

***Off widd de spellin ov werdz: A Sociolinguistic  
Approximation to Respelling Practices  
A Case Study of *Scouse Alice****

**Azler García Palomino**

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Supervisor: Eva Delgado Lavín

Faculty of Arts

Department of English and German Philology and  
Translation and Interpreting

## Abstract

A relatively uninvestigated topic in the literature (Sebba, 2007, p. 12), spelling variation is an interdisciplinary field interpretable as serving the purpose of revaluing the non-standard identities corresponding to the linguistic varieties represented by variant spellings. I aim to study the close connections between the encoding of sociophonetic variation through non-standard spelling variants and the social evaluations of a vernacular variety, and to consolidate the typology of non-standard spelling variants by contributing more examples. To that end, I will divide this paper into two parts. Firstly, I will deal with some theoretical preliminaries to the study of non-standard spelling from a variationist and social-practice perspective while also providing a classification of the most relevant non-standard spelling categories: *eye dialect*, *allegro forms*, and *dialect respellings*. And secondly, I will analyse the respelling practices in a chapter of *Scouse Alice* so as to measure the incidence and significance of the non-standard Liverpool English phonological features represented and the sociolinguistic attitudes towards them using a corpus-based approach.

In so doing, I will answer two research questions by investigating 1) the salience of Liverpool English sound features at the level of consonants and vowels and 2) the patterns of representation and distribution of these features through respellings. The empirical findings reported here show that, even though respelling practices in *Scouse Alice* are not entirely consistent, there is a noticeable tendency to regularise the systematic differentiation of certain features through spelling in a given social context, especially via *eye dialect*, in an attempt to present information about the phonological rather than just social aspects of Liverpool speech. This calls for a conceptual reformulation of the typology of non-standard spellings (Jaffe, 2008, pp. 165-166). From the results, I conclude that salience in the non-standard spellings representative of more regionalised features such as stopping of /θ, ð/, the NURSE-SQUARE merger, and retention of /ŋg/ in stressed syllables may indicate how significant and prestigious local features are becoming in Liverpool English. However, frequency and quality of respellings are not the only factors to take into consideration when assessing salience since availability of graphic resources is also determining.

*Keywords:* non-standard spelling, *Scouse Alice*, Liverpool English, corpus-based study, sociolinguistic salience, eye dialect

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## Table of contents

<b>Abstract</b>	i
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	ii
<b>1. Introduction</b>	1
<b>2. The Sociolinguistics of Spelling</b>	2
2.1. Spelling as a Sociolinguistic Phenomenon	2
2.2. Practising Spelling in Society	6
2.3. Classification of Non-Standard Spellings	8
<b>3. Study of Respellings in Scouse Alice</b>	11
3.1. Data and Methodology	11
3.2. Results and Discussion	12
<b>4. Conclusion</b>	22
<b>References</b>	25
<b>Appendix. Corpused Text and Translation</b>	31

## 1. Introduction

Spelling variation is a relatively unexplored field of enquiry that intersects several linguistic disciplines, namely, sociolinguistics, graphemics, and phonology. Indeed, it is only thanks to recent studies on the socio-cultural significance of spelling variants within a particular community and a growing interest in the social distance between voices behind written and spoken language that spelling variation has managed to develop an analytical framework (Jaffe, 2008, pp. 163-166; Macaulay, 1991, pp. 280-282; Sebba, 2007, p. 12). Therefore, respelling practices can be understood as overt linguistic, and by extension, symbolic endeavours to revalorise —positively or negatively— targeted varieties, which represent a particular voice and identity within a speech community.

In this respect, my aim in this paper is twofold: 1) to examine the dialectics between non-standard language practices in the form of spelling and attitudes towards vernaculars, and 2) to expand the definitions of already existing theoretical categorisations of non-standard spellings by adopting a corpus-based approach to a socio-discourse analysis of the respelling practices in a passage from *Scouse Alice*. This novel is entirely respelled so that it accommodates the non-standard sound inventory of the *accent*<sup>1</sup> of English spoken in Liverpool, a variety which “is rather clearly distinct from that of the neighbouring areas” (Wells, 1982b, p. 371) and “amongst the most negatively stereotyped” (Watson & Clark, 2012, p. 298). To that end, I will divide this paper into two main parts.

Section 2, devoted to sociolinguistic approaches to spelling, will be further subdivided into three subsections so as to contextualise my analysis within a variationist framework. In section 2.1, I will lay the foundation for the conception of spelling variation as a valid indicator of sociolinguistic phenomena, as the same standard-oriented parameters and relationships are operative at all linguistic levels (pronunciation, grammar, and lexis). Next, in section 2.2 I will review more recent works on spelling that deal with attitudes towards it and its informational value determined by participation in common practices within a community. On the basis of Jaffe’s typology (2008, p. 165), section 2.3 will outline and

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<sup>1</sup> According to the standard dialectological definition of accent, the term refers to language variation in pronunciation, i.e. phonetics and phonology (e. g. Chambers & Trudgill, 1998, p. 5; Meyerhoff, 2015, p. 31).

interpret a taxonomy of non-standard spelling variants: *eye dialect*, *allegro forms*, and *dialect respellings*.

In section 3.1, I will outline the data under consideration as well as the socio-discourse methodology that I will be employing for the exploration of spelling variance in *Scouse Alice*. After that, I will move on to section 3.2, in which I will discuss my findings and quantify the relevance of the corpused material in order to derive phonological and sociolinguistic conclusions by answering these two research questions:

- **RQ1:** What are the most sociolinguistically salient Liverpool English features as represented through spelling in the passage?
- **RQ2:** What are the most prominent spelling patterns of representation of the features in question?

From both a qualitative and quantitative perspective, I focus on four consonantal and two vocalic variables typical of Liverpool English (henceforth LE) in RQ1, and on numerous *eye dialect* spellings in RQ2. Based on the literature (Honeybone & Watson, 2013; Jaffe & Walton, 2000; Preston, 1982), I predict a) high rates for *eye-dialect*-class spellings due to their socially informative value, b) a correlation between non-standard respelling patterns and standard orthographic combinations recognisable for users of the language, and c) not full consistency in the manufacturing of spellings for each feature so as to influence reader interpretation.

## 2. The Sociolinguistics of Spelling

### 2.1. Spelling as a Sociolinguistic Phenomenon

Although it is a controversial topic in sociolinguistics due to its socio-cultural implications, the notion of *standard variety* refers to the linguistic variety that has undergone *standardisation*, the normalising process whereby a given variety against which all other language use is compared acquires social recognition often with the aid of official institutions (Finegan, 2006, p. 14; Lippi-Green, 2012, pp. 61-62; Milroy & Milroy, 1999, p. 19). When standardisation extends onto several varieties, the term *pluricentric language* is used, which

is characterised as a language with “more than one normatively installed national standard variety” (Auer, 2013, p. 19).

Moreover, according to Clyne (1991, pp. 2-3) and Kristiansen (2013, p. 2), pluricentricity relies on simultaneously functional epicentres primarily contingent on extralinguistic factors like socio-economic power, with varying degrees of acceptability and a set of regularised norms which operate at linguistic levels such as pronunciation, grammar, lexis, and spelling. This is certainly true in the case of English, and more precisely, its present-day spelling since its standard status is divided into two “politically sanctioned” diatopic varieties, British and American English, including the respective use of well-established variants like *honour/honor*, *centre/center*, *monologue/monolog*, and *aeroplane/airplane* (Rutkowska, 2017, p. 213).

Derivative of “local dialects spoken in centres of commerce and government” (Finegan, 2006, p. 14), a standard variety generally arises from the need for *mutual intelligibility* amongst more than one regional variety through prescriptive forces, namely, uniform grammars, dictionaries, and orthographies. In line with Haugen (1972, pp. 106-109), the standardisation process is typically described as consisting of four not necessarily sequential stages applied in public domains: selection, codification, elaboration, and acceptance. More formally, a variety is selected on the basis of the speech employed by elites and/or influential communities commonly associated with centres of social power so as to meet specific requirements: 1) being conventionally arranged into a systematic code with minimally distinct forms which are appropriate for all groups within the speech community, and 2) elaborating maximally communicative functions for the purpose of elevating the chosen standard to a widely accepted position of public recognition. Following the standardisation stages, the boundaries for what is known as standard and non-standard language use are set by social and linguistic agents concerned with the development, rise, and maintenance of said standard.

