A typological analysis of loan translation in contact languages

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Defining loan translation

• Numerous definitions with various shortcomings:
  • Haugen (1950:214)
  • Hockett (1958:412)
  • Hock (1986:399)
  • Bussmann (1996:61)
  • Gramley (2001:89)
  • Crystal (2003:61)
  • Campbell & Mixco (2007:26-7)

Best definition so far:

‘A calque (or loan translation) is a complex lexical unit (either a single word or a fixed phrasal expression) that was created by an item-by-item translation of the (complex) source unit.’ (Haspelmath & Tadmor 2009: 39)

Example: Jamaican gad-aas (god+horse) < Hausua dokin Allah (horse+god)
Loan translation in Creolistics/Contact linguistics

- Main treatment of loan translations in descriptive work by lexicographers, e.g. *Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage* (Allsopp 1996)
- Often ignored by theorists, with the exception of Lefebvre (1998)
- Allow us to look at substrate lexical influence (e.g. lexical Africanisms) but from the perspective of (cognitive) semantics.
  - Morphemic retentions, e.g. *nyam* ‘eat’ – identity in form, similar/close meaning
  - Loan translations, e.g. *hand-belly* ‘palm’ – identity in meaning, camouflaged form
Data source


‘…far more data than we have been able to list below are needed before any firm conclusions can be drawn’ (Parkvall & Baker 2012: 232)

- Approximately 100 potential loan translations listed
- 41 secure bi-morphemic constructions (mostly *compounds*) selected for this study
- Focus on the Atlantic Creoles
## Greater use of richer documentation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jamaican</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haitian</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahamian</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krio</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sranan</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saramaccan</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berbice DC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Higher numbers in languages with comprehensive (modern) dictionaries: Jamaican, Haitian, Bahamian, Krio)
Directionality parameter

‘the word order in Haitian compounds follows the order in Haitian syntactic phrases, which in turn, follows the order in French syntactic phrases.’ (Lefebvre 1998:342)
Directionality parameter: human propensity

- English 1 (Noun-Adjective)
  - *sea-sick*

- English 2 (Adjective-Adjective) – most common
  - *stiff-necked* (cf. *black bird*)

- Jamaican 1 (Adjective-Noun) – most common
  - *iez-aad* [ear+hard]
    - Substrate or JC Subject-Predicate structure? E.g. *Im iez aad.* (3SG ears hard)

- Jamaican 2 (Noun-Adjective)
  - *aad-ież* [hard+ear]

- English NP (Adjective Noun)

- Jamaican NP (Adjective Noun)
Directionality parameter

‘the word order in Haitian compounds follows the order in Haitian syntactic phrases, which in turn, follows the order in French syntactic phrases.’ (Lefebvre 1998:342)

• Different lexifiers or different substrates?
• TOE
  1. Duala (?)
     a) finga-fut Cameroonian EC
     b) udedu ope Principense
  2. Ga foot-finger
     a) foot-finger Trinidadian EC
     b) boi vingre Berbice Dutch Creole
Issues affecting source languages

1. **We are constrained by the comprehensiveness of descriptions of African languages/etymology**
   a) Words that are synchronically simplex but diachronically complex
   b) Older relevant forms now obsolescent
   c) Quality of the sources

2. **Researcher’s familiarity with orthographic conventions**
   a) Akan *nsam* ‘the palm of the hand’ (s.v. *nsá* ‘hand’ in Christaller 1933:416)
   b) Akan *nsá-yam* ‘the palm of the hand’ (Christaller 1933:432)
**Distribution of loan translations according to lexifier**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lexifiers</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English-only</td>
<td>Jamaican <em>red-yai</em> (red+eye) ‘jealous(y)’, <em>ban-beli</em> (hand +belly) ‘palm (of the hand)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French-only</td>
<td>Haitian <em>tèt-chaje</em> (head+troubled) ‘problematic (person)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portuguese-only</td>
<td>Guinea Bissau PC <em>biska palabra</em> (search+talk) ‘chercher querelle’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch-only</td>
<td>No examples in database</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English + French</td>
<td>Jamaican <em>jrai-yai</em>; Haitian <em>je-chèch</em> (dry+eye) ‘audacious (person)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English + French + Portuguese</td>
<td>Sranan <em>watra-ai</em>; Dominica FC <em>glo zje</em>; Cape Verdean <em>agul oju</em> (eye+water) ‘tears’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English + Portuguese + Dutch</td>
<td>TrinEC <em>foot-finger</em>; Principense <em>udedu ope</em>; Berbice DC <em>boi vingre</em> (foot+finger) ‘toe’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean (?)</td>
<td>Jamaican <em>swiit-taak</em> (sweet+talk) ‘flatter(y)’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Distribution of loan translations according to lexifier

