

Non-standard spellings in media texts: The case of German fanzines¹

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Based on an investigation of spellings in German punk fanzines (a blend of ‘fan’ + ‘(maga)zine’), this paper sketches a framework for the analysis of non-standard spellings in media texts. The analysis distinguishes between a number of spelling types, which include both representations of spoken language and purely graphemic modifications, and three patterns of spelling usage: spellings as a part of the text’s regular features, spelling choices as contextualization cues, and as cues of subcultural positioning. By examining the relations between types and usages of non-standard spellings, the paper demonstrates how young writers creatively use the graphemic resources of their language in order to communicate sociocultural meanings, at the same time constructing an orthographic anti-standard in the restricted field of music-related subcultural discourse.

KEYWORDS: Sociolinguistics, orthography, media discourse, youth media, German

1. INTRODUCTION

The term ‘non-standard spellings’ is used in this paper as a general heading for spellings that diverge from standard (codified) orthography and/or do not occur in formal writing. In this sense, it is meant to include both the transfer of spoken language features to writing, and formal modifications of a sign that are not related to spoken language facts. The work which I will briefly review in this introduction provides evidence for the usage of non-standard spellings in various domains of written discourse, including fiction, advertisement, mass media, and vernacular writing. Taken together, it reveals a number of important points about spelling choices as a communicative resource which is used to suit different purposes, according to each ‘social and cultural context of orthographic practices’ (Sebba 1998: 36).

A well-known context in which non-standard spellings are used is the construction of a ‘written dialect’ in fiction. According to Balhorn (1998: 63), ‘the primary communicative potential of written dialect is not symbolic, but indexical’, i.e. to indicate the (low) status of a character vis-à-vis other

characters. Lakoff (1982) and Balhorn (1998) point out that the indexical function of spelling choices is grounded in their contrast to their (neutral) orthographic context. As a result, 'any deviations from the conventional representation of the sign is interpreted as non-standard regardless of all linguistic facts' (Ballhorn: 1998: 60). In other cases of fiction, however, non-standard spellings are an attempt to represent the author's own language for which no official orthography exists. In the case of British Creole writing (Sebba 1998), spelling choices not only signal phonetic differences from standard English, but they also affect words without any difference in pronunciation, e.g. the use of <k> in *Jameka*, *kool*. Their primary function is a symbolic one, in that they increase the distance of creole orthography from the British English model (Sebba 1998: 32–33).

One common theme in the literature is that non-standard spellings place the discourse in which they appear in an opposition to standard language and the ideologies associated with it. This holds true for the spelling practices of British Jamaican poets (Sebba 1998), Italian hiphop writers (Romiti 1998) and the German alternative press (Hess-Lüttich 1984). In public awareness, correct orthography is often taken as an indicator of conformity to norms and ideals of a dominant culture (August 1988). Therefore, a deviation from (and even more the conscious challenge of) orthographic norms has the potential of signalling distance from or negation of dominant culture. To this extent, unconventional spelling can be a subversive writing practice (Kataoka 1997: 130). When collectively adopted, such a practice can gain the status of an anti-standard (Halliday 1979) which functions as an important expression of social and cultural identity, a point recently emphasized by both Kataoka (1997) and Sebba (1998).

However, non-standard spellings can also create or enhance a particular relation between writer and audience, without being necessarily connected to an oppositional sociocultural stance. In advertisement, elisions and contractions typical of informal speech are reproduced as a means to 'attract the readers' attention' (Davies 1987: 48) and to bring advertisement discourse closer to the everyday discourse of the target group. In mass media, non-standard spellings are a part of what Hartmann (1990) calls an intentional approach (*Annäherung*) of written to spoken language. Together with other patterns typical of informal speech (such as syntactic patterns, lexical choices, discourse markers etc.), orthographic choices can both simulate the phonic code in particular discourse types, e.g. interviews, and suggest a relation of nearness or intimacy between the communicators and their audiences. According to Nübling (1992: 305ss), representations of clitics in written German are likely to increase as one moves from up-market to down-market newspapers, and even more so in advertisement. To this extent, orthographic choices in media texts can also be conceived of as a part of audience or ingroup referee design (Bell 1984), i.e. a language style purposefully adopted by communicators for an ideal audience. Since previous work suggests the importance of a correlative approach to non-standard spellings

(Nübling 1992; Smith and Schmidt 1996), it would be tempting to regard a particular spelling pattern as a sociolinguistic variable, similar to phonologic or syntactic variables in media language (cf. Bell 1984; Jucker 1993).

Previous research also indicates that spelling choices in various genres are not restricted to the representation of spoken language features, but include manipulations of the orthographic form without reflecting any variation in pronunciation. Instances of this phenomenon include the substitution of individual letters in trade names (Davies 1987), graffiti (Romiti 1998) and fiction (Sebba 1998), script change from Japanese to Latin (Kataoka 1997), and the substitution of word parts through homophone numbers (Romiti 1998). Balhorn (1998: 60) aptly states that written signs 'take on a life independent of the sound symbols that compose them'. Smith and Schmidt, in their study of Japanese, emphasize the potential of 'writing systems and practices as independent channels for expressions of creativity, social self-identity and cultural forms' (Smith and Schmidt 1996: 46). Even though Japanese has richer graphemic resources compared to alphabetic systems, the authors' point that script choices convey sociolinguistic and stylistic information (Smith and Schmidt 1996: 69) holds true for writing systems in general.

2. AIMS AND ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

The aim of this paper is to examine how non-standard spellings are used in a non-mainstream form of print media produced within an oppositional (sub-cultural) framework. In addition, the study is aimed at sketching a framework for the formal and functional analysis of non-standard spellings in media texts. The research described in this paper is based on the analysis of a corpus of approximately 80 German fanzines, collected between 1992 and 1995. The core data consists of a sample of 270 record and magazine reviews with a sum of ca. 25,000 words which will be referred to below as the 'review corpus'. These 270 texts come in equal amounts from 10 fanzines, nine of them from all over Germany (including the cities of Augsburg, Bremen, Duisburg and Ludwigshafen as well as smaller towns in several federal states), and one from Vienna, Austria. Additional material, including several genres from fanzines and other youth culture media, provided a useful background in order to estimate the spread of the phenomena discussed below, but explicit reference to it will only be sporadic in this paper.