Definitions for a *non-standard* or *vernacular variety* have proven to result from the negation of the features acknowledged in Haugen’s four-step interpretation model of standardisation (Murelli, 2011, p. 32). As a matter of fact, some experts (Edwards, 2009, p. 66) understand vernaculars strictly as deviations from the standard norm at any linguistic

level in an attempt to underscore the importance of difference-based approaches to the construction and indexing of social identities through language. By contrast, others (Labov, 1970, pp. 3-4; Milroy & Milroy, 1999, pp. 12-13) advocate a reconfiguration of definitory criteria for vernaculars as fully-fledged linguistic constructs governed by internal relations independent from standards. In denying the existence of a superior, and thus, an inferior variety, however, both perspectives transcend a purely linguistic dimension and consider socio-cultural structures in order to present a more accurate analysis of what standardness and the absence thereof mean within the framework of variationist sociolinguistics.

Let us, for instance, examine more closely the concept of *orthography*<sup>2</sup>, which by definition suggests that there is inevitably both a “correct” and “incorrect” way to spell words according to certain normative conventions implied by the idea of “correctness” so deeply ingrained in many cultures (Sebba, 2007, p. 10). Similarly to other regularised language systems, orthography sets a benchmark for the social permissibility of departures from these standards so that all “violations” of the norm are penalised by means of what Milroy and Milroy call “standard ideology” (1999, p. 150), the misconception that there is a single correct representation of spoken language modelled on one rigid written form.

Furthermore, fixity of form has been reported to frequently affect scriptural channels faster and more effectively than oral ones, hence the greater tendency of spelling to undergo standardisation together with grammar and lexis (Clifton, 2014, p. 82; Crystal, 2004, p. 393; Milroy & Milroy, 1999, p. 18). Sociolinguistic work has largely focussed on disentangling the intricate relationships between the identities represented by standard and non-standard variants as well as delving into the rationale behind the differential evaluative patterns that language users derive from these variants. As a consequence, a novel methodology to study non-standard orthographic practices reinforces the connections between identities that, rather than the centre, occupy the periphery of society and the signalling of dissidence from standard language usage.

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<sup>2</sup> From Greek ὀρθός *orthós*, “correct” + γράφειν *gráphein*, “to write”, the OED defines orthography as “the way in which words are conventionally written”, and it acknowledges connotations of “correct or proper spelling” too (Simpson & Weiner, 1989, p. 954). In adopting a more descriptivist view, Carney (1994, pp. 3-4) contends that the study of orthography is not only interested in the set of formalised spelling regulations, but it also goes as far as to encompass punctuation, hyphenation, capitalisation, word breaking, and emphasis.



By way of illustration, a comparison of the pair of English words *brother* and *bruddah* reveals that, based on the characterisation mentioned earlier, the former item is labelled as the standard variant because it complies with the spelling norm endorsed by a hegemonic educational system and transferred into the publishing sector to which most language users in a developed linguistic landscape have been exposed regularly. The latter, on the contrary, stands in striking opposition to the established orthographic code, and therefore, it is to be considered a non-standard variant, one amongst a multiplicity of forms which range from *brudda* and *brudder* to all sorts of exceptions to standard *brother*.

Milroy and Milroy (1999, pp. 10-11 & 21) point out that, on closer inspection, the emergence of particular attitudes to each of the variants corresponds directly to the social evaluations of the more or less powerful identities relating to the *brother-bruddah* divide, further consolidating the spelling-identity interface as a valuable source of socially-motivated language variation driven by *prestige*, that is, the marker of direction of structural variation in linguistic exchanges according to group allegiances (Holmes & Wilson, 2017, pp. 149-151; Meyerhoff, 2015, p. 41). In consequence, as they opt out of abiding by prescriptive rules, non-normative realisations like *bruddah* are more prone to be subjected to general stigmatisation sensitive to social variables (class, gender, ethnicity, age, etc.) within a specific speech community, and so they establish themselves as subordinate to *convergences* to dominant *brother*.

A notable example of high-scale sociolinguistic change in spelling lies in Webster's spelling reform proposals for American English in the early eighteenth century. Webster's case illustrates the effects of authoritative lexicography on the transition of regional variants previously regarded as being non-standard into standard status (Baron, 2000, p. 144; Carney, 1994, pp. 474-476; Crystal, 2004, p. 420). Various of the new orthographic *divergences* proposed by him and retained in American English spelling include the dropping of medial <u> in words along the lines of *honour/honor* and *mould/mold* (examples taken from Carney, 1994, p. 475), which hint at the materialisation of the ambition of the United States for socio-political emancipation from the British Empire in linguistic, and by extension, governmental terms (Crystal, 2004, pp. 420-421).

As observed by Logan (1937, pp. 18-20) and Weinstein (1982, pp. 88-92), Webster's innovations are geared towards the maximisation of national self-assertion in a context in which linguistic supremacy correlates with political supremacy in that Americanised orthographic variants have eventually become the default spellings in international communication. Considering the prevalence of extralinguistic circumstances over the development of attitudes to different globalised standards of English<sup>3</sup>, the prestige distinction between a burgeoning delocalised standard in the shape of American English and the decline of another, British English, poses new challenges to the treatment of pluricentricity of statusful varieties in English.

## **2.2. Practising Spelling in Society**

In spite of its relative neglect as a subject of extended scholarly attention in sociolinguistics, spelling variance has traditionally been analysed more exhaustively in the field of literary studies and graphemics<sup>4</sup>. Nevertheless, in this section I will discuss more recent developments in the study of non-standard spelling, as I will review sociolinguistic publications which deal with respelling practices conditioned by potential affiliations or disagreements with given social groups.

In fact, attempts at rearranging scriptural systems, which form “the fundamental medium for written expression” in literary languages, take on more than simply linguistic meaning, as they respond to power imbalances imposed by authoritative orthography (Sebba, 2012, p. 1). Sebba acknowledges, however, that there has been a growing body of literature concerned with the anthropology of the postcolonial process of creating orthographies for unstandardised languages like creoles, which may or may not want to deviate from the superstratum for socio-political reasons (see Sebba 2007, especially pp. 84-95, for clarification).

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<sup>3</sup> See Bhatt (2002, pp. 80-87), Leitner (1991, pp. 212-225), and Schneider (2013, pp. 213-223) for further discussion on the internationalisation of standardness in L1 and L2 contexts. .

<sup>4</sup> On the implementation of eye dialect as a characterisation mechanism and the distribution of spelling, see Walpole (1974) and Carney (1994) respectively.

In variationist terms, however, Sebba (2007, p. 12) identifies a substantial lack of a common framework due to the theoretical isolation of papers already in circulation which primarily address the socio-cultural issues concerning spelling and orthography: Androutsopoulos (2000), Beal (2006), Jaffe (2000), Olivo (2001), and Shortis (2007), who attempt to parametrise real-life occurrences of uncodified spelling in contexts ranging from urban literature and scripts to computer-mediated discourse. In his survey of social attitudes to orthographic modelling across the globe, Sebba makes a clear-cut distinction between spelling and orthography by explaining that the core of his understanding of orthographic alterations lies in the the standard-oriented prescriptive forces involved in making value judgements with respect to non-normative spelling (2007, pp. 10-11).

In subsequent works, Sebba (2009; 2012; 2015) consolidates his approach as focussing on social practices<sup>5</sup>, which Meyerhoff defines as consistently shared endeavours and activities “whose salience and meaning can only be determined through detailed and ingroup knowledge” within a so-called *community of practice* (2015, p. 194). Holmes and Wilson (2017, pp. 208-209) add that the incorporation of the variable of group membership into sociolinguistic examination allows for more comprehensive ethnographic insight into the assigning of value to certain identity affiliations in different social interactions.

Variants connected with a specific community tend to come at the cost of social evaluations, whether positive or negative. Whereas compliance with the norm, if any, is generally assumed, Rutkowska argues that the use of non-standard spelling “is likely to be socially punished by being judged uneducated or even unintelligent” (2017, p. 212). Likewise, in their study of instances of vernacular spelling read by both male and female speakers with African American, white, Southern, and non-Southern backgrounds, Jaffe and Walton prove that these penalisations are “transformed into degrees of projected stigma”

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<sup>5</sup> More recently, numerous papers have been published that follow the same framework methodology first proposed by Sebba; see Stewart, Chancellor, De Choudhury, and Eisenstein (2017) for additional contributions to sociolinguistic knowledge through explorations of innovation drivers in communities of practices.

(2000, p. 580), since the greater the increase in textual non-standardness the more associations with non-prestige varieties are made<sup>6</sup>.

In line with these findings, Sebba (2009, pp. 246-247) examines two dimensions of deviations from orthographic standards: involuntary and voluntary. A language user who commits a spelling “mistake” unintentionally is bound to confront severe bias; alternatively, a language user who deliberately bypasses accepted orthographic conventions is believed to be pointing to a particular aspect of the word that they do not want to go unnoticed for some reason, which echoes Crystal’s conclusion that non-standard spelling may have a “maximally informal or jocular” intention (2004, p. 481). As a result, the underrepresentation of non-standard spelling can be justified by both the powerfully prestigious status of spelling variants belonging to a standardised orthography and the attitudes to the level of education and ignorance distilled from the negative reactions.

