English-speaking* context.

First, in Chapter I, I describe where the study took place, and then explain why I did this study. Following that I explain the questions I sought answers to by doing this study and why and to whom this study would be important. Next, I establish the boundaries of the study and define concepts important to the study. I review relevant literature in Chapter II. This is followed by a description of the methods used in this study, how the data were collected, and how the data were then analyzed in Chapter III. Finally a discussion of results, implications for educators, and suggestions for further research appear in Chapters IV through VI.

Research Questions

As I began to think about my research, I knew that I wanted to do research that involved the non-standard dialect of English speakers in a *Standard English* education environment. Two questions that were constantly in my mind were: (1) How are children in these situations considered in the education system? and (2) How are their language needs met? I started my review of the literature on these topics and found studies (Flyman-Mattsson & Burenhult, 1999; Hammink, 2000; Nelson, 1990) that helped to focus the questions in my research.

At this point, these were the questions that I wanted answered by my research: (1) What are the speaking and writing issues that exist in a Standard English educational environment for speakers of a non-standard dialect of English? (2) Is there evidence of code-switching in the speaking and writing behaviour of *Caribbean Creole English* speakers? (3)What functions do code-switching serve for *Caribbean Creole English* speakers? (4) Will non-standard dialect English speakers' awareness of code-switching affect their language choice? I thought that the answers to these questions would yield data that would unearth information useful to educators in influencing many decisions that they make.

Significance of the Study

In this study, I examined the strengths and differences that five *Caribbean Creole English* speakers brought to a *Standard English* environment. These Caribbean Creole English speakers recall their experiences of adjusting to a context of Standard English practices. The study provided data that gave information about what worked and what did not work. The information gained from this study has shed light on literacy knowledge and skills of Caribbean Creole English speakers. The information gained has also provided details about different individuals' literacy needs, especially about the needs of speakers that transition from one context to another where the language demands are shifted and their own English dialect is now considered different. The participants' recollection of experiences provided information about Caribbean Creole English speakers' oral language and their transitional literacy practices. This information has shed

light on many issues that exist for the non-standard dialect of English speakers in Standard English education environment.

In this study I also examined the phenomena of code switching (Auer, 1984). As the Caribbean Creole English speakers spoke and wrote they switched code (see definition list page 26) from Caribbean Creole English to Standard English and vice versa. The information gained from this study has expanded knowledge on the phenomena of code switching, particularly about the purpose of code switching and the type of code switching that occurs in Caribbean Creole English speakers' everyday literacy practices.

Information from the study has also provided details on Caribbean Creole English speakers' awareness of their code switching behaviour and actions that occurred as a result of awareness or lack of awareness. Facts provided by the study enlighten factors that impact the participants' awareness of code switching. In addition the study also provided data that informed about Caribbean Creole English speakers' language choice and factors that affected their choice of language in different circumstances and/or contexts of language use.

The study has provided in-depth information about the context of Caribbean Creole English speakers in Canada. This has shed light on Caribbean Creole English speakers' thoughts and behaviours in transitional settings. The context of an individual in any educational environment can include a very wide range. The next section specifies the extent covered by the research.

Scope of the Study

In this study I investigated the oral language and literacy practices, and the code switching behaviours of five *Caribbean Creole English* speakers.

The topic of oral language and literacy practices within the entire realm of literacy education tends to be very broad. It involves reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, and visual representation of ideas (Manitoba Education & Training, 1998; Vogt & Shearer, 2003). In this study only speaking and writing were investigated. Speaking and writing are used in language to convey meaning (Halliday, 1987). Speaking is using oral language to convey meaning; writing is using text to convey meaning. In a *Standard English* environment, meaning is conveyed using the *Standard English* dialect. *Standard English* dialect speakers convey meaning using distinct words, grammar, and pronunciation. *Standard English* texts also convey meaning using specific vocabulary, sentence structure, spelling, and grammar.

The topic of code switching includes the grammatical perspective, the sociological perspective, and the interactive perspective of code switching (Auer, 1984). In this study only the interactive perspective of code switching was examined. The interactive perspective considers what code alternation indicates and what may be its intended purpose. As a result I looked at the function and meaning that code switching served in the lives of the participants.

Data from five *Caribbean Creole English* speaking individuals cannot be generalized because the subjects used for the study are a small number of *Caribbean Creole English* speaking individuals who volunteered to be in the study. The results of the research may be limited to other individuals with the same or similar characteristics.

In the study I looked at how *Caribbean Creole English speakers* convey meaning orally and convey meaning using text in a *Standard English-speaking* environment. The following definitions are important to this study and clarify terms specific to the research.

Definitions of Terms

Caribbean Creole English: "comprised of a combination of the phonology,

> morphology, and syntax of West Africa and other ethnic languages with the

> largest contribution of the vocabulary coming from British English" (Nero, 2000,

> p. 486). Caribbean Creole English is a non-standard dialect of English and was

> referred to as a non-standard dialect in this research.

Code switching: a person repeatedly replacing one or more dialects, languages, or

> language registers with another as he/she speaks (Auer, 1999). The switch can

> occur with words, sound of word parts, sentence structure, and meaning. Code

> switching is different to the presence of two language feature combinations

> existing in one language (Edwards, 2004). Note: Some languages may adopt a

> word from another language, and, over a period of time, the adopted word

> becomes a significant part of that initial language. The presence of this adopted

> word within this initial language is not code switching.

Dialect: any variety of a language shared by a group of speakers. These varieties usually

> correspond to differences of other types between the groups, such as geographical

> location, social class, or age (Wolfram & Christian, 1979, p. 1)

Non-standard dialect: a variety of the language that is not the standard dialect (Wolfram

> & Christian, 1979).

The English-speaking Caribbean (or Anglophone Caribbean): the following

> Islands in the West Indies: Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas,

> Barbados, the British Virgin Islands, Caricou, Cayman Islands, Dominica,

> Grenada, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts-Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the

Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands, and the U. S. Virgin

Islands. In addition, there is Belize in Central America and Guyana in South

America (Nero, 2000).

Sociocultural discourse: involves: 1) discourses, 2) social languages, 3) genres, and 4)

cultural models that are linked to a specific social identity and activity. Discourses

involve specific language and literacy practices, social languages involve a

specific way of arranging words, genres involve specific ways of using words

and acting, and cultural models involve specific shared attitudes, values, goals

and practices (Gee, 2004).

Standard dialect: variety of language that conforms to social norms. These norms are

based on judgments of acceptability rather than assessments of correctness

(Wolfram & Christian, 1979, p. 5).

Functions of language: the actions for which language is specifically fitted or used.

(Halliday, 1973).

Chapter II

Review of Literature

Introduction

There has been a notable difference in the reading achievement of *Standard English* mainstream culture pupils to that of students of minority cultures (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Linguistically and culturally-diverse students have fallen behind their mainstream peers in literacy achievement. This gap gets even wider as students progress to higher grades (Fillmore & Myers, 1992). *Caribbean Creole English* speakers are one group of minority-culture students who have been identified in this issue. Literacy-skills tests carried out in the West Indies indicate that students from the English-speaking Caribbean are struggling with literacy (Simmons-Mc Donald, 2001). In *Standard English* education environments like the United States and Canada *Caribbean Creole English* speakers also face many challenges in literacy (Coelho, 1988; Nero, 2001).

In this review of literature I start by summarizing the descriptive literature about the language of the English-speaking Caribbean. Second I describe language acquisition and the link between spoken and written language. Third I discuss issues that exist in the *Standard English* educational environment for the *Caribbean Creole English* speaker which have affected literacy. Fourth I examine studies carried out with *Caribbean Creole English* speakers which pertain to their literacy issues. Next I present a summary of research on code switching and finally the implication of code switching for the Caribbean Creole English speakers as they acquire literacy in *Standard English*.

Figure 1

ATLANTIC
OCEAN

http://www.century21cycb.com Century 21
CYCB Real Estate

U.S.A. Miami

GRAND BAHAMA I.

BAHAMAS

ANDROS I.

NASSAU

CAT I.

Havana

CUBA

Camaguey

ACKLINS I.

TURKS & CAICOS IS.

Santiago de Cuba

Santiago

Cayman Islands

Greater Antilles

HAITI

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

San Juan

BRITISH VIRGIN IS.

ANGUILLA ST. MARTIN
ST. MAARTEN

Port-au-Prince

Santo Domingo

PUERTO RICO

U.S. VIRGIN IS.

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

JAMAICA Kingston

ST. KITTS AND NEVIS

MONTSERRAT

GUADELOUPE

• Merida

MEXICO

Belmopan
BELIZE

C A R I B B E A N   S E A

DOMINICA

MARTINIQUE

ST. LUCIA

GUATEMALA

San Pedro Sula

Guatemala City

HONDURAS

Tegucigalpa

San Salvador
EL SALVADOR

NICARAGUA

Managua

Lake Nicaragua

ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

BARBADOS

ARUBA

NETHERLANDS ANTILLES

BONAIRE

CURACAO

GRENADA

MARGARITA I.

TOBAGO

Baranquilla

Cartagena

Maracaibo

Caracas

Valencia Maracay

Port-of-Spain

TRINIDAD

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

San Jose
COSTA RICA

San Miguelito

Panama City

PANAMA

Cucuta

Bucaramanga

VENEZUELA

Georgetown

GUYANA Paramaribo

Medellin

Itagui

COLUMBIA

Manizales

Pereira

Bogota

Cali

Cayenne

SURINAME

FRENCH GUIANA

BRAZIL

The Language of the English-speaking Caribbean

History of the English-speaking Caribbean

During the period of the early 1600s to the late 1700s, Africans were brought to the West Indies to supply labour for sugar plantations (Sheridan, 1973). The plantation system and slavery influenced the structure of the social system in the Caribbean; the social system, in turn, impacted the development of the Caribbean's Creole languages (Roberts, 1988).

During this period of the plantation system, various groups of individuals were brought together to form the Caribbean's diverse population (Sheridan, 1973). Many Europeans came to the Caribbean: Plantation owners either migrated there or sent an administrator; individuals came as servants or artisans; some poor whites immigrated for new opportunity; some were abducted; and prisoners were sent as a punishment for their crimes. In addition, Africans who spoke many different African languages were brought as slaves. Within this population, a stratified social pyramid existed (Roberts, 1988). At the top of the social pyramid were plantation owners and administrators, next poor whites, then house slaves and craftsmen, and, at the bottom, the African slaves. This lowest level of status for the slaves meant that they were taken advantage of in many different ways to maintain the plantation system which thrived on the existence and maintenance of slavery.

Plantation owners were of the opinion that, if the slaves were able to communicate with each other, they might band together to overthrow the plantation owners whom they greatly outnumbered. Various strategies were employed by the plantation owners to restrict the slaves from communicating with each other. Slaves of

various different ethnic groups were placed together, and families were broken up and sold to other plantations. As a result, many Africans were only in contact with other Africans who spoke different languages.

The development of the non-standard English spoken in the English-speaking Caribbean resulted from the contact of Africans and English-speaking Europeans (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985; Roberts 1988). This mixture accounts for the rich diversity of non-standard English spoken in the Caribbean. The main individuals with whom the slaves had to communicate to carry out their daily duties did not speak their African language, but spoke English. As a result slaves developed ways of basic communication with their overseers so that they could carry out their day-to-day duties. This use of language was a very important survival strategy in the plantation system. The strategy resulted, over time, in a breakdown in the slaves' ability to communicate in their African language, so that they had to develop basic language skills in the language of their overseers. This basic communication that the slaves learned only resulted from contact with colonists who gave very little consideration to the correct form and structure of the English language. As a result the form and structure of English learned by the slaves was considered subordinate to the Standard form that was valued in London and the courts of Britain.

Roberts (1988) states that colonists and servants came from all parts of England, Scotland, and Ireland. However, he further states

> "The bond servant who would generally be in closer contact with the slaves than the masters… were generally speakers of lower-class dialects of various geographical regions" (pp. 112). Many 'black sheep' of upper class families were sent to the colonies… such people might not have projected themselves as models of linguistic sophistication. The low level of literacy which has been a factor in the black population…is paralleled by a level which was not substantially higher

among the white plantation administration throughout slavery and colonialism. Thus the variety of English which the slaves came into contact with most often… were regional and colloquial." (Roberts, 1988, pp. 112)

English language learning for the slaves had occurred either through contact with individuals as mentioned above or through the intervention of missionaries. The slaves learned their work under the instruction of descendants of Europeans and slaves. Slaves who were selected for trades were taught by craftsmen. These craftsmen were either whites craftsmen or slaves who were became skilled in certain trades. Very few of the Europeans who migrated to the English-speaking Caribbean paid much attention to their spoken language. In addition, lack of contact with Britain and the isolation of plantations meant that colonists did not speak the English valued in England, and each plantation may have developed variations of English which served their needs. This resulted in the ex-slaves only being exposed, generationally, to various forms of English as their guide.

The missionaries were the only individuals who taught that slaves should learn to read and write. On the other hand, the slave owners thought that educating the slaves would cause social unrest because knowledge of reading and writing would give the slaves access to information and therefore social power. Despite these sentiments, during the early 19th century, some slaves were taught to read as a result of missionaries who desired that they learned to read the Bible. Altogether, very few African slaves were exposed to adequate literacy knowledge although some developed the ability to read and/or write English.

After the British Emancipation Act was passed in 1833 and the enslaved Africans were freed, their literacy situation did not improve to a large extent (Parry, Sherlock, & Maingot, 1987). For another 6 years, slaves simply moved from slavery to apprenticed

labourers until education of labourers became a priority. After emancipation, the Secretary of State for the colonies in 1838 suggested that schools should be set up for the ex-slaves in order to introduce them to the concept of industrialization and encourage them to be employed. Following this in 1848, Lord Harris put forward proposals to set up free elementary and secondary education for the ex-slaves in the colonies. This was followed by various attempts to organize and establish schools in the English-speaking colonies. However, despite these attempts, very little was actually done in establishing adequate education for the colonies in general. By 1891 more than half the ex-slaves in the Anglophone Caribbean remained unable to read or write.

Dialects of English

The English-speaking Caribbean islanders are considered to be speakers of a non-standard dialect of English. This language is mainly made up of British English and a combination of African languages like Twi, Ewe, Fon, Yoruba, and Kikongo (Coelho, 1988). During the post-emancipation period, in addition to the weak education system and the development of a unique variety of English in the colonies, there were other influences that resulted in the creation of the linguistic system that exists in the Anglophone Caribbean today. The introduction of indentured labour and migration caused further challenges to the creation of a homogeneous and stable language system. During the period 1838 to 1917, Asians and East Indians from India were brought in as indentured labour (Watson, 1979). This situation introduced additional challenges for the linguistic system of individuals of the Anglophone Caribbean because this added to new and additional languages that ex-slaves had to develop in order to communicate with

others. In addition, these new immigrants to the English-speaking Caribbean also had to develop ways of communicating with the ex-slaves. Further to this there was constant migration taking place within the islands and from Europe to the islands. Migration brought a large variety of languages into contact with each other. All these influences contributed to the formation of an English dialect in the English-speaking Caribbean which Nero (2000) calls *Caribbean Creole English;* this variety of English differs from the Standard form in pronunciation, syntax, and vocabulary (Nero, 2000). This linguistic variety together with social unrest, economic development, and political influences resulted in the English-speaking Caribbean developing into a Standard English-speaking and English-Creole speaking territory. English has existed in the Caribbean for over three hundred years; despite this fact, the Caribbean is still not recognized as a "legitimate" centre of English because of the existence of English-based Creoles (Taylor, 2001). In the section that follows I will discuss the relationship between *Caribbean Creole English* and *Standard English* in the English-speaking Caribbean.

The Structure of the English Linguistic System in the English-Speaking Caribbean

Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985) state that the concept of language takes in four separate meanings. These four meanings refer only to one specific language, for example if one is referring to English or French. I think that these four meanings are quite important to help to clarify the meaning of language specific to this research. The first meaning of language suggests that it is something that individuals possess. Hence an individual has a native tongue or mother tongue; and this is associated with the individual's identity. Secondly, language refers to how an individual behaves and the

system that motivates that behaviour. This means that within a community a certain type of language will be considered as a greeting and a certain action will be considered as the motivation for a greeting. Thirdly, language refers to the description made by linguistics using specific data which makes up the structure of that language. So here language means a specific set of words, sentences, grammar rules, and linguistic patterns. Last of all, language refers to a communication system adopted by a community. If this system is applied to spoken language, then this system will involve what is said, how something is said, why it is said, and where it is said. From Le Page and Tabouret-Keller's information, it can be concluded that language encompasses identity, established rules, a linguistic system, and a way of life established within a community.

Caribbean Creole English exists on a sequence ranging from one extreme of the English language to another (Coelho, 1988). The continuum is a way of representing the link that exists between the two extreme varieties of the language.

Figure 2

The Creole continuum.

Creole	Intermediate variety	Standard English

◀ -- ▶

Basilect	Mesolect	Acrolect
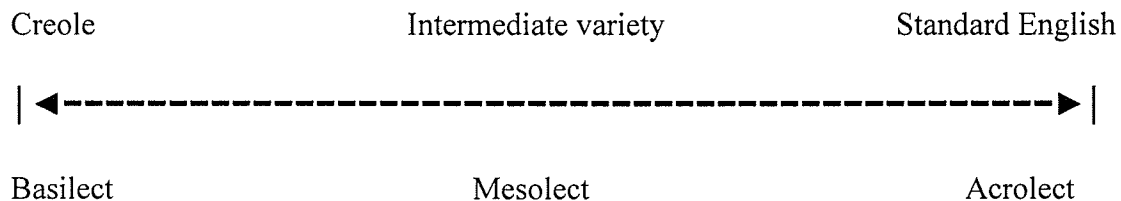
At one end of the sequence exists the Acrolect: the dialect that is the closest version to the *Standard English.* This variety is used for more formal settings. The Basilect is the dialect of English language furthest removed from the *Standard* variety and is used in

more informal settings. Language varieties exist between these two extremes with the Mesolect considered the most intermediate varieties. The intermediate variety is usually close enough to the *Standard English* to be understood by most English speakers. The individuals who speak the Acrolect variety of English must have specific knowledge of the other English dialects spoken in their community; in many cases, individuals may be able to understand but not speak it. Moreover, most Acrolect speakers, even though they may not admit it, use some form of Basilect during informal situations/conversations. *Caribbean Creole English* is made up of a complex system of dialects that range from a version close to *Standard English* that may be understood by *Standard English* speakers to a variety so extreme that it may not be understood by many *Standard English* speakers. In the section that follows the main differences between the *Standard English* dialect and *Caribbean Creole English* dialect is highlighted.

Nero (2000) gives a summary of some of the main differences that between *Caribbean Creole English* and *Standard English* dialect. There may be a change in the initial consonant, final consonant, and vowel sounds. There are also sentence structure differences, and vocabulary differences.

Standard English.

James Milroy and Lesley Milroy who are linguistic professors at the University of Michigan provide information on the history of standardization of English. They state that dialects develop over time due to specific language conditions and at the social capital associated with these conditions (Milroy & Milroy, 1999). Social capital here means the assets or advantages that come through social connections. When the topic of

the English language is considered -- a particular variety called Standard English stands out above the others.

The standardization of a variety of a language is brought about when an influential set of people select and accept a specific variety to be the most important. Standardization is motivated by various social, political, and commercial needs. Nero (2000) states that individuals from developed English-speaking nations like Australia, Canada, New Zealand, England, and the United States are considered to be native speakers of English, and these developed nations determine the variety that is considered the best usage of the language (Wolfram & Christian, 1979). According to Milroy and Milroy (1999) "what Standard English is taught to be depends on the acceptance of a common core of linguistic conventions" (p.22). After acceptance, this variety of a language is promoted geographically and socially in different ways, for example through the education system, official papers, and the writing system. Thus, the establishment of a standard variety of a language also creates discrimination against other varieties that are not the standard.

Caribbean Creole English dialect.

It has been previously stated that *Caribbean Creole English* has developed as a result of the influences of many different languages. Coelho (1988) states that, in the English-speaking Caribbean, English dialect differences exist on each island. Many of the islands have their own distinct *Caribbean Creole English* dialect resulting in variations represented by differences in the varieties that exist on the continuum previously described. Nero (2001) does not attempt to negate this fact or to over-simplify

the many differences that exist between the English-speaking Caribbean islands. He

simply presents some of the most important differences that exist between the two

varieties of language, and categorizes general characteristics of the different non-standard

English languages that are spoken through out the English-speaking Caribbean. These

general characteristics of the English-speaking Caribbean islands (see tables below) were

used in this study.