Endorsing an 'ideological' rather than a 'technological' view on orthography (Street 1995; Sebba 1998), spelling choices are seen in this paper as a sociocultural practice, reflecting the values a speech community attributes to particular representations of linguistic variation, as well as the stances and identities a social group wishes to express in writing. My analysis is also informed by Fairclough's (1995) framework for the analysis of media discourse, and thus takes into consideration the sociocultural context of the media as well as their production and distribution patterns (see section 3). However, the

primary focus of this paper is a linguistic analysis of spelling patterns, in which I attempt to reveal how the graphemic resources available in a particular language are employed in a particular type of media in order to meet specific communicative purposes.

The analysis presented in this paper is based on a distinction between *spelling types* on the one hand, and their *usage patterns* on the other. Writers have at their disposal a variety of graphemic resources, some bearing a relation to spoken language, others being purely graphemic manipulations. The graphemic resources attested in fanzine texts will be summarized in a typology which will be presented in section 4.1. However, various types of non-standard spellings may differ greatly in their frequency of appearance, their textual and lexical distribution, and the background knowledge they point to. For this reason, three usage patterns of non-standard spellings will be discussed in section 4.2.

As a starting point for the examination of usage patterns, a broad distinction is made between 'regular' and 'exceptional' non-standard spellings. On the one hand, certain spellings will be found to occur in a regular, patterned manner throughout the data, typically representing informal speech. Such spelling choices can be regarded as a part of the writer's orientation towards the oral mode of communication or 'conceptual orality' (*konzeptionelle Mündlichkeit*), as defined by Koch and Oesterreicher (1990, 1994).² Looking at spellings as a part of the text's orthographic regularities includes both their systematic appearance as regards structural differences between written and spoken language, and their frequency in a variationist sense.

On the other hand, certain spelling choices may be exceptional, but highly salient in their discourse environment, playing a key role for the point the writer wants to make. Uncovering the stances and identities such spellings are associated with requires a context-bound analysis which can be based on the concept of contextualization cues (cf. Gumperz 1982, 1992; Auer 1986, 1992). For the purposes of this paper, graphemic contextualization cues can be defined as spelling choices which signal certain attitudes or evoke certain frames of interpretation by establishing a contrast to the text's spelling regularities or to the default spelling of a linguistic item. For instance, writers can manipulate spelling in a manner analogous to intonation or style shift in spoken discourse, in order to contextualize a change in their attitude or footing (cf. Georgakopoulou 1997 for a discussion of such cases in e-mail discourse). As suggested in Androutsopoulos (1999a), graphemic choices comply with a number of criteria for contextualization cues, as summarized by Auer (1986): they have no referential meaning as such, they can be ambiguous, in the sense that a single cue can be employed for a variety of functions, and they can also be redundant, in the sense that cues of different kinds may co-occur, enhancing a specific frame of interpretation.

Whether a particular spelling has a contextualizing function or not, depends on its relation to the text's orthographic norms, and on the discourse environment in which it appears. As a consequence, the same spelling pattern may be

'regular' in one text and 'exceptional' in another, even in instances of the same genre within a homogeneous corpus. In my review corpus, this is the case with, for instance, the reduced form of the copula verb (*ist* > *is*), a relatively frequent feature of spoken German (cf. Schwitalla 1997: 33–34). In some reviews it appears throughout the text, thereby indicating informal writing. However, when the reduced form only appears in a particular context (e.g. in an expressive speech act at the text's opening, together with interjections or exclamation marks), it can be said to contextualize the writer's (enthusiastic) attitude towards the topic, i.e. the reviewed record.

While in the above example the transgressive spelling still reflects a difference in speaking vs. writing, in other cases, spelling norms may be transgressed in ways that are purely graphemic. Writers may draw on spellings reminiscent of an 'historical variety of the language' (Davies 1987: 57), or on the exchange of individual letters (cf. Romiti 1998; Sebba 1998). Such spelling choices are of particular interest to this study, since they are quite common in the mediated discourse of music-related subcultures such as punk or hip-hop culture. Consequently, they will be discussed as a special form of graphemic contextualization cues.

3. THE SOCIO-TEXTUAL FRAME

Fanzines have been an essential ingredient of punk culture from its very beginning in the late seventies, and still constitute a forum for alternative expression in many countries of the world.³ Fanzines are devoted to various topics (cf. Duncombe 1997: 1–16; Kleiber 1997: 61–65); my data, however, includes only music-orientated fanzines which define themselves as punk or hardcore/punk, the latter being a more politically conscious development of punk in the eighties and nineties (cf. Lau 1992).

It is safe to say that fanzines are not a part of the mainstream print media market, but rather a part of smaller, parallel or alternative markets. Following Lau (1992: 159) and Triggs (1995), a fanzine is defined by non-professional production, low circulation, underground distribution, topical specialization, and a decisively fan or engaged perspective. The German fanzines of my corpus are short-lived, black and white, home and copy shop productions with a circulation ranging from around 100 up to 2000 copies per issue. A sample page is given in Figure 1. As a rule, they are created by people (mainly but not exclusively males) aged from 18 to 30, including students, musicians, and even unemployed people. Their average amount of advertisement (15%) and their ad prices lag behind those of commercial print youth media. Since fanzines do not have an ISSN identification and are not available by press distribution, people subscribe to or buy them in cafes, record stores and at concerts. In fact, fanzine makers assume that their magazines are mostly read by people they know (cf. Androutsopoulos 1999a).