### **2.3. Classification of Non-Standard Spellings**

In the above section, I have provided a thorough explanation of the social engagement in orthographic practices and the different assessments triggered by the often presupposed relationship between speaker and spelling variant. Let us now turn to a more theoretical taxonomisation of variants of non-standard spellings on the basis of already existing classifications (Beal, 2006; Jaffe, 2008; Preston, 1982; 1985), which centre on what Jaffe refers to as “the information value of non-standard orthography” (2008, p. 164).

Jaffe adds that respelling and transcriptive practices “are never neutral records of linguistic behaviour, but rather are forms of representation that attribute social and interactional roles, identities, and statuses to the speakers represented” (2008, p. 163). As such, entextualisations of non-standard spellings do not occur as socially-independent phenomena exclusively informative about the pronunciation dissimilarities of a given vernacular variety, but they speak into the very fabric of society and encapsulate phonological features that conjoin different sound inventories, gradations of sociolinguistic *style*, and the outcome of *ingroup* or *outgroup* inclinations.

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<sup>6</sup> For empirical studies assessing the level of stigmatisation that non-prestige varieties undergo through respellings, see Nguyen (2005) on acceptability rates for Appalachian vs British English.

In a compendium of non-standard orthographies found in transcripts and literature, Jaffe (2008, pp. 164-166) reports on principally three types of spelling variants according to their informational valence: *eye dialect*, *allegro forms*, and *dialect respellings*. Whether these features takes on positive or negative meanings, however, is dependent on other extralinguistic coercions intrinsic to the social setting in which they are situated and produced (Jaffe, 2008, p. 167). These spelling modification types, and all of the others that have not been considered for this paper, fit into Labov's explanation of a *change from above* as "the importation of elements of other systems" (2007, p. 346) which may diffuse both standard and non-standard features. The implementation of these elements tends to be the result of abrupt changes motivated by social factors and develops consciously, hence a potential "reversal in the trajectory of change" (Tagliamonte, 2012, p. 58) through endorsement of already established variants.

Firstly, *eye dialect*<sup>7</sup> spellings are "alternate spellings of standard pronunciations" which do not necessarily represent any linguistic variation (Jaffe, 2008, p. 165). For instance, the forms <enuff> for *enough*, <ev'ry> for *every*, and <wuz> for *was* (examples from Jaffe, 2008) present no difference in the phonological system of standards and most vernaculars, at least at the level of the sound-to-graph correspondences. Nonetheless, the findings of the study conducted by Jaffe and Walton (2000, pp. 582-583) indicate that these respellings are more liable to be subjected to penalisation and negative uptake, partly due to their higher incidence percentage on average. In this respect, *eye dialect* constitutes an altogether typographic "marker of difference" (Jaffe, 2008, p. 166) devoid of phonological indexing, albeit replete with social content along non-standard lines.

Secondly, *allegro forms* illustrate "casual or informal speech" (Jaffe, 2008, p. 165) and exhibit stylistic, registerial, or generic choices in the delivery of rapid speech. Currently well-known and frequently used examples include <gonna> for *going to* and <kinda> for *kind of*, all of which make phonological but not dialectal impressions (from Jaffe, 2008). Although it has been concluded that *allegro forms* are not categorically distinct from *eye dialect* (Jaffe,

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<sup>7</sup> Note that the same term is used by Walpole to define literature written in non-standard spelling (1974, p. 192), but here I use it in the strict sense specified by Jaffe (2008, p. 165).

2008, p. 165; Androutsopoulos, 2000, pp. 517-521), the class separation follows from the lack of any stable correspondences between standard-formal and vernacular-colloquial associations (Coupland, 2007, pp. 5-8; Chambers, 1995, p. 6). Additionally, Androutsopoulos (2000, p. 521) and Sebba (1998, pp. 7-12) have observed an irregular representation of features of informal style to the point that some of them have been standardised. This is exemplified by all apostrophic uses aiming at representing the absence of a segment or a contraction such as <isn't> for *is not*.

And thirdly, *dialect respellings* have a twofold effect, i.e. they convey information reflective of “phonological features of a speech variety” (Jaffe, 2008, p. 165) while also reporting on the sociolinguistic background that structures them. They are, therefore, the only respelling category listed aiming to render pronunciation variation unique to non-standard regional varieties. Given that previous knowledge of the connections between non-standardness and stigma is acquired via frequent use across different textual *enregistrements*<sup>8</sup>, comparative approaches to their study provide the opportunity of delving into sociolinguistic patterns of salience as well as patterns of participation in certain communities of practice (Hill, 2005, p. 115).

In examples taken from Barry’s analysis of the respellings in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston (2001, pp. 184-186), the following non-standard characteristics of African American Vernacular English are featured amongst others: /ɪ/-/ɛ/ merger in <git> and <shet> for “get” and “shit”, and postvocalic /r/-dropping or /r/-vocalisation in <heah>, <yo>, and <brothuh> for “here”, “your”, and “brother”. All of these examples match Tagliamonte’s (2012, pp. 57-58) outline of the identifying traits of a change from above in that they are deliberate changes made by the author via features taken from outside standard orthography in order to foreground a minoritised identity.

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<sup>8</sup> The notion of enregistrement is defined by Agha as a set of “processes through which a linguistic repertoire becomes differentiable within a language as a socially recognisable register of forms” (2003, p. 231).

### 3. Study of Respellings in *Scouse Alice*

#### 3.1. Data and Methodology

The data is composed of one chapter in a literary adaptation of great sociolinguistic value, *A Scouse Interpretation of Alice in Wonderland*, also known as *Scouse Alice*. Translated from Carroll's original work into LE by Marvin R. Sumner in 1990, the novel is written in variant spelling in its entirety and succeeds in transparently capturing the essence of the LE-specific sound inventory in writing. The choice of work has not been coincidental due to Wells' (1982b, p. 371) and Watson's (2006, p. 61) claims about the distinctiveness of LE and its resistance to supra-local innovations like /t/-glottalisation. Additionally, there exists a back-translation into standard spelling by Honeybone (2015), which sheds light on many of the potential ambiguities and indeterminacies that may arise from the lack of exposure to non-standard spellings reflective of the variety of English spoken in Liverpool.

What follows is a socio-discourse analysis of a 1027-word-long passage of *Scouse Alice* that aims to answer my two RQs by observing two dimensions: the extent of salience of LE accent features and the way in which such features are signalled through the respelling practices in *Scouse Alice*. To gauge the depth of variation, I have employed a corpus-based approach to extract quantitative parameters and evaluate them qualitatively, based on dialectological research conducted on both phonological and sociolinguistic properties of LE. Collected data have been run through the AntConc (3.5.8) keyword list (Anthony, 2019) in order to obtain token-frequency tables that I have systematically singled out depending on 1) what type of respelling method is used and 2) what LE phonological feature is being represented.

Data analysts specialised in the field of language variation and literature (Baker, 2010, pp. 121-127; De Sousa & Correia, 2014, pp. 10-12; Kretzschmar, 2001, pp. 100-101) have demonstrated that implementation of computational corpora in dialect literature contributes to a more efficient material sorting in addition to enabling experts to reach more solid conclusions from extrapolable figures and data comparisons, as in Barry (2001), Eisenstein (2015), and Honeybone and Watson (2013). While Barry aims to prove whether non-standard spellings in conjunction with non-standard uses of grammar and lexis contribute to the authenticity of an African-American voice in literary writing (2001, p. 171), Eisenstein

focuses on orthographic manipulations of coda deletions to establish a phonologically-driven pattern in social media texts illustrative of AAVE too (2015, p. 161). More interestingly, Honeybone and Watson use a compiled corpus of Contemporary Humorous Localised Dialect Literature of Liverpool to find what accent features are more salient (2013, p. 306).

For RQ1 six variables of the LE accent have been examined, four consonantal processes and two vocalic: stopping of /θ, ð/, dropping of /h/, retention or simplification of /ŋg/ in stressed and unstressed syllables, weakening of /t/ to [ɾ] (henceforth T-to-R, as Wells (1982b, p. 370) labels it), NURSE-SQUARE merger, and absence of FOOT-STRUT split<sup>9</sup>. I have then transported the data onto graphs showing variation percentages in order to extract robust phonological and sociolinguistic information. To that end, the resulting respellings have been contrasted with extensive dialectological accounts of the sociophonetics of LE that are temporally close to the date of publication of the novel.

As for RQ2, I have manually isolated the incidence of the three respelling types discussed in section 2.3 above counting each spelling alteration separately so that what initially were 1027 words have turned to 1200 different instances of respellings. Furthermore, I will look at the different orthographic criteria followed and their informational value, especially regarding *eye dialect*, in an attempt to elaborate on the classification of non-standard spelling types.