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lexifiers</th>
<th>Num.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English-only</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French-only</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portuguese-only</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch-only</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English + French</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English + French + Portuguese</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English + Portuguese + Dutch</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>26</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Model (i.e. substrate) languages

1. One source language identified so far
   Haitian < Fon
   \textit{nukun-ton-no} (eye+burst-ATTRIB)
   'blind (person)'
   These tend to be the more opaque of the lot

2. Multiple possible source languages
   (eye+water) ‘tears’ < Malinke, Mandinka, Akan, Ewe, Yoruba, Igbo, Kishikongo, Sango
   These tend to be the more transparent of the lot
Model (i.e. substrate) languages

Five lgs with 3 each: Kikongo, Hausa, Vai, Malinke, Wolof

Three lgs with 2 each: Ga, Mandinka, Edo

Ten lgs with 1 each: Duala, Sango, Balante, Mankanya, Manjaku, Nupe, Banyam, Efik, Temne, Zulu
Unique vs. multiple models

These results are strikingly similar to the results for morphemic retentions from African languages for some Creoles, e.g. Jamaican:

Single-source etymologies: 59.2%
Multiple sources: 40.8%

(Farquharson 2012)
Lexifiers and Creoles

3. Pan-lexifier (found in only one lexifier)
   (door+mouth) ‘threshold’ in: Gullah, Bahamian, Jamaican, Guyanese, Sranan, Saramaccan, Ndjuka, Krio, Cameroonian PC
   These tend to be in the middle of the transparency scale

4. Pan-Creole (found in multiple Creoles of different lexifiers; 3>)
   (eye-water) ‘tears’ found in: Belizean, Bahamian, Jamaican, Haitian, Antiguan, Tobagonian, Dominican FC, Grenada FC, Sranan, Saramaccan, Krio, Cape Verdean, Sao Tomense, Annobonese
   These tend to be the more transparent of the lot
Semantic domains

Very different from morphemic retentions. E.g. Jamaican:

Food and drink 17.3%
Descriptors 13.5%
Fauna 9.7%
Material culture 9.3%
People 8.9%

Farquharson (2012:146)
Lexical Africanisms and loan translations

• Africans retained substrate morphemes to:
  • Fill lexical gaps e.g. Jamaican *fufu*
  • Refer to items/states/events that are more typical of African ways of being than European ones.

• When and why did Africans use loan translation?
  • For a wide variety of things, but more often
  • To name (mostly) undesirable human characteristics
  • To name body parts
Seeking explanations: body-part terms

• Body-part terminology:
  1. Morphemic retentions – female genitalia, e.g. Jam. *pumpum* < Akan
     a) Private and/or taboo
     b) Not often spoken about
  2. Polysemy – hand/arm and foot/leg
     a) Generally non-taboo
     b) Features often in discourse
  3. Loan translation – skull, finger, toe, palm, sole
     a) Generally non-taboo
     b) Rarer than (2) in discourse
A different approach

1. Need for an approach that overcomes:
   a) Researcher bias (expertise, preference)
   b) Documentation bias

2. From documentation to documentation and experts

3. From chance samples to domain-specific samples
A different approach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jamaican</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Akan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>bed</em></td>
<td>head</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>bed-skol</em></td>
<td>skull</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>iez</em></td>
<td>ear</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>yai</em></td>
<td>eye</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>yai-huol</em></td>
<td>socket of the eye</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>yai-kaana</em></td>
<td>corner of the eye</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>mout</em></td>
<td>mouth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*(mout-)<em>lip</em></td>
<td>lip</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>nek</em></td>
<td>neck</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>nek-bak</em></td>
<td>nape of the neck</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Looking for models

• **SKULL**
  • Jamaican *bed-skol* (head-skull)
  • Gbari *tugo bure* (head-shell) (Blench & Doma 1981-93:51)

• **NOSTRIL**
  • Jamaican *nuoz-huol* (nose+hole) ‘nostril’
  • Gbari *ebwabu* (nose+turn out) (Blench & Doma 1981-93:13)
Other languages

1. What can we learn from loan translations or loanwords in a specific domain from high-contact non-creole languages?

2. We can discover which concepts in a specific domain are more susceptible to borrowing and/or loan translation, e.g.
   a) Old English *palm* < Old French *palme*
   b) Old English *stomach* < Old French *stomaque, estomac*
   c) Old English *orbit* < Old French *orbite* ‘eye socket’

3. Stability: borrowing and loan translations

4. Are loan translations of body-part concepts more typical of Creole languages (in a specific area)?
THANK YOU!