Besides being connected to each other by virtue of their 'objective' market

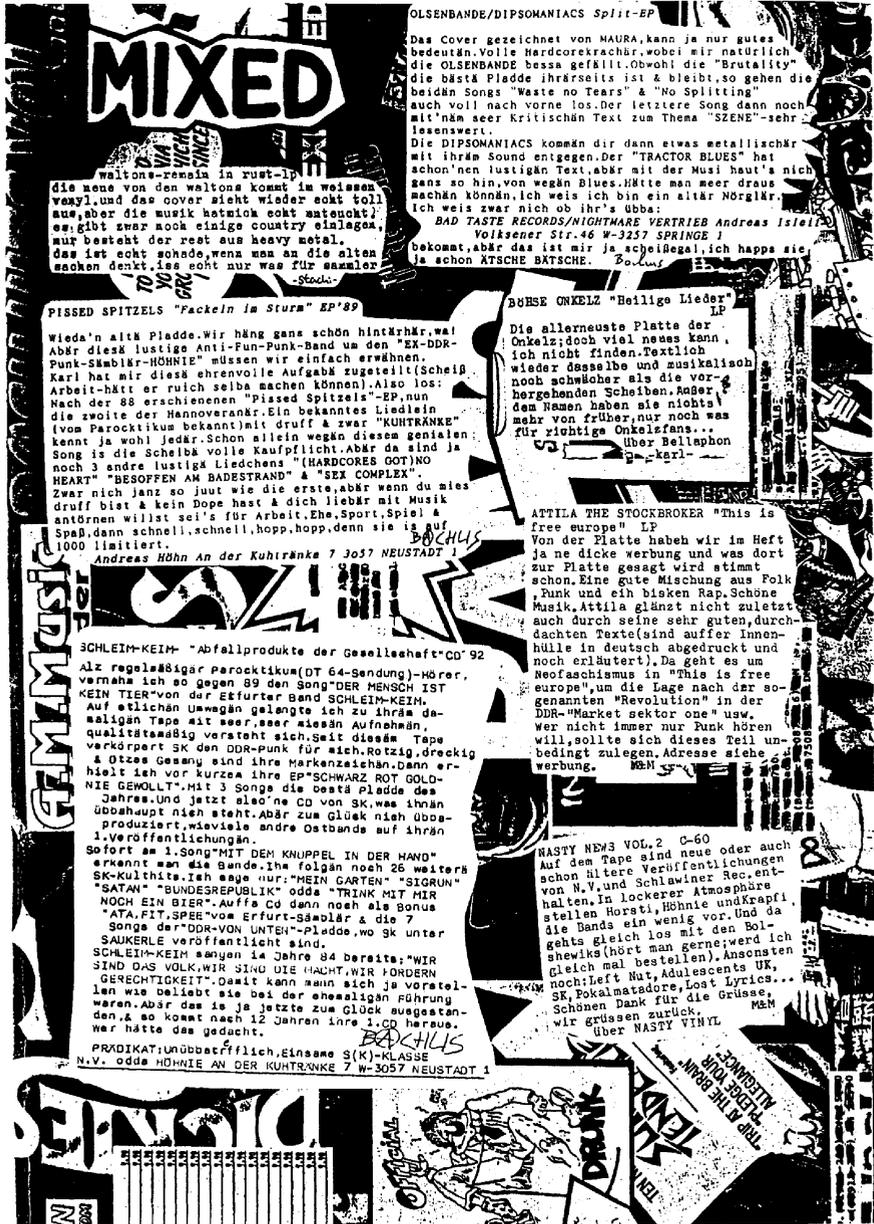


Figure 1. Sample page from 'Röhr Zu' Nr. 4, Neubrandenburg, 1992

position, German punk fanzines form a *socio-textual network* connected by discursive and social links.⁴ In essence, the German *fanzine scene* (a term used by participants themselves) is constructed through mutual references in fanzines' discourse. Fanzine makers organize common activities, e.g. a joint distribution, concerts or football contests, which are reported on in the magazines. Fanzine writers regularly review one another's new issues and they refer to one another in editorials, columns or concert reports, sometimes by means of puns or allusions to fanzine names. Judging from this discourse, there is an awareness of music preferences and individual habits of fanzines' creators, and of status differences between 'small' and 'big' fanzines, i.e. between newcomers and the few established scene leaders. Status differences in the scene are typified to some extent by the fanzines' format, with the prototypical fanzine having an A5 format (14.8 × 21 cm) rather than an A4 one (21 × 29.7 cm). A5 fanzines are cheaper to make, they generally have fewer copies per issue and a smaller amount of advertisement than A4 fanzines, and they faithfully adopt visual features of punk style such as the collage layout. Judging from occasional comments in fanzine reviews, a puristic view on what a 'real fanzine' looks like would probably exclude A4 fanzines on the basis of their more commercial or conventional format.

In Koch and Oesterreicher's (1994) terms, the production and distribution conditions characteristic of fanzines constitute a space of 'communicative nearness' which allows for patterns of conceptual orality to be unfolded. This is especially the case as regards those aspects of discourse which are most affected by the absence of face-to-face interaction, such as expression of intimacy, dialogic communication, and spontaneous text production. These patterns are constructed in fanzines' discourse through various communicative strategies and linguistic means, in ways which go beyond the scope of this paper (cf. Androutsopoulos 1999b, 1999c). Linguistically, fanzine texts are basically colloquial standard German (cf. Barbour and Stevenson 1990), their particular style resulting both from their lexicon and idiomatic usage (music jargon, youth slang), and from various orality features (e.g. conversational formulae, discourse markers, spellings representing colloquial speech). Such features abound in genres such as editorials, interviews, readers' letters, columns, reviews and scene reports. These genres provide spaces for informal writing and thus occasions for spelling choices to be employed as communicative resources.