### **3.2. Results and Discussion**

Sometimes written discourse has the ability to project oral voices analysable at a number of different levels of meaning which can be framed within the variationist model of sociolinguistics (Dubois & Sankoff, 2001, p. 283). Therefore, to break down the linguistic scaffolding of a social construct like LE identity into socio-discursive units, I will comment on a number of aspects present in the passage in the format of two research questions.

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<sup>9</sup> See Beal, 2004, pp. 121-129; Sangster, 2001; Watson, 2006; Wells, 1982b, pp. 370-373, on the phonology of LE.



**RQ1:** What are the most sociolinguistically salient Liverpool English features as represented through spelling in the passage?

My first task to determine salience in LE is to examine the most frequently-occurring non-standard spelling variants that reflect some type of phonological variation detailed in the literature. Salience, in line with Gussenhoven and Jacobs (2017, p. 2) and Honeybone and Watson (2013, pp. 4-6), refers to the variable awareness of a given element. Meyerhoff (2015, p. 71) further defines the term as the readiness to perceive a variant due to “social and psychological factors that prime speakers and make them attend to a form”. In consequence, salience is related to prestige in that it informs about what linguistic variants are attached more value overtly and covertly according to speakers’ usage reports. That is, the more salient a feature linked to a variety, standard or non-standard, the more overtly prestigious it is, and the more salient a feature ignored by its speakers the more covertly prestigious it will be<sup>10</sup>.

The results obtained from the preliminary analysis of salience are presented in Figure 1, which summarises the main percentages of the standard and non-standard spelling realisations of six variables: three diatopically more localised in Liverpool (retention or simplification of final /ŋg/<sup>11</sup>, stopping of /θ, ð/, and the NURSE-SQUARE merger) and three spread across the linguistic North of England (/h/-dropping, T-to-R, and the lack of the FOOT-STRUT split). I have decided to include these six because of the amount of studies conducted on their distribution and status in LE. In the graph, then, each pair of bars, blue and orange, corresponds to one variable. The blue represent the cases in which the non-standard feature is permitted and realised as such while the orange represent the cases in which the standard feature is realised. In addition, I have split processes relating to final *-ng* into two categories, retention and simplification, to better pinpoint the degree of variability depending on stress.

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<sup>10</sup> On the interplay between language usage reports and the frequency of certain forms see Holmes and Wilson (2017, pp. 149-151) and Meyerhoff (2015, pp. 41-42).

<sup>11</sup> As shown below, I will consider phenomena related to reduction or simplification of final *-ng* to be more localised characteristics of LE despite not being exclusive to Liverpool (Wells, 1982a, pp. 262-263), because the representation in the analysed spellings clearly patterns with the sociolinguistic status of the feature in LE.

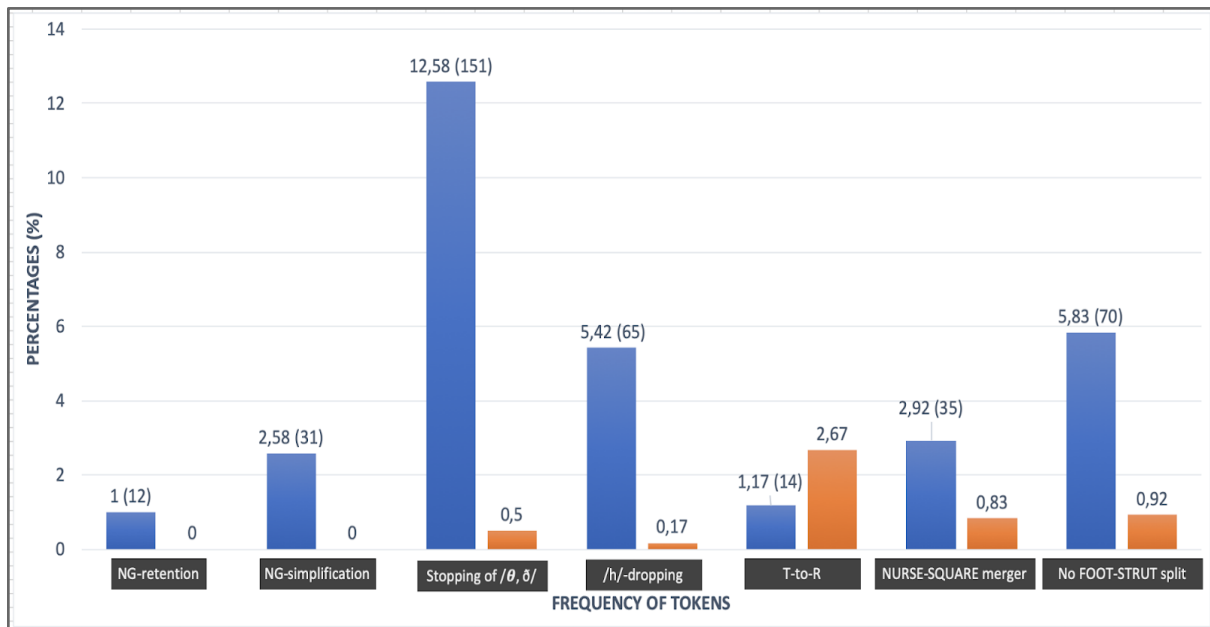


Figure 1. Token frequencies of LE features by percentages.

As can be seen from the graph above, out of all the 1200 types scrutinised, retention of final /ŋg/ in a stressed syllable and simplification thereof to [n] in an unstressed syllable are absolute. As regards retention of /ŋg/, tokens such as “tingz, ting, long, song, yung”<sup>12</sup> attest to the lack of reduction of a velar segment. Although spellings cannot clarify the complex or single nature of the segment, Knowles (1973, pp. 294-295; 1978, pp. 85-86), Watson (2007, p. 352), and Wells (1982b, p. 372) have unanimously noted that there is no presence of coalescence to [ŋ], hence the general trend to maintain /ŋg/ in final or postvocalic position in a stressed syllable like elsewhere in North-West England.

In relation to simplification to [n], quite compelling evidence has been found of two tendencies: 1) mostly the *-ing* morpheme is affected (“gettin, lernin, unwillinly”) but it also encompasses high-frequency elements in an unstressed syllable (“everitin, nothin”), and 2) *-ing* is altogether lenited to [ɪn] or variant [əɪn] via the weak vowel merger<sup>13</sup> (Wells, 1982b, p. 373). In the special case of “singin”, reduplication of /ŋg/ does not seem to apply as often since Knowles (1973, p. 294) explains that locally prestigious /sɪŋgɪn/ “[has] to compete with

<sup>12</sup> Although the notation specifically corresponding to spelling is <...>, I have chosen to enclose examples from the data between “...” throughout section 3.

<sup>13</sup> This process is responsible for the occurrences of “reezun, opinyun, littul, gentul, savidge”, which almost consistently overgeneralise the weak vowel as <u>.

half a dozen alternatives” ranging from regional /sɪŋŋɪŋg, sɪŋŋɪ, sɪŋɪn, sɪŋgən, sɪŋən/ to standard /sɪŋɪ/.

No satisfactory explanation has been offered that details the prestige distribution of [n, ŋ, ŋg] forms in LE; however, the prestige patterns reported by Knowles (1973, p. 296) are corroborated in that non-coalescing /ŋg/ appears to be kept in all stressed syllables in the data while unstressed *-ing* is never velarised. In addition, the quality of the plosive has been found to be determining in assigning prestige (Knowles, 1978, pp. 85-86; Wells, 1982b, p. 372). Contrary to overall evaluations in England, high local prestige in LE stressed *ng*-forms is geared towards a clear realisation of the homorganic stop preceded by the nasal, as in /sɪŋg/; unstressed /ŋg/ and prolongation of the vowel in stressed *ng*-forms are both very much stigmatised in Liverpool, being dismissed as “contribut[ing] to the impression of ‘adenoidal’ speech” (Knowles, 1973, p. 296).

This distinction hints at an augmenting conflict between locally and supra-locally salient variants in Liverpool, thereby bypassing the general [n ~ ŋ] alternation, which does not seem to operate in LE nearly as prominently. Taken together, then, the findings discussed here verify the exclusively allophonic status of [ŋ] in LE —with the vestigial exception of a disappearing portion of the older, Irish-descending population (Knowles, 1973, p. 296)— as well as its differential prestige situation ratified by the consistency in the patterning of both stressed and unstressed *ng*-words.

From the data in Figure 1, it is apparent that fortition of /θ, ð/ to [t̪, d̪]<sup>14</sup> is also very much salient as a feature “of much more restricted geographical range” (Wells, 1982b, p. 371). For instance, forms like “de, radder, udderz, doe” and “tink, ting, sumtin” emerge in the place of *the, rather, others,* and *though* and *think, thing,* and *something* respectively. Incidence of these variants is high due to the frequency of words containing interdental fricatives, since grammatical words like determiners and demonstratives include them.

