

FROM AFRICA TO JAMAICA AND BACK: THE ATLANTIC AS A DYNAMIC LINGUISTIC CONTACT ZONE

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Abstract: This paper is concerned with Africa and the African Diaspora in Jamaica from a linguistic perspective. It will shed light on linguistic and communicative practices which illustrate the dynamic and reciprocal relationship between Africa and the Caribbean. My objective is to go beyond the approach of traditional (Caribbean) creolistics, which usually investigates African “substrate” influences in so-called creole languages, and to look at the Atlantic contact area as a dynamic zone with mutual and multidirectional influences. This will involve not only the historical dimension of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, through which the African Diaspora in Jamaica, the Caribbean, and the Americas emerged in the first place, but also a focus on the role of the dynamicity of current language practices on identity, language ideologies, linguistic creativity, and agency. An important aspect in this respect is the emblematicity of African elements, as linguistic elements, which are different from ‘Standard English’ (often perceived as the colonial language and the language of the slave master and oppressor), and which are marked in the context of conscious linguistic choices. Moreover, there is an awareness of the African heritage in Jamaican language practices that informs conscious efforts to use African linguistic elements (for instance, names). For many Jamaicans, their African heritage and identity play an important role. This can be observed, in particular, in Rastafari discourses and in Reggae music and culture, which emphasize a strong focus on Africa. These phenomena are also relevant in (Anglophone) Africa, where Jamaican linguistic practices are adopted through the influence of Reggae, Dancehall, and Rastafari. Therefore, this contribution will also feature some examples of how influences from the Diaspora come back to Africa, for example, in music and youth language practices.

Keywords: Africa. Jamaica. Creole languages. Atlantic. Contact area.

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- | From Africa to Jamaica and back: the Atlantic as a dynamic linguistic contact zone

VON AFRIKA NACH JAMAICA UND ZURÜCK: DER ATLANTIK ALS DYNAMISCHE SPRACHLICHE KONTAKTZONE

Abstrakt: Dieses paper beschäftigt sich mit Afrika und der afrikanischen Diaspora in Jamaika aus linguistischer Perspektive. Es wird Licht auf linguistische und kommunikative Praktiken werfen, welche die dynamische und wechselseitige Beziehung zwischen Afrika und der Karibik illustrieren. Mein Ziel ist es, über den Ansatz der traditionellen Kreolistik hinauszugehen, welche üblicherweise afrikanische "Substrateinflüsse" in so genannten Kreolsprachen untersucht, und statt dessen den atlantischen Kontaktraum als dynamische Zone mit gegenseitigen und multidirektionalen Einflüssen zu betrachten. Dies wird nicht nur die historische Dimension des Transatlantischen Sklavenhandels, durch den die afrikanische Diaspora in Jamaika, der Karibik und den Amerikas damals entstanden sind, beinhalten, sondern auch einen Fokus auf der Rolle von Dynamizität zeitgenössischer Sprachpraktiken mit Blick auf Identität, Sprachideologien, sprachlicher Kreativität und agency. Ein wichtiger Punkt in diesem Zusammenhang ist die Emblematisierung afrikanischer Elemente, denn linguistische Elemente welche sich vom 'Standard English' (welches oft als koloniale Sprache und als Sprache der Sklavenhalter und Unterdrückter wahrgenommen wird) unterscheiden, sind im Kontext bewusster sprachlicher Entscheidungen kennzeichnend. Außerdem gibt es ein Bewusstsein über das afrikanische Erbe in jamaikanischen Sprachpraktiken, welches bewusste Bemühungen, afrikanische linguistische Elemente (wie zum Beispiel Namen) zu verwenden beeinflusst. Für viele Jamaikaner spielt ihr afrikanisches Erbe und Identität eine wichtige Rolle. Dies kann besonders in Rastafari-Diskursen sowie in Reggae Musik und Kultur beobachtet werden, wo in starker Bezug zu Afrika betont wird. Diese Phänomene sind auch im (anglophonen) Afrika relevant, wo jamaikanische linguistische Praktiken übernommen und adaptiert werden, durch die Einflüsse von Reggae, Dancehall und Rastafari. Daher wird dieser Beitrag ebenfalls Beispiele diskutieren, die zeigen, wie linguistische Einflüsse aus der Diaspora wieder zurück nach Afrika kommen, beispielsweise in Musik und Jugendsprache.

Stichworte: Afrika. Jamaika. Kreolsprachen. Atlantik. Berührungsfläche.