4. RESULTS

4.1 *A typology of non-standard spellings*

Based on graphic-phonetic relations and on additional formal criteria, non-standard spellings attested in fanzine texts can be divided into six types, which will be introduced in this section. At the same time, this typology includes all kinds of non-standard spelling attested so far for German. Since the speech phenomena in question are well documented (see Benware 1986;

Barbour and Stevenson 1990; Kohler 1995; Schwitalla 1997), structural details and phonemic notations are reduced to a minimum.

1. **'Phonetic spellings'** This term is restricted to representations of standard pronunciation not covered by standard orthography, as in the case of English 'wuz' for 'was' (cf. Balhorn 1998: 60). German examples include the final devoicing of plosives, /b/ > /p/, as in *deshalp* (*deshalb* 'therefore'), as well as the vocalization of /r/, whereby word final <er> /ɐ/ appears as <a> (*supa* 'super') and the word *Mark* /ma:k/ is spelled *Maak* or *Mack*.

2. **'Colloquial spellings'** is used as a cover term for the representation of reduction phenomena typical of colloquial speech, including so-called weak forms. Examples will be discussed in section 4.2. Suffice it to say that although fanzine writers consistently use a remarkable variety of colloquial spellings, not all features of informal speech are equally represented, as in Sebba's (1998) analysis of British creole writing.

3. **'Regiolectal spellings'** are representations of features typical of a regional variety of German. Examples are the spirantization of /k/, a feature of north and central German varieties, whereby <g> becomes <ch>, as in *Betruch* ('deception'); and the southern German palatalization of /s/ to /ʃ/, as in *kostet* > *koschtet* ('it costs'). Such spellings may appear as an integral part of colloquial language or in a shift from colloquial standard to what is commonly labelled 'dialect'.

4. **'Prosodic spellings'** are representations of prosodic patterns, e.g. the simulation of word stress by the use of capitals and hyphens or the representation of vowel lengthening, i.e. in discourse markers, intensifiers and evaluators (e.g. *guuuut!*). In Smith and Schmidt's (1996: 50) terms, spelling choices of this kind operate as "'paragramhemic" components of textual style'.

5. **'Interlingual spellings'** are phonetic spellings of loanwords according to native orthographic rules. In German, they sometimes include consonant sequences not allowed in native words, and regularly use <ä> for <a> to represent /æ/, e.g. *Äktschn* ('action'). This spelling type is also documented in Italian and French youth media (Romiti 1998; Androutsopoulos 1999b).

6. **'Homophone spellings'** is used as a cover term for graphic alterations without a correspondence to phonic alterations. This type forms an intersection to advertisement techniques, since the preference for spelling alterations that Davies (1987) attests for trade name creators is also common to Italian hiphop writers (Romiti 1998) and German fanzine writers. Based on formal criteria, I distinguish between two major groups:

a. 'lexical substitutions', whereby a graph, a combination of two graphs or a number replaces a homophone word or word part; examples are English *U*

- (‘you’) and *8* (as in *sk8ter* ‘skater’), German *1 /ann/* as in *1-tritt* (‘Eintritt’, ‘entrance’), and Italian *Nas1* for *nasone* ‘big nose’ (Romiti 1998: 290).
- b. ‘grapheme substitutions’, i.e. replacing a graph (or graph sequence) by another graph (or graph sequence), as in <ph> for <f> in English *phat*, <z> for <s> in German *Jungz* (‘guys’, cf. *boyz*), and <k> for <que> in French *disk* or *rubrik*.

As the examples demonstrate, both subgroups include some spelling variants which only occur in (American) English loanwords.⁵ But as a whole, homophone spellings are less widespread in German than in American English, youth media being their major context of appearance. Although many grapheme substitutions can also be classified as phonetic spellings, I will argue that phonetic representation is not the decisive motivation for their use (see section 4.2.3).

4.2 Usage patterns of non-standard spellings

Spellings of all six types generally co-occur in the fanzines under investigation, even within the same text or utterance. This is demonstrated by the examples (1) – (3) below, in which the affected items are in bold type. Phonetic spellings are the vocalization of /r/ in *aba* (*aber* ‘but’) in example (1) and *wieda* (*wieder* ‘again’), *leida* (*leider* ‘unfortunately’), *übba* (*über* ‘over’) in example (2). Colloquial spellings are the assimilation *isn* (*ist ein* ‘is a’) in (1) and the elision *hör* (*höre* ‘I listen’) in (2). The item *happx* (*habe es* ‘I have it’), also in (2), involves the phonetic representation of devoicing and the colloquial contraction of the pronoun *es*. Regiolectal spellings are the spirantization of /k/ in *gekriecht* (*gekriegt* ‘got’) in (2) and the lenition of /p/ and /t/ in *Bladde* (*Platte* ‘record’) in (3). Example (3) also includes intonational spellings of the words *Kult* (‘cult’) and *Vinyl* as well as the grapheme substitution <x> in *Trax* (‘tracks’). The same marker occurs in example (1) as well (*Sonx* ‘songs’).⁶

1. ‘Teenage Kekx’ Nr. 1, Lippetal, 1993
*Eine leichte Melancholie zieht sich durch alle **Sonx**, die Texte gefallen mir auch. Sound **isn** bissel dünn, **aba** noch gut.*
‘A slight melancholy goes through all songs, the lyrics I like too. The sound is a bit thin, but still okay.’
2. ‘Röhr Zu’ Nr. 4, Neubrandenburg, 1992
“Schon **wieda** ein altes Tape” **hör** ich die meisten schreien. **Abär** ich **happx leida** erst jetzte **übba** “Aggressive Punktapex” **gekriecht**.
““An old tape again” I hear most of you complaining. But I’ve just got it from “Aggressive Punktapex”.”
3. ‘Stilbruch’ Nr.1, Ebertsheim, 1992
Kuuuuuuult!!! Falls diese **4-Trax Bladde** noch nicht ausverkauft ist, dann sofort beim örtlichen **Vinüüül**-Dealer holen.
‘Cult! In case this 4 track record is not sold out yet, get it immediately from your local vinyl dealer.’