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<sup>14</sup> Here I will only consider dentalised plosives for brevity and despite the lack of spelling accountability that the stops are pronounced otherwise, though for a more detailed discussion on the different allophones of /θ, ð/ see Drummond (2018, pp. 172-173) and Knowles (1973, pp. 252-253 & 324-325).

Nevertheless, the nearly total consistency for plosive-reflective spellings indicates that there is a significant positive correlation between stopping of /θ, ð/ and salience.

Moreover, Watson (2006, p. 56; 2007, p. 352) contends that stopping of interdental fricatives is preferred to fronting to labiodental [f, v] locally in Liverpool more than it is nationally, and the absence of fronted variants [f, v] from the data points in the same direction. This is not to say, however, that pure /θ, ð/ variants do not exist. Further analysis reveals that there are three scattered tokens that maintain the standard *th*-spelling, and thus, fricative pronunciation for various reasons in “both, nothin”<sup>15</sup> and probably owing to the following /r/ in “three” /θri:/. Another possible interpretation to “three” is the context of utterance in the passage: the standard pronunciation may have been adopted for emphasis and clarification that the number referred to is exactly three.

Concerning /h/-dropping, the results from Figure 1 support Trudgill’s claim that the absence of /h/ is a widespread phenomenon in Britain, especially in weak forms of grammatical words (1999, p. 29). What is more, Wells (1982a, p. 254) argues that “in the basic phonological system acquired in childhood there is no /h/” yet “social pressure from teachers and others, supported by the effects of literacy, leads to the partial and inconsistent addition of /h/ to the phoneme inventory”. Later work (Beal, 2004, p. 127) has elaborated on the categorical nature of the socially stratified vision of /h/-dropping to which Wells points by stating that it is particularly common in the speech of working-class, male Northerners not only in grammatical but also lexical words.

A contrastive view is provided by Watson in his case study, concluding that in LE /h/-dropping does not appear to be categorical and may be more likely to be maintained in some lexical words (2007, p. 352). The analysed data reveal similar findings in that the vast majority of the instances liable to exhibit /h/-dropping are /h/-less, except “herd” for standard *heard*. The most notable examples include “‘atter, ‘e, ‘umbel, ‘ere, ‘er ‘elped”<sup>16</sup> for *hatter*,

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<sup>15</sup> Perhaps Sumner overlooked these occurrences, or he could even be aware of the fact that sometimes /θ, ð/ are also operative in these cases.

<sup>16</sup> Note that only /h/-less forms are marked with an apostrophe, which has historically served the purpose of signalling the omission of a segment, amongst others (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, & Svartvik, 1985, p. 1636). No other features display this diacritic even though it is a common practice to employ an apostrophe in

*he, humble, here, her, helped*. The amount of /h/-less lexical words and the prevalence of /h/-lessness in all grammatical words from the passage may show the willingness of LE to take social distance from the /h/-ful standard.

The last consonantal phenomenon to be addressed here is the so-called T-to-R, which Wells (1982b, p. 370) describes as “a widespread but stigmatised connected-speech process in the middle and far north<sup>17</sup>”. The /t/ → /r/ rule, he posits, is phonologically conditioned in that /t/ rhoticises to [ɹ] (typically by reanalysis of [r], which also occurs occasionally) “in the environment of a preceding short vowel and a following boundary plus vowel” (1982b, p. 370). To complete the characterisation of the process, Clark and Watson (2011, p. 524) add a lexical conditioning dimension to Wells’ formula: “the rule does not apply blindly across the board to all words which fit the phonological pattern. Instead, t-to-r shows evidence of being lexically restricted”.

Lexical specificity to a tightly constrained set of words is a key factor in the realisation of /t/ as [ɹ], which suggests that “t-to-r in some, if not all, contemporary northern varieties is a remnant of a once productive process” (Broadbent, 2008, p. 142). Not surprisingly, Figure 1 indicates significantly higher percentages for retention of /t/ in the environments suitable for T-to-R (“bottum”, “repeeted”, “forgettin”), taking up more than two thirds of the cases which permit the process. The fewer tokens that do present the process are limited to final-/t/ simple and complex determiners (“worrापens” for *what happens* and “birra” for *bit of*), prepositions (“abarrit, arrova, arrall” for *about it, out of a, and at all*), conjunctions (“burri” for *but I*), pronouns (“irron” for *it on*), monosyllabic verbs (“gorreny, gorrup” for *got any and got up*), and morpheme-internal /t/-words (“berrer” for *better*) — all categories studied by Buchstaller et al. (2013, pp. 89-90).

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the spelling of simplified *-ng* words (Bunčić, 2004, pp. 194-195). On observational studies concerned with the sociolinguistics of apostrophes, see Beal (2010).

<sup>17</sup> Aside from Liverpool and its environs (Buchstaller, Corrigan, Holmbergs, Honeybone, & Maguire, 2013, p. 92; Watson, 2002, pp. 200-201), T-to-R has been variously reported in the Midlands (Ashby & Przedlacka, 2011, p. 66), Tyneside area (Docherty, Foulkes, Milroy, Milroy, & Walshaw, 1997, p. 282), and Yorkshire (Broadbent, 2008, p. 142; Wells, 1982b, p. 370).

It is now appropriate to turn to the representation of vocalic processes in LE. Liverpool, as Wells (1982b, p. 372) contends, “is notable for the merger of the lexical sets NURSE and SQUARE” so that *fur* and *fair*, which in Standard British English are typically /ɜ:/ and /ɛə/, are homophonous. In accordance with Watson and Clark (2012, p. 298) and Wells (1982b, p. 372), fronted vowels of the [ɛ: ~ ɛ:] type are characteristic of the merger in LE. Watson (2007, p. 358) notes, however, that contrastive realisations gravitating towards standard-like [ɜ:] and [ɛ:] are commoner in middle-class speakers. His findings suggest that the feature is socially stratified, and thus, they align with mine.

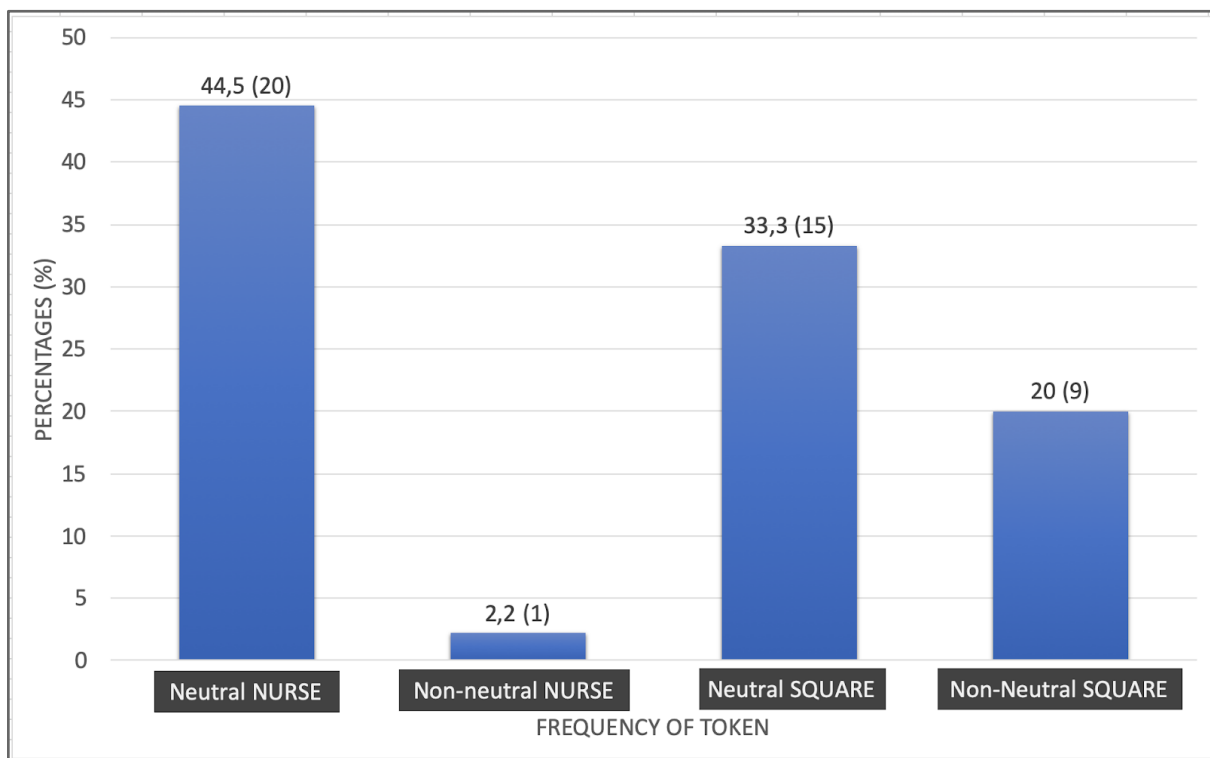


Figure 2. Token frequencies of standard and non-standard spellings for the NURSE-SQUARE merger, by percentages.