Table 1

Pronunciation features in Caribbean Creole English and Standard English

Features	Caribbean Creole English	Standard English
Initial consonant	(t) ting (tr) tree (d) dat (ky) kyan (*in Caribbean Creole English palatalization -the insert of the /y/ sound- often occurs between any consonant /p, t, k, d, g, / and a following vowel usually an /a/*) ( ) ome (*primarily rural feature*)	(th) thing (thr) three (dh) that (k) can't (h) home
Final consonant (*in Caribbean Creole English consonant clusters are typically reduced*)	(n) somethin' (n) don' (s) bes	(ng) something (n't) don't (st) best
Vowels	(ih) dih (e) mek (uh) yuh (a) bady final (a) fadda	(e) the (a) make (oo) you (o) body (er) father

Table 2

Syntactic and vocabulary features of Caribbean Creole English and Standard English

Syntactic Caribbean Creole English (CCE)	CCE Form	Corresponding Standard English Form
Zero copula if predicate is an adjective	He strong	He is strong
Zero inflection for subject-verb agreement	She tell me everything	She tells me everything
Zero inflection for tense (*tense is indicated by context*)	Yesterday I wash the clothes	Yesterday I washed the clothes
Zero use of passive structure	Eggs selling today	Eggs are being sold today
Use of does (*unstressed*) to indicate habitual action with any person or number (*primarily Guyanese feature*)	He does go to church every week	He goes to church every week
Zero inflection for plurals if plurality already indicated	My Father work two job (*in this case two already signal more than one*)	My Father works two jobs
Zero marking for possession (*possession is shown by the juxtaposition of possessor and possessed*)	Paul house	Paul's house

Vocabulary Item (*many other false friends exist*)	Meaning in CCE	Meaning in Standard English
Hand	Part of the body from the shoulders to the fingers	Part of the body from the wrist to the fingers
Foot	Part of the body from thigh to the toes	Part of the body from the ankle to the toes
Tea	Any hot beverage	Specific beverage made from tea leaves
Goblet	Covered pitcher made of clay	Drinking glass with a stem
A next	Another (*e.g., I want a next one*)	I want another one

Social Status of Creole Languages.

In this section I will describe the social status that *Caribbean Creole English* has acquired over the years. In discussing social status I will look at the dialect's social rank among community groups and its social status among domains of influence in the community. Social dialectology is the study of connections between a particular social status and a specific dialect. William Labov, an American linguist whose major study is in sociolinguistics, wrote some important information on the social status of different dialects of English. In his book *The Study of Language in its Social Context* he calls some linguistic features, like the manner in which "th" is pronounced, "indicators". He states "If the social context concerned can be ordered in some hierarchy, these indicators can be said to be stratified" (Labov, 1972, p. 283). This means that there is a specific social status linked to certain linguistic features of a particular variety of English. Labov (1972) gives information on how social influences can determine language use. Sometimes language varieties can become socially stratified or linked to a particular social group. If this social group is at the top of the social ladder, that would mean that the speech sounds and ways of arranging words used by this group would be considered as the best usage of that variety of language. The inverse would also be true: if the social group is at the bottom of the social ladder, then the variety of language used by this group would be considered the worst usage of that language. Moreover, this variety of language use would often be considered an incorrect usage of that language, especially under more formal conditions.

In the Caribbean, the status of Creole English is always seen and compared to both written and spoken *Standard English*. When considering varieties of English, *Standard English*, with its associated sound system, vocabulary, language structure, and meaning system, has always been linked to society's elite and the educated. As a result *Standard English* has been identified as the best usage of English. On the other hand, English Creoles have always been associated with the working class and uneducated, and as a result, *Caribbean Creole English* has been considered as "broken" or incorrect usage of the English language in Standard English contexts (Winford, 1976; Wolfram & Christian, 1979).

Carrington (2001) gives further information on the status of Creole dialects in the Caribbean. He suggests Creoles that have developed in the Caribbean are always assessed by how those dialects function in certain social domains, which exist within particular communities, when compared to their *Standard* variety. Carrington highlights five domains: government and politics, education sector, the printed media, writing and technical support for writing, and performing and literary arts. (1) In government and politics, only one country in the Caribbean has identified its Creole dialect within its constitution as the national language, and one country has included a Creole linguistic icon in its coat of arms suggesting its existence and importance. Even in instances where a Creole speaker is included in any government role, *Standard English* knowledge and ability are necessary criterion for inclusion in government affairs. (2) Within the education system, the flow of education policies and procedures has always streamed in a particular direction -- from Europe to the colonies, from the upper class to ordinary people. Education, therefore, goes from the Standard to the Creole speaker and not in the

other direction. As a result, the Creole has always remained mostly on the outskirts of education. Over the years, small concessions have been made for the Creole; in a small number of cases education policies have been put into place which support the use of the Creole during instruction. In addition, in the major Caribbean examinations, only the content of subjects are officially marked; only in English Language Arts are students penalized for inappropriate language use. Inappropriate language here is usually the Creole. (3) In the writing system of all countries, there are books such as dictionaries and grammar books that assist in the understanding of text. These writing supports exist for the Standard dialects of many languages. In Creole-speaking regions, written text and supportive books have also been published (This is only a recent accomplishment.); however, few people have access to these writings. In addition, even in instances where these reference materials are available, the supports (like dictionaries and grammar books) for Creoles are so complicated that only individuals who have a linguistic background can understand them. (4) In the printed media, the Standard variety of a language is used for any valid information; the Creole is mainly used for humour. In a very few cases printed documents are actually written in Creole. What is the most common occurrence is that documents are written in the Standard variety of a language and only very small inclusions are printed in Creole. (5) In the media where oral performance is the means of communication, the Creole has taken dominance. Firstly the Creole is mainly a spoken language and takes prominence over the spoken air waves. This is only true, however, in instances where there is no reading of written text such that Creole is used for call-in programs, entertainment shows, and music-based shows. Any formal program where information is read from a script is done in the Standard dialect.

Second the development of FM broadcasting has also increased the use of the Creole in the spoken media yet the motivation for this is to reach as many potential clients as possible and not to promote the Creole. Thirdly, in television where the news items are mostly of foreign origin, the Standard dialect is used and the Creole is restricted mainly to programs that are locally generated. Fourthly, in the music industry, music is mainly sung in the Creole dialect because there is the Caribbean origin and influence for the most important Caribbean music-like calypso, dub, and reggae. Last of all, most plays and literary publishing are in the Creole, and there are many instances where great literary pieces are rewritten in the Creole.

In all the cases mentioned above, *Standard English* continues to play a major role in most instances. Over the years there have been small changes, and the changes have helped with the promotion of the Creoles. However, the status of *Standard English* continues to occupy a place of prestige with the usual negative stereotype associated with the Creole still present (Carrington 2001).

As a result, it seems as if *Standard English* in the Caribbean has been recognized not only as the dialect of status but also the dialect of government and politics, education sector, the printed media, writing and technical support for writing, and performing and literary arts. Creoles' dialects seem to imply low social status and illiteracy. From the information presented here *Caribbean Creole English* speakers have the influence of two main dialects in their lives *Caribbean Creole English* which seems to have a low status and *Standard English* which holds a status of prestige. The next section will look at the language that is acquired by the *Caribbean Creole English* speaker in such a situation.

The Language Acquired by the Caribbean Creole English Speaker

Literacy acquisition before school.

Studies carried out in literacy development, language development, and schema theory have contributed significant information on how children's literacy develops. Children's home, family, and community are significant contributors to their literacy development (Sulzby & Teale, 1996). Studies carried out in the United States revealed that children of all ethnicity and socioeconomic backgrounds are involved in some kind of reading and writing activities (Phillips & McNaughton, 1990; Sulzby & Teale, 1987, 1991). Children typically display early literacy behaviour long before they develop conventional literacy. They exhibit this by reading from pictures to portray book reading and scribbling marks to represent a printed message. Children gain various literacy knowledge and experiences in the home, from family members, and from their environment, and they learn that these activities play a very important role in their lives. Moreover, specialists in the field of reading and writing suggest that literacy achievement is influenced by the development of the ability to understand and produce speech (Lipson & Wixson, 2003).

The development of spoken language occurs as a result of children's interaction with individuals in and out of the home (Halliday, 1975). Language in a home is a reflection of the language of the family and the community. Through interaction with adults, children learn the structure and functions of spoken language. They also learn how to use language structures to convey ideas in the different functions of language. The purposes, audience, and occasions for language use help to determine the language that is used (Lipson & Wixson, 2003). Language varies according to the conventions of

different occasions. Some occasions such as delivering a speech may require the use of very formal speech; whereas, conversation with a friend may require very informal talk. The appropriateness of the language used is negotiated by engagement in different social contexts within communities. The way of life established within a community is made up of the ideas individuals share about the world and beliefs that they use in getting along. The language and linguistic information that a child develops will therefore be determined, at least in part, by the community to which he/she associates.

The development of different concepts about the world takes place within communities (Gee, 1996). Individuals make sense of their world by fitting their experiences into their cultural ideas. The idea of culture includes context-specific ideas, values, expressions through literature, and individuals' lived-through experiences (Gee, 2004). Each culture has a unique way of using language to give words meaning within a particular context. Individual thinking is shaped through participation within a culture linked to its language. This means that children who are *Caribbean Creole English* speakers develop within their community literacy practices, an acquired spoken language, and mental concepts about the world linked to their spoken language. However the first dialect that many *Caribbean Creole English* speakers learn and have most of their knowledge in is a dialect that is not the *Standard* dialect and is called a non-standard dialect. A conflict between context and language development is inherent in these situations.

Stigma associated to dialects

Non-standard dialect speakers are often publically humiliated for their speech patterns (Nero, 2000; Nero, 2001; Nero 1997). Some subtle ways that they are humiliated is when their speech is called poor or broken English. Other, not so subtle humiliation, is when they are placed in English as a second language classes. The act of placement in second language classes suggests that they speak some other language and need to learn English when the individuals believe that English is their language. Self-esteem is affected.

Green's (1994) and Nero's (2001) studies provide evidence suggesting that non-standard dialect speakers try as much as possible to conform their pattern of speech to that of the *Standard* dialect used in their society for economic, social, and educational progress. Despite this attempt, there are instances where features of the non-standard dialect still seem to exist in their reading and writing behaviours which causes difficulties in a *Standard English* environment. One important point that Nero (2001) puts forward is the fact that *Caribbean Creole English* is identified as "English" by its speakers. As a result, these individuals feel confused when their dialect is considered to be poor or broken English or when they are treated as if they know little or no English at all.

Any language can be made up of a number of dialects. Wolfram and Christian (1979) identify two very important definitional distinctions used when addressing different dialects in a language. In the first definition the word dialect has a neutral connotation. It indicates some variety of language that is shared by individuals who speak the same variety of a language may share the same social class, geographic location, or age. Individuals who are part of a group share certain distinguishing features; a variety of

a language can be one of these distinguishing features. The second distinction has a negative implication in that it is used to refer to a certain social or geographical variety of English that is not the *Standard* and is usually used to label a certain group of people. *Caribbean Creole English* has many features that are similar to *Standard English*. Both *Caribbean Creole English* and *Standard English* are called English by their users. These facts cause confusion for the *Caribbean Creole English* speaker who does not know the marked differences between the two dialects. In addition, if one of the dialects has a positive association and the other has a negative association, then the individuals linked with each dialect will either be seen in a positive or negative light depending on their dialect. Language use leads to the attribution of social status.

Language is an unconscious meaning-making system

The action of speaking has a tendency to be an unconscious activity (Halliday, 1987). Halliday goes on to say that when individuals speak, they are not aware of the underlying systems of the language that they use. The actual process that occurs when an individual makes meaning is insensible to both the speaker and the listener. When someone listens to talk, they will ordinarily not be able to recall the exact words but will reword what is said to represent the meaning of what they understood or comprehended. As individuals speak, they encode a certain meaning, and as they listen they make meaning of what is said. This means that individuals come to school with an unconscious meaning-making system already established. And that the meaning they get from what is said is linked to meanings that they learn within their community. Therefore, when individuals from one community come in contact with concepts from another community,

even though they may speak the same or a similar dialect or language, there may be some

disconnection between the meaning that is intended and the meaning that is received

(Manku, 1994). This may be the situation with *Caribbean Creole English* speakers as

they are educated in the *Standard English* educational environment. Since reading and

writing are two very important functions in education, that would mean that as *Caribbean*

Creole English speakers reads *Standard English* text, they may respond with a different

meaning to what the author intended. In addition, as they write they may imploy a

different meaning from that which was intended. This affects the *Caribbean Creole*

English speaker's ability to successfully read and write *Standard English*.

Language/dialect spoken influences ability to read

Ruddell (1995) came to the conclusion that the ability to read is determined by the

similarity of patterns of reading material and the reader's oral language. Findings of more

recent studies suggest that there is a significant relationship between oral language skills

and literacy experiences (Dickson, & Snow 2004; Senechal, Le Fevre, Thomas, & Daley,

1998). These researchers suggest that individuals who speak a different variety of

language from that of the educational environment may have influences of that language

on their reading and writing behaviour. These influences may include (1) phonology

differences between Standard English and their spoken dialect which may cause them to

pronounce morphemes and words differently and thus causing them to misspell words;

(2) syntax differences may cause then to use their spoken sentence structure in written

text; (3) lexical differences may cause them not to understand some Standard English

words as they read and use non-standard dialect expressions in their writing; and (4)

orthographic differences may cause them to be unfamiliar with letter strings in words and morphemes causing accurate meaning to be missed as they read, and inaccurate meaning and spelling to be used as they write. The *Caribbean Creole English* speaker may, therefore, experience difficulties reading and writing *Standard English*. Learning the code of the context is an additional burden toward comprehensive understanding and overall literacy measures expected where social capital favours the Standard variety.

The Caribbean Creole English Speaker and the Standard English Educational Environment

The Caribbean Creole English education environment

The acquisition of *Standard English* literacy by the non-standard English-speaking person in the Anglophone Caribbean can be a complex task and, as a result, many individuals fall short of this goal (Simmons-Mc Donald, 2001). What complicates this matter is the fact that *Caribbean Creole English* speakers normally learn *Standard English* in an environment where many different varieties of non-standard English dialects exist.

In the *Caribbean Creole English* educational setting, *Standard English* is in many ways influenced by the presence of the various dialects encompassing the learner. First of all, the teacher is in most cases a non-standard English speaker. The teacher over his/her lifetime would have been influenced by one or more of the different varieties of languages spoken in any one island in the West Indies. This means that this teacher may, in reality, bring a complexity of dialects to the classroom. Second an educational setting

in the Anglophone Caribbean can bring together a complexity of English dialects from the staff and pupils. Even if the situation in the educational setting is that the child is exposed to a monolingual educational environment where only one dialect exists, that child returns to a home, immediate family, and wider community where a complexity of dialects exist. Simmons-McDonald (2001) goes on to say that the linguistic ability of the child in this particular situation is the acquisition of more than one dialect. The child would usually become proficient in one dialect and have some knowledge of the other dialects that exist around him/her. I sense from my own experience; however, that at times the dialect that the child may become proficient in may not be *Standard English*. It may not end up being the preferred situated social capital choice for the child.

There are two major *Standard English* assessments carried out in Anglophone Caribbean schools: One occurs at the end of elementary school, the other at the end of secondary school. These two examinations reveal that many pupils fail to acquire adequate literacy levels in *Standard English* (Simmons-McDonald, 2001). Many children actually score zero in the language tests. Simmons-McDonald suggests that these low results maybe due to the manner in which literacy learning is approached in the educational environment. Here *Standard English* acquisition is mostly dependent on language instruction, text books, and the interaction that occurs in the classroom and Standard English use is not a significant part of the pupil's life. As well, the tests themselves may not measure language growth because they might exclude the context of dialect development and situated appropriateness, a nuance of language function use that requires skill and experience.

Literacy and the education environment

Learning literacy works best as a natural series of events that are a part of an individual's customs and way of life (Gee, 2004). So, for individuals to learn literacy it is best for them to learn and practice non-vernacular forms of language that are associated with school in the home (Weinberger, 1996). Weinberger's study produced findings suggesting that children's home environment contributes significantly to their literacy development. In this environment these literacy practices become significant parts of the child's identity because these literacy practices develop into literacy schema and shape a significant part of the child's distinctive character (Shapiro, 1994; Weinberger, 1996). Gee (2004) suggests that in the situation mentioned above, the development of personality includes literacy practices that are responsible for academic success. Identity often categorizes an individual as part of a particular community. These individuals are regulated by and possess certain specific characteristics. Moreover when *Standard English* literacy practices that are associated with school are learned and practiced in the home, these literacy practices will become a significant part of the child's identity and literacy schema on which the child can build upon in the classroom. Self esteem is associated with identity and literacy schema is associated with language agility. In the *Caribbean Creole English* home different literacy practices maybe established and these literacy practices maybe disassociated with or even stigmatized within the educational setting. These are the children who may experience the most reading and writing difficulties.

Numerous children experience reading and writing difficulties due to the disconnection between their spoken dialect and written text (Persky, Danne, and Jin,

2002; Snow, Burns and Griffin, 1998). This is especially true for students who do not fluently and proficiently speak a *Standard* form of *English*. The absence of Standard English practices in the home may be one of the contributing factors in reading and writing difficulty for non-standard English speakers.

Teaching the Caribbean Creole English-speaking child

Lack of awareness and understanding the language needs of the learner may be one obstacle that teachers need to address as they teach individuals who speak a non-standard dialect (Winford, 1976). In the past these individuals have been viewed through the lens of the deficit model (Labov, 1972). The deficit model does not fully making use of the prior knowledge of the *Caribbean Creole English* speaker. In addition, this model does not acknowledge that there is a difference in how the child may be able to achieve and what they are achieving in helping them develop literacy skills. The deficit approach devalues the child's prior knowledge and previous home literacy experiences (Ruddell, 2001). As a result, a gap exists between home and school literacy practices.

Using this view, it was thought that these individuals were culturally or linguistically deprived. This view still seems to be prevalent as, too often, teachers are unaware of their pupil's community, home environment, and the dialect most spoken in their community (Christian, 1997; Dumas, 1989; Goodman & Buck, 1973). Awareness of these attributes can help the teacher better at meeting the literacy needs of the pupil (Fillmore & Meyer 1992; Pransky & Bailey 2002/2003). It may be unrealistic for a teacher to be fully knowledgeable of all dialects, but it is possible to maintain some level of awareness of the child's non-standard English community.

Non-standard English speakers are often speakers of a minority cultural group and therefore exhibit that culture's characteristics. Teachers can misconceive specific cultural behaviors as signs of passive resistance, non-engagement, and non-compliance in the classroom. In many cultures, children behave according to the cultural norm. For instance, cultures in the Caribbean teach that looking a person directly in their eyes is a sign of defiance and is considered disrespectful. Kahaney (1994), in her research in a college composition class, demonstrates that student behaviours in class were culturally based. Many students experienced problems in negotiating oral language activities because in their culture opposing other student responses and interrupting others as they speak was considered impolite. In addition, offering constructive criticism was viewed as rude. Many teachers from different cultural backgrounds to their students may not be aware of these dissimilar cultural contexts.

Research indicates that teachers hold negative perceptions of non-standard English speakers (Berry, 1997; Robinson, 1996; von Trotha & Brown, 1982). These negative perceptions include believing that non-standard English speakers have low intelligence, are from a low socio-economic background, are low class, have low social prominence, are using slang, are inferior, and have poor literacy and academic skills. Farr and Daniels (1986) point out in their study that teachers routinely track non-standard English speakers for lower-level academic courses. Teachers may also over correct in an attempt to rectify non-standard English students' linguistic responses to the appropriate speech, perhaps causing the child to become quiet, and therefore, be viewed as less intelligent than their peers (Dumas, & Gaber, 1989; Fay and Milner, 2004). Self-esteem issues then interfere with school-based literacy engagement.

Teachers often view non-standard English dialect speakers as having language problems and often erroneously refer students for special education services. Some studies show that there is a higher incidence of referrals of Black children to speech services because of the perception of a language problem (Adger, 1994; Adger, Wolfram, Detwyler, & Harry, 2003; Foster, 1997). Research shows that non-standard English dialect speakers experience the most difficulty in school and have the lowest achievement scores on standardized tests (Maddahian & Sandamela, 2000). More often that not, some standardized tests include some bias against non-standard English speakers (Simmons McDonald, 2001). Misconceptions need to be closely examined in order to reduce the high number of minority children in special education services. Some of the children in those types of programs do not really need to be there. Non-standard dialectal language issues need to be fully considered in the referral process.