However, the overall frequency of the six spelling types is not equal. As a rule of thumb it can be said that various patterns of colloquial spellings make up three quarters of the non-standard spellings in the review corpus. The remaining quarter is divided among the other five types. Individual fanzines may diverge from this proportion, the 'Röhr Zu' fanzine with its numerous phonetic spellings (see example 2) being a case in point.

4.2.1 Regular spelling patterns

Since the base language variety of fanzine texts is colloquial standard German, regularly appearing non-standard spellings are essentially restricted to various patterns of colloquial spellings (type 2). In a manner analogous to spoken German (Bresson 1982), no colloquial pattern appears categorically in writing, but standard and reduced forms can co-occur in the same text. Drawing on four different patterns, I will argue that certain colloquial spellings appear more often than their standard counterparts, that their frequency co-varies with extralinguistic factors, and that they reflect structural regularities which are only partially present in standard German spelling.

The quantitative analysis presented below involves three very common written representations of spoken German, which are also the most frequent patterns of colloquial spelling in the data. The patterns are:

- a. the unstressed indefinite article, its reduction being the colloquial spelling, e.g. *eine* /ainə/ > *ne* /nə/;
- b. verb final *-e* /ə/, its elision being the colloquial spelling, e.g. *ich habe* > *ich hab* 'I have';
- c. the sequence of a verb and the enclitic pronoun *es* ('it'), contraction of the pronoun being the colloquial spelling, e.g. *ich habe es* > *hab's* 'I have it'.

Since none of these colloquial spellings is obligatory or involves a change in referential meaning, they can be treated as variants of the respective variables. All three patterns are analyzed as full Labovian variables, i.e. counting all actual over potential occurrences of the colloquial spelling in all contexts that show spelling variation in the data.⁷ Table 1 displays the total occurrence of the variables and the colloquial variants in the review corpus.

The first column of Table 1 displays the occurrence of the colloquial variants in the complete review corpus. As can be seen, the variants differ considerably in frequency, which ranges from about 20 percent for the indefinite article to almost 80 percent for the verb-pronoun contraction, with the elision of verb final-*e* occurring in almost half of the cases. The second and third column of the table display the amount of colloquial spellings according to the fanzine format. It shows that all three features occur more frequently in A5 fanzines than in A4 ones. Since A5 fanzines are considered more 'underground' than A4 ones (cf. section 3), this difference is consonant with the sociolinguistic tenet of a correlation between subcultural orientation and linguistic non-standardness

Table 1: Occurrence of three colloquial spellings in five A4 and five A5 fanzines

	<i>Total</i>		<i>A4 fanzines</i>		<i>A5 fanzines</i>	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Reduction of unstressed article	76/378	20.1	20/378	10.9	56/378	28.7
Elision of verb final <i>-e</i>	59/129	45.7	20/129	31.7	39/129	59.0
Contraction of verb + <i>es</i>	80/102	78.4	30/102	73.1	50/102	80.6

(see e.g. Cheshire 1982). In other words, the data suggests that the more subculturally oriented a fanzine, the more non-standard spellings it can be expected to contain.

This finding receives further support from the fact that A5 fanzines display a wider range of non-standard spellings than A4 ones in a qualitative sense. The example I draw on is the contraction of the enclitic definite article after the prepositions *auf* ('on'), *aus* ('from'), *für* ('for'), *in* ('in'), *mit* ('with'), *von* ('of, by'). Since articles are inflected in German, a single preposition exhibits up to five contracted forms, according to the article's case, gender and number. This pattern is considerably more developed in colloquial spoken than in formal standard German (Bresson 1982: 30). Although most contraction forms are not represented in public writing (Hartmann 1980; Nübling 1992), they are systematically represented in fanzines' colloquial writing. For instance, while the only accepted written contraction involving *auf* is *auf das* > *auf's* ('on the'-acc.neuter), fanzine texts also display the forms *auf den* > *auf'n* (acc.masc.), *auf dem* > *auf'm* or *auffem* (dat.masc. and neuter), *auf die* > *auffe* (acc.fem.) and *auf der* > *auffer* (dat.fem.).⁸ For all six prepositions examined, a total of 17 contraction forms are attested in my data, but only five of them are accepted in formal writing (*auf's* 'auf das', *für's* 'für das', *ins* 'in das', *im* 'in dem', *vom* 'von dem'). As for the other contractions (e.g. *aussem* 'aus dem', *für'n* 'für den', *inna* 'in der', *mit'm* 'mit dem', etc.), all but one are only attested in A5 fanzines. In other words, even within the subcultural literacy space of punk fanzines, the most 'underground' publications exhibit the greatest number of 'extremely spoken' graphemic features.

4.2.2 Graphemic contextualization cues

While regular spelling patterns in fanzine texts are essentially restricted to one single spelling type, i.e. colloquial spellings, all spelling resources available to fanzine writers can be used as graphemic contextualization cues. For instance, the representation of vowel lengthening, a 'prosodic spelling' according to my typology, is a major device for contextualizing expressivity and, sometimes,

irony. This section will concentrate on the contextualizing functions of two other spelling types, i.e. regiolectal and interlingual spellings.