Figure 2 above compares the percentages of merged vs non-neutralised variants of words of NURSE and SQUARE lexical sets, and it shows substantially higher frequencies for neutralised NURSE forms like “turned, gerl, werd, herd” and neutralised SQUARE forms like “wer, der, derz” whereas occurrences of non-merged variants are minor — only the vowel in one word remains unchanged for each of the sets “murdrin” and “are”. As mentioned above, social stratification may play a role in the nearly total level of consistency of the neutralised spellings. More importantly, the incidence of occurrences of “are” are probably due to the

March Hare being a major character in the selected passage, and therefore, its name needs to be kept recognisably unmodified as much as it is possible in a way that does not cause any interference with readability.

The sixth and last feature under analysis is “one of the most salient markers of northern English pronunciation, and the only one which involves a difference between dialects of the North (and Midlands) and those of the South” (Beal, 2004, p. 121): the lack of the FOOT-STRUT split. This phenomenon implies no “phonemic opposition between the vowels of FOOT and STRUT” (Wells, 1982b, p. 351), respectively /ʊ/ and /ʌ/ in Standard British English. In Figure 1 a great number of cases has been identified as displaying neutralisation of the vowel to <u> in the absence of /ʌ/ from the LE sound inventory: “sum, tuk, dunn, wud, cum, udderz, wunder, yung” (*some, took, done, would, come, others, wonder, and young*).

Nevertheless, there are also many other cases that have non-<u>-spellings, as in “above, nothin”. The single most striking observation to emerge from the data comparison is the occurrence of “won, wonce” for *one* and *once*, which Knowles reports as being pronounced [ɒ] (1973, pp. 290-291). Interestingly, most educated Liverpoolians are unaware of the prestige attached to standard /wʌn, wʌns/, and so they converge into /wɒn, wɒns/. Overall, these results reveal that <u> is presented as the primary grapheme to correspond, almost univocally, to /ʊ/<sup>18</sup> in contexts for both standard /ʊ/ and /ʌ/ unlike in standard orthography.

On the question of salience, then, this study has found that the high incidence of non-standard variants and sociolinguistically accountable explanations of their occurrence in reduction and simplification of /ŋg/, stopping of /θ, ð/, /h/-dropping, and the NURSE-SQUARE merger, all of which except /h/-dropping are very much diatopically localised in Liverpool, make them the most salient features of the set of six variables under consideration. As for the remaining two, lexical conditioning prevents more instantiations of T-to-R from arising, hence its low salience; and although <u> is established as the most reliable indicator of /ʊ/,

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<sup>18</sup> It is rare for context-independent <u> to signal /ʊ/ in standard orthography, and as a result, grapheme combinations representing /ʌ/ have been adopted in the absence thereof.

fewer respellings have been necessary to showcase the absence of the FOOT-STRUT split, resulting in a lower degree of salience as compared to other more non-standardly respelled variables.

The presence of other features of LE is negligible or even nonexistent in the data regardless of the high incidence of environments that do permit them. One notable example attested in Liverpool is the lenition of /p, t, k/, which “sometimes lack complete closure in certain syllable-final environments” (Wells, 1982b, p. 371). The set of voiceless plosives undergoes frication or affrication to varying degrees, as suggested in the literature (Ashby & Przedlacka, 2011, pp. 47-48; Marotta & Barth, 2005, pp. 406-408; Watson, 2007, p. 353). In fact, Marotta and Barth’s study confirms that more allophones of the [t̥ ~ t̪s]<sup>19</sup> type result for alveolar stops (2005, p. 392). Lenited realisations of /k/ are also rather generalised and vary along [x ~ χ] in words like *snake* /sneɪx/ (Watson, 2007, p. 353; Wells, 1982b, p. 371). Conversely, frication of /p/ to [ɸ] is agreed to be anomalous and phonologically constrained to intervocalic and unstressed positions (Marotta & Barth, 2005, p. 397).

There is little evidence for occurrences of voiceless plosive lenition that can, if anything, be extracted from the data in that in examples such as “datz, letz, sortza, itzself, remarkz, mowsetrapz” an alveolar fricative of the seemingly opposite voicing follows the plosive. This indicates a potential difference from pure plosive realisations and glottal realisations in the case of /t/ (Watson, 2006, p. 61). In light of these findings, I hold that familiarity of respellings together with usage awareness is central to the frequency of a non-standard feature. The same is true in the case of tapped occurrences of /r/ as [ɾ], which Watson (2007, p. 352) observes to still be operative in the repertoire of certain speakers to a much lesser extent, since there are no recognisable graphic elements other than <r/rr> that can signal [ɾ] owing to the prevalence of [ɹ] as the principal realisation of /r/ in Standard British English.

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<sup>19</sup> Allophones taken from Wells (1982b, p. 371).



**RQ2:** What are the most prominent spelling patterns of representation of the features in question?

I will now investigate the representational mechanics of the chief non-standard spelling categories present in the passage. The pie chart below outlines the percentages and number of occurrences of the various spelling types, standard and non-standard, present in the data. Non-standard spellings manage to make up almost two thirds (65.75%:789) of all 1200 spelling tokens analysed whereas the score of standard realisations occupies slightly more than one third (34.25%:411). Consistent with the model of spelling typology based on the association of non-standard spellings with vernacular sociophonetic variation discussed in section 2.3, the higher incidence of non-standard occurrences is intended as a message that in the main it is none other than vernacular linguistic information that is embedded in the passage.

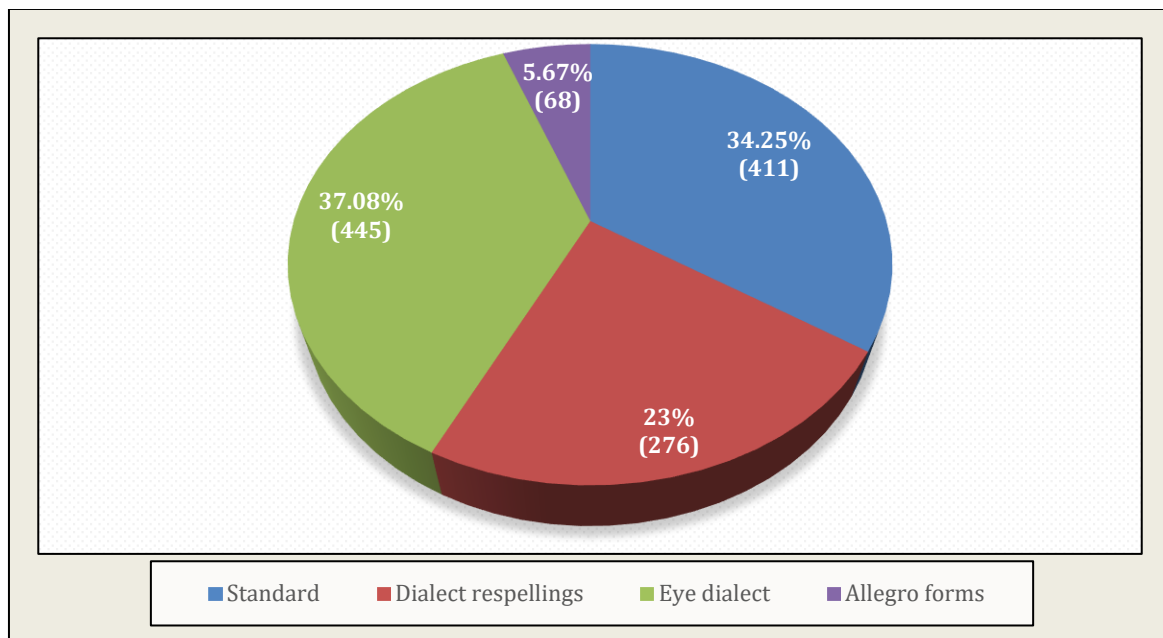


Figure 3. Occurrences of spelling types by percentages.

A deeper look into the distribution of each respelling category (see section 2.3) corroborates Jaffe's (2008), Jaffe and Walton's (2000), and Preston's (1982; 1985) findings and contributes to the conclusions drawn by Honeybone and Watson (2013) by considering separately socially- and phonologically-oriented spelling typologies. As a matter of fact, occurrences of *eye dialect* exceed those of other forms, including standard spellings; and

therefore, the text is presented as a reevaluation of the LE accent because the vast majority of spelling alterations found in the data do not correspond, at least initially, to any deviations from a standard at the phonological level, but their informational value lies in the social evaluations derived from such realisations.

