

1. INTRODUCTION

Notwithstanding impressions in the field, a look at the literature on Jamaican Creole (JC) reveals that it is not as well described as many researchers believe. Much of the work done on JC has focused narrowly on either proving or disproving theories of Creole genesis or has been concerned with the continuum phenomenon. In addition, the work has also suffered from theoretical biases within the discipline of Creole linguistics, such as the bias against morphology, largely based on the belief that Creole languages have no morphology to begin with (see DeGraff 2001 for a refutation of this position). Apart from the preliminary observations in Cassidy's (1961) study of the JC lexicon, and Mittelsdorf's (1978) thesis reassessing the African-assigned etymologies in the *Dictionary of Jamaican English*, there is still no work which describes in some depth morphological aspects of JC such as derivational affixation, compounding, reduplication, ideophones. My research proposal seeks to fill this gap by providing a description of Jamaican morphological processes, while also identifying these processes with possible substrate sources. In the following, I set out some of the issues which arise from the Creole literature with respect to the study of lexical and morphological Africanisms in Caribbean Creoles, and the range of JC morphological processes which this study seeks to consider.

2. THE STUDY OF LEXICAL AND MORPHOLOGICAL AFRICANISMS IN CARIBBEAN CREOLES

While substratists over the years have suggested that many aspects of the grammars of Atlantic Creoles (phonology, lexicon, syntax) can be linked to Niger-Congo languages (e.g. Alleyne 1971, 1980), the real analyses which prove these claims in some amount of detail are blatantly few. (See Boretzky (1983), Parkvall (2000) for exemplary studies which seek to trace features in several Atlantic Creoles to West African substrates.) With regards to detailed analysis of substrate

influence on specific Atlantic Creoles, there is the work of Lefebvre (1998) on the Fon-Haitian connection, the Ijo-derived lexicon in Berbice Dutch Creole (Smith, Robertson & Williamson 1987; Smith & Kouwenberg in prep.) and recent work on the Gbe substrate of the Surinamese Plantation Creole (Ndyuka) (Migge 1998; Smith forthc.). Even where the case for substrate sources of Atlantic Creoles is argued, the West African influence on the lexicon is sidelined. The pan-Atlantic coverage of both Boretzky (1983) and Parkvall (2000) while useful for comparative analysis, is at the same time one of their major flaws, since the number of languages and the volume of research they must deal with means that their focus cannot be as sharp as is needed. Also, the fact that they rush ahead to compare structures in Creoles and substrate languages, even when the structures might not have been well studied in the Creoles, poses a problem for the reliability of their outcome. The more specific studies mentioned have given only relatively minor consideration to word formation processes.

The investigation of lexical and morphological Africanisms in JC requires a multi-factorial approach, one which will take in various branches of linguistics while also drawing on relevant insights in fields such as history, in particular historical demographics. Ideally, any such project is built on a strong etymological foundation – one which identifies as much as possible the relevant lexical and morphological Africanisms using a rigorous etymological tool.

The kind of comparative work that this type of study demands is constrained by a number of factors:

- (i) **SOCIO-HISTORICAL:** Slaves were taken from a wide cross-section of West African societies which means multiple potential substrate languages;
- (ii) **AVAILABILITY OF (GOOD) DESCRIPTIVE DATA:** The availability of comprehensive and reliable descriptions of many languages of West Africa is a general problem, and there is also the fact that Creole languages have not been fully described. The comparison might be hindered on either side, i.e. where a particular phenomenon has been fully treated in a possible

substrate language but has received little or no attention in JC, or vice versa.