It should be pointed out that regiolectal and interlingual spellings can be employed for a variety of purposes in different media discourses of the German speech community. For instance, there is a tradition of dialect poetry, and certain computer magazines regularly feature Germanized spellings of English technical terms. However, the cultural context fanzines operate within restricts the communicative purposes of both spelling types. As engaged members of a small, but international youth subculture, fanzine writers set themselves apart from both the native popular culture and unskilled or 'fake' appropriations of their own subcultural style. This subcultural distinction is sometimes achieved through spelling choices. Specifically, both regiolectal and interlingual spellings can be used to project cultural ignorance or a lack of 'subcultural capital' (Thornton 1995) onto outsiders.⁹

Regiolectal spellings generally reflect the ambivalent status of the language varieties they represent. Regional dialects being a part of everyday communication, their simulation in writing can convey a positive assertion of local identity. However, writers also exploit the widespread stereotypical association of dialect usage with a restricted cultural horizon. For instance, a newcomer fanzine called 'Ich bin der Papst' ('I am the Pope') features a jocular table of contents, in which the 'contents' label is heavily marked as Allemanic dialect: *Wa isch do dimne?* (standard German: *Was ist da drin?* 'What's in there?'). In another case, a dialect voice is attributed to the stereotypical manager of a 'village disco' (*Dorfdisco*) who would fire a disc jockey in the event that 'the people don't dance' (*weil die Leut net tanze*). Here, regional speech is represented through the omission of word final phonemes in *Leut-e* ('people'), *tanze-n* ('dance') and the negative *net* instead of *nicht* ('not'). This can be seen as an instance of metaphorical code-switching whose purpose is to stress the manager's lack of understanding of subcultural values (i.e. the quality of the music as opposed to the commercial success of the event). In both cases, a dialect voice is constructed to imply cultural ignorance, be it in a jocular or dissociative manner.

Interlingual spellings operate within a different frame of interpretation, due to the fact that they are largely restricted to *culturally relevant* loanwords. Since music-related youth subcultures in Germany are generally modelled on English/American trends, they derive most of their terminology from (American) English. Although the original spelling of loanwords is the default case, certain types of 'deviant' spellings also exist. Some of them indicate the phonological integration of a loanword, e.g. the verb *check* is also attested as *schecken*. Further instances of spelling change include proper names (e.g. *Sitt Vissches* for 'Sid Vicious'), group labels (e.g. *Punks* is also attested as *Pönks*), and the names of regular fanzine columns such as *Blählist* ('playlist'). Playful transformations of this kind could perhaps be interpreted as a symbolic appropriation of the concept represented by the graphemic unit. That is, the Germanized spelling indicates that a culturally relevant referent has 'gone native', is a part of the

writer's life-world. In other cases, however, an interlingual spelling can be employed to project a 'native' understanding of the referent or a nationally restricted cultural scope. A particularly clear example occurs in the following excerpt from a concert report:

4. 'Rote Zora' Nr. 3, Bad Dürkheim, 1992

In der Umpaupause [sic] verbrachten die Zoras die Zeit damit, zwei Einheimischen zu erklären, was ein Fähnziehn ist und das [sic] da oben der Titel steht und links die Gruppen und daß das Bild halt so da ist und und und.

'During the set change the Zoras [i.e. the fanzine makers] spent their time explaining to two natives what a **fanzine** is, and there's the title and these are the bands on the left and there's the picture and so forth.'

The spelling *Fähnziehn* involves the deletion of word final <e>, the replacement of <a> by <ä> for /æ/, and standard mechanisms of German orthography for indicating vowel length for /i:/. Consequently, <z> is now read as German /ts/. The spelling thus suggests a Germanized pronunciation, /'fæntsi:n/, while the usual pronunciation of the word in the scene is the English one, i.e. /'fanzɪ:n/. Occuring as it does in the indirect interrogative clause, the word renders the asking voice of the natives. Since German fanzine makers always use the default spelling, *fanzine*, when speaking from their own point of view, the exceptional Germanized spelling can be said to contextualize the cultural gap between ingroup and outgroup. The natives' ignorance about subcultural matters is further conveyed by the naive explanation of 'what a fanzine is' and by their social labelling (*Einheimischen*) which is juxtaposed to the writer's ingroup label *die Zoras* (derived from the name of their fanzine).

Although regiolectal and interlingual spellings derive their meaning potential from different domains of cultural knowledge, they can also co-occur. For instance, in a review from a club culture magazine the writer contrasts the positively evaluated 'spacy cover' (*das spacige Cover*) of the reviewed record to the 'mass of pseudo-modern techno covers' (*dem Allerlei der auf pseudomodern getrimmten "Däschnokawer"*). Here the writer manipulates spelling to construct the social voice he associates with a negatively evaluated referent, i.e. popular techno covers. He thereby deforms the default spelling, *Technocover*, into "*Däschnokawer*" through a mixture of Germanized orthography and regional speech markers. The substitution of <c> through <k> is an official Germanized spelling of loanwords, and the spellings <ä> for <e>, <a> for <o> and <w> for <v> are phonetic for standard German. Two further spelling changes simulate regional speech features, i.e. the voicing of the initial plosive, <t> to <d>, and the palatalization, <s> to <sch>. The quotation marks indicate "*Däschnokawer*" as a distant voice, which is probably attributed to the cover's designer. By evoking the negative values associated with both spelling types involved, this particular spelling contextualizes the writer's distance from what he considers a bad copy (or fake appropriation) of subcultural style.

4.2.3 Cues of subcultural positioning

While the graphemic resources discussed in the previous section are used to create distance, fanzine writers also make use of spelling choices for the purpose of marking their own subcultural affiliations. This is the case with homophone spellings and especially their second subset, grapheme substitutions. In this section I will focus my attention on the distribution of two spelling variants, <x> and <z>, which were probably introduced into German fanzines through exposure to (American) English media, and occur to a great extent in English loanwords. Note that <x> is not a native German grapheme, and <z> is always pronounced /ts/ in German, so the /z/ pronunciation which is relevant here is imported from English.

Both <x> and <z> most commonly appear in certain forms of trade names, i.e. record, label and band names such as *Eightz Dayz*, *Human Punnx*, *Feederz*, *Noize*. They also occur in visually salient textual spots, such as picture legends or column titles, as well as in music advertisements, e.g. in phrases such as *phat beatz* or *techno trax*. However, they are not restricted to advertising discourse, but also occur in genres such as interviews, editorials and reviews (cf. examples 1 and 3 above).

