



Substrate Influence in the Lexicon of Jamaican Creole: A Comparative-Typological Study

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Current Research

- o Significant lexico-etymological focus
- o *DJE* as major source for Jamaican data
- o Questions, critiques and revises proposed substrate etyma
- o Uses historical data on the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade to support linguistic evidence.

Limitations of the current study



- (1) Availability of sources and quality of sources on Niger-Congo languages, especially on Bantu;
- (2) Availability of sources on morphology in JC;
- (3) A comprehensive and objective schema for assigning etyma

Motivation for the current work

- The supposed predominance of Akan

* Far larger numbers of slaves from the Bight of Benin, the Congo and the Angola were eventually delivered to Jamaica by the time the trade was brought to an end in 1807-8; but by that time as both the linguistic and historical evidence show, the Akan- and Ewe-speaking slaves were firmly established in a *Creole* society, speaking Creole English [...] (Cassidy & Le Page [1967]1980: xli)

*It seems that as far as language is concerned, the Akan and Ewe group were predominantly responsible for many of the structural similarities found within English-based 'creoles' and within French-based 'creoles', as well as similarities across the two groups [...] The predominance of the Akan culture in the English contact areas in the West Indies is also sometimes attributed to certain psychological and cultural traits possessed by the Coromanti (Alleyne 1971: 176)

Origin of slaves imported by Jamaica

PERIOD	Bight of Benin	Bight of Biafra	Gold Coast	West-central Africa	Total
1651-1675	876	2,473	415	590	4,264
1676-1700	13,218	5,458	3,917	11,341	33,934
1701-1725	12,563	730	14,896	4,874	33,063
1726-1750	2,495	3,947	4,902	2,324	13,668
1751-1775	8,172	24,771	22,527	9,201	64,671
1776-1800	4,080	17,521	17,869	4,336	43,806
Total	41,404	54,900	64,526	32,576	193,406

From Eltis et. al. (1998)

Criteria for identifying substrate transfer in the morphology

- ❑ Supported by historical-demographic evidence;
- ❑ Cross-linguistically uncommon (Marked);
- ❑ Etymologically, not derivable from the superstrate language;
- ❑ Can be derived from the proposed substrate by appealing to regular patterns of change.

Macrostructure of proposed research on morphology



(1) Descriptive

(3) Typological

(5) Comparative

Research

- **Lexico-etymological (inherited lexemes and sememes)**
Based on formal and semantic correspondences, some JC lexical items can be traced to particular West African etyma.
- **Morphological (inherited processes)**
Transfer of productive morphological processes (reduplication, compounding) may lead us to particular substrate languages, with a focus on processes which are formally, semantically, and selectionally/distributionally marked.
- **Historical**
The availability of more reliable historical data on the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade (Eltis et. al. 1998) gives linguists the chance to see how far the demographic data support or refute the linguistic.

Inherited lexical items

- ❖ What are the lexical items in JC which are inherited from Niger-Congo languages?
- ❖ Can we trace families of words to particular Niger-Congo languages?
- ❖ In addition to the inherited words, did JC inherit the morphological processes associated with them?
- ❖ Can we trace productive and non-productive morphological processes to the same or different substrate sources?

Lead questions for morphology

(Based on Kouwenberg & LaCharité 2004: 286)

- (a) What is the form and function of process X in Jamaican Creole
- (c) To what extent does the form and function of process X in Jamaican Creole resemble that in Niger-Congo languages? Where resemblance is established, can we claim that it is due to substrate transfer?