Practices that facilitate Standard English literacy development in a Standard English Literacy environment

Early literacy practices.

Early literacy practices that help children to develop the ability to know and use literary forms in writing, summarizing ideas, analyzing situations, and arguing their point of view are some of the cultural practices that later develop into the literacy practices required for success in the *Standard English* educational system (Gee, 2004). Children who come from mainstream *Standard English* language and culture tend to perform well at these, whereas children who do not come from this background often do not perform as well (Gauvin, Savage, & McCollum, 2000). The literacy demands in a *Standard English*

context for a *Caribbean Creole English* speaker involve both the components of language and a way of thinking (Gee, 2004). Classifying *Caribbean Creole English* as a dialect or a completely different language to Standard English still seems to be unresolved. Some researchers have already established that *Caribbean Creole English* speakers should not be considered second language learners in a *Standard English* situation (Winford, 1976). Since *Caribbean Creole English* is currently considered a dialect of *Standard English*, the two language systems will have similarities, but there are many differences. The differences present in the two dialects are where the problem lays for *Caribbean Creole English* speakers in a *Standard English* educational environment. Other systems in literacy also play a big role in literacy development.

Language.

Language is one of the learner factors that influence performance in literacy, and becoming skilled in language plays an important role in learning literacy (Flood, Lapp, & Fisher, 2003; Mason, Stahl, Au, & Herman, 2003). There are four components of language that are involved in the reading process: (1) orthography, (2) lexis, (3) syntax, and (4) semantics (Zakaluk, 1982/1996). Orthographic knowledge is the knowledge of letter patterns. Orthographic symbols in language are arranged according to a fixed set of rules which help to determine how words are spelled. This sequence helps children to be able to work out and decode unfamiliar words. Lexical knowledge contributes to two aspects of learning to read, identifying words and deriving meaning from text. Syntax is the knowledge of how words are ordered in a sentence. Words in a language are ordered according to certain rules. Knowledge of theses rules help children to identify particular words and assists comprehension and schema development. Semantic knowledge

influences reading because it helps readers identify words and understand text. These four components affect individual's abilities to read and since there is a connection between reading and writing also affect an individual's ability to write.

Reading.

In terms of literacy development, reading and writing skills develop simultaneously (Kucer, 1985; Squire 1983). Decoding of words, identifying words and knowing the meaning of words, the ability to order words in a sentence, and identifying words and understanding text are also very important facets of writing skills. Success in *Standard English* literacy depends on *Caribbean Creole English* knowledge and understanding of the orthography, lexis, syntax, and semantics of *Standard English*. First time language learners may not know the rules to these four components of language so that the differences that may be present in *Standard English* may present problems for *Caribbean Creole English* speakers (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). In light of this, a *Standard English* educational environment will demand that *Caribbean Creole English* children pronounce some words differently, identify words that are not in their oral language vocabulary, use unfamiliar sentence structures to order words, and make meaning of unfamiliar ideas and concepts. Studies carried out with non-standard English pupils (Flowers, 1985; Jeffery, 1991; Patton-Terry, 2005; Tuton, 1982) revealed that, as students internalized *Standard English* language rules, they composed better *Standard English* text.

Writing.

There are set standards of practice that pertain to how texts should be written in *Standard English* academic setting (Halliday, 1989; Chef & Danielewicz, 1987). (1) written language is a symbolic representation of the world concepts; (2) written language has traditionally been more structured; and (3) written language tends to be more lexically dense. First, in written language the world is defined more as a product more than a process so that in writing the symbols that are used to represent ideas are more nominative forms of verbs. Many actions words are turned into nouns to name processes. Second in writing relationships among ideas are formed using symbols so that the reader will understand if one thing follows another or opposes another. Cummings (1984) adds to Halliday's input on written language by saying that written *Standard English* taught in schools requires individuals to write about ideas using the components of grammar that cause the content to be logically connected. In addition, written *Standard English* also uses established grammar, syntactic rules, phonetic rules, and spelling rules. Further to this, written *Standard English* portrays information that is first analyzed and then synthesized in a logically connected manner. Third Halliday (1989) goes on to say that written language has more grammatical metaphor. In the light of this, words such as applause, speech, and satisfaction are used more than words like applauding, speak, and satisfied. Halliday believes that written language represents a more static view of the world. This is so because written language does not occur presently in the context of the circumstances written about. In order to write about something there is a greater need to be explicit in meaning. This explicit meaning is brought about by using words that cause meaning to be clear, understandable, accurate, and detailed. For this reason written

language displays a list of words that are meaningful in a particular domain. To aid meaning these lists of words must cater to such things as context, linguistic indicators (like tone of voice) and other indicators (like gestures) to make meaning clearer. These lists of words are related to the field concerned. Halliday goes on to say this means that a written sentence tends to be packed with vocabulary content words, more than grammatical words. Vocabulary content words are a list of words that are related to the topic, grammatical words are words that help to maintain the rules and relationships in language. Halliday goes on to say that measuring lexical density is a good means of showing how "written" or "spoken" a language is. This measure has been used by other researchers (Desmond, Berry, & Lewkowicz, 1995; Kopple, & William, 1995; Kukkonen, 1993) who also indicate that this measure shows how "written" or "spoken" a language is. In the light of all this I believe that if language is more "written" then it will be: (1) more structured, (2) more verbally explicit, and (3) more lexically dense. If written language is a more spoken form of language it will be: (1) less structured, (2) less verbally explicit, and (3) less lexically dense. In the education system "written" form of language is more highly valued.

Spoken language usually tends to have a different structure from written language (Halliday, 1989). In spoken language, things are viewed in the world in terms of movement and actions. In spoken language there are fewer different verbs and many action words. In addition, at times spoken language does not show boundaries which represent the end of one idea or group of ideas. This means that there may be one idea running into another.

Spoken and written dialects have both similarities and differences (Halliday, 1989). Talking and writing tend to be similar because spoken dialects and written dialects can be used to express ideas about the same concepts. They are both used to express the same concepts, and in both talking and writing, language is used. However, talking and writing are different because they each have different ways of exemplifying the same things. In talking and writing, ideas are not represented in the same manner. The nature of the system of language used is dependent on the function that language is used for. This means that according to the context of use, individuals will select the appropriate grammar, sentence structure, and vocabulary to make meaning.

Caribbean Creole English speakers may not in many instances select the appropriate components of language as they write. Individuals who are of African descents' culture are heavily influenced by the oral tradition (Sutcliffe & Figueroa, 1992). The oral tradition means that individuals pass down verbal compositions orally from generation to generation. In this manner such important cultural information as songs, stories, proverbs, and religious instruction was kept alive over the years. Due to the fact that Caribbean and African American people's cultures are steeped in the oral tradition, writing using the conventions of Standard English is quite challenging for these individuals (Nero, 2001). From the information presented above I think that in Caribbean and African American cultures, talking plays a very important role and more often replaces the functions that writing plays in other cultures. When Caribbean and African American individuals live in a community where literacy plays a vital part they may experience problems in writing. These problems may occur because they are now in a culture where reading and writing play a very important role and may even take over

some of the functions that oral language plays for them. What may occur is that

Caribbean and African American individuals writing may more resemble their spoken

language and may not conform easily to the conventions of written language in a

Standard English environment. In the next section I will look at research carried out on

Caribbean Creole English students and some literacy issues that affected them.

Research on Literacy Issues Carried out with Caribbean Creole English Speakers

As I tried to answer the questions of my research, I started searching for studies

carried out with Caribbean Creole English speakers that looked at their literacy issues. A

number of studies (Anderson & Grant, 1987; Coelho, 1988; Narvaez & Garcia, 1992;

Pratt & Johnson, 1993; Winer, 1993) were carried out with Caribbean Creole English

speakers as subjects. Anderson and Grant's study (1987) dealt with many issues that

newly arrived CCE speakers to Canada are confronted by, but very little work was

completed on literacy issues. Coelho (1995), Pratt and Johnson (1993), Winer (1993), and

Narvaez and Garcia (1992) all addressed language issues of the CCE speaker. However, I

found that Nero's (2001) study was most relevant to my research because it looked

specifically at the participants' spoken and written language and issues that arose as a

result of their spoken non-standard English dialect.

Nero's (2000) study analyzed the spoken and written language of four *Caribbean*

Creole English speakers who were in college in New York. These students stated that

they spoke two types of English: a Creole-influenced variety and a Standard variety.

They felt that they had the knowledge and skills of spoken and written *Standard English*

dialect which were concurrent with someone who belonged to a developed *Standard English-speaking* nation. However, an analysis of their spoken and written language revealed evidence that they repeatedly replaced *Standard English* dialect with their non-standard variety of English and vice versa. This caused them to be placed in basic writing college programs.

All the participants admitted that they did use both dialects. They felt that they used *Standard English* in instances where their non-standard English was not appreciated in formal domains and at times when they felt that they would be better understood if they used Standard English. They used their non-standard dialect in informal situations to identify as a member of their language community and in more relaxed settings.

All the participants considered themselves as native speakers of English, and they were all aware of the stigma associated with their non-standard English dialect. Two participants showed inconsistencies in their perception of their language ability and their actual linguistic behaviour. These two participants thought that they displayed a higher proficiency and consciousness of accurate use of *Standard English* than data from the research displayed. The participant whose data displayed the least evidence of proficiency and accurate use of *Standard English* acted as if he had no problem with *Standard English*. Data from all the participants displayed evidence that, when they wrote, they replaced *Standard English* with their non-standard dialect. In addition, the data also provided evidence of the unconscious use of non-standard English dialect when participants thought they were using the *Standard* dialect. Although the participants believed that they had a good command of *Standard English,* they demonstrated that they

were code switching from one dialect to another. As a result I concluded that I should examine research done on code switching.

Research on Code Switching

Code switching defined.

The switching from one variety of a language to another is called *code switching* (Auer, 1999; Macswan, 2004; Ritchie & Bhatia 2004). Code switching in linguistics describes an individual repeatedly replacing one or more dialects, languages, or language registers with another as he/she speaks. The switch can occur with words, sentence structure, sounds of word parts, and meaning. Code switching researchers suggest that it is not a haphazard activity, but is governed by certain distinct rules (Flyman-Mattsson & Burenhult, 1999; Hammink, 2000; Nelson, 1990). All the rules that govern this type of behaviour are not fully known (Edwards, 2004). Early researchers who studied code switching looked at both code switching between dialects and code switching between languages (Myers-Scotton, 1993).

Code switching is different from the presence of two language feature combinations existing in one language (Edwards, 2004). Edwards gives four examples of instances where language features are combined to form one language. First, two languages are combined to form one language. Here a word from one language may be borrowed and becomes part of another language. Second, a word from one language is translated and used as part of another language. Third, the sentence structure of one language is used for another language. Last of all, words from one language are

pronounced with the accent of another language. In these four cases Edwards suggests

that there is not a switch from one language to another but a combining of two language

features and is considered as one code. There are the instances where two codes may

seem to be so similar that it is difficult to distinguish one from another. One example of

this is the dialect/standard situation (Auer, 1999). Peter Auer, a linguist analyst, states

that in a situation where codes may seem to be similar, as long as these codes are

considered independent by their members, they are separate codes. He notes that the

participants, not language experts, are the judges in this instance. Therefore, language

alternation from one dialect to another can be seen as code switching; but, what is the

main purpose of studying language fluctuation?

Purpose of code switching.

Auer (1984) argues that a study of the purpose and intent of code switching was

one of the most important aims of studying language fluctuation. He suggests that there

are three views that are considered in code switching literature: the grammatical

perspective, the sociological perspectives, and the interactive perspective. The

grammatical perspective considers grammatical constraints that are placed on language

alternation, the sociological perspective looks at the community where code switching

takes place to observe what situation language alternation takes place and why, the

interactional perspective considers what code alternation indicate and what maybe its

intended purpose. Auer feels that to study the function and meaning of language,

alteration covers the topic of code switching more broadly and can account for less

spectacular instances of code switching. In addition he argues that the function and

meaning of code switching is more valid study than identifying which community code switches or the grammatical constraints of code switching.

Previous code-switching research.

Nishimura (1997) identifies two main functions of code switching in previous research: (1) the symbolic function, and (2) the instrumental function. In the symbolic function, the two languages or language varieties represent two separate and contrasting identities with its corresponding attitudes and values. Choice of a specific code is a display of a choice of the personality association that the individual desires. In the instrumental function, bilingual speakers use two languages to communicate. In this instance a switch from one language to another is simply a way of communicating. So that as bilinguals speak, they may switch from one language to the other to repeat a passage or remark, speak to a person, cut in as an individual speaks, repeat something that was said in one language, or restrict or limit the meaning of something that was said. Further, the purpose of code switching seems to go beyond these two functions because Meeuwis and Blommaert (1999) state that all the occurrences that have been identified as possible meaningful elements of communication structure can and do appear in code switching. It seems that code switching, therefore, does not only have a symbolic function and instrumental function, but also plays the role that one language plays in communication.

Although code switching may play the roles that language performs in communication, all communication acts that may involve code switching may not always involve a switched code. One such communication act is called speech accommodation

theory (Giles, Mulac, Bradac, & Johnson, 1987; Sachdev & Giles, 2004; Thekarer, Giles, & Cheshire, 1982). In speech accommodation theory, individuals use communication to indicate their social distance from each other. By changing their communication behaviour, they move towards or away from an individual using code switching in some instances but in other instances using the same language but different communication indicators. Some different communication indicators are speech rate, accent, utterance length, gestures like smiling, and gazing. Code switching is used as an accommodation strategy but all accommodation strategies do not involve code switching.

Early scholars of code switching ascertained that individuals code switch because of some language deficiency (Myers-Scotton, 1993). If a bilingual individual were deficient in one language, he/she inserted aspects of a better known language. In addition, it was also determined that bilinguals who did not have adequate knowledge in both languages switched from one to the other. These views were the early opinions of researchers, but as this language topic became more popular, other important discoveries were made. Blom and Gumperz (1986) conducted the first research on code switching. This research was conducted in an environment where code switching occurred between a standard variety and a dialect variety of the Norwegian language. Each variety of the language had certain social meanings attached to it and seemed to be connected to certain identities or social norms in society.

Social groups and social norms within a society are two characteristics which mark the social stratification of language. (1) Within societies there is the existence of groups which can be identified and categorized by certain traits (Fishman, 1972; Tajfel & Turner 1986). Individuals usually form social groups they identify with and adopt certain

shared characteristics. Language varieties is one of these shared characteristics. (2) Social variation involves things like social class, gender, ethnic group, education, and variations in speaker's situation (Maclagan, 2005). Maclagan goes on to suggest that individuals of different social class develop different ways of speaking and non-standard features are usually avoided by speakers of higher social class. In addition, an individual's dialect or language difference may be subject to social norms (Sachdev & Giles, 2004). This means that native languages or dialects may be mainly used to discuss emotional issues or when talking about topics that are related to culture and informal communication in private settings. On the other hand, standard varieties are used for more intellectual conversations or public formal topics and settings.

In Blom and Gumperz's (1986) research, language use seemed to be subject both to social identity and social norms. The research was done in Hemnsberget in northern Norway. The population of this town is made up of (1) a small elite of merchants and landholding families who are descendants from southern Norway, and (2) tenant farmers, fishermen, estate laborers, and servants who were natives. The elite population of Hemnsberget introduced the standard variety Norwegian to Hemnsberget. The Hemnsberget elite showed a preference for the standard dialect but used the local dialect in Hemnsberget where its use was seen as a sign of solidarity with the locals. In other parts of Norway, the Hemnsberget local dialect was associated with lack of education and sophistication. The native Hemnsberget residents highly valued their local dialect; they saw it as an important indication of their distinctive identity and culture. These residents also had control of the standard Norwegian dialect. Further to this, Blom and Gumperz (1986) also indicate the distinctions in the use of the standard and native dialects of

Norwegian language in Hemnsberget. The standard dialect is used for official

transactions, religion, and the mass media, the native Norwegian dialect was used for

greeting, informal conversation, and talking about local issues like family, cultural, and

ecological activities.

Two social phenomena can be identified in Blom and Gumperz's research: (1) the

elite of Hemnsberget could be identified and characterized with the standard dialect,

while the working class natives of Hemnsberget could be identified and characterized by

the native dialect. (2) The standard dialect was associated with sophistication, education,

and formality, while the native dialect was associated with local Hemnsberget identity

and its associations such as local culture and community life. In these circumstances,

when an individual switched to the standard dialect they could be seen as elite,

sophisticated, and educated, and when there is a switched to the native dialect, they could

be seen as simple/every day individuals.

A further link was associated to the non-standard dialect use in this research.

Although use of the non-standard dialect seemed quite appropriate in certain instances in

the community of Hemnsberget outside of the community, it was seen as a sign of being

homely or uneducated. As a result of this dialect use in one setting which may give an

individual a sense of simply belonging to a particular community can in another instance

construct a negative label.

Links between language use and identities can also be seen in research about

native and standard dialect linguistic situations (Edwards, 1983; Giacalone-Ramat, 1995;

Winford, 1976) and also research that considers native language/standard English dialects

(Cleghorn & Rollnick, 2002; Myers Scotton, 1976). Auer (1984, 1999, & 2005) also supports the notion of an individual's use of a specific dialect to adopt a specific identity.

Auer (2005) discusses the link between alternate language use and identity. Social identity is an important criterion that links the use of a particular variety of language and an associated social structure. When individuals use a particular variety of language, they identify with an associated social group; code switching to this particular variety of language here symbolizes an affiliation with a particular linguistic group and its social category. Using one language would be sufficient as an indication of membership to a specific social group. However, if this social group is a representation of various ethnic groups, an individual may wish to make a further more specific ethnic group representation; in this case code switching will be used. The use of the more generalized ethnic group code will be used to identify the individual with a more general group of ethnicities; but the use of a more specific language or dialect which is more loaded with the culture and common origin of a more distinct group of individuals will be used and will indicate that that person belongs to that specific ethnic group. Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985) also support this link between identity and code switching. I think that Auer (1984, 1999, & 2005) was saying that code switching here is influenced by an individual desire to be identified in a certain manner. Identity plays a very important role in code switching behaviour (Blom & Gumperz, 1986; Edwards, 1983; Giacalone-Ramat, 1995). Individuals would usually switch to the language of the individuals with whom they wanted to identify. In addition, the language which was considered to be more prestigious seems to be also associated with education and was used as an indication of educational achievement (Cleghorn & Rollnick 2002, Scotton 1976). After all the

information above on code switching is considered, it appears that individuals code switch for different purposes: code switching could be simply a way of communicating or it could be an act of socially-constructing identity. However, was there previous research carried out in code switching with *Caribbean Creole English* speakers?

Previous research carried out in code switching with *Caribbean Creole English* speakers are the following: (1) Wheeler and Swords (1997-2006) looked at the phenomena of code-switching for the purpose of teaching *Standard English* to *Caribbean Creole English* CCE students. Wheeler and Swords (1997-2006) also spoke about *Caribbean Creole English* students and their high percentage of recorded failure in acquiring *Standard English* literacy. He suggests that pupils need to translate from *Caribbean Creole English* to *Standard English* as they write. He feels that language should not be considered as good or bad but should be seen as appropriate or inappropriate for a particular setting. (2) Taylor (1991) did a study on African American students in two first-year writing college classes; this study will be considered because it involves individuals who are similar to *Caribbean Creole English* speakers. In the control group the traditional method of correcting errors was used. In the experimental group the method of contrastive code-switching was used. Results indicated that the experimental group showed a very large decrease in use of African-American vernacular in their writing. On the other hand, the control group showed an increase in the use of the vernacular in their writing. (3) Fogel and Ehri (2000) conducted a similar study with African American third- and fourth-grade students; this study will also be considered because it involves individuals who are similar to *Caribbean Creole English* speakers. In this study, three groups of students were used. In the first group, students were asked to

observe the *Standard English* grammar closely. In the second group, the students were asked to be observant of the *Standard English* grammar, and they were also given instruction in *Standard English* grammar. The third group was instructed in the use of contractive code switching. The third group who studied contrastive code switching displayed greater success than the first and second groups. In these three studies, code-switching with non-standard English speakers were studied however, code-switching was studied as a corrective strategy.

