Colloquium at SS 16, University of Limerick, 6-8 July 2006

1. Title of Colloquium

The Sociolinguistics of Orthography

2. Convenors

Prof. Sally Johnson
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3. Participants and titles of papers

Jannis Androutsopoulos
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'Script Romanization on the Internet: the case of Greek.'

Susan Dray
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'Contributions to orthographic change from "the street": uses and representations of nonstandard Creole forms in Jamaican roadside texts.'

Alexandra Jaffe
California State University, Long Beach, USA
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'Transcription in Sociolinguistics: Nonstandard Orthography, Variation and Discourse'

Sally Johnson
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'The iconography of orthography: the visual representation of the 1996 reform of German spelling in the news magazine, *Der Spiegel*.'

Suzanne Wertheim
University of Maryland, USA
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'Reclamation, Revalorization, and re-Tatarization via changing Tatar orthographies.'

Mark Sebba
Lancaster University, UK
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Respondent.

4. Organisation of the colloquium

The colloquium will consist of five 30 min. presentations. These will be followed by a concluding 30 min. session led by the respondent, who will present a critical summary of the papers and chair a brief discussion session. The language of the colloquium will be English. All papers will have been circulated prior to the colloquium itself and read by all participants.

5. Order of speakers

1. Alexandra Jaffe
2. Susan Dray
3. Suzanne Wertheim
4. Sally Johnson
5. Jannis Androutsopoulos

6. Colloquium abstract

For many years, the dominant view of orthography has been that of a neutral, technical accomplishment whose primary function is little more than the 'reduction of speech to writing'. Yet inspired by Street's (1984) now classic distinction between 'autonomous' and 'ideological' views of literacy, it has recently become clear how an autonomous, context-free approach to orthography similarly masks the contingent and ideological nature of orthographic practices more generally. Over the past decade or so, this recognition has led to a burgeoning interest in the cultural, social and political aspects of orthography, including not least the creation and revision of writing systems (e.g. Jaffe 2000; Johnson 2005). Yet despite of the volume of work undertaken, research in this area remains surprisingly fragmented, scattered across a range of disparate journals and books, and without any coherent identity as a focus for sociolinguistic study in its own right. The aim of this colloquium is to bring together a group of researchers whose work on different aspects of orthography has led them

to explore questions of spelling and punctuation in a range of political, cultural and linguistic contexts. Here we will be presenting our most recent work that is itself informed by a number of theoretical approaches drawn from *inter alia* sociolinguistics, (critical) discourse analysis, literacy studies and linguistic anthropology, particularly work on language ideologies. By presenting our ideas in this structured format, we aim to explore the ways in which we might begin to move towards both a more coherent theoretical framework for the sociolinguistic study of orthography.

References

Jaffe, Alexandra (ed.) (2000) Non-standard orthography and non-standard speech. Theme issue, *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 4 (4).

Johnson, Sally (2005) *Spelling Trouble? Language, Ideology and the Reform of German Orthography.* Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Street, Brian (1984) *Literacy in Theory and Practice*. Cambridge: CUP.

7. Abstracts of contributors (max 300 words each)

Alexandra Jaffe

Transcription in Sociolinguistics: Nonstandard Orthography, Variation and Discourse

This presentation focuses on the connection between orthographic variation in transcription and processes of social identification, differentiation and stratification. Following a line of argument opened by Dennis Preston (1982), it examines the political and ideological nature of nonstandard orthographic representations of speech and how it is related to the larger issue of how writing practices reflect and reproduce sociolinguistic hierarchies. The paper begins with a review of (1) categories of nonstandard spellings found both in academic transcripts and popular representations of speech, and (2) research on the production and interpretation of nonstandard spellings. The former includes *eye dialect* forms; *allegro forms* like "wanna" that reflect fast or casual pronunciations; *dialect respellings* and *prosodic spellings*. Research on (2) shows that on the one hand, nonstandard orthographic practices can be powerful tools of self-representation and markers of in-group identity. At the same time, they invariably carry sociolinguistic stigma. With this strong risk of stigma in mind, the rest of the presentation explores the sociolinguistic information value of nonstandard orthography in transcriptions with respect to variation and its predictability, and with respect to principles of consistency. This discussion shows that the ideological consequences of using nonstandard spellings in the representation of others have to be understood with reference to specific, situated discursive contexts of production and interpretation/consumption. This raises complex questions for linguists relative to their relationship to the speakers that they represent, and with respect to the multiple purposes and audiences for their transcriptions.