Bearing the factors noted above and their ramifications for tracing the substrate elements in JC in mind, I intend to limit my study to the West African languages that—based on information from the Eltis et al. (1999) database of the Transatlantic slave trade—were present in Jamaica during the early period of British colonization, satisfying *Bickerton's Edict* that 'the right people be in the right place at the right time' (see Huber & Parkvall 1999: 307-309). Within those confines, I want to zero in on languages within relevant language clusters for which good data are available. My limiting the investigation to potential substrate languages in this manner makes it more focused than Parkvall (2000), whose study is dogged by the fact that the several dozen languages he lists range from well described (dictionaries, grammars, journal articles, etc.) to only briefly described in one journal article. The work I wish to undertake focuses on the language data which are actually available and can be rechecked and tested.

We can also safely assume that although the Africans taken to Jamaica during the course of its colonial history arrived with scores of languages, not all ethnolinguistic groups would have had the same opportunities to have an impact on the speech community. Factors such as population size, time of arrival, and socio-cultural practices would have impacted on the outcome. The popular lament that too many languages were involved in the contact for us to identify exact provenance is pre-investigative and has stalled attempts to start with what we know, if even for the mere fact of demonstrating that we are off track. On the basis that some of the morphological processes being surveyed have not been (well) described in JC, the project that I wish to undertake must be taken as a fact-finding mission, and not necessarily an attempt to show the merits of any school of thought on Creole genesis.

So far, my investigations into the demographics of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in relation to Jamaica (based on Eltis et. al. 1999), have revealed that West-Central Africa (the Kongo area and the area just south of it) supplied roughly 10% of the total number of Africans shipped to the island as slaves. However, for the first few decades of British colonization (1655-1700), West-Central Africa supplied as much as 19%. It is of interest to note that Creolists have generally ignored Bantu as a source for Creole grammar, despite the evidence of their early dominant presence. Apart from the Kwa (Akan) bias which has been perpetuated since Cassidy & Le Page (2002 [1967]), substratists' rejection of the Bantu linguistic area as a possible source of Creole grammar seems to be based on two chief assumptions: (i) that Creole languages, being predominantly isolating, have no morphology to speak of; (ii) that Bantu languages have too much morphology for substrate transfer to have been possible.¹ However, when we consider that isolating and agglutinative morphology are more alike typologically than Creolists tend to acknowledge, the picture changes, for both types have clearly defined morphemes which can be associated with one meaning/function. Other West African ethno-linguistic groups with a significant presence in early Jamaican slave society include speakers of Gbe and Cross River languages. In fact, up to the 1700s the Bight of Biafra and the Bight of Benin supplied the greatest number of slaves, and even in the early to mid-1700s when the Gold Coast came to dominate, the Bights continued to be major suppliers. This information begs for a greater focus on the Gbe group and Cross-River languages with regards to substrate influence in JC.

¹ Linguistic evidence for a shift towards an analytic structure is attested in other cases where a highly inflecting language under contact produced a Pidgin or Creole which has isolating morphology. Good examples of this are Chinook Jargon and Mobilian Jargon which are contact varieties based on North American Indian languages (Grant 1996). In West Africa, Lingala and Kituba, which are contact varieties spoken in the Bantu region, show a drastic reduction in morphology compared to typical Bantu agglutinative morphology (see Mufwene 1997 for information on Kituba).

3. THE MORPHOLOGY OF JAMAICAN CREOLE

This section briefly introduces the morphological aspects of JC which fall within the purview of this study and how they fit into our search for substrate lexical influence. The areas to be treated are reduplication, compounding, calquing, and multifunctionality which affects all these word-formation processes.

3.1 REDUPLICATION

The work of Kouwenberg and LaCharité (1998; 2001; 2003), and Gooden et al. (2003), Gooden (2003) has gone a far way towards filling the gap on descriptions of JC reduplication. The information we now have gives us a better chance of identifying potential substrate languages given decent descriptions of those candidates.