Conclusion

The previous history of slavery and language contact for the English-speaking Caribbean resulted in the evolution of a variety of English that is not considered the Standard variety. However, the term 'variety of English' may be the wrong term to use here; and 'varieties of English' may be a better term to use. This term helps to indicate an idea of the English linguistic phenomenon of there being the development of different varieties of non-standard English. However for the purposes of this research and to avoid confusion, I will use the term variety of English. Each Anglophone Caribbean island has developed a different variety of English and within each island further different varieties exist. This non-standard variety of English is called *Caribbean Creole English*.

Caribbean Creole English belongs to a group of individuals who are at the bottom of the social ladder. As a result, this dialect has had a negative stigma attached to it. This dialect is different from Standard English in vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. This dialect is the first language/dialect of most of the individuals of the English-

speaking Caribbean; this is the dialect that they bring with them to the educational

environment, and it is also called English. Non-standard English speakers have been

identified as individuals who fail to acquire adequate literacy levels in *Standard English,*

Caribbean Creole English speakers are one set of individuals identified in this group.

Research presented in this paper which pertains to literacy issues carried out with

Caribbean Creole English speakers suggest that they seemed to switch from one dialect

to another as they speak and write. In the Caribbean, where *Standard English* is the

language of education, there may be the influence of *Caribbean Creole English* on

individuals' spoken and written *Standard English.* Individuals may unconsciously switch

from *Standard English* to non-standard English, and this will mean that in their literacy

activities their vocabulary, sentence structure, letter/sound system, and overall meaning

may reflect this switching from *Standard English* to *Caribbean Creole English.*

From information presented previously in this review *Caribbean Creole English*

and *Standard English* are dialects that may tend to be quite similar and may have some

overlap. In the light of what Auer (1999) says about the dialect/standard situation, I think

that for the *Caribbean Creole English* speaker *Caribbean Creole English* is a one code

and *Standard English* is another code. The switch from *Caribbean Creole English* to

Standard English can, therefore, be considered as code switching. In addition, when I

considered Nero's (2000) study, I decided that the participants were code switching from

Caribbean Creole English to *Standard English* and vice versa as they spoke and wrote

and as a result their written and spoken *Standard English* was considered inadequate.

Nero's study did not directly look at code switching but as I reflect on this research I ask

myself the question here: why were these participants in Nero's study code switching? What does a code switch in this instance signify and what is the purpose?

Earlier research carried out on code switching suggests that there are two main functions of code switching: to adopt either one of a contrasting identity or to communicate. Earlier scholars who considered code switching stated that it may result from deficiency in one language but this phenomenon was not studied. Bloom and Gumperz were the first researchers to study code switching, and they discovered that code switching was linked to the adoption of a particular identity or to conform to certain social norm. Other researchers on code-switching also identified this link. Auer (2005), for example, made a further distinction of the importance of code switching for identity purposes; his writings suggest that individuals may code switch from a language that is a representation of a more general ethnic group to a language that represents a more specific ethnic group and thus assuming this group's identity. This phenomenon was not researched. Studies carried out with *Caribbean Creole English* speakers or similar non-standard English speakers looking at the phenomena of code switching did not address the reasons that *Caribbean Creole English* speakers switched code but only looked at code switching as a strategy to be used to teach non-standard English speakers Standard English. I consider that my research is important to look at for the reasons and the meaning of a switched code in a *Caribbean Creole English* speaker's life; this is an area that I found code switching research has not touched on. In addition, I found that information gained from this research would shed light on *Caribbean Creole English* speakers' literacy practices and may supply some answers as to why many of these speakers fail to acquire adequate *Standard English* literacy.

The next chapter focuses on the methods used to study these issues.

Chapter III

Materials and Methods

Introduction

The study of some phenomenon in qualitative research highlights the experiences and perceptions of the researcher and a set of participants who fall with in a certain category (McMillan & Wergin 2002; McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). In this study I looked at the phenomena of code switching in the lives of five *Caribbean Creole English* speakers as they spoke and wrote. I observed and described the experiences and perceptions of these participants. This study highlights the literacy experiences of these *Caribbean Creole English* speakers who live in a *Standard English-speaking* context. This study aims to investigate the literacy practices and code-switching behaviour of the participants. In the sections that follow, first I state the purpose and the research questions, then I describe the subjects of the study, next I describe the materials used and procedures carried out in the study, after that I discuss the assessment used, and finally I conclude with a description of how the data was analyzed.

The Study

Purpose of the study and research questions.

The purpose of the study was to investigate the oral and writing behaviours of five *Caribbean Creole English* speakers in order to gain information concerning the language that they speak and their literacy practices. The study investigates how the speaking of a non-standard English dialect affects individuals' ability to speak and write *Standard English.* Important also to the context of this study is my own background. I am also a

Caribbean Creole English speaker. Many of my writing and speaking experiences may be similar to the participants. Therefore, my personal experience of being immersed in the culture provides additional context for the research.

These were the questions that I addressed in my research: (1) What are the speaking and writing issues that exist in a Standard English educational environment for speakers of a non-standard dialect of English?, (2) Is there evidence of code-switching in the speaking and writing behaviour of *Caribbean Creole English* speakers? (3)What functions do code-switching serve for *Caribbean Creole English* speakers? (4) Will a non-standard dialect of English speakers' awareness of code-switching affect their language choice? I sensed that as I investigated the oral and writing behaviours of *Caribbean Creole English* speakers and the presence of code-switching behaviour in their speaking and writing, my study would yield data useful to educators of *Caribbean Creole English* speakers.

Subjects.

This study begins with me, I am from Trinidad in the West Indies and I identify with cultural practices of the English-speaking Caribbean. I determine and establish my identity as Caribbean by such cultural practices as speaking a non-standard English dialect called *Caribbean Creole English,* identifying with Caribbean Creole food, music, folklore, and other cultural practices. The participants recruited for the study could also be identified as *Caribbean Creole English* speakers who classify their identity as Caribbean. The following section describes each of the five participants.

First, Erica Hare (pseudonym) is presently a housewife who was born in Jamaica. She is of African descent. She has been married for about seven years to a citizen of Winnipeg; they have three children between the ages of nine and one. Her husband lived in Jamaica from about the age of seventeen. Erica and her family immigrated to Winnipeg, Manitoba about two years prior to data collection. Erica is a very vibrant, attractive, and talkative individual. She speaks confidently and is able to provide very detailed descriptions of concepts that she is trying to explain. Her spoken language reflects a lot of her Jamaican Creole but she has adopted a Canadian accent. Erica seemed to struggle between the identity of a Canadian and that of a Jamaican. She was proud to be a Jamaican but knew of the stigma associated with her dialect. She struggled to be a Canadian especially in her speech because she felt this was more acceptable here in Canada. She seemed to exert a lot of effort towards her children being Canadian especially in their speech and writing.

Roanne Rabbit (pseudonym) is a single, middle-school teacher. She is of East Indian descent. She was born in Canada. Her parents immigrated first to England and then to Winnipeg, Manitoba, before she was born. Roanne's parents were from Trinidad. Although they lived many years in Canada, the Trinidadian culture is a very significant part of this family's life. They fluently speak the Trinidadian dialect, they prepare meals that are from Trinidad, and they identify with literature and music of the Caribbean. Roanne sat confidently as we conducted the interview. She had a high-pitched voice when she spoke. When she was excited about what she spoke about, the tone of her voice seemed to raise, her face lighted up, and her eyes glowed. She spoke enthusiastically

about her Trinidadian dialect and other cultural characteristics of Trinidad. She also spoke perfectly clear and coherent Canadian spoken variety of Standard English.

Andrea Yak (pseudonym) is an office clerk who was born in Jamaica. Andrea is married and the mother of four children. Three children are between the ages of thirteen and seven. Andrea also has a one-month-old baby. Andrea migrated to Toronto, Canada about twenty-five years ago. She married many years later, a gentleman who also immigrated to Toronto from the Caribbean. She, her husband, and their children then moved to Winnipeg, Manitoba. Andrea seemed to have a shy and reserved disposition. During the interviews, she spoke softly and at times when she was not as confident about what she spoke about, her voice tended to trail off. Other times she spoke firmly about how she felt about a topic. That is how she spoke concerning her Jamaican culture. She firmly stated that it was part of her, and she was pleased for her children to know that this is their background. Nonetheless, she felt that she now was a Canadian.

Kavita Rhino (pseudonym) is a university student who was born in Guyana. She came to Winnipeg about twenty-five years ago with her mother and sister; her father immigrated to Canada a few years earlier. Kavita is currently separated and has two children from her marriage. The children are fifteen and ten years old. Kavita tended to be calm and confident. She had a tendency not to get too excited and emotional when she spoke. Ideas that she felt confident about, she spoke about boldly. If she felt uncertain about a matter, she stated that she was uncertain. She was direct with her statements. She spoke confidently about her Guyanese heritage; she was proud to be Guyanese. She knew that as a Canadian resident she had to adopt a Canadian identity and she did when she had to.

Raj Antelope (pseudonym) is the only male in the study. Raj was born in Trinidad and came to Winnipeg about three years ago to study. Raj is of East Indian descent. He is single and a university student. Raj's parents are divorced, and his father lives in Trinidad. His mother lives in Toronto and is married to a Caucasian Canadian. A lot of Raj's family has worked in the field of education. His grandfather was a principal, and his mother was a teacher. Raj comes from the second largest city in Trinidad. A lot of well-educated wealthy East Indians live there. Raj speaks with an accent that is adopted by many wealthy well-educated East Indians in Trinidad. This accent is not Canadian, but the pronunciation of words is easily understood by Canadians. Raj accepted the fact that he is Trinidadian and speaks the Trinidadian English dialect. He felt that this dialect is more appropriate in his community in casual conversation. He spoke unemotionally about his Trinidadian culture: It is a fact that he seemed to just accept because that is who he was. However, he felt that it was more practical to speak Standard English. His answers were short and succinct.

The information from me and the five participants was used in the study to provide an indepth description of the literacy practices and code-switching behaviours of *Caribbean Creole English* speakers.

Procedures

In order to carry out a study of the literacy practices and code-switching behaviours of the participants, I made written descriptions of what happened and how the phenomenon was experienced. The occurrences studied are common both to me and the participants; as a result, data from both me and the participants were collected. Data

included descriptions of experiences and potential meanings of these experiences. In this section of the research I share the procedures used to carry out this research. First, I discuss my duty and experience as a researcher; second, I talk about how the participants were selected; third, I share strategies used to collect data and carry out research, and last of all I discuss how I dealt with validity, reliability, and generalizability in the study.

Researcher's experience and role.

I started this research a little self assured because of my past training. I felt that I was experienced enough to carry out this study because of past lectures: tertiary level assignments which involved observing individuals, collecting data, and conducting interviews; and other research projects conducted in the past. However, as I started this project, I had many experiences of feeling inadequate especially because I saw myself so vividly in my study: a non-standard English speaker conducting an assignment which will put my speaking and writing skills on display for many to observe. In order to reduce my fears and increase my confidence in all aspects of the research process, I constantly sought the advice of other experts and relevant texts. I felt that by this action I could conduct a study which was understandable, trustworthy, valid, and logical.

In order to increase the credibility of my research I attempted to take the role of an unobtrusive observer. Also I paid careful attention to validity, reliability, and generalizability of the research. To futher increase the credibility of the study, I employed the services of a second rater who was a literacy specialist but not a Caribbean Creole English speaker. A second rater is an individual who has adequate training and experience in research and can be an additional examiner of the research findings.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006) these strategies increases the credibility of a study. I felt that as a result of my past training and experience and my attention to the credibility of the research, I increased my attempt at conducting a research that gives an authentic description of valuable experiences of *Caribbean Creole English* speakers that are relevant to this research.

Selection of participants.

The recruitment of participants began with approaching many individuals whom I felt could be identified as *Caribbean Creole English* speakers. Five individuals agreed that they were interested in being observed, interviewed, and provided in-depth information on their literacy practices. Four females and one male agreed to be in the study. The five participants identified themselves as *Caribbean Creole English* speakers. The characteristics of all were that: (1) they spoke some variety of Caribbean Creole English, and (2) they identified with one or more cultural practices of the Caribbean as stated previously in the section subjects of the study. Participants were selected through "purposeful sampling" as described by McMillan (2004). In order to ensure purposeful sampling, individuals who were most representative of a typical *Caribbean Creole English* identity and who, I determined, would be most informative were selected.

Strategies used to collect data and carryout the research.

Initially a session was held with each participant where they were given an introduction to the research and allowed the opportunity to ask questions. In this first briefing, I informed participants that both formal and informal written artifacts would be

collected. Written consent was obtained. Next, an interview was carried out with each participant. An additional interview had to be conducted with the fourth participant. This participant was quite nervous on the occasion of the first interview, and the information that was collected was incomplete without a second interview.

The speech of the participants was taped and transcribed. These transcripts were examined for evidence of *Caribbean Creole English* attributes as described by Nero (2000). Nero's Tables compare some of the main linguistic differences between the *Caribbean Creole English* and *Standard English.* It is expected that examination of the transcripts might yield documented evidence of *Caribbean Creole English* dialect features; plus, inform about participants' literacy practices and code-switching behaviour.

Written artifacts were collected from the participants in the period of time that I spent doing the study. One set of writing which I called *formal* writing and another set which I called *informal* writing were collected. Formal writings were texts that had certain set rules as far as syntax, vocabulary, and grammar are concerned. As noted earlier, examples of these are formal letters, resumes, tertiary level assignments, and the like. I ascertained that these writings displayed the participant's ability in written Standard English text. Informal writings were texts that do not have certain set rules as far as syntax, vocabulary, and grammar is concerned. Examples of these were emails to friends, notes left to family members, and unofficial letters.

Nero's (1997) study suggests that *Caribbean Creole English* features can be observed in a speaker's written material. After initial examination of the artifacts, I concluded that too much editing occurred in the informal writing. Much of the writings contained well-structured Standard English sentences with punctuation. I decided that

participants would be encouraged to do an "on the spot" written document on a very general topic in the presence of the researcher. On-the-spot writing meant that participants were given a topic and they wrote about the topic in my presence. This was done on another occasion after all the interviews were completed and all the writing samples that the participants submitted were collected. While doing this piece of writing, participants were encouraged to write freely and to take as much time as they felt that they needed. Thus participants' anxiety was reduced, and they would be allowed as much time as possible to expand on their thoughts. Once the writing was completed, participants were not allowed to do any adjustments to their writing or to allow anyone to edit.

As a researcher, I spent approximately one year with the participants, exchanging emails, conversing on the phone plus actual face-to-face conversation, and reviewing their artifacts that I collected for the research. By doing this, I was able to spend a considerable amount of time with the participants. The meetings that I had with the participants were evenly distributed between both informal and formal settings. Informal meetings were occasions where a participant and I met just for conversation. These meetings were more of a casual nature, like meetings that were held just to discuss the research, the participants' fears about being in a study, or to clarify any particular issues. During formal meetings, interviews were conducted and notes were made. I tried as much as possible not to manipulate or control the behaviour of the individuals or the setting. One example of how I accomplished this was that I tried my best to always make comments that would encourage the participant to talk. Also, I tried to avoid comments that would steer the participant into giving a particular answer. I sought by this act to

create a setting that encouraged the natural behaviour of the participant. As I observed, I recorded the participants' specific phrases that they used, physical reactions, expressions, and their emotional responses. All these characteristics could be analyzed as thick descriptions of the participants' behaviours. This part of the design is in line with McMillan's (2004) notion of rich-thick description. In addition during interviews, I also recorded participant perspectives on the language that they spoke. Participants' behaviour, their perspective on their spoken language, and their written artifacts helped to shed light on their code switching behaviours.

Validity, reliability, and generalizability.

Three methods can be used to increase the credibility of the research: (1) triangulation of data sources, (2) using reliability measures, and (3) using measures that increase the validity of the research (McMillan, 2004, p. 227). Triangulation refers to the use of different data collecting methods to observe phenomena. If information from three data sources coincided, then they triangulate (Anderson, 1998). In this study three data collecting methods were used: participants were interviewed, observations were made of participants' spoken and written language, and detailed field notes were made. Reliability in qualitative research is the extent to which what is recorded is what actually occurred in the setting (McMillan & Wergin, 2002). To increase the reliability of my research I made detailed field notes of what occurred and I also made audio- recordings of my conversations with the participants. To increase the trustworthiness of the research I employed the following strategies: I used three data collection methods as mentioned previously; I tried as much as possible to use speech that the participant would

understand and record their actual speech verbatim; I also used a tape recorder to document accurate and relatively complete data. McMillan and Schumacher (2004) state that these strategies help to increase the trustworthiness of research. In addition, by involving the use of another researcher as a second rater I gained assistance in the understanding and accuracy in interpreting of data collected. The role of the second rater was to validate conclusions made on categories, emerging themes, and behaviours that I identified in the data.

It is also my intent that the findings of this research can be extended to similar situations, subsequent research or practical situations. Therefore, I tried to give detailed descriptions of different categories of this research so successive researchers could clearly understand the findings and apply different aspects of the research to other circumstances. In addition to the above information, I also tried to add as much as possible to the credibility of my research by being reflective.

Being reflective meant that I constantly examined my personal commitment to the research. I tried, as much as possible, not to have too much influence on the data collected from participants of the research. There are uncontrolled influences in such a situation where the researcher is part of the study: a researcher's bias can distort the data collected (McMillan 2004). In any researched situation a researcher's presence will have some influence on both the setting and participants in a study; a researcher's presence can cause individuals to act abnormally. For these reasons I designed the research to minimize these biases as much as possible by using different data sources, adding as much information as possible so that the research may be clear for others to understand,

and by being reflective as I completed the study. In order to increase the credibility of the research the materials that I gathered were very important to minimizing bias overall.

Materials

To carryout the research I used three sources of materials: I collected written artifacts from the participants, I conducted semi-structured interviews, and I made field notes.

Written Artifacts.

Artifacts are tangible evidence of individual's knowledge, actions, and values (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). McMillan and Schumacher describe two types of written artifacts: personal documents and official documents. I used this information to define two types of writing that I thought I should collect: one set of writing which I called formal writing and another set which I called informal writing. Formal writings are organized according to set rules. Examples of these are formal letters, resumes, tertiary level assignments, and the like. I felt that these writings displayed the participant's ability in writing that showed *Standard English* text writing characteristics. The *Standard English* text characteristics that I specifically looked for were: writing about ideas using the components of grammar that causes the content to be logically connected; using established grammatical, syntactical, phonetic, and spelling rules; analyzing information and synthesizing appropriate components of that information in a logically connected manner. I calculated that these characteristics were general characteristics of written texts. Informal written artifacts are writings that are not organized according to set rules;

examples of these are emails to friends, notes left to family members, and unofficial letters. Coelho (1988) says that individuals who speak a non-standard dialect tend to use a variety of language that is closer to *Standard English* in situations where fixed conventions were more appropriate and a variety that is closer to the Creole in everyday relaxed situations. In light of this, both types of texts collected would give a wider view of the participants' writing and a clearer view of the occurrence or non-occurrence of code switching behaviour.

When I examined the written materials collected from the participants I noticed that the first set may have been too perfectly edited and structured; as a result I asked the participants to do some informal writing in my presence. I collected these together with writing samples which the participants wrote previously. The written artifacts were examined for evidences of oral and written features described by Halliday (1989).

Interviews.

Semi-structured interviews were used because this type of interview includes both structured questions and informal conversation. These methods of questioning create a context for both formal and relaxed conversation. Coelho (1988) states that non-standard English speakers tend to use a variety of the language that is closer to the Creole in informal situations and a variety that is closer to Standard English in formal situations. The interview protocol consisted of general questions that asked participants general information about themselves, their literacy background and their parents' literacy background. As the interview progressed, questions were formulated based on what the participants said. It was hoped that the method of interview added to the research by

providing opportunity for both *Standard English* and *Caribbean Creole English* to be used in the interview.

The interviews were approximately one hour long. The interview time tended to fluctuate according to the talkative nature of the participants. Some participants were quite talkative while others needed to be prompted. Interviews were structured to gather information that could not be obtained from field observations; and, to verify observations made. In addition, during interviews, participants shared how they felt about the issues concerning their spoken and written language. The interviews were held in settings where the participants would be comfortable and in a setting most suitable for data collection. These sites offered privacy so that confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research. Field notes were also made. Field notes are detailed records of interaction with the subjects (McMillan & Wergin, 2002). These notes included observations and impressions that I observed. I recorded the participants' specific phrases used, their physical reactions, expressions, and emotional responses. I also recorded my thoughts and impressions as I interviewed participants, after meetings, and as I reviewed the literature. The information that I wrote as field notes will not be in the tape recordings as I interviewed participants. The collected artifacts, transcribed interviews, and field notes were then analyzed for themes, codes, and categories from which I can make conclusions about the issues studied.