Reference:

Preston, Dennis R. (1982) 'Ritin 'Fowklower Daun 'Rong: Folklorists' failure in phonology. *Journal of American Folklore* 95(377): 304-326.

Sally Johnson
'The iconography of orthography: the visual representation of the 1996 reform of German spelling in the news magazine, Der Spiegel.'

The recent reform of German orthography is a prime example of what Blommaert (1999) refers to as a 'language ideological debate'. In such contexts, the close analysis of material texts is central to any attempt to understand the discursive struggles that are constitutive of the debate in question. That said, it is relatively unusual to find such texts in visual form. This paper explores one such example, namely the front cover of Der Spiegel news magazine from October 1996, published at a time when disputes surrounding the reform of German were at their most intense (Johnson, 2005). Drawing on Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996, 2001) approach to the analysis of visual/multimodal images with respect to the representation of social actors, modality markers and image composition, the paper will show how the Spiegel cover employs a range of semiotic means in its depiction of, and contribution to, the dispute over German spelling. Of particular interest is the use of visual resources as a way of linking the dispute - both inter-textually and inter-discursively - to the German revolutionary upheavals of 1848/9.

References

Blommaert, Jan (ed.) (1999) *Language Ideological Debates*. Berlin: de Gruyter.

Johnson, Sally (2005) *Spelling Trouble: Language, Ideology and the Reform of German Orthography*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Kress, Gunther and Theo van Leeuwen (1996) *Reading Images: the Grammar of Visual Design*. London: Routledge.

Kress, Gunther and Theo van Leeuwen (2001) *Multimodal Discourse: The Modes and Media of Contemporary Communication*. London: Arnold.

Suzanne Wertheim
Reclamation, Revalorization, and Re-Tatarization via Changing Tatar Orthographies

The Tatar intelligentsia and government of post-Soviet Tatarstan are engaged in a sub-state nation building project involving the reclamation, revalorization, and re-Tatarization of both the Tatar language and Tatarstan. These attempts to reclaim pre-Soviet Tatar regional dominance have expression on the institutional and individual levels, and are articulated in multiple ways, many of which are attempts to control the form and use of Tatar. With the 1990 ascent of an ethnically Tatar government at the republic level, we find "promotive" language policies and the conscious and sometimes legislated expansion of Tatar's functional domains; Tatar is now one of the republic's two official languages, and Tatar language study is compulsory in primary and secondary school. The most prominent language ideology in post-Soviet Tatar discourse is a "discourse of purity," with a variety of "pure" Tatar that is maximally distinct from Russian as its explicit and implicit ideal; "pure" Tatar is de-Russified Tatar. One institutional post-Soviet Tatar purification movement involves the de-Russification of the lexicon, an attempt to undo the 1930s "enrichment" of Tatar vocabulary with Russian words that replaced Arabic and Persian loanwords. Another institutional purification movement, one that is highly politicized, is the attempted shift from the current Cyrillic alphabet, nearly identical to the one used for Russian and imposed upon the Tatar language in the 1930s, to a Latin-based alphabet nearly identical to that of modern Turkish. The new

orthography was approved by the Tatar Republic government in 1999 and implementation was to start in 2001, but after contentious debate and inflammatory rhetoric, it was made illegal by 2002 federal legislation that declared Cyrillic the only acceptable alphabet for government languages of the Russian Federation. This talk examines the political and symbolic uses of Tatar orthographies in post-Soviet Tatarstan and the ideologies and meanings embedded in the letters themselves.