As regards their lexical distribution, these imported spelling variants make their way from loanwords into native words. In fact, of the 28 items on which <x> occurs in my data, 21 are German words. In this 'nativization' process, they extend their distribution beyond the original (i.e. English) one. For instance, <z> appears in loanwords such as *noize* ('noise') and *boyz* ('boys'), as a plural marker of native nouns, e.g. *Jungz* (*Jungs* 'guys'), and finally in words such as *gibtz* (*gibt's* 'there is'), where it reflects the pronunciation of /ts/ which is specific to German. The distribution of <x> includes six different segments: it replaces the segments <ks>, <cks> and <gs> in both English and German items, e.g. *Punnx* ('punks'), *Thanx* ('thanks'), *Marx* (*Marks*) for <ks>; *Trax* ('tracks'), *Stix* (*Stücks* 'tracks'), *zwex* (*zwecks* 'for the purpose of') for <cks>; and *Zeux* (*Zeugs* 'stuff'), *Sonx* (*Songs* 'songs'), *Junx* (*Jungs* 'guys') for <gs>; it also replaces <cs> in English loanwords, as in *Lyrinx* ('lyrics'), *Comix* ('comics'); finally, <x> replaces the segment <chs> in German words such as *Abwexlung* (*Abwechslung* 'change') and *demnäxt* (*demnächst* 'soon'), and the segment <kt>, pronounced /kts/, in the word *Redaxion* (*Redaktion* 'editorial staff').

Now, at least in the case of *Redaxion*, <x> cannot be treated as a phonetic spelling. The same holds true in the case of *H-Blockx*, the name of a popular German crossover band. Here, <x> just replaces <s>, whereas a full phonetic substitution would yield the form <Blox>. Thus, <x> is simply added on. Moreover, both <x> and <z> can appear in the same lexical item, as in *Junx* and *Jungz*, *Punnx* and *Punkz*. The crucial motivation for these spelling variants is not phonetic representation, but their indexical or symbolic value as cues of subcultural positioning. In other words, they act as an instruction to interpret the discourse as 'subculturally engaged' or 'hip'.¹⁰ This value can be

further specified according to the lexical class of the carrier. When appearing in youth-cultural trade names, grapheme substitutions may stress the 'hipness' of the product (and its producers), while at the same time possibly serving as a visual mnemonic device. In the case of social categorizations, they may convey notions such as originality, radicality, or toughness, thus permitting us to read *Punx* as 'real punks'. In still other cases, e.g. in verbs such as *gibz* or adverbs such as *demnäxt*, the lexical carrier seems of little importance, it is rather the discourse as a whole which is marked as subcultural.

5. SPELLING CHOICES AND SUBCULTURAL IDENTITY

The findings of this study show that fanzines are a particularly rich discursive domain for the exploration of spelling choices. To some extent, the abundance of non-standard spellings in fanzines reflects an overall tendency towards unconventional linguistic practices in media discourse, a tendency which is perhaps more pronounced in youth culture media than in mainstream ones. What seems to be specific to punk fanzines, however, is the orchestration of spelling choices to a particular orthographic style which in turn characterizes punk conventions of media discourse.

As demonstrated in the previous sections, spelling conventions in fanzines are a 'collage' consisting of different spelling types used to suit different purposes. Taken together, they can be said to act as an identity construction device. By regularly reproducing colloquial speech, fanzine writers project an intimate relationship with their audience; by exploiting further graphemic resources, they both style relevant others and self-consciously signal their own cultural orientation.

Although a comparison between fanzines and other media goes beyond the scope of this paper, my investigation suggests that fanzines' spelling conventions are partly contiguous and partly transgressive with respect to mainstream orthographic practices. While some of the features discussed above appear in mainstream media as well, other aspects of fanzines' orthography, including both their overall amount of non-standard spellings and certain spelling types, would probably be singled out as 'deviant', 'illiterate' or 'bad taste' from a dominant point of view.

Expressions of subcultural identity in media discourse seem to be essentially *multi-layered*, in the sense that particular sociocultural stances are symbolically expressed in choices affecting more than one semiotic code or level of description (Androutsopoulos 1999a). As a consequence, the sociosymbolic value of spelling choices must be assessed in their interplay with other linguistic choices on the one hand, and with the overall design and discourse of the media in which they appear on the other. In punk media, transgressive spelling practices are part of a homologic relation which includes the overall structure of fanzines, their visual design (Triggs 1995), the unconventional treating of genres such as reviews (Androutsopoulos 1999a, 1999c), and their abundant 'vulgar' language. Since punk positions itself as the most oppositional youth subculture, its

mediated expression seems to follow a maxim of 'distortion' of conventional mediated discourse, perhaps in analogy to the sound distortion characteristic of punk and hardcore music.

All types of non-standard spellings presented in this paper are widespread in the German fanzine community. This suggests that spelling conventions in fanzines constitute an anti-standard, i.e. a form of symbolic capital for the adherents of this particular scene. This interpretation is further supported by the fact that newcomer fanzines adopt existing orthographic (as well as other linguistic and visual) conventions as a sign of identification with the national fanzine scene. Here, as in cases of private writing, particular sign choices connect individual practices to cultural memberships (Kataoka 1997). Significantly, the emergence of an orthographic counter-norm is only possible due to the fact that fanzines operate in an 'autonomous' market, governed by its own 'laws of price formation' (cf. Bourdieu 1991: 97–98). In this restricted market, individual participants use spelling choices to position themselves, as is the case with A5 fanzines which underline their underground orientation with even larger numbers of non-standard spellings. By virtue of their market limitations, fanzine writers can afford to code their own social norms through (among other things) their own ways of spelling, thus turning what is simply 'wrong' at school to a subjective assertion of identity.