Assessment

To carry out the analysis of data I used a set of tables adapted from charts used in similar research found in the literature. In order to make a judgment concerning the code-

switching behaviour in the participants spoken and written language from *Caribbean Creole English* to *Standard English* and vice versa I used a chart (Table 1 and Table 2) adapted from Nero (2000). This table highlights the major differences between *Caribbean Creole English* and *Standard English*. I also examined participants' writing for written Standard English text writing features using a chart (Table 5) that I adapted from information in Nero's research (2001). In addition, I also created a table (Table 4) from information presented in Halliday (1989) and Nero (2001); this table helps in the analysis of lexical density of written language. These three tables were employed as I did my analysis of data.

Table 1

Pronunciation features in Caribbean Creole English and Standard English

Features	Caribbean Creole English	Standard English
Initial consonant	(t) ting (tr) tree (d) dat (ky) kyan (*in Caribbean Creole English palatalization -the insert of the /y/ sound- often occurs between any consonant /p, t, k, d, g, / and a following vowel usually an /a/*) ( ) ome (*primarily rural feature*)	(th) thing (thr) three (dh) that (k) can't (h) home
Final consonant (*in Caribbean Creole English consonant clusters are typically reduced*)	(n) somethin' (n) don' (s) bes	(ng) something (n't) don't (st) best
Vowels	(ih) dih (e) mek (uh) yuh (a) bady final (a) fadda	(e) the (a) make (oo) you (o) body (er) father

Table 2

Syntactic and vocabulary features of Caribbean Creole English and Standard American

English

Syntactic Caribbean Creole English (CCE)	CCE Form	Corresponding Standard English Form
Zero copula if predicate is an adjective	He strong	He is strong
Zero inflection for subject-verb agreement	She tell me everything	She tells me everything
Zero inflection for tense (*tense is indicated by context*)	Yesterday I wash the clothes	Yesterday I washed the clothes
Zero use of passive structure	Eggs selling today	Eggs are being sold today
Use of does (*unstressed*) to indicate habitual action with any person or number (*primarily Guyanese feature*)	He does go to church every week	He goes to church every week
Zero inflection for plurals if plurality already indicated	My father work two job (*in this case two already signal more than one*)	My father works two jobs
Zero marking for possession (*possession is shown by the juxtaposition of possessor and possessed*)	Paul house	Paul's house

Vocabulary Item (*many other false friends exist*)	Meaning in CCE	Meaning in Standard English
Hand	Part of the body from the shoulders to the fingers	Part of the body from the wrist to the fingers
Foot	Part of the body from thigh to the toes	Part of the body from the ankle to the toes
Tea	Any hot beverage	Specific beverage made from tea leaves
Goblet	Covered pitcher made of clay	Drinking glass with a stem
A next	Another (*e.g., I want a next one*)	I want another one

Analysis of data

McMillan and Schumacher (2004) suggest that analysis of data involves the researcher's strategic use of his/her methodological knowledge in qualitative research. Analysis of data does not involve strict adherence to one qualitative data analysis rule; data can be analyzed in any number of ways. However the researcher should be thorough and precise as s/he examines the data and derives conclusions from observations. In the section that follows I will describe how I strategically derived themes, coded information, and developed categories for the study; next I will discuss how I analyzed the data for the themes using information suggested by Auer (1984), Wei (1999), and Gumperz (1982); following this I will describe how I analyzed the written artifacts.

Deriving themes, codes, and categorizes.

I analyzed the data using a template analysis approach. A template analysis style of analyzing data involves a logical application of a derived set of codes and categories, which are constantly revised, according to the data as it is received. I initially derived some potential themes, codes, and categories from previous research carried out in code switching and also research on *Caribbean Creole English* speakers. As I started to collect and review data and considered my questions and the objective of the research, some of the themes, codes, and categories were later revised.

Duke and Mallette (2004) suggest that inductive and deductive coding should be done, and through the process of checking and rechecking, conclusions can be made which are unbiased and conscious of subtle differences. As I collected and transcribed all the recordings, the data were checked and double checked. In addition, I used specific

words and symbols that I derived previously, to categorize information. At the beginning of the study, I met with each participant and in the evening after the meeting I reviewed the field notes that I made. As I reviewed field notes, I would add comments to these notes. Most of the time, I would listen to the parts or to the entire recorded conversation of our meeting. As I did these activities, I questioned myself about the research and reflected on observations that I had made. From my reflections I made additional notes. After all of the interviews were completed and transcripts were made of the recordings, codes were made of characteristics such as behaviours of individuals, things that happened in the interviews, and beliefs that I had about the data. I also made codes of conclusions that I made based on my reasoning as I observed the participants and reviewed theories that I read. From these notes, I believe that I made valid conclusions and generalizations from the data. The transcripts were reexamined by a second rater to reconfirm the themes that were identified.

I chose the second rater based on her experience in issues pertaining to language use and literacy issues in education. I explained important concepts in the research to the second rater. I also revised Nero's (2000) table as a guide to compare the differences between *Caribbean Creole English* and *Standard English*. I explained the table to the second rater, and we completed some practice examples. I examined the transcripts and field notes for evidence of themes that indicated individual's reasons for code switching. I also examined the written artifacts for the same. After I examined this information they were passed to the second rater to do the same. I felt that the examination that the second rater did further validated the findings. The examination of transcripts, and field notes for themes, codes, and categories was completed in the above manner. In addition,

information from certain writers on the topic of code switching was also considered as I analyzed.

Information considered in the process of analysis of data

As I reviewed the transcripts, field notes, and participants' written artifacts, I considered Auer (1984), Gumperz (1982), and Wei (1999) information on code switching. Their writing states that an interactive perspective on code switching was the best approach to identify the purpose and intention of language alternation. They felt that the situation that caused code switching was a set of occurrences that act on each other. As individuals converse they create events of speech. Every time an individual takes a turn in the conversation, some aspect of the conversational situation is either maintained or changed. As a result of this I felt that code switching to *Caribbean Creole English* or *Standard English* should be looked at in the light of all the interaction that is occurring. Individuals who switch codes do so because the change in language signals to the person that they are speaking to that they wish their utterance to be interpreted in a certain manner. As a result the analytical procedure should focus on the sequences of events of the conversational interaction because the meaning of the code switch is part of the interactional process.

There are three important points that should be considered when analyzing code-switching behaviour: first, the analysis must show that it is related to the matter at hand; second, it must show what gives a particular piece of interaction its specific character; and third, it must demonstrate how the criterion identified in the analysis manifests itself in the course of conversation (Auer, 1984).

Within the context of a conversation, there are certain agreed upon conversational conventions which signal to participants the social and situational context of the conversation. Language difference is one of these communicative resources. Other characteristics within conversation that can help individuals to make inferences about what is taking place are the use of a particular dialect, the manner in which things are said, the words that are used, and the expressions used. These signals can help to indicate what individuals' value or reject and believe or disbelieve. In addition, these signals can also give ideas of the position an individual holds on an issue.

Both Wei (1999) and Gumperz (1982) may have used more elaborated forms of analysis than what is being used in this research; however, their ideas were used as guideposts for analysis and categorization data in this research.

Analysis of written artifacts.

To analyze the written artifacts I considered first Halliday (1989) information on written and spoken language. As previously mentioned in the literature review *Caribbean Creole English* individuals' culture is built in the oral tradition. I felt that their written language may more resemble a spoken form of language and not language that portrays the written conventions of *Standard English*. In order to identify this I used two measures: 1) I measured the lexical density of the participants' writing (Table 4) and 2) I examined participants writing for written Standard English text writing features using a chart (Table 5).

First of all, a measure of the lexical density will portray to what extent the participants' written language represents a more written form or spoken form of language

(Desmond, Berry, & Lewkowicz, 1995; Halliday, 1989; Kopple, & William, 1995). Lexical density of language is the number of vocabulary content words versus the number of grammatical items in a given passage. To calculate lexical density the vocabulary items are calculate as a percentage of total number of words in a passage. High lexical density will suggest that the participant's writing shows a more written form of language which is characteristic of *Standard English* writing. Low lexical density will suggest that the participant's written language portrays a more spoken form of language which may suggest that the participant is writing as he/she speaks. Kopple, and William (1995) say that speech, especially spontaneous speech is made up of a number of complex sentences. Lexical density of 55 percent or below is within the range of spoken language. This measure has been used by others researchers (Desmond, Berry, & Lewkowicz, 1995; Kopple, & William, 1995; Kukkonen, 1993) to distinguish "written" and "spoken" language.

Secondly I also analyzed the participants' written language using a table which highlights both spoken and written language features. If the participant's writing is of a more written form, it will display more written language features; on the other hand, if the participant's writing is of a more spoken form, it will display more spoken language features. As previously acknowledged in the literature review, characteristics of written *Standard English* text display writing that: 1. portrays logically connected content, 2. uses established grammatical, syntactical, phonetic, and spelling rules, and 3. analyzing and synthesizing appropriate components of information in a logically connected manner.

I deem that the measure of lexical density and the measure which highlights whether the participant's writing is more of spoken or written form, are good measures to

portray one of the issues of code switching. To explain this, I note that it would describe whether the participant is code switching from spoken language phrases to written language phrases. The reason why I use the term code switching and not style shifting is that I am looking at *Caribbean Creole English* as a dialect of English. On the extreme continuum *Caribbean Creole English* features and *Standard English* features may be distinct, but on other areas of the continuum there maybe some overlap. The areas of the overlap are text that display a more written form of language or a more spoken form of language and these distinctions may be the only distinguishing mark of a code switch.

Table 4.

Important characteristics of Standard English written text

Important characteristics of formal Standard English writing.
- write about ideas using the components of grammar that causes the content to be logically connected
- use established grammatical, syntactical, phonetic, and spelling rules
- analyze information
- synthesize appropriate components of that information in a logically connected manner

Table 5.

Analysis of lexical density

Analysis of lexical density

lexical density (LD)   Vocabulary content words (VCW) Total words in passage (TW)

% LD = VCW / TW

LD 55% or below = range of spoken language

LD 56% or above = range of written language

Comparison of data.

Data from five participants' transcripts, field notes, and written artifacts were compared to identify patterns which emerged in the analysis. These patterns helped direct conclusions made about the data and stabilized the data to be more valid and credible. In the section that follows I discuss the results of the analysis.

Chapter IV

Results of the Analysis

In this study, the following were the questions I wanted answered: (1) What are the speaking and writing issues that exist in a Standard English educational environment for speakers of a non-standard dialect of English? (2) Is there evidence of code switching in the speaking and writing behaviour of *Caribbean Creole English* speakers? (3)What functions does code switching serve for *Caribbean Creole English* speakers? (4) Will non-standard dialect of English speakers' awareness of code switching affect their language choice? After I analyzed the data, I identified certain features in the participants writing, I recognized certain attributes about their speech, I distinguished certain trends in their early literacy experiences, and I identified five themes. In addition, I have also made conclusions about observations that I have made from the data.

In this section I firstly, analyzed features of the participants writing; secondly, I looked at certain attributes about the participants' speech; thirdly, I identified certain trends in their early literacy experiences; and fourthly I established five themes that pertain to code-switching.

Participants' Writing

Caribbean Creole English features found in writing

Participants tended to have written language that displayed what would be considered mistakes in *Standard English* writing. However, these mistakes were reflections of *Caribbean Creole English* dialect features. The written documents of both Erica Hare and Andrea Yak are provided here because they show most of these features

in their written work. The other three participants tended to write using *Standard English* in most of their written material. Erica admitted that she always experienced difficulty in her written language. She said that English was most difficult for her. She said:

"It was the only subject that I, I barely ever get a pass in, and every odder subject I did pretty good except for English I always scrape through with a 'D' and that was not fun. And they (teachers) were always marking up my work."

Her written artifacts supported what she said. In her formal written document she wrote:

– one rule <u>which demonstrate</u> (Zero inflection for subject/verb agreement) the difference between the Jamaican Creole and Standard English is that of Syntax.

In her informal written document she wrote:

-We were soon over this then <u>it on</u> (Zero copula) to the Daycare Drama.

– I have since come to accept that Winnipeg have no hills or <u>mountain</u> (Zero inflection for plural).

– <u>I have stop</u> (Zero inflection for tense) I have expecting Canada to be like my home.

–and my <u>two daughter</u> (Zero inflection for plural) will start nursery school next month.

Andrea Yak expressed both doubts and confidence about her writing ability in Standard English. When she was asked about the finished product of her Standard English writing in one instance she expressed uncertainty.

"like as you said if your writing a letter to a friend it's not too much of a

big deal, you know you still got to get it correct, the words correct and
what ever you want to say. But when, if your writing to your supervisor or
your manager or someone at work you really, (she gives a short laugh)
that's when it, your thinking that, 'oh well I hope it's, yuh know, ah hope
this is the correct word that I'm putting in here and what, you know."

At another time she felt that she wrote "good" Standard English.

"I don know I guess my understanding of the Standard English is, is I
think is preddy good or else I wouldn't be as far as I am now."

Her writing also had evidence of non-standard English dialect features. In her formal
writing she wrote:

– I show appreciation for any assistance <u>I received</u> (Incorrect tense

used) that allows me to complete my job in a professional manner.

– I respect the opinions of my team leader, peers and those

<u>departmental policies that governs</u> (subject/verb agreement) our

work.

In her informal writing she wrote:

– At first it was very difficult for me being that <u>my parents was</u>

(subject/verb agreement) still in the Caribbean.

– <u>It seem</u> (subject/verb agreement) as if most everything was

different from what I was used to.

Features that represent written Standard English

I asked the participants to submit one writing artifact that could be considered as writing that is organized according to generally established set rules. Three participants submitted sections of written assignments, the forth participant submitted a letter of recommendation, and the fifth submitted a résumé. I found that these documents displayed the participant's ability in writing according to certain set *Standard English* requirements of essayist writing mentioned previously.

1. *One paragraph of Erica Hare's formal writing.*

Our Jamaican Creole is said to be a mixture of English, Spanish, French, and the African language. One who is not familiar with it on hearing it would think the language is an arbitrary form. However with familiarity and close examination it would become evident that there are rules that govern the language some of which we will examine in order to demonstrate.

The ideas in this paragraph seem to be connected. However the lexical density is quite low. This means that this participants' writing has more of the characteristics of spoken language than more of written Standard English.

Figure 3. Lexical density for Erica Hare.
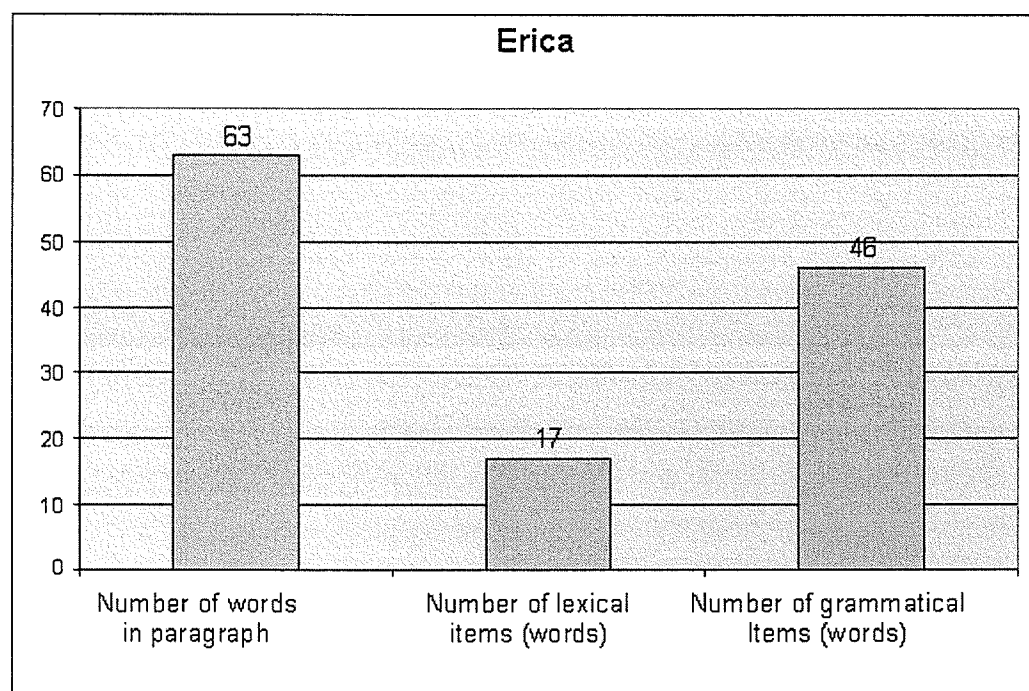
2. *One paragraph of Roanne Rabbit's formal writing*

It is with great pleasure that I nominate Apple Zee (pseudonym) for the Youth Role Model award in the area of award in the area of Academics. I have known Apple for five years and I had the privilege of teaching him for three of those years. I thought him Math and French. His work was not only outstanding for his grade level but consistently above and beyond. There was no challenge too great for him.

This participant's writing is connected logically to the ideas of the first sentence. The lexical density seems to be low.

Figure 4. Lexical density for Roanne Rabbit.
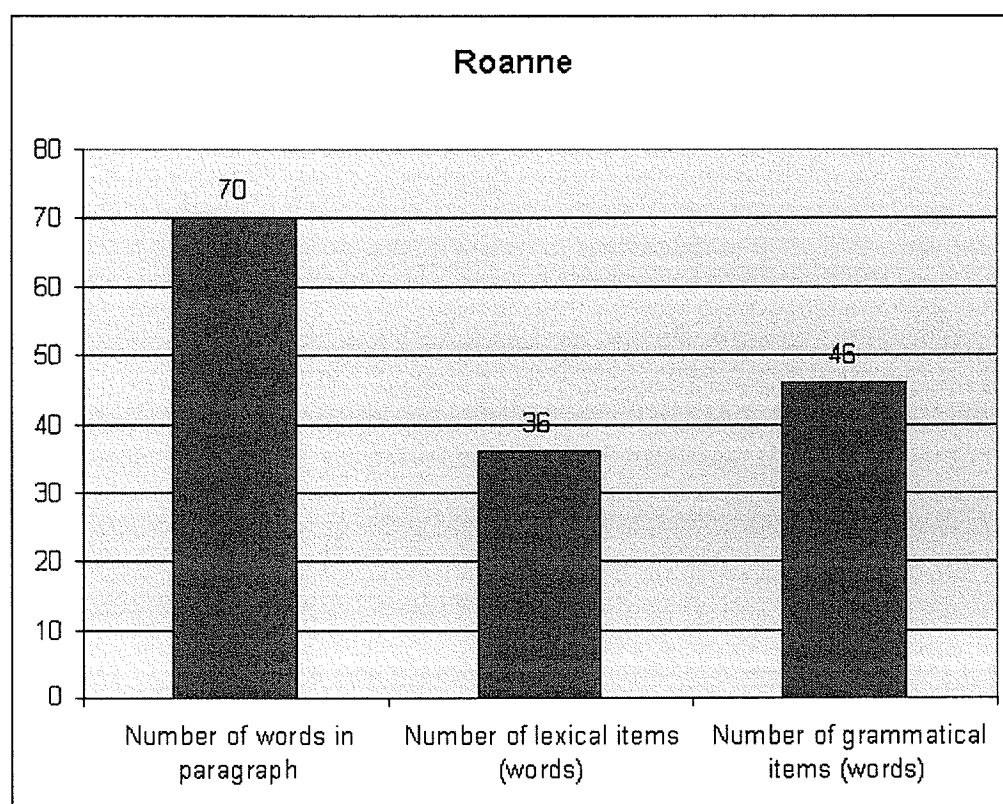
3. *One paragraph of Andrea Yak's formal writing*

I show professionalism in my daily actions by being consistently present at work on my scheduled days Monday to Friday 8am-4pm. I am always punctual and do not abuse my breaks. I show my appreciation for any assistance I received that allows me to complete my job in a professional manner. Working independently, with minimal supervision, and not slacking of in my supervisor's absence, show remarkable professionalism on my part.

The ideas in this paragraph seem to be a bit disconnected. The first sentence that introduces the topic does not appear to introduce the main theme of the paragraph. In addition, there seem to be unnecessary repetition of words and ideas. Although the lexical density is quite high for this paragraph (43%) there seems to be an unnecessary repetition of words and ideas in this paragraph.