This claim, however, may be called into question in that *eye dialect* spellings like “lukked” for *looked*, “yew” for *you*, “werld” for *world* interact with *dialect respellings* (“ead” for *head* and “diss” for *this*) and *allegro forms* as in “an” for *and* and “ekstraordinry” for *extraordinary* to potentially create a complex network of automatic assumptions of non-standardness. It is arguably true that, as Jaffe (2008, p. 166) posits, *eye dialect* carries no phonological information by itself, yet my results suggest otherwise: *eye dialect* spellings emerge as the major driving force of non-standardness in pronunciation when combined with *dialect respellings* and *allegro forms*.

As a consequence, a novel system is established which relies on *eye dialect* as the main authoritative source to govern non-standard spellings. In this sense, I argue that it is not only *dialect respellings*, as proposed by Jaffe (2008), that guide sociophonetic variation in respelled texts, but a synergy amongst all non-standard and standard spelling types, in particular *eye dialect*. An indicator of this can be found in the neutralised <er> spellings that signal the presence of the NURSE-SQUARE merger because they are in a linguistic setting that permits neutralisations to be regarded as phonologically informative variants. In isolation, the <er>-spellings of “herd, gerl, der, werd” give social information only, but they gain a regionally restricted phonological dimension contextually, contrary to Jaffe’s categorisations (2008, pp. 165-166).

#### 4. Conclusion

In this paper I have accounted for a more socially sensitive understanding of spelling variation by focussing on the dynamics which operate at the level of non-standard spelling as a window into the phonological and sociolinguistic status of respellings representative of the LE sound inventory. Furthermore, in supporting my claims with robust dialectological and variationist evidence from the literature, I have demonstrated that the most salient features in the LE represented in the corpus passage from *Scouse Alice* are the lack of coalescence in stressed /ŋg/, simplification of unstressed /ŋg/ to [n], stopping of /θ, ð/ to [t̚, d̚], and the

NURSE-SQUARE merger given their high incidence and consistency in patterning. Despite not being restricted to the Liverpool area, /h/-dropping has also been observed to occur frequently and rather consistently.

T-to-R and the lack of the FOOT-STRUT split, on the contrary, do not seem to be very salient along with frication or affrication of /p, t, k/ and tapped /r/ either because they may be of little local significance or because graphic elements to represent them are less accessible. Thus, in opposition to Honeybone and Watson (2013), I argue for a revisiting of the concept of salience as the driving force in the representation, or underrepresentation, of non-standard features via respellings, inasmuch as my results suggest that it may not only be low salience but also unavailability of graphic resources to reflect certain phonological processes that affects the quantity and quality of signalling of phonological variables more or less prominently attributed to a speech community.

Respelling practices take effect on the assumption that, ordinarily, standard spelling is synonymous with central voices, and therefore, variation serves the purpose of signalling especially regionally significant features that are situated in the periphery of general social power. In line with Jaffe's contention that *eye dialect* encodes socially valuable information (2008, p. 166), my analysis confirms the prediction that the most frequently occurring non-standard spelling type is indeed *eye dialect* since *Scouse Alice* is intended as a non-standard rendition replete with social evaluations, marking LE out as a deviant variety that is also valid for being written down into a code. However, I have found conclusive evidence in favour of *eye dialect* contextually acquiring a diatopically phonological, and not just social, value in the case of the NURSE-SQUARE merger.

In spite of the predominance of the consistent use of respelling practices, a few irregularities exist that perpetuate the standard-ideological association of non-standard varieties with lack of systematisation. However, prescriptive pressures appear to be the principal catalyst for inconsistency, which is justifiable in graphemic and sociolinguistic terms. It would, thus, be interesting to assess the correlation between non-standard spellings and possible past or present spelling combinations that are functional in other contexts of English orthography.

Corroboration of findings of previous observational studies notwithstanding, the empirical results reported here have to be interpreted with caution and seen in light of some limitations to be addressed in further research: the highly audience-designed nature of the text under analysis and the size of the corpus compiled. *Scouse Alice* has undergone a substantial process of intentional remodelling whereby respellings have been exaggerated by means of conscious authorial choices to better capture vernacular voices of LE; nonetheless, a balance has been maintained between expectations about the reader's familiarity with the rules governing orthographic innovations and indexicality of non-standard phonology.

In addition, due to time and space constraints, the scope of my analysis has exclusively limited to particularised trends present in the material employed without making any broader generalisations about the variety portrayed. In consequence, this case study may prospectively function as a pilot corpus-based analysis of a larger set of data that will further elucidate local tendencies in LE through respelling practices that may attest to the salience and prestige of regional and supra-regional variants.

With regard to *Scouse Alice*, non-standard spellings are constructed against two main supra-local varieties —Standard British English, but in particular, Northern British English— in that features characteristic of the Liverpool region (e.g. the stopping of /θ, ð/, retention and simplification of /ŋg/, and the NURSE-SQUARE merger) are represented more saliently than those attributed to the linguistic North in general, as is the case with T-to-R and the absence of the FOOT-STRUT split. It is for all these reasons, I conclude, that the approach adopted here is an efficient method to investigate the potential of identity signification of spelling from a result-bearing perspective, and it may reinforce and expand the current theoretical framework of an untapped area of study as well as helping to comprehend more real-world language practices that take on meanings beyond what can be displayed through language itself.

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## Appendix. Corpused Text and Translation

*A Scouse Interpretation of Alice in Wonderland*

Marvin R. Sumner

1990

*“Twinkel, twinkel, littul  
bat! ’Ow I wunder wot  
yor at!”*

“Yunnaw de song doyeray?”

“I’ve herd sumtin like it,” sed Alice.

“It goezon, yernow,” de ’atter kontinyewed, “in diss way:—

*Up above de werld yew  
fly, Like a tea-tray in  
de sky.*

*Twinkel, twinkel—”*

’Ere de Dormowse shuk itzself an began singin innitz sleep “*Twinkel, twinkel, twinkel, twinkel—*” an wenn on so long dat dey ’ad to pinch it to make it stop.

“Well, I’d ’ardly finished de ferst verse,” sed de ’atter, “wenn de Kween bawllid out, ’E’z murdrin de time! Off wid ’iz ’ead!”

“’Ow dredfully savidge!” eksclaimed Alice.

“An ever since dat,” de ’atter wenn on inna mornful tone, “’E woan do a ting I ask! It’s orlwayz sixa klok now.”

A brite idea came into Alicez ’ead. “Is dat de reezun so meny tea-tingz are purrout ’ere?” she asked.

“Yes, datz it,” sed de ’atter wid a sigh: “It’s orlwayz tea-time, an weev no time to wash de tingz between wilez.”

“Denn yew keep moovin rownd, I suppoze?” sed Alice. “Eggzakly so,” sed de ’atter: “az de tingz get uzid up.”

“But worrappenz wenn yew cum to de beginnin agenn?” Alice ventured to ask.

“Suppoze we change de subjekt,” de March ’are interrupted, yawning. “I’m gerrin tired ov diss. I vote de yung gerl tellz uz a story.”

“I’m afrade I doan now won,” sed Alice, radder alarmed at de propozal. “Denn de Dormowse shall!” dey both kride. “Wake up, Dormowse!” An dey pinched irron both sidez at wonce.

De Dormowse slowly opened its eyez. “I wosn asleep,” it sed inna ’orse feebel voice, “I herd every werd yew lot wer sayin.”

“Telluz a story!” sed de March  
’are.

“Yes, pleeze do lar!” pleaded  
Alice.

“An be kwick abarrit,” added de ’atter, “or yew’ll be asleep agenn befor it’s dunn.”

“Wonce upon a time der wer three sisterz,” de Dormowse began inna grate ’urry; “an der namez wer Elsie, Lacie, an Tillie; an dey lived at de bottum ov a well—”

“Wot did dey live on?” sed Alice, ’oo orlwayz tuk a grate intrest in kwestchunz ov eetin an drinkin.

“Dey lived on treekel,” sed de Dormowse, after tinkin a minnit or two. “Dey kuddena dunn dat, yunnow,” Alice sed ded gentul like. “dey’da been ill.”

“So dey wer,” sed de Dormowse; “*very* ill.”

Alice tried a littel to fancy to ’erself wot sucha ekstraordinry way ov livin wud be like, burrit puzzelled ’er to much: so she wenn on: “But why did de live at de bottum ov a well?”

“Take sum mor tea,” de March ’are sed to Alice, earnestly.

“I’ve ’ad nothin yet,” Alice replied inna offended tone: “so I karnt take mor.”

“Yew meen yew karnt take *less*,” sed de ’atter: “it’s ded eezy ter take *mor* dann nothin.”

“Nobody asked *yor* opinyun,” sed Alice.