As a result, the findings of this paper suggest we should reexamine certain assumptions about the sociolinguistics of orthography, as stated e.g. in Augst's (1988) handbook article. The quasi-equation of the prestige of writing with 'normed orthography' (Augst 1988: 1135) should be redefined following the sociolinguistic distinction between overt and covert prestige, so as to include the value of unconventional spelling choices in particular social contexts or markets of mediated communication. Moreover, the view of orthography as an identity marker for social groups (Augst 1988: 1137) would need to be widened from the national, religious or ethnic minority identities considered at present to include historically recent and socially fluid cultural formations which define themselves not (exclusively) by nation, ethnicity or class, but (primarily) by lifestyle preferences. Connected to this, the view of orthography as 'a means to demonstrate a cultural identity that transgresses national boundaries' (Augst 1988: 1137, my translation) should be extended from cultural bounds based on nationality or religion, to include global lifestyle (sub)cultures. However, it seems important not to forget that unconventional spelling practices are also motivated by creativity, i.e. the playful moment of language use. The findings suggest that ingroup (vernacular) texts offer a chance to experiment with visual representations of language in ways that are not permitted by school.

6. CONCLUSION

In this study of spelling practices in an extensive corpus of German subcultural print media (music-orientated underground magazines), I have documented in

detail both the orthographic mechanisms and the textual usage of a number of non-standard spelling types. The analysis shows that non-standard spellings in media texts form a multi-layered structure which derives its meaning potential from both the text's orthographic regularities and additional graphemic resources which are occasionally put to context-specific usages.

The significance of this study lies in the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods in the investigation of a complex phenomenon in written discourse. The quantitative findings of this paper suggest that spelling constitutes a locus of sociolinguistic variation in media language; specifically, the analysis provides evidence that both type and number of non-standard spellings in particular media texts correlate with their sociocultural orientation and the linguistic markets in which they operate. Qualitative analysis highlights the way that spellings are used as contextualization cues both by simulating sociolinguistic variation and by manipulating the graphic code alone. The interrelationships between non-standard spelling types and their usage patterns may provide a useful analytic tool for working out the orthographic profile of particular media, as well as for cross-linguistic comparisons in this largely unexplored field.

It is likely, moreover, that awareness of the communicative potential of spelling choices is growing. In particular markets, including youth culture media, 'unconventional' spellings are in fact becoming increasingly conventionalized. In view of the ever-increasing importance of the written word in our daily lives, the potential of spelling as a means to convey sociocultural stances and contextual meanings is something sociolinguistics should not ignore in the years to come.

NOTES

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2. Koch and Oesterreicher (1990, 1994) distinguish between the medium (a 'phonic/graphic' dichotomy) and the conception (a 'spoken/written' continuum) of linguistic utterances. The degree of a text being conceptually spoken or written depends on its communicative situation, which is allocated on a continuum between 'communicative nearness' and 'distance' (*kommunikative Nähe/Distanz*), based on a cluster of 'anthropologically grounded' (1994: 588) parameters. The notion of 'conceptual orality' comprises, then, a variety of universal and language-specific means for expressing communicative nearness (see also Schwitalla 1997: 16–19).
3. For the place of fanzines within punk culture, see Hebdige (1979), Lau (1992) and

- Kleiber (1997); for a cultural analysis of U.S. American fanzines, see Duncombe (1997); for an analysis of fanzines' typographic/layout conventions, see Triggs (1995); for statistics on German fanzines' readership, see Kleiber (1997).
4. The notion of a *socio-textual network* was introduced by Karlsson (1998) in an analysis of personal homepages.
 5. More precisely, it is possible to distinguish between 'loan', 'integrated' and 'native' homophone spellings. The first only occur in English loanwords, e.g. <ph> for <f> in *phat*, the second make their way from loanwords to native words, as is the case with <x> and <z> described in section 4.2.3, and the third are based on language-specific correspondences, such as German *1 /ain/ in 1-tritt*.
 6. All examples are followed by the fanzine's name, issue number, place of origin, and year of publication. English glosses of the examples are literal; no attempt has been made to translate idiomatic speech.
 7. In particular, occurrences of the article reduction are counted for all grammatical forms of the indefinite article except for the genitive singular *eines* which does not show variation, verb final elisions are counted for finite verbs in the 1.sg.present and auxiliars in subjunctive, and verb-pronoun-contractions are counted for verbs in the 1.sg., 3.sg. and 3pl. present, 3.sg. past, 1.sg. present subjunctive and in plural imperative.
 8. Note that contractions simply involving an omission of graphemes, e.g. *auf'n*, also occur in advertisement and mass media, though Nübling (1992: 305) only attests them in 'extremely conceptually spoken' texts. However, fanzines also include numerous bisyllabic contraction forms created through replacement and addition of graphemes, such as *auffer*, *inner*, *voner* (dative feminine), resulting in a greater visual deviation from standard orthography. Interestingly, representations of the same contractions in grammars (cf. Weinrich 1993: 615) replace the determiner onset by an apostrophe, as in *in'r*, *von'r*, in an attempt to deviate to the least possible extent from the orthographic norm.
 9. Extending Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, Thornton (1995: 10–14) introduced the notion of 'subcultural capital' in order to capture youth-cultural competencies which are summarized in everyday language under the notion of 'hipness'.
 10. Occasional comments provide evidence for the fact that fanzine writers and young musicians are aware of the indexical or symbolic value of particular spelling markers, linking them to particular affiliations or attitudes. In a review of a band named 'Psychick Warriors ov Gaia', the writer comments on the spelling <ov> as a marker of the band's new age affiliations by saying: 'as the spelling indicates' (*wie schon an der Schreibweise erkennbar*). A 23-year old male musician, when asked by me to interpret the spelling *H-Blockx*, pointed at the band's attempt to show that they are 'tough' (German: *hart drauf*), a socio-stylistic value similar to that attached to slang items.

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