Figure 5. Lexical density for Andrea Yak.
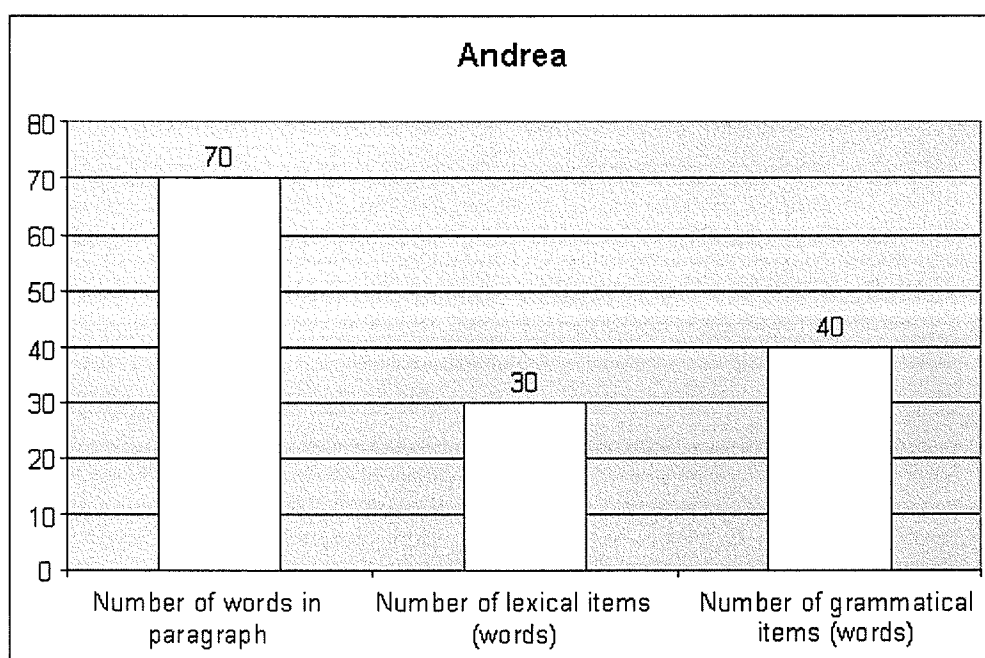
4. *One paragraph of Raj Antelope's formal writing*

Of an estimated 190 million 911 calls made each year in North America, more than 50 million originate from wireless phones. From these call the 911 operator has to

rely on the caller in distress to identify the place to which to send help. However the increase use of GPS enabled cellular phones provides a new opportunity whereby ERS can be enhanced. On the other hand there exists no reliable or standardized method of utilizing this asset.

The ideas in this paragraph seem to be logically connected. The first sentence introduces the topic and the sentences that follow expand on the topic sentence. The lexical density is a little higher than the previous participant's. This writing may be considered closer to the requirements for formal written Standard English text.

Figure 6. Lexical density for Raj Antelope.

Raj

- Number of words in paragraph: 77
- Number of lexical items (words): 41
- Number of grammatical items (words): 36
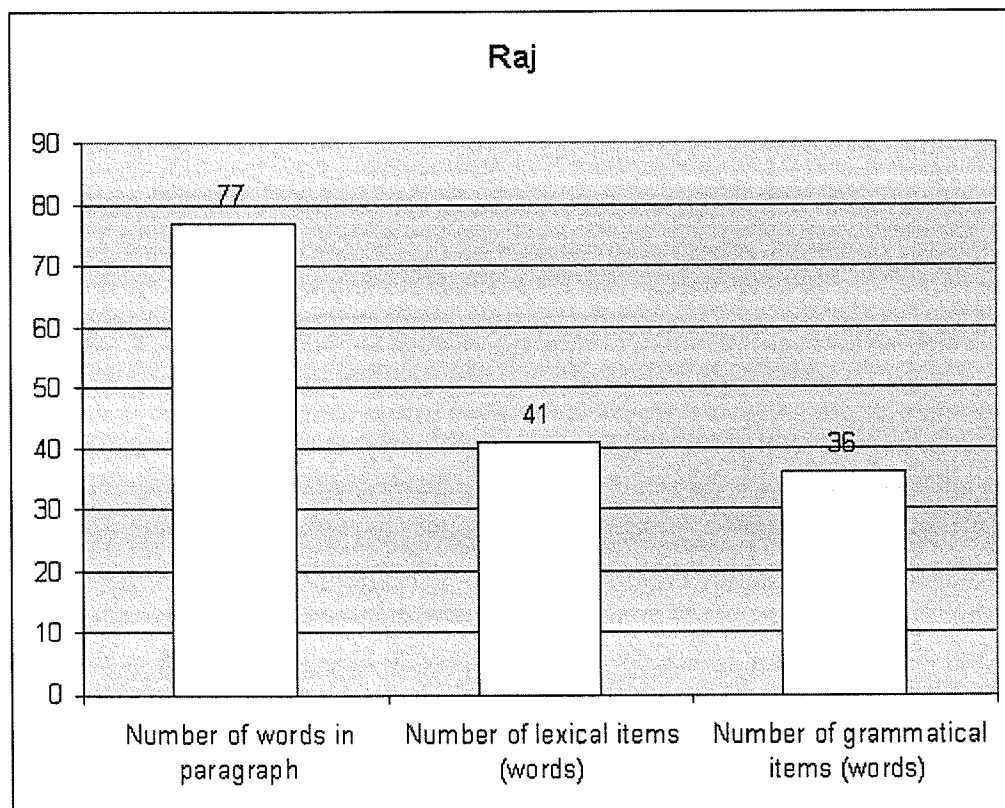
5. Paragraph of Kavita Rhino's formal writing (L5)

The growing importance of human capital on adult learning serves to maintain and exacerbate the present inequalities that exist not only in OECD member countries but in developing countries as well. According to the OECD report, Beyond Rhetoric... (2003), adult education is being tied closely to the labour market and the economy. The idea behind human capital is that it will contribute to economic growth. However I believe that if the question is analyzed closely, what we might see that is actually happening is the commodification of education.

Structured ideas

The ideas in this paragraph seem to be logically connected. The first sentence introduces the topic and the sentences that follow expand on the topic sentence. Here, lexical density is a little higher than the previous participant's, meaning that this writing may be closer to what is considered to be the requirements for formal written Standard English text.

Figure 7. Lexical density for Kavita Rhino.
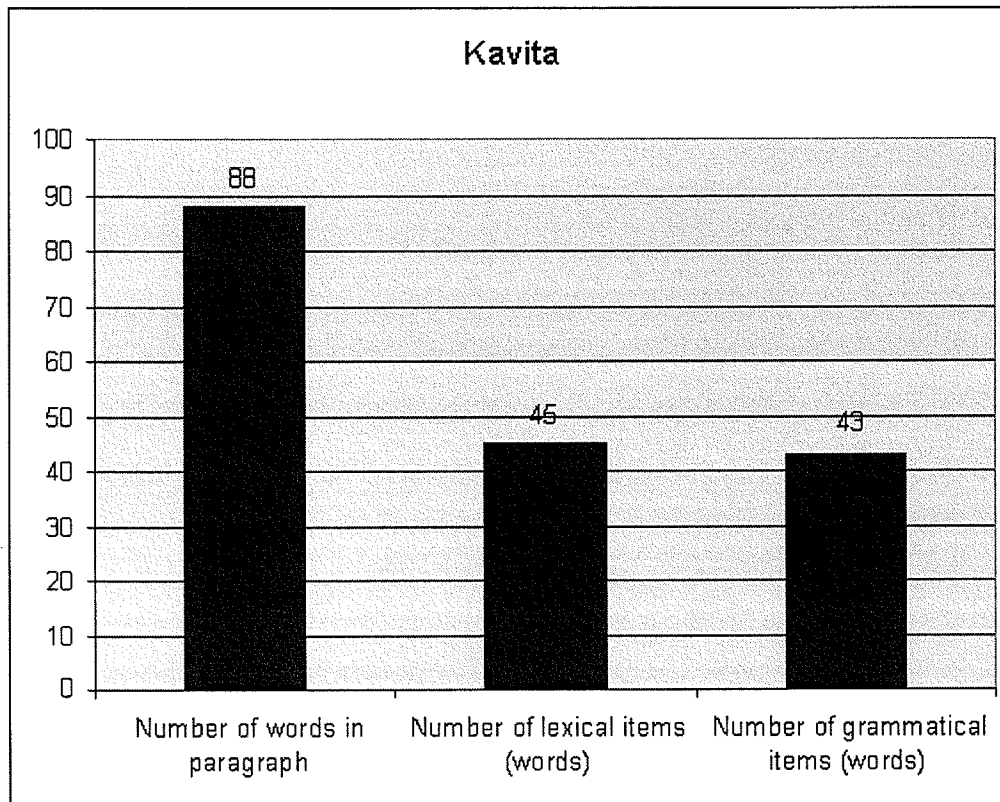
Comparison of lexical density

A comparison of the lexical density of all the participants gives information that suggests the following. Erica's writing displayed the lowest lexical density and Raj the highest lexical density. All the participants' lexical density fall within the thirty and fifty three percentage range. No participant's writing went above fifty five percent. The following figure shows the comparative percentage of lexical density.

Figure 8. Comparative Percentage of Lexical Density

Comparative Perecntage of Lexical Density

[bar chart: Erica 30%, Roanne 39%, Andrea 43%, Kavita 51%, Raj 53%; y-axis 0% to 60%]
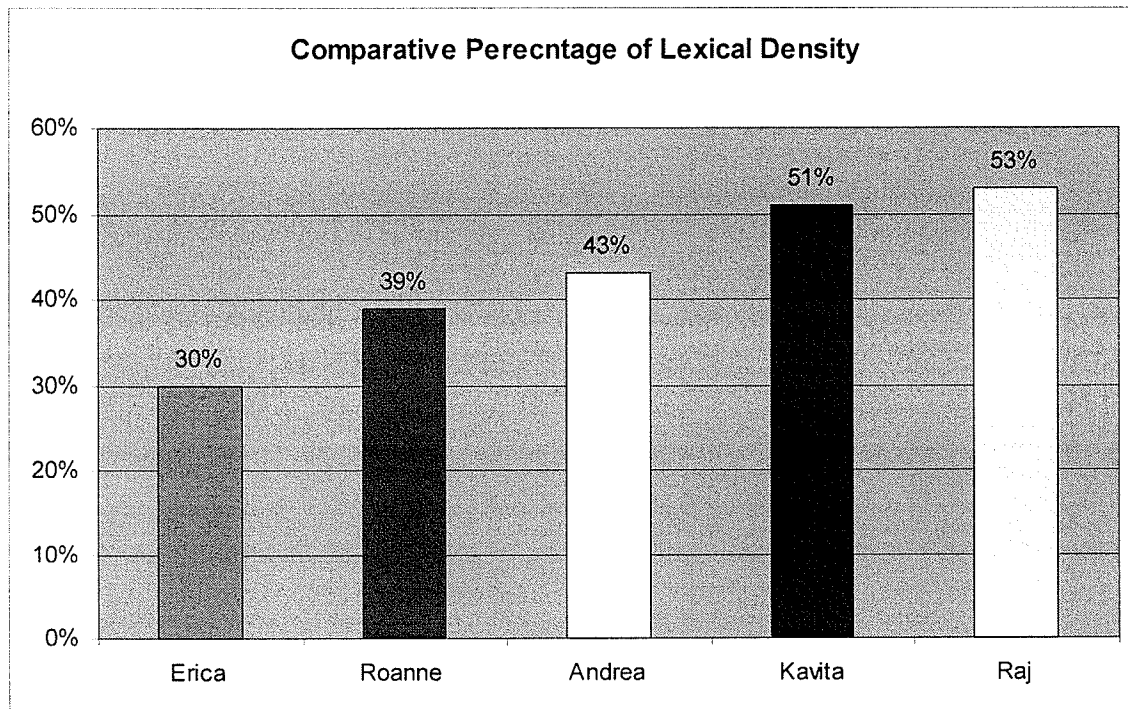
Participants' Speech

Caribbean Creole English Features Present

    Pronunciation differences.

    As data were analyzed, it was revealed that code switching occured more in the participants' speech than in their writing. As indicated previously, dialects differ in pronunciation, vocabulary, grammatical patterns, and discourse style. As participants spoke, at times they tended to use *Caribbean Creole English* in their pronunciation of some words.

    Erica: "you learn to read by learning the letters, yuh know. You read by reading

letters without, yuh did, yuh never read, I never learn to read by, by knowin the

sounds of the letters. Was more of a memory so you read beca... because you

know that 'cat' is kyat not because of the sounds that it made to make kyat you

just learn"

In the sentences above, one can observe the way that Erica pronounces the word *cat* and

you. The */oo/* sound is pronounced */uh/* so that */yuh/* was said instead of /yoo/. In

addition, the sound */ky/* is said instead of */k/* so that the word *kyat* was said instead of cat.

Roanne: my modder and fadder, I feel to talk today, (she laughs) my mother and

father come from Trinidad."

In the sentence above Roanne pronounces mother and father as "modder" and "fadder".

In these words the */th/* are pronounced as */d/.*

Raj: "I read a lot uh stuff on the Internet but it is all academic it is not fictional or

like yuh know that kind ah stuff yuh just ask me if I have ah favourite author"

In the sentence above Raj pronounces you as yuh. In this word the vowels "ou" are

pronounced /uh/ instead of /oo/.

Andrea: I know I like reading stories back then so probably that had something to

do with it, I doh Know, (she laughed) and math I doh know I guess I don't really

have a reason (she laughed)."

In the sentence above Andrea pronounces "don't" as "doh". The final consonant is left

out and */on/* is pronounced */o/.*

Kavita: "Am...I kyah remember when I was a little kid ah I don't really think I

cared for then after I started high school in Guyana."

In the sentence above Kavita pronounces the word "can't" as "kyah". The pronunciation

of the initial consonant is /ky/ instead of /k/.

Drop of final consonant.

This study also confirms what was found by Nero (2000), the exclusion of the

final consonants of words. Participants tended to display these features as they spoke.

Most of the participants tended to say "jus" instead of "just" or had a tendency to drop

the final consonant of other words.

- Raj said "Am writing activities I guess is jus stuff I would have done at

  school."

- Kavita said: "Jus homework, that would be the only thing I could remember

  writing maybe occasionally writing a letter, or so to maybe and aunt or

  somebody who was abroad but am there is no writing jus for writing, it maybe

  jus home work we really did from what I can really remember"

- Roanne: "which I guess a lot of people would jus refer to as an accent you

  know maybe not recognizing it is really a different dialect they would jus say

  the Trinidadian accent or"

- Andrea: "I know what I want to say so I just write it , it jus, you know it jus

  comes like that you know I don't really have to think about it too much unless

  its "

Erica admitted to this fact and expressed that she now realized what caused some of the problems that she encountered over the years as she wrote Standard English.

> ...every odder subject I did pretty good except English. ...I left the endings off I missed stuff out and I could never figure out why. ...I figured out a lot more then, it was just that I never heard the endings ... I write it like I hear it and I never heard the endings and so I jus wrote it without the "Ses" and I never pluralize it with "Ses" and my words were in the proper tense at times, and it wasn't pluralized properly..."

Awareness of code switching in speech

Most of the participants said that they code switched when they were relaxed. Most of them used their non-standard dialect in the home setting where the atmosphere most likely is more relaxed.

> Andrea: "... I mostly speak it in the home, outside of the home I don't really so..."

> Roanne: "In my home it is mostly dialect because I live with my mother and my sister... "

Kavita also added a situation where individuals usually eased up or relaxed their attention. She admitted to switching code to dialect in situations where she was extremely angry.

> Kavita: "...there are instances when it happens and in retrospect I realize I had done it, and it would be times when I maybe angry, very angry..."

Most of the participants also felt that they used the dialect when they were in a

recreational or comfortable atmosphere.

> Erica: "…most ah the time when I am home, yuh know, I know definitely talk
>
> like am in Jamaica because it is more relaxing, yuh know, yuh don't have
>
> to think about it…"

For the participants, code switching experiences seemed to occur as long as there

was an ease in attention no matter what caused that ease. This ease may have also caused

unconscious code switching. Evidence in the data seems to suggest that even in an

environment where Standard English was more appropriate, individuals may switch

codes. Roanne admitted to doing this on more than one occasion in her school setting.

> "Even here in the school setting and I don't, I am not aware of it but people would
>
> point it out to me. . . . if I'm telling a story say about my mom or about my sister
>
> they would laugh at it and not at what I'm saying…"

Raj admitted to less unconscious code switching when he said, "Unconsciously I would

probably use a little bit because it is natural. I've been doing that for eighteen years. . . .it

is not something you can just break like that right."

Kavita also added to the idea of unconscious code switching, despite the fact that she

purposely tried to be always aware of how she speaks.

> Kavita: "…at times where I am extremely, extremely comfortable with someone
>
> that I'm not conscious that I was using, quote unquote proper English
>
> because I'm always aware of how I'm speaking all the time because of my
>
> experiences when I came here so I am always conscious of trying to use
>
> the Standard English so you know there would be people that I am very,

very, very comfortable with and not notice the Canadian and I would say something with the accent or what ever then I am like oh my God I just said that and they didn't seem to react to it they understood what I was saying and it was fine with them so you know I sort of play it back in my head and it is so that is what I jus did so yeah."

In most cases participants seemed to be very unaware until someone reacted to this unusual code.

Participant's Early Literacy Experiences

As I analyzed the data, I observed a pattern that suggested a link between the participants' early literacy experience, their percentage of lexical density, and their code switching behaviours. For this reason, I decided to tabularize each participant's early literacy experiences. The relationship between the participant's early literacy experiences, percentage of lexical density, and their code switching behaviours is discussed in the section below titled *Awareness of code switching's affect on language choice.*

Awareness of Code Switching's Affect on Language Choice

Participants	Early literacy activities of participants
Erica Hare	Researcher: Where your parents readers? Erica: …ah never grow up seeing them read. … they said them uses to read but by the time I was old enough they weren't reading and so I read by myself, I never read with their help. Researcher: "what kind of writing activities were done in the home? Erica: Not much just pretty much us coming home with our homework, it was not dem writing, daddy was pretty much at work all the time and mom had lots of kids so dat was pretty much it.
Roanne Rabbit	…my parents would encourage us as children to read and take us to the library to get books and then read them at home … my parents did not read to us as much as we would read to them, because they really wanted to hear us read to sort ah, test our reading and, and then we would often have reading as part of games, again we would be reading to them. When I was about ten I got turned on to pen pals. I must have had forty pen pals as a child and I would write letters to them. … I have an older sister, my parents bought her a typewriter which I was fascinated with and so I would often type things for my sister that she had written
Raj Antelope	My mom was a teacher in primary school so she was really good at reading I guess because she taught stuff, am my dad he was an insurance salesman and he was actually good at English so I guess his English is pretty good as well. My grandfather was a principal so I actually came from ah academic background, so academic stuff reading, math what

	ever was no problem. Researcher: …what type of reading activities did you do…? Raj ah …in primary school we had a read-a-ton and just basically read bunch ah books usually novels and what not, that's the most reading I did actually… Researcher: …what type of reading activities would the family do in the home…? Raj …my dad… he reads papers everyday …he reads a lot of cooking magazines… … mom she is a teacher so she is always there everyday reading stuff… … my grandfather …he would he keeps track of newspapers he has like newspapers from last five years till now… … the newspaper was the thing mostly read in my household.
Andrea Yak	My dad had a problem with the English with the writing… … he (Andrea's dad) had a problem with reading actually, his education level, his education level I guess, he never had a lot of schooling, so he was not really educated with that when it comes to reading. Researcher: …do you think you remember anything more about your childhood reading and writing activities? Andrea: Reading … ah… would probably say reading was mostly to do with school work, I had homework, could be reading but I read, I read other things so, paper, the newspaper, am an magazines I like magazines am but other books to tell you the truth really unless for homework ah had homework and ah had to read but that's about all the reading. Researcher: Do you remember belonging to the library at all? Andrea: No… Researcher: As a child?