Reduplication

❖ Lexical vs. morphological

poto-poto 'muddy, miry'

**poto*

❖ Full vs. partial

❖ Iconic vs. non-iconic interpretation (Kouwenberg & LaCharité 2003)

Iconic:

Attribute	<i>priti</i>	'pretty'	>	<i>priti-priti</i>	'very pretty'
Verb	<i>tiif</i>	'to steal'	>	<i>tiif-tiif</i>	'to steal repeatedly'
Noun	<i>chrash</i>	'trash'	>	<i>chrash-chrash</i>	'a large quantity of trash, many small bits of trash'

Non-iconic:

Adjective	<i>blak</i>	'black'	>	<i>blak-blak</i>	'sooty; black spotted'
Adjective read	<i>buk</i>	'book'	>	<i>buki-buki</i>	'bookish, liking to
Adjective inclined	<i>laaf</i>	'laugh'	>	<i>laafi-laafi</i>	'good-humoured, to laughter'

Reduplication cont'd

- ❖ **Marked vs. unmarked (formal, semantic, selectional)**



Reduplication cont'd

The Results of Kouwenberg & LaCharité (2003, 2004)

- ❖ Intensive adjective reduplication (cf. Ibibio)

priti 'pretty' > *priti-priti* 'very pretty'

- ❖ Deverbal nouns:

kriep 'to scrape' > *kriep-kriep* 'scrapings' Result

bluo 'to blow' > *bluo-bluo* 'a toy whistle' Instrument

- ❖ Deverbal stative adjectives (not common in JC)

beg 'to beg' > *beg-beg* 'begged'

kata 'to scatter' > *kata-kata* 'scattered'

- ❖ X-like Reduplication (cf. Bantu for prosody)

yala 'yellow' (Adj.) > *yala-yala* 'yellowish'

kot 'to cut' (V) > *koti-koti* 'much cut, shredded'

faak 'fork' (N) > *faaki-faaki* 'pronged, forked'

Compounding

❖ Cross-linguistically uncommon (or non-superstrate) combinations

- (i) VN [event] kiss-teeth, cut-eye, kin-teeth, taste-mouth, throw-wud.
- (ii) VN [object] chew-stick, chew-water, cratch-bush, cratch-kin, cut-cake, cut puss, cut card, grow-post, pop-toe
- (iii) V_{ATT}N [object] bore-nose,
- (iv) VN [attribute] clap-hand, dead-back, push-point, suck-pussy
- (v) VV bata-bruuz, cross-cut,

❖ Gender-denoting compounds using man-/uman-

man-kou 'bull'

uman-kou 'cow, heifer'

man-foul 'rooster'

uman-foul 'hen'

Compounding cont'd

- ❖ Compounds in specific semantic fields (superstrate simplex vs. JC complex)

JC

English

Body parts

nuoz-huol

[nose-hole]

nostril

han-migl

[hand-middle]

palm

Human Qualities:

lang-got

[long-gut]

greed(y)

red-yai

[red-eye]

envious

haad-iez

[hard-ears]

stubborn

Calques

❖ Good formal + semantic match

black bakra ‘a black man who imitates white people, or who moves in white society’
cf. Efik *obub̄it makara* (black+makara) [*makara* alternates with *mbakara*]

foot back ‘heel’ < Gungbe *àfɔ-gódó* [foot+back] ‘heel’ (Van den Berg & Aboh 2002: 2)

❖ Good semantic match but component order reversed (Lefebvre and Brousseau account for this by the directionality parameter)

god horse ‘mantis’ < Hausa *dookìn-Allàh* ‘mantis’

Calques cont'd

- ❖ **Issues of markedness (cross-linguistic distribution & transparency)**
nose-hole 'nostril' cf. Twi *hwwénem-tókuru* (nose+hole) 'nostril'
OE *nosthyrl* (nose+hole) 'nostril')
- ❖ **Grammaticalization:**
Apparent grammaticalization (Bruyn 1996)
e.g. *se* 'complementizer' from verb of saying 'say'
dem 'plural morpheme' from 3rd person plural pronoun

Contributions of the study

- (a) The first lexico-etymological reassessment of the Africanisms in Cassidy and Le Page (1967) in the past 26 years.
- (b) The first detailed description of the structure and behaviour of Jamaican Creole ideophones
- (c) The first description of certain aspects of compounding in Jamaican Creole.
- (d) Advantage of historical position

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