“’ooz makin persunal remarkz now?” de ’atter asked triumfanly.

Alice dinnt kwite now wot ter say ter diss: so she 'elped 'erself to sum tea an bred-an-butter, an denn terned ter de Dormowse, an repeeted 'er kwestchun. "Why did dey live at de bottum ov a well?"

De Dormowse agenn tuk a minnit or two ter tink about it, an denn sed "It was a treekel-well."

"Derz no such ting!" Alice was gettin ded narked, but de 'atter an de March 'are went "Sh! Sh!" an de Dormowse sulkily remarked, "If yew karnt be civil, yew'd berrer finish de story for yorself."

"No, pleeze go on!" Alice sed ded 'umbel. "I woan innerupt yew agenn. I der say der may be *won*."

"Won, indeed!" sed de Dormowse indignantly. 'Owever, 'e konsented ter go on. "An so deez three littel sisterz—dey wer lernin ter draw, yunnow—"

"Wot did dey draw?" sed Alice, kwite forgettin 'er promise.

"Treekel," sed de Dormowse, widdout konsidrin arrall, diss time.

"I wanna kleen cup," innerupted de 'atter: "Letz orl moov won place on." 'E mooved on az 'e spoke, an de Dormowse follied 'im: de March 'are mooved into de Dormowsez place, an Alice radder unwillinly tuk de place ov de March 'are. De 'atter wos de only won 'oo gorreny advantidge from de change; an Alice wos a gud deel werse off dann befor, az de March 'are 'ad just upset de milk-jug into 'iz plate.

Alice dinnt wish to offend de Dormowse agenn, so she began very korshusly: "Burri doan unnerstand. Wer did dey draw de treekel from?" "Yewkin draw warter arrova warter-well," sed de 'atter; "so I shud tink yew kud draw treekel arrova treekel-well — eh, stewpid?"

"But dey wer *in* de well," Alice sed ter de Dormowse, not chewzin ter notice diss last remark.

"Ov korse dey wer," sed de Dormowse: "well in."

Diss anser so konfuzed pore Alice, dat she let de Dormowse go on for sum time widdout inneruptin it.

"Dey wer lernin to draw," de Dormowse wenn on, yornin an rubbin its eyez, for it wos gettin dogtired; "an dey drew orl sortza tingz — everytin dat beginz widd a M—"

“Why widd a M?” sed

Alice.

“Why not?” sed de March

’are.

Alice wos silent.

De Dormowse ’ad clozed its eyez by diss time, anwos goin off into a doze; but, on bein pinched by de ’atter; it woke up agenn widd a littel shreek, an wenn on: “— dat beginz widd a M, such az mowsetrapz, an de moon, an memry, an muchness — yew now yew say tingz are ‘much ov a muchness’ — d’yer ever see such a ting az a drawin ov a muchness?”

“Reely, now yor askin,” sed Alice, ded konfewsed, “I doan tink—”

“Denn yew shudden tawk,” sed de ’atter.

Diss birra roodness wos mor dann Alice kud take: she gorrupt inna big ’uff, an warked off: de Dormowse fell asleep instanly, an neider ov de udderz tuk de leest birra notice ov ’er goin, doe she lukked back wonce or twice, ’arf ’opin dat dey wud call after ’er: de last time she saw dem, dey wer tryin to put de Dormowse into de teapot.

Back-Translation into Standard Spelling

Patrick Honeybone

2015

*Twinkle, twinkle, little bat!  
How I wonder what you're  
at!"*

"You know the song, do you, then?"

"I've heard something like it," said  
Alice.

"It goes on, you know," the Hatter continued, "in this way:—

*Up above the world you  
fly, Like a tea-tray in  
the sky.  
Twinkle, twinkle—"*

Here the Dormouse shook itself and began singing in its sleep "*Twinkle, twinkle, twinkle—*" and went on so long that they had to pinch it to make it stop.

"Well, I'd hardly finished the first verse," said the Hatter, "when the Queen bawled out, 'He's murdering the time! Off with his head!'"

"How dreadfully savage!" exclaimed Alice.

"And ever since that," the Hatter went on in a mournful tone, "He won't do a thing I ask! It's always six o'clock now."

A bright idea came into Alice's head. "Is that the reason so many tea-things are put out here?" she asked.

"Yes, that's it," said the Hatter with a sigh: "It's always tea-time, and we've no time to wash the things between whiles."

"Then you keep moving round, I suppose?" said Alice.

"Exactly so," said the Hatter: "as the things get used up."

"But what happens when you come to the beginning again?" Alice ventured to ask.

“Suppose we change the subject,” the March Hare interrupted, yawning. “I’m getting tired of this. I vote the young girl tells us a story.”

“I’m afraid I don’t know one,” said Alice, rather alarmed at the proposal.

“Then the Dormouse shall!” the both cried. “Wake up, Dormouse!” And they pinched it on both sides at once.

The Dormouse slowly opened its eyes. “I wasn’t asleep,” it said in a hoarse, feeble voice, “I heard every word you lot were saying.”

“Tell us a story!” said the March Hare.

“Yes, please do, friend!” pleaded Alice.

“And be quick about it,” added the Hatter, “or you’ll be asleep again before it’s done.”

“Once upon a time there were three sisters,” the Dormouse began in a great hurry; “and their names were Elsie, Lacie and Tillie; and they lived at the bottom of a well—”

“What did they live on?” said Alice, who always took a great interest in questions of eating and drinking.

“They lived on treacle,” said the Dormouse, after thinking a minute or two.

“They couldn’t’ve done that, you know,” Alice said, in a very gentle way.

“They’d’ve been ill.”

“So they were,” said the Dormouse; “*very* ill.”

Alice tried a little to fancy to herself what such an extraordinary way of living would be like, but it puzzled her too much: so she went on: “But why did they live at the bottom of a well?”

“Take some more tea,” the March Hare said to Alice, earnestly.

“I’ve had nothing yet,” Alice replied in an offended tone: “so I can’t take more.”

“You mean you can’t take *less*,” said the Hatter: “it’s very easy to take *more* than nothing.”

“Nobody asked *your* opinion,” said Alice.

“Who’s making personal remarks now?” the Hatter asked triumphantly.

Alice didn’t quite know what to say to this: so she helped herself to some tea and bread-and-butter, and then turned to the Dormouse, and repeated her question.

“Why did they live at the bottom of a well?”



The Dormouse again took a minute or two to think about it, and then said “It was a treacle-well.”

“There’s no such thing!” Alice was getting very annoyed, but the Hatter and the March Hare went “Sh! Sh!” and the Dormouse sulkily remarked “If you can’t be civil, you’d better finish the story for yourself.”

“No, please go on!” Alice said, very humbly. “I won’t interrupt you again. I dare say there may be *one*.”

“One, indeed!” said the Dormouse indignantly. However, he consented to go on. “And so these three little sisters—they were learning to draw, you know—”

“What did they draw?” said Alice, quite forgetting her promise. “Treacle,” said the Dormouse, without considering at all, this time.

“I want a clean cup,” interrupted the Hatter: “Let’s all move one place on.” He moved on as he spoke, and the Dormouse followed him: the March Hare moved into the Dormouse’s place, and Alice rather unwillingly took the place of the March Hare. The Hatter was the only one who got any advantage from the change; and Alice was a good deal worse off than before, as the March Hare had just upset the milk-jug into his plate.

Alice didn’t wish to offend the Dormouse again, so she began very cautiously: “But I don’t understand. Where did they draw the treacle from?”

“You can draw water out of a water-well,” said the Hatter; “so I should think you could draw treacle out of a treacle-well—eh, stupid?”

“But they were *in* the well,” Alice said to the Dormouse, not choosing to notice this last remark.

“Of course they were,” said the Dormouse: “well in.”

This answer so confused poor Alice, that she let the Dormouse go on for some time without interrupting it.

“They were learning to draw,” the Dormouse went on, yawning and rubbing its eyes, for it was getting very tired; “and they drew all sorts of things — everything that begins with an M—”

“Why with an M?” said Alice. “Why not?” said the March Hare. Alice was silent.

The Dormouse had closed its eyes by this time, and was going off into a doze; but, on being pinched by the Hatter, it woke up again with a little shriek, and went on: “—that begins with an M, such as mousetraps, and the moon, and memory, and muchness—you know you say things are ‘much of a muchness’— did you ever see such a thing as a drawing of a muchness?”

“Really, now you’re asking,” said Alice, very confused, “I don’t think—”

“Then you shouldn’t talk,” said the Hatter.

This bit of rudeness was more than Alice could take: she got up, very annoyed, and walked off: the Dormouse fell asleep instantly, and neither of the others took the least bit of notice of her going, though she looked back once or twice, half hoping that they would call after her: the last time she saw them, they were trying to put the Dormouse into the teapot.