	Andrea: …from around age ah… maybe age 12. Researcher: Um hum. Andrea: If I remember anything before that no. Andrea: (she laughs) ah can remember from, earlier than age nine or ten that's as far as ah can remember back so ah don't remember anything earlier than dat. …I don't remember her (Andrea's mom) really picking up ah book, or helping with the homework it's …probably an older sibling probably would do dat but not really my mom, my mom… so… … had lots of older brothers and sisters in the home so they probably did, I'm sure they did but it's jus dat ah can't remember… (she laughs)
Kavita Rhino	…I remember reading storybooks like fairytales and nursery rhymes those kinds of things. Jus homework, that would be the only thing I could remember writing maybe occasionally letters, or so to may an aunt or somebody abroad. Maybe when I was about eleven or twelve being more aware that there were two different kinds of English that were being spoken or being used because I would hear about actually, my aunt was a teacher and then she would talk about her students who spell words differently so they would spell in the spoken form of English. … my father was also a teacher so I think because of this I had a more formal background in my English and also going to school in the city…

Themes Identified in the Research

Theme 1. *Code-switching to maintain community life.*

A community is a group of individuals who are connected by common characteristics. One of these common characteristics that connect people is language. By using a similar dialect, *Caribbean Creole English* speakers preserve a link that fosters cohesion among this distinct group of individuals in society. In a *Standard English-speaking* community when two *Caribbean Creole English-speaking* individuals communicate, they may switch to *Caribbean Creole English* with the purpose of sustaining this special link.

Example .1 Erica

Researcher	uh-hum, uh-hum, *so she doh want de tea*
	(she does not want the formula)
Erica	she will soon come back.
Researcher	*so she watch you she jus watch you make de tea and she gone her way?*
	(she just allowed you to make a bottle of formula for her and now she does not want it)
Erica	*Uh-hum, she look and she gone to look at de TV*
	(yes, she looked at me and then she has gone to look at TV)
Research	*OK lemah continue...* am so your were talking about the writing,
	(OK let me continue)
	right, was there anything that was easy, in writing, for you?
Erica	(long pause as she thinks) I'm not sure, I'm not sure I mean I could

---

Erica in Example 1: In the example above I am interviewing Erica. I am a *Caribbean Creole English* speaker and I belong to a *Caribbean Creole English* community so Erica is speaking to me with this in mind. Erica is speaking about her one-year-old daughter who has just left the room after Erica brought a bottle of prepared formula. I respond to the situation by using dialect to convey my thoughts. Erica responds using the dialect. I restart the interview in dialect then switch to *Standard English* and Erica responds using *Standard English*.

As I carried out the interview, Erica's infant daughter entered the room and interrupted our conversation by coming inbetween us and handing Erica an almost-full bottle of formula. After she did this, she turned and left the room.

Example 2. Erica

Researcher	...tell me how you feel about it how you feel when you hear them speak... (i.e., when she hears her children speak the Jamaican *Caribbean Creole English* dialect)
Erica	It's very personal it's, it's yours, you know, it defines you it's not something negative... it links you with a group *ah people* and **(a group of people)**
	so no matter where you go when a Jamaican hear a *nex, dem go, where you come from?* **(hear another Jamaican speak they will say where are you from?)**

Erica, in Example 2: As the interview continues Erica states that her children, who now speak a mostly *Standard English* dialect, switch to the Jamaican *Caribbean Creole*

English in certain instances when they are at home. As Erica shares how she feels about this, her face takes on a sentimental look. As she continues to speak about her spoken Jamaican *Caribbean Creole English* dialect and about meeting others who are identified as Jamaican as a result of speaking this dialect; her face lights up and she speaks enthusiastically.

Example 3. Roanne

Roanne	I was born in Canada.
Researcher	Tell me about your parents Roanne?
Roanne	*Oh my, both ah my parents my modda and my fadda, I feel to talk* **(Oh, both of my parents my mother and my father)**
	today, (she laughs) my modda and fadda come from Trinidad. **(I feel like talking today, my mother and father are from Trinidad)**
	My modda from Tableland side and my fadda from San Fernando **(My mother is from Tableland and my father is from San Fernando)**
	area and they came across first to England in the 60's then to Canada.

Roanne in Example 3: I noted that Roanne was the most unique participant that I interviewed. In previous encounters with Roanne Rabbit, I met her in the capacity of vice principal of my children's school. In these instances she was always in her school environment and in official situations. Someone told me she was a fluent dialect speaker.

I was not sure because in the instances that I met her we only exchanged short greetings and there may have been an instant where I heard her address a pupil or a staff member. I called her at school to ask her about the research. We spoke and she agreed. I noted that up to that point, I had never heard her use any *Caribbean Creole English* dialect. I do not know if I may have heard her use a word or two in *Caribbean Creole English* dialect and simply did not detect it. I questioned myself at this point: Was I so accustomed to translating *Caribbean Creole English* into *Standard English* and vice versa that I only identified a sentence as *Caribbean Creole English* if most of the words are *Caribbean Creole English?*

I conducted the interview with Roanne in the school library where no one else was around. I was surprised at the manner in which she answered the first question (Example 3). I felt as if I sat in the presence of someone to whom I had never spoken before. She pronounced words and used *Caribbean Creole English* syntax like any typical *Caribbean Creole English* dialect speaker. As she spoke, she spoke fluently and with enthusiasm switching back and forth from, what I would consider, perfect *Caribbean Creole English* to perfect *Standard English*. There was radiance in her face as she said "I feel to talk today." When I met Roanne before, I felt that she had a really friendly personality, but as she spoke about her background, there was an added glow on her face.

Later on in the interview she identified that from her mother she received modeling of code switching behaviour although she may not have called what she learned code switching. Roanne said:

"We some how got a cue from her (Roanne's mother) that we had a dialect, for our family or another Trinidadian, that we use but in speaking with a Canadian you need to learn to speak like them to really get along."

Here I felt that by modeling code switching to *Caribbean Creole English* or *Standard English,* Roanne's mother taught Roanne to establish her *Caribbean Creole English* or *Standard English* distinctive identity at the appropriate time. Being *Caribbean Creole English* was important for Roanne because it established who she was and her cultural values. On the other hand, being identified as a *Standard English* speaker was what had helped Roanne to be more accepted in the *Standard English* community in which she lived. Later on in the interview when asked, "How would you describe yourself?" Roanne stated: "If I had to, I would say first and foremost a *Standard English* speaker and writer."

Example 4. Raj

Raj   *If I was back* in, *if like,* (pause), if I were back in Trinidad and I
         (If I were back in, if I were in)

        Tried speaking, it would be in broken English *like I would use* present
                                    (usually I would use)
        tense for past tense.

Raj in example 4: As Raj spoke with me he used more of a mesolect variety of the *Caribbean Creole English* dialect. This may be because he lived for most of his life in San Fernando, the second largest town in Trinidad and because he grew up in an

environment where a lot of the adults were in the field of education. Raj did not display much syntactic code switching; most of his switching could have been identified in some words and pronunciation that he used. He would usually say *"yuh"* instead of "you" and *"jus"* instead of "just." These are some features of *Caribbean Creole English* identified by Nero (2000).

Example 5. Kavita

Researcher	Did you enjoy school?
Kavita	*...you making me* go back to my childhood years. **You are making me**

Kavita in example 5: As Kavita spoke she switched code as she reflected on her life in Guyana. She threw her head back and laughed as she spoke.

Theme 2. *Code Switching to Convey Meaning*

Conveying meaning means to communicate the idea that is intended. *Caribbean Creole English* individuals may have difficulty expressing certain ideas using *Standard English.* Firstly, there are some concepts that may not be easily translated into other dialects because the meaning is so wrapped up in the culture and dialect of a particular community. Secondly, there may be times when it is difficult for individuals to express some ideas using another dialect because they may not know the correct words. In these two instances a *Caribbean Creole English* individual may switch code in order to communicate.

Example 6 Erica

Researcher	Where your parents readers?
Erica	*No, ah mean, ah not, ah never grow up seeing them read.* **(while growing up I never saw them read)**
	They said, *dem uses to read* but by the time I was old enough they **(They said they used to read)**
	weren't reading and so I read by myself, *I never read(*present
	tense) *with their help.* **(I never read with their help)**

Erica, in example 6: Erica has a very talkative personality; on the occasions when we met before the interview, she spoke using a lot of her Jamaican dialect. In the interview she talked fluently, but at times she seemed to reflect on the presence of the tape recorder and stammered a bit. I felt in these instances that she struggled to get her language as close to the *Standard English* dialect as possible. Erica here wants to convey that she cannot recall seeing her parents reading as she was growing up. Erica also said that her parents stated that they read, but she felt she did not see much evidence of this especially when she got older. This is the manner in which Erica conveys this information: *No, ah mean, ah not, ah never grow up seeing them read.* They said, *dem uses to read. I never read* (present tense) *with their help.*

Example 7. Roanne

Researcher	well at home I think they make mostly mango (Cou-chee-la)
Roanne	...mango? We make it with green apple *cause yuh cyah get*
	(you cannot get mango)
	mango right?

Roanne, in example 7: Roanne here wants to convey a specific meaning about mango in Canada. When she says *yuh cyah get mango right,* the words imply that mangoes do not grow in Canada. The types of mangoes, which are used to make mango cou-chee-la, are not even exported to distant countries from Trinidad.

Example 8. Kavita

Researcher:	do you feel that there are some things that you can express better using the dialect?
Kavita	I think if I am speaking to some people within my community it is *kinda like* half and half. **It is a bit of half dialect half Standard English**
	I find with my generation who lived half over there and half here
	... came over when we were young *we kinda use* both dialect and
	We use a bit of both dialect and
	English.
Researcher	do you believe that there are things that you can better express using the dialect?
Kavita	you know ... they wouldn't understand it and we would have to explain what it is. One of the words is "*Jumbie*" which is ghost...

> we would have to explain how it worked... it just doesn't mean ghost. It is so much more, around the culture of ghost and what the *jumbie* is, is not the same thing...

Kavita in Example 8: Kavita's use of certain words shows two features; the use of a *Caribbean Creole English* word –*kinda*- which has quite an easy translation to *Standard English* –a bit of- and the use of a *Caribbean Creole English* word –*Jumbie*- which is more difficult to translate to *Standard English* because its meaning is tied up in so many cultural practices and traditions.

Theme 3. *Code Switching to Maintain Caribbean Creole English Identity*

To maintain identity means to preserve the characteristics that portray the distinctive personality of a *Caribbean Creole English* individual. One main characteristic of a *Caribbean Creole English* individual is the ability to speak their native dialect. A switch to *Caribbean Creole English* means a display of that distinctive personality.

Example 9. Erica

Researcher	Do you think that you speak like the people from Jamaica, right now?
Erica	*Ah, nex Jamaican living in Canada would* **(another Jamaican who lives in Canada would)**

Erica in Example 9: Erica felt that another Jamaican in Canada can identify her (Erica's) Jamaican identity by her speech.

Example 10. Andrea

Andrea	I can still hear, I'm not sure if this is the correct way to answer OK but, the accent I can still hear that part, but I think that I do speak the, but, as I say the accent I can still hear the way that I spoke in Jamaica.
Researcher	Do you believe that you use any Jamaican words at all?
Andrea	Yeah, but just in the home really, or with someone who is from Jamaica or who understands.

Andrea in Example 10: This is what Andrea said about her dialect. In addition, she felt that it was good that she used a bit of her Jamaican-English with her children from time to time because she felt that her Jamaican culture was part of their heritage.

Theme 4. *Code Switching when Attention is Relaxed*

Information in the literature review suggests that speaking tends to be an unconscious activity. So that, like speaking, code switching may also be an unconscious activity. Because the *Caribbean Creole English* speaker has the ability to communicate in two dialects there may be the tendency to switch code as long as there is no conscious effort to use one particular dialect.

Example 11. Erica

Researcher	Do you think you say any words like you did in your home country?
Erica	yeh most of the time when I am home, you know, I know that I definitively talk like I'm in Jamaica because it is more relaxing, *yuh* know *yuh* don't have to think about it *yuh jus talk yuh* "th" **(you know you don't have to think about it, you just speak your "th")**
	starts with a "d" *yuh* say "*dem*" instead of "them" *yuh doe put yuh* **(uses the "d" sound you say "dem" instead of "them" you don't put your)**
	tongue between yuh teet, teeth and is like "th" "th" "th"... **(tongue between your teeth, it is like "th", "th", "th",)**

In Example 11 Erica is suggesting that she switches to Jamaican dialect when her attention is relaxed.

Example 12. Roanne

| Roanne | … and I think that, too, it is more than jus language it is foods we eat it's am... the thing we might talk *ol-talk* home talk you know. I **(casual talk)** |

made over the summer some apple *cou-chee-la and ah yuh know*
(cou-chee-la and I, do you know what apple cou…)

what is apple cou, you know what it is?
(Do you know what it is?)

(Cou-chee-la is the name of a Trinidadian dish, there is no real
Canadian equivalent)

Roanne Example 12: In this section of the interview, there was a lot of laughter as

Roanne shared a joke with the researcher (Example 12). This comment she made

concerning her constant code switching during the interview. She said:

> "There are times when I would deliberately switch and there are other times like
>
> even throughout this interview depending on what I'm talking about it would
>
> come and go, you know. But also too I feel very comfortable with you so I can
>
> slip into it very easily, whereas if I were doing a similar interview with someone
>
> else I might not do that."

Theme 5. *Code Switching to Establish Standard English Identity*

A *Standard English* identity is very import for the *Caribbean Creole English*

speaker. Being able to establish a *Standard English* identity using dialect means that the

Caribbean Creole English individual can adopt the dialect of a *Standard English* speaker.

It has already been established that the *Standard English* dialect has many positive

attributes and rewards attached to it. A *Caribbean Creole English* speaker will switch to

the *Standard English* dialect in any instant that s/he may feel that use of this particular

dialect may produce the necessary benefits.

Example 13. Erica

Researcher	When you say you had other kids what, exactly, do you mean?
Erica	*we had ah nursery ah nursery and ah after school program* so we **(we had a nursery, a nursery and an after school program)** had lots of other kids coming and so I was using Brian's use of English to influence the kids in our environment.

Erica Example 13: In this part of the interview Erica felt that it was important for the nursery school that she was in charge of to strengthen the children's knowledge and skills in the Standard English dialect.

Example 14. Roanne

In this example both the researcher and the interviewee are laughing at this point at a joke that the interviewee was making.

Researcher	*what she say?*
Roanne	some type of "ANCHAR"
Researcher	she say "ANCHAR"?
Roanne	*Very proper, very proper, so she pronounce all de* **(The girl is using Standard English pronunciation)** *language and so am, you know I tol her how to make it, and she* **(So I told her how to make it and she said, "where do you buy** *saying 'where you buying mustard oil? I say by Bennies, and de*

the mustard oil," "at Bennies" I said, "and the masala,

masala, where you getting masala, by Bennies and I feel like you

where do you get the masala?" "at Bennies and...)

really have given up part of your heritage.

Roanne Example 14: (The joke here is that the person the interviewee was speaking to

has pronounced a dialect word which has no real *Standard English* translation using

Canadian English. As a result the person's speech sounds peculiar.) In Example 14 as

Roanne continues to talk about her heritage as a Canadian/Trinidadian in the interview

she switches back to *Standard English*.

Example 15. Raj

Researcher	do you feel you speak that dialect here in Canada?
Raj	No I speak *proper English* as much as possible in Canada because **Standard English**
	ah doh know its *jus* everybody mostly Canadian tend to speak to a **I don't know it's just**
	certain level of English to speak *proper English* I jus try to mimic **Standard English**
	that so that I fall inline I am not the odd one out.

Raj Example 15: In Example 15 Raj identified himself as a Standard English speaker

especially here in Canada.

Chapter V

Discussion

Discussion of research findings

In this section I present first a short summary of answers to the four research questions. Second, I give an analysis of answer to each question. Third, I discuss the limitations of the study and then fourth I discuss implications of my study for further research.

The goal of this research was to answer the following questions: (1) What are the speaking and writing issues that exist in a Standard English educational environment for speakers of a non-standard dialect of English? (2) Is there evidence of code switching in the speaking and writing behaviours of *Caribbean Creole English* speakers? (3)What functions do code-switching serve for *Caribbean Creole English* speakers? And (4) will non-standard dialect of English speakers' awareness of code switching affect their language choice? I consider that this study addressed these questions and shed light on *Caribbean Creole English* speakers' oral language and literacy practices; and the study has yielded information that suggests how the use of an oral non-standard English dialect impacts the ability to acquire literacy in *Standard English*. The study also provided insight into the literacy practices of *Caribbean Creole English* speakers who live in a *Standard English-speaking* context.

The information from this study indicates that there are literacy issues that that need to be addressed in the *Standard English* educational environment for the *Caribbean Creole English* speaker. 1) When considering speech issues first, *Caribbean Creole English* speakers code switch as they speak; second, the participants were not always

aware when they switched code; third, participants had the tendency to switch code to *Caribbean Creole English* when they were relaxed or there was an ease in their attention to their speech; and fourth, participants switched code to convey meaning. 2) When considering writing issues firstly, the measure of lexical density indicated that all the participants were writing within the spoken language range of lexical density; and secondly, features in the participants writing that would be considered as mistakes in *Standard English* writing were identified by Nero (2000) as *Caribbean Creole English* features. These results appear to indicate that speaking and writing issues that exist for *Caribbean Creole English* speakers in the *Standard English* education environment concerned mainly issues that exist from using the appropriate dialect situationally. This suggests that the participants were code switching at an inappropriate time.

Evidence of code switching was identified in the participants' speech and writing. In speech participants code switch in vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. When the participants' writing was observed, evidence of code switching was seen. In their *Standard English* writing the participants used zero inflection for subject/verb agreement, zero copulas, zero inflection for plural, and zero inflection for tense. These features may have been considered correct if the participants were writing in their non-standard dialect but these features are not accurate use of Standard English text. The information gathered here suggests that the *Caribbean Creole English* speaker code switching may cause them to be viewed as using incorrect *Standard English* dialect features as they spoke and wrote.

There seemed to be five main reasons for code switching. Participants code switch to maintain community life, to convey meaning, to maintain *Caribbean Creole*

English identity, when attention was relaxed, and to establish a *Standard English* identity. The functions that code switching served here were: to identify with a particular character, to convey meaning, and to communicate more effectively.

Code switching for the *Caribbean Creole English* speaker seemed to be an important means of communicating. However, lack of awareness of code switching seemed to be an issue both in speaking and writing because lack of awareness meant that the inappropriate code, in some instances, may have been used.

Speaking and writing issues that exist in a Standard English educational Environment.

This result of the analysis seems to be consistent with Nero's (2000) research. Awareness of code switching seems to be an important issue in my research because an individual being unaware of code switching meant that they used the inappropriate dialect in certain contexts. The participants felt that use of inappropriate dialect brought negative impressions and attitudes about the speaker; this idea was also supported by Koch, Gross, and Kolts's (2001) study.

The results also indicate that switching to *Caribbean Creole English* in a *Standard English* environment can cause challenges for the *Caribbean Creole English* student because the non-standard dialect features of *Caribbean Creole English* in both spoken and written dialect are considered incorrect and may be seen as hindrances to pupils acquiring *Standard English* (Williamson & Hardman, 1997). In addition, participants in my research realized the negative perception of non-standard dialect of

English speakers who use non-standard vernacular or code switch in violation to social norms (Koch, Gross, & Kolts, 2001).

The research findings also appear to indicate that all the participants were writing within their spoken language range as indicated by the measure of lexical density of 55% or below (Desmond, Berry, & Lewkowicz, 1995). Findings of Nero's (2000) study also support these conclusions.

Evidence of code switching in speaking and writing.

Similar to Nero's study (2000) evidence of code switching was found in both speech and written text. In speech, individuals code switch in vocabulary, grammar, and punctuation (Nelson, 1990). In written *Standard English* dialect text code switching was evident by the use of zero inflection to indicate plural, tense, and subject/verb agreement; and also by the use of zero copulas. Nero (2000) research also indicated these features in *Caribbean Creole English* individuals' writing; Williamson and Hardman (1997) also indicate that some of these features were present in other black non-standard dialect of English speakers. In their research, evidence of non-standard dialect features were identified in the participants' use of inflection to indicate plural, tense, and subject/verb agreement.

Functions that code switching serve for participants.

In this research, code switching seems to serve five main functions for *Caribbean Creole English* speakers. These individuals code switched to: (1) maintain community life, (2) to convey meaning, (3) when attention was relaxed, (4) to maintain their

Caribbean Creole English identity, and (5) to establish a *Standard English* identity. These functions and their relations to previous research are discussed in the following section.

First, considering the main functions that code switching serves for *Caribbean Creole English* individuals, findings from the research suggest that they switched code to maintain community life; these findings are supported by Nelson's (1990) research. Participants felt that their dialect was one of the unique characteristics that connected them; this outcome from the study seemed to be also supported by Blom and Gumperz's (1986) study.