Gooden et al. (2003) have documented reduplication of nouns, adjectives and verbs in JC in cases where iteration takes place with phonological change (e.g. a paragogic vowel), and others where full reduplication takes place without changing the form of the base. They classify reduplication in JC in terms of:

- (i) **inflectional reduplication** where the word class and semantic properties of the base are preserved. The general pattern in this group produced 'augmentation for adjectives, iteration, continuation or intensity for verbs, accumulation or plurality for nouns' (p. 106).
- (ii) **productive derivational reduplication** where the semantic properties of the base are not fully preserved, and/or a change in word class is occasioned by the process. From their focus on productive derivational reduplication, they found that this type 'produces adjectives denoting "X"-like quality from nouns and verbs as well as adjectives' (p. 107)
- (iii) **unproductive derivational reduplication** which consists mainly in deverbal reduplicated nouns e.g. *kriep* 'to scrape' > *kriep-kriep* 'scrapings' (p. 108)
- (iv) other unproductive reduplications

Reduplicated forms in the Cassidy & Le Page (2002 [1967]) dictionary of JC which can positively be traced to a substrate source tend to have no corresponding simplex form in JC. This means that these forms do not represent true morphological reduplication, as pointed out by Gooden et. al. (2003). Actually, the highly productive aspects of JC reduplication involve the copying of items taken from the lexifier.

Having identified the types of morphological reduplication which exist in JC, the stage is now set for research into the extent of typological markedness which the various types demonstrate and how much the presence of a typologically marked process can help us identify substrate sources.

3.2 COMPOUNDING

Cassidy (1961: 5), commenting on the Jamaican lexicon stated that: 'By far the largest number of new formations are made by composition of existing elements, whether native or foreign or both'. However, Cassidy fails to give compounding the attention due to a word-formation strategy which is so productive. Among many other patterns, JC also has VN and VV compounds, which both appear to be cross-linguistically uncommon – VV compounds appear to be rare in European languages (Bauer 1987: 205 confirms this for English) and VN → N compounds are also scarce in JC's lexifier.² If the types of compound mentioned above are truly cross-linguistically uncommon, then a substratist account of their existence in JC seems worth pursuing; note also that a Universalist explanation of cross-linguistically uncommon formations is less than convincing.

² VN compounds are normally identified as synthetic compounds. Although English employs NV combinations in composition (e.g. globe-trot, play-act), most of these forms tend to be backformations of the normal NV-ing, NV-er synthetic compounds (which I treat like NN combinations) we find in English (see Marchand 1969: 58-65; Selkirk 1982). In addition, most of the examples found are from the twentieth century.

Also interesting is the class of gender-denoting compounds used as names for flora and fauna (dendronyms and zoonyms) which are quite productive in JC. Flora and fauna are assigned gender by using *man* and *uman* as left-hand elements to designate 'male' and 'female' entities respectively. The *OED*, only lists three examples for this type of appositive composition using *man* and four using *woman*.³ Preliminary research has shown that this type of compounding is a very robust morphological process in several Niger-Congo languages (e.g. Akan, Efik, Ibibio, Yoruba), and such a strong presence cannot be ignored.

3.3 CALQUES

While we can agree with the critics on the near absence of derivational affixes in JC, there has been no serious study on compounding as a process of derivation outside of Farquharson (2004). The lack of attention received by compounds in JC no doubt hides semantic calques of substrate items such as JC **god-horse** 'mantis' (compare Hausa *dookìn-Allàh* [horse of God] 'mantis' (Ahmad 1994: 82); it is not clear whether similar forms exist in other potential substrates. The example raises issues of linearization of elements similar to issues occurring in Lefebvre's research on the Haitian-Fon relation, where she claims that Haitian compounds are patterned upon Fongbe even though the items are ordered differently in the Creole language and its putative source variety (e.g. Lefebvre 1998).

³ The three records in the *OED* for *man* in these flora/fauna compounds are from 1624 (1 cpd.) and 1901 (2 cpds.). If we base our analysis on the *OED*, the form doesn't seem to have been very productive in English in the seventeenth century. The formations with *woman* are equally under-productive, with only four being recorded, one of which is from British Guyana.