Second, *Caribbean Creole English* individuals code switch to convey meaning. Conveying meaning could be placed in two categories: 1) conveying meaning using a particular dialect because certain meanings are wrapped up in that dialect and its culture, and 2) convey meaning using a particular dialect because the correct words may not be known in another dialect. Findings of this study support the notion of meaning being wrapped up in a particular dialect; findings of Nelson (1990) study also seem to support this. Findings of this study seem to also suggest that individuals switch code to convey meaning because the correct words may not be known in a particular dialect; Reyes (2004) study also seems to support this.

Third, findings from this research suggest participant's code switched when their attention was relaxed. Participants had the tendency to switch code to their native dialect in instances where there was no reason to use a particular dialect. Findings of Collins (2007) seem to suggest this finding; information in this study provide evidence that participants agreed that using their native code was easier. Findings of Nelson (1990)

suggest that one of the reasons participants' use this dialect is when they are comfortable with someone; this idea is also supported in my research.

Fourth, findings of my research suggest that *Caribbean Creole English* individuals also code switched to maintain their native identity. Blom & Gumperz's (1986) research also supports this result. On the other hand Myers-Scotton (1976) supports the notion that individuals code switch between English and their native dialect in order to avoid committing to any one identity. Identity shift is therefore an important consideration in the journey between and in the midst of cultural environments.

Fifth, findings of this research suggest that participants seem to code switch to *Standard English* for the purpose of establishing a *Standard English* identity. Findings of Edwards' (1983) research also support this. Findings of Blom and Gumperz (1986) suggests that there are many benefits to establishing oneself with the identity of the standardize dialect of a community. Findings of Edwards (1983) suggests that a code switch to the standard dialect means that the individual has identified themselves as one having social status. Being identified as educated and an aristocrat are also other benefits of being distinguished with a *Standard English* identity.

Awareness of code switching's affect on language choice.

Findings from this study indicate that participants who were more aware of code switching seem to more successful as using the appropriate dialect in different situations. Awareness develops the ability to be flexible dialect users. The results of this study are consistent with earlier research (Blake & Van-Sickle, 2001). In this research, the participants were given activities where they were allowed to communicate in their non-

standard dialect. The participants were then introduced to the appropriate words to be used in Standard English. The results of the study showed that as the participants became more aware of the appropriate words to be used, they switched to the appropriate dialect to communicate.

Results suggest that the individuals who had earlier parental feedback as to the appropriate dialect to use in different instances seem to be the ones who wrote better Standard English text and seemed to be more aware of the appropriate dialect to be used in different circumstances. This result seems to be consistent with earlier research (Weinberger, 1996) carried out on the influence of the home on children's later literacy development. Awareness here appeared to be influenced by the participant's home early home dialect use and initial literacy experiences.

Conclusion of findings

Although some of these hypothesizes were supported by previous research there are factors that need to be considered when examining the findings. The results or conclusions made here may be limited by the subjects selected, researcher bias, measure of lexical density, and boundaries of the definition of code switching.

Limitations

In this section I present the limitations of my research. First, the subjects chosen for the research offer a limitation to the findings. The subjects used in the study were a small number of *Caribbean Creole English* individuals who volunteered to be in the study. These participants fell with in the range of 18 to 45 years. The results of the research may be limited to other individuals with the same or similar characteristics.

Since as a researcher, I am also a *Caribbean Creole English-speaking* individual, the findings of the research may be limited to my own bias. As a researcher with very similar characteristics as the participants, many times I had to caution myself to be careful in reporting what I was hearing or seeing and not what I know to be true of *Caribbean Creole English* individuals' ways of speaking, or acting.

Another limitation to the research was the measure that I used to assess participants' written or spoken dialect. A table of lexical density was used to accomplish this task. One limitation with using a table of lexical density was that certain actions such as repetition of words can give a false result.

The results of the research were also limited to my definition of code switching. As I define code switching, I did not include the dimensions of code switching that considered the alternate use of two dialects for the purpose of indicating social distance from an individual.

Despite these limitations, I believe that the findings of my research are still useful as a means of illuminate the literacy issues that *Caribbean Creole English* speakers face in a *Standard English* educational environment.

Implication for further research

One area that I felt needed further study is the area of awareness of code switching behaviour. Findings from this study and earlier research (Nero, 2001) indicate that there were instances when participants code switched since they thought they were or ought to be using *Standard English*. I thought that participants in my research who had certain early literacy experiences seemed to be more aware of their code switching

behaviour although there were instances where they code switched unconsciously. I found that information from Nero's (2001) research suggested this but neither code switching nor awareness of code switching was directly measured in his research. As a result, I recommend that further research in this area be initiated.

Another area for further research should be directed towards the academic writing style that appeared in *Caribbean Creole English* individual's writing. Findings of this and earlier research (Nero, 2000) indicate that *Caribbean Creole English* individuals may be writing within their spoken language range. This finding seems to predicate the absence of the academic style of writing that is carefully planned and formal that is chiefly characterized by lexical density above 55%. Further research should be conducted in this area and research should be directed towards the main academic writing style that *Caribbean Creole English* individuals develop.

Chapter VI

Summarized Insights

Observations and Recommendations

This study evolved from my desire to gain insight into the non-standard dialect of English speakers' oral language and literacy practices. My main aim was to provide insight into the literacy practices of a specific group of non-standard dialect speakers: *Caribbean Creole English* speakers who live in a *Standard English-speaking* context. I hoped to observe how the use of an oral non-standard dialect impacted individuals' ability to acquire *Standard English.* I felt that such a study could yield an indefinite amount of questions but, for the purpose of this study I focused on only four questions. As I considered together the literature I reviewed, my literacy experiences, and the experiences of the five participants, I gained insights into the questions. Our discussions led to other concerns as well. Information from the participants in the research yielded information on speaking and writing issues that existed for them in a *Standard English* environment. Information from the research also yielded information on code switching behaviour in *Caribbean Creole English* speakers' spoken and written dialect; these code switching behaviours served various functions. The information from the research also yielded information on participants' awareness of their code switching behaviours and how this awareness or lack of awareness affected their situated dialect choices. In this section I will first present a synthesis of the information that I gained about the *Caribbean Creole English* speakers' code switching behaviours in a diagram. Following this, I will present implications and recommendations for further educational practices.

Figure 9.

The code switching behaviour of Caribbean Creole English-speaking individuals

Code switch to Standard English or Caribbean Creole English for community life:
- appropriate dialect used in the community
- dialect associated to group membership
- dialect defines group boundaries
- dialect connected to specific social activities

Reasons for using Standard English

- appropriate for certain contexts
- dialect of discourse for certain developed communities
- gives access to certain privileges
- academic, social, political, and economic progress demands knowledge and use of this dialect

Code switch to Standard English or Caribbean Creole English to convey meaning:
- dialect puts human actions into words
- dialect use to suite context
- sometimes code switching can be unconscious

Code switch to Standard English or Caribbean Creole English for specific identity:
- specific dialect used for identity
- particular dialect use shows social position
- specific dialect use shows affiliation to other individuals
- specific dialect use shows a particular point of view

Code switch to Caribbean Creole English when attention is relaxed:
- it is the dialect used when Caribbean Creole English individuals talk as every-day people
- sometimes code switch here can be unconscious
- there are certain meanings that are specifically connected to this dialect and its related cultural practices

In an attempt to address the first question, the participants were asked questions that yielded information on speaking and writing issues that existed for them in a *Standard English-speaking* environment. First, the participants all admitted that there were instances that they code switched using either *Standard English* or *Caribbean Creole English* as they spoke and wrote. From their experiences they knew that there was a negative stigma associated with their non-standard dialect in a *Standard English* society. They identified that their non-standard dialect was called English but recognized that this English differed from *Standard English* in various ways. Moreover, they were aware of the fact that this non-standard variety of English was given negative names like broken or incorrect English and they were also aware of other negative stigmas associated to this dialect use.

Second, four of the participants felt that they wrote *Standard English* text that reflected an adequate knowledge of written *Standard English.* However, examination of their written artifacts revealed one participants' writing reflected use of *Caribbean Creole English*; the one participant who was uncertain of her *Standard English* writing ability also reflected this same type of text in her writing. The other three participants' writing displayed much more knowledge of *Standard English* written text. However, an analysis of all the participants writing revealed that they all wrote within their spoken language range when the lexical density of their writing was measured.

When the second and third research questions were considered, participants were asked questions which yielded information about their code switching and the functions that this phenomena served in their lives. They identified that both *Standard English* and *Caribbean Creole English* played important functions for them. Both dialects helped to

maintain community life, help them to communicate, aid in identity formation, and in addition, they had the tendency to switch to *Caribbean Creole English* when they were relaxed.

The fourth question yielded information about their awareness of code switching and how their awareness affected their ability to select and use appropriate dialect in different contexts. All the participants admitted that there were instances when they were not aware of code switching. They all acknowledged that there were instances when they used *Caribbean Creole English* and instances where *Standard English* was the more appropriate dialect; however this situation mainly occurred in spoken dialect for most participants. Participants' awareness of appropriate dialect use especially in writing seemed to be influenced by their early literacy experiences.

Caribbean Creole English individuals

Concerning issues that *Caribbean Creole English* individuals face in a *Standard English* environment; first, only in my adult life, after encountering information on dialects, did I realize that there was a difference between the dialect that I spoke and *Standard English.* Some participants admitted to early knowledge of the two dialects, and information from their conversation and written artifacts indicated a more adequate knowledge of *Standard English* and appropriate dialect use in different contexts. Information from the study suggests that participants who did not have this knowledge did not seem to be as aware of the different dialects especially in their written text. Assistance in identifying differences appears to be helpful toward sorting out the nuances

of language dialect and creating awareness based on differences rather than labels of right and wrong.

Second, I recall from my own experiences that reading and writing *Standard English* text was very difficult for me. Many of my teachers' comments on my writing indicated that they knew that I needed some type of assistance but what to do about it was not part of instruction. One participant expressed similar experiences and the participant's *Standard English* writing revealed an extended amount of *Caribbean Creole English* influence. The other participant whose writing revealed *Caribbean Creole English* features could not recall early literacy experiences, but did state that parental literacy input was weak due to their inadequate knowledge of Standard English and the focus on demands of the home rather than on literacy acquisition.

Third, in my home I was introduced to literacy experiences; however, I later understood that my early literacy experiences differed from early literacy experiences that fostered *Standard English* dialect development in speaking and writing. Information obtained from some of the participants suggested that these early literacy experiences were part in their home environments. Those participants whose home environment reflected reading activities, writing activities and awareness of differences in dialects as part of their daily home experiences, exhibited better knowledge of written *Standard English* and more awareness of differences in *Standard English* and *Caribbean Creole English* dialects.

Fourth, in my earlier years I recalled the messages that were relayed in my home concerning education and its link to social and economic advancement. In school these messages seemed to be reinforced by a system that required knowledge of a specific

dialect necessary for advancement. Information from the participants suggested that they were all aware of the connection between *Standard English* dialect and progress in society.

Recommendations for the Caribbean Creole English individuals

As a first recommendation, Caribbean *Creole English* individuals should be taught about dialect and dialect differences. Adequate knowledge in dialect differences should help create and increase awareness of dialect differences. The literature reveals that *Standard English* has been a dialect that *Caribbean Creole English* individuals have been exposed to in some manner or other all their lives. They have a lot of knowledge of *Standard English* but their knowledge may not be enough to adequately impact their ability to sufficiently function as a literate *Standard English* individual. Many influences exist that prevent this dialect and its corresponding literacy practices from being a natural part of *Caribbean Creole English* speakers' life. Their history of language contact exposed them to inadequate *Standard English* dialect contact. Furthermore, *Caribbean Creole English* is made of various varieties of non-standard English dialect. Making a conscious link between non-standard dialect and Standard English for language learning purposes may create a great challenge. Many *Caribbean Creole English* speakers fail to acquire adequate literacy levels in *Standard English.* This inadequacy may have been passed down over the years from one generation to the next. Enhanced education should cause the situation mentioned previously to reverse.

Studies show that all families in Western societies are involved in some type of reading and writing activities. Individual's home, family, and community are significant

contributors to their literacy development. For the *Caribbean Creole English* speakers, some literacy development would have occurred in *Caribbean Creole English;* however, they need to be made aware of literacy practice in *Standard English.* As a result of *Caribbean Creole English* speakers' literacy practices, they may be communicating meaning in a different manner from what is expected in a *Standard English* educational system. The literature suggests that communicating meaning and engaging in literacy activities is influenced by the experiences that individuals have in their early life. Communicating meaning is influenced by an unconscious meaning making system. When individuals enter school they already have an established communicating system. Creating ample opportunity for *Caribbean Creole English* speakers to be aware of their communication should create a better opportunity for them to be successful in the *Standard English* educational environment.

The literature explicated in Chapter II reveals that a certain social status exists for both *Standard English* and *Caribbean Creole English. Standard English* seems to be connected to economic, educational, political, and social advancement and as a result a certain level of education in *Standard English* is vital for any individual who wants to progress. This translates into a tenet, that the *Caribbean Creole English* speaker must become proficient in *Standard English* in order to advance in society.

Educators

Individuals in education: administrators, principals, and teachers are significant contributors to pupils' educational experiences. I recall as I progressed through school that my teachers' encouragement played a significant role in motivating my efforts

towards achieving success in school. On the other hand, many negative remarks written on my assignments caused me great discouragement. Participants who recalled school experiences, remembered mainly the experiences that motivated or discouraged their progress. Information given by participants in the research suggests that *Caribbean Creole English* speakers belong to a unique community which has specific cultural practices and distinct characteristics. All these characteristics will affect the meaning they give or get as they read, speak, and write. Educators' lack of awareness and understanding of the dialect differences may cause them to misinterpret the needs of *Caribbean Creole English* speakers.

Distinct characteristics are responsible for giving the *Caribbean Creole English* speakers their unique identity. I recall from my childhood experiences there were many negative characteristics associated with my *Caribbean Creole English* identity. Information from the participants suggests that they, too, had similar negative experiences. Information from all the participants suggests that their *Caribbean Creole English* identity helped establish who they were, but a *Standard English* identity was important for their success. This may be one of the reasons that causes code switching to play such a very vital role in their lives. Through code switching, *Caribbean Creole English* identity can reflect one identity in one instance and another on another occasion; however, such a situation suggests the rejection of one's true self in order to gain success. Educators' lack of awareness of learners' needs and different concepts of literacy reinforces this dilemma for the Caribbean *Creole English* individual.

Information from the participants also suggests that those who were able to successfully adopt a *Standard English* identity and its related characteristic literacy

practices were more successful. These literacy practices were not just habits that the participants adopted but were part of their everyday lives.

Recommendations for the Educators

In a proposal to educators, I suggest that they learn more about the language needs of learners, and different concepts of literacy. This awareness will include the needs of *Caribbean Creole English* speakers. Awareness should cause educators to have a better understanding of *Caribbean Creole English* speakers and their literacy needs. The *Caribbean Creole English-speaking* individuals have in many instances been viewed through the lenses of defect, deficit, disruption, and/or medical models. As a result, their dialect has been called poor or broken English and they have been put into second language classes which imply that they have a distinctive lack of knowledge in Standard English. They have been taught that they have language problems, and have been referred to special education services and speech services. This action suggests that an important part of their identity is viewed as an imperfection. Education in the specific language needs of Caribbean Creole English-speaking students should produce a vast change in how matters of dialect are assessed and addressed in schools.

Educators' lack of knowledge may also contribute to *Caribbean Creole English* speakers' resistance to identify positively with their *Caribbean Creole English* identity and its corresponding literacy practices. Research suggests that these individuals have their own distinctive literacy practices. These literacy practices can be encouraged in the educational environment and can also be used as links to introduce individuals to new literacy practices.

Educators need to encourage pupils not to just carry out literacy activities in order to successfully complete an assignment but to make literacy practices, which will give them success, part of their everyday life. The literature suggests that literacy occurs best as a natural series of events that are part of individuals' customs and way of life.

Researchers

Researchers contribute significant information that affects education policy; and as a result these education policies help to determine what occurs in the classroom. Over the years I experienced a lot of challenges as I attempted to write text according to the conventions of *Standard English.* One participant admitted to having the same dilemma, information from the other participants suggests that writing *Standard English* text had many challenges. All the participants displayed a certain level of lexical density which suggests that they all wrote within their spoken language range of lexical density. Some researchers purport that research participants have not developed the style of writing that is associated with carefully planned formal *Standard English* writing. I think that this lexical density may also imply that the *Caribbean Creole English* speakers' text is influenced by their oral language tradition, meaning that the contexts of speaking play such a vital role in their life that it influences their style of writing.

Recommendations for the Researchers

My recommendation for researchers is that more research needs to be completed which will inform about the *Standard English* text writing ability of *Caribbean Creole English* speakers. The literature suggests that writing according to the conventions of

Standard English is a challenge to *Caribbean Creole English* speakers. The literature also indicates that many *Caribbean Creole English* fail to achieve an adequate level of *Standard English* literacy. Ability in the two dialects involves added education and added value; however more time is needed for learners to develop dialectically, much as is expected when students learn two languages. The *Caribbean Creole English-speaking* individual has a different dialect, culture, system of making meaning, and identity to *Standard English* speakers'. However despite all this the dialect, culture, system of making meaning and identity of a *Standard English* has always and will always be a significant and vital part of the *Caribbean Creole English* speakers' life. Research in the *Caribbean Creole English* speakers' writing will reveal information about writing strengths and challenges that will impact these speakers' writing ability.

This study focused on gaining insight into the oral language and literacy practices of *Caribbean Creole English* speakers who live in a *Standard English-speaking* context. In this research I have observed how the use of a non-standard dialect impacted individuals' ability to acquire *Standard English.* The research also observed the code switching practices of the participants. The participants' non-standard dialect presented many issues for them as they spoke and wrote *Standard English.* Code switching seems to serve various functions in their lives as they live in a context that views distinct characteristics of their identity in a negative light. Code switching helped them to use appropriate dialect in some instances however unconscious code switching, at times, seems to be responsible for inappropriate dialect use. A *Standard English* identity and its corresponding literacy practices were vital to *Caribbean Creole English* speakers'

success and advancement. However, *Caribbean Creole English* speakers' identity and

corresponding literacy practices were important to their sense of self worth.

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APPENDICES

Interview protocol

This appendix contains interview questions and some prompts that were used to help

each subject focus on the information that he/she wanted to give; and to make clearer

some of his/her thoughts.

1. Tell me about yourself:

   ➢ What is your name?
   ➢ What is your occupation?
   ➢ Are you married?
   ➢ How long have you been living in Canada?

2. Tell me about your home life as a child:

   ➢ Could your parents read English?
   ➢ Could your parents write English?
   ➢ What type of reading activities did you do at home?
   ➢ What type of writing activities did you do at home?

3. Tell me about your educational back round:

   ➢ What school did you go to as a child?
   ➢ In what country did you attend that school?
   ➢ What secondary education do you have?
   ➢ In what country?
   ➢ Do you have college or university level of education?
   ➢ In what country did you have this education?

4. Tell me about your school life:

   ➢ Did you enjoy school?
   ➢ What was/were your favorite subject/subjects?
   ➢ Why was/were this/those your favorite subject/subjects?
   ➢ Were there any subjects that were hard for you?
   ➢ What do you think made them hard?
   ➢ Were there any subjects that were easy?
   ➢ What do you think made them easy?

5. Tell me about your reading activities:

  - ➢ Do you like reading?
  - ➢ What type of books do you like to read?
  - ➢ Do you have a favorite author?
  - ➢ Why is this your favourite author?
  - ➢ Are there any things that are difficult for you in reading?
  - ➢ What do you think makes it difficult?
  - ➢ Is there anything about reading that is quite easy for you?
  - ➢ What do you think makes it easy?

6. Tell me about your writing activities:

  - ➢ What did you think of the finished product when you write?
  - ➢ Do you feel that you use the correct words?
  - ➢ Do you feel that you put the words together correctly?
  - ➢ Do you feel the way that you wrote help you convey exactly what you mean?
  - ➢ What things are easy for you when you write?
  - ➢ Why do you think this is easy?
  - ➢ What things are hard for you when you write?
  - ➢ What do you think makes these things hard?

7. Tell me about your spoken language:

  - ➢ How would you describe the language that spoke in you home country?
  - ➢ How would you describe the language that you speak now?
  - ➢ Do you think you speak like the people from your home country?
  - ➢ Do you think you say any words like the people from your home country?
  - ➢ Do you think you say any sentences like the people from your home country?
  - ➢ Do you think you speak English like Canadian people do?