3.4 SOUND SYMBOLISM AND IDEOPHONES

Apart from DeCamp (1974), sound symbolism in JC has only received passing references within studies on reduplication, and no attempt has been made so far to produce a comprehensive description of JC ideophones and other phono-symbolic units. The use of similar phono-symbolic items and strategies to denote colour, manner, smell, action, state and intensity, suggests a relationship between languages, since these items tend to be idiosyncratic. Also, that JC shares a the tendency with several West African languages for ideophonic material to be reduplicated, is not likely to be coincidental. Several of the ideophones listed in Cassidy & Le Page (1967), can be assigned (tentatively) to one or the other West African language.

Although JC ideophones are included in Bartens' (2000) study of the phenomenon in Atlantic Creoles, her scope, (all Atlantic Creoles) does not allow her to give a full description of ideophony in the particular Creoles, plus her etymologies are tentative.⁴ JC makes moderate use of ideophones such as *poto-poto* 'muddy', *saaka-saaka* 'cut in a haphazard manner', which cannot be connected etymologically to the lexifier. While both simplex and complex forms are present in the language, the tendency towards complex (i.e. reduplicated structures) begs for attention. The current project would hope to be the first proper treatment of ideophones in Jamaican and would touch on areas such as the morphological, semantic, and syntactic functions of this class of words.

There is no agreed typology for ideophones and phono-symbolic elements, basic questions need to be addressed, such as what types of ideophones are found in JC, and what word classes they belong to.

⁴ In fact, she depends on her sources for quite a few of her etymologies.

Further, I propose to undertake a comparison between those forms which can be positively identified with a substrate origin, and those which are local creations, in order to see whether the patterns are the same, or new strategies have been developed in the language.

3.5 MULTIFUNCTIONALITY

Multifunctionality is a phenomenon which touches all the areas outlined in 3.1 – 3.4 above. Much of the earlier work undertaken in Creolistics was predicated by the belief that the word classes of Creole languages are the same as those of their lexifiers or that their behaviour is either the same or a simplified version of the superstrate. That this is not always so is an insight which has developed slowly. Thus, the status of adjectives in JC, as in other Creoles, continues to pose problems for Creolists, since although most of the JC adjectives – like the rest of the lexicon – are taken from English, they display ambiguous behaviour. While in the Suriname Creoles adjectival items behave very much like verbs, elsewhere, things are less clear-cut. It is possible that an insight into what patterns of conversion (zero-derivation) are possible in JC might lead us to a source especially if the direction of conversion is cross-linguistically marked and not possible/present in the superstrate. Also noteworthy is the fact that most of the studies which have tackled adjectives in Creole languages have done so from a syntactic perspective, and the ground work for approaching them from a lexical and semantic perspective is yet to be carried out.

Equally important is a consideration of the issues of multifunctionality and whether same form but different function occasions a different word class. The case of attributive nouns in Noun-Noun compounds are good examples of this kind of relationship. We would also need to look at attributive versus predicative use of adjectives; and what morphological processes such as compounding and

reduplication can tell us about the distribution and behaviour of those lexemes we conventionally label as verbs or adjectives.

4. CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY AND CONCLUSION

The study will contribute to the field of linguistics and Creole linguistics in particular by:

- (a) Being the first lexico-etymological reassessment of the Africanisms in JC since Cassidy & Le Page (2002 [1967]) and Mittelsdorf (1978);
- (b) Providing the first description of certain aspects of compounding in JC, which will be further employed in a comparative analysis aimed at identifying substrate sources for typologically marked patterns;
- (c) Providing the first description of the structure and behaviour of ideophones in JC, in order to conduct a typological analysis and comparison with similar structures in several Niger-Congo languages;
- (d) Appropriating the advantages which my situation in time has given me over my predecessors in terms of the description of Niger-Congo languages, and the continuing work on the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.

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