Introduction: A critical approach to Creole Linguistics

Linguistic influences between Africa and Jamaica have traditionally been investigated within the paradigm of Creole Studies. Since the traditional approach to the study of

African influences in Creole languages is highly problematic due to its historical rootedness in colonial discourses, this paper will start with a critical introduction of the creolistic paradigm and the study of African elements in Jamaican². The second section will then provide a historical and sociolinguistic overview of Jamaica and discuss some examples of African influences in Jamaican. Section three will highlight a special domain of African influences, namely body part metaphors and their use in expressions of emotions. This will also involve an illustration of how these expressions feature in today's language use and music. After that, I will relate those practices to current linguistic scenarios in African contexts to illustrate how language practices of the African Diaspora influence the African continent as well. The final section will conclude the paper.

As mentioned above, Jamaican is usually studied in the context and paradigm of creole linguistics. Though Jamaican is (lexically) based on English, it exhibits numerous influences from African languages, which came to the island with enslaved Africans during the course of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. While there is a range of (much) older works on Creole languages, several linguistic works of the 19th century have been regarded as the foundation of the establishment of Creole Studies including, for instance, the works of Hugo Schuchard, Francisco Coelho, Lucien Adam among others. As the linguistic discussions of the origins and structures of so-called Pidgin and Creole languages gained momentum, Creole Studies became institutionalized as an academic discipline in the 1960s. Several theories about the origins of Pidgins and Creoles, their development, grammatical structure and lexicon, and their relations to other languages etc., have been proposed since then, and many have been contested. While a thorough review of the various theoretic positions and views would go beyond the scope of this paper, it is important to point out that there are several problematic issues in the creolistic paradigm which led to substantial criticism (for a more detailed discussion of the problematic nature of Creole Studies, see for instance Ansaldo and Matthews, 2007, Hollington, 2015, 2020). I want to highlight three problematic aspects of Creole Studies, namely (1) the historic context in which Creole Studies emerged, (2) the terminology, and (3) the lack of linguistic evidence that so-called Creole language form a typological unit ("creole exceptionalism").

(1) The roots of Creole linguistics (like African linguistics and other academic disciplines concerned with languages, cultures, music, and other social practices of non-Western people) are strongly connected to and influenced by the colonial discourse (see

2 Jamaican, the so-called Creole language spoken in Jamaica, is often referred to as Jamaican Creole by linguists, while most speakers of the language call it Patwa (also spelled Patois, Patwah, etc.). Several (mostly Caribbean) linguists, especially in light of the postcolonial critique of the coloniality of Creole Studies, have proposed to call the language Jamaican. This suggestion is also followed by the present author.

- | From Africa to Jamaica and back: the Atlantic as a dynamic linguistic contact zone

Krämer 2014). As Makoni *et al.* (2003, p. 9) point out in their volume on *Black Linguistics*, “historically knowledge production within Creole Studies occurred during an era when speakers of the language were considered less than human”. Importantly, the authors stress that the ideological colonial and racist background of the missionaries and scholars who conducted early studies on Creole languages informed their paradigms and attitudes to the linguistic practices they were working on. For example, these ideologies led to a conceptualization of Creole language as opposed to ‘normal languages’ in terms of their linguistic development and set-up (see, for instance, the argumentation by Michel DeGraff in his video by MIT Open Course ware³), which needs to be regarded as a form of linguistic *othering*. Characterizations of Creole languages as “broken” or “corrupt” were coined within those discourses, and they have had a negative effect on language attitudes towards Creole languages, language policies, and language ideologies to the present day. Jamaican, for example, has been referred to as “stubborn, but expressive corruption of the English tongue” (RUSSELL, 1868 [1990], p. 186, see also the discussion in Walicek, 2014). In Jamaica, for instance, despite the fact that language attitudes are changing and that there are also positive attitudes towards Jamaican which are gaining momentum, many people still believe that English (as the colonial language of prestige and power) is better than Jamaican (see BECKFORD WASSINK, 1999, THE JAMAICAN LANGUAGE UNIT, 2005, FARQUHARSON, 2007, HOLLINGTON, 2015, 2020).

(2) In connection to these ideological underpinnings of early Creole Studies, it should be pointed out that some of the terminology used is highly problematic and by no means neutral. In fact, the very terms “Pidgin” and “Creole” have developed negative connotations affected by the racist colonial discourse as mentioned above. Moreover, for example, terms such as “superstrate” and “substrate”, which have been used to refer to the various languages involved in the linguistic contact scenario from which a Pidgin or Creole arose, are charged with hierarchical connotations that mark the unequal power relations of the language and their speakers and cannot be regarded as neutral terms (mostly, “superstrate” was used to refer to the dominant colonial language which seemingly had the greatest impact on the emerging contact language, for instance as the so-called “lexifier”, while languages regarded as “substrate”, often those used by the enslaved and colonized, were regarded to have had a minor impact on the contact variety).⁴ When trying to reconstruct

3 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p8BXCDrYliY> (accessed November 2021)

4 While the etymology and previous usages of these terms reveal different underlying conceptualization, some of which have been metaphorically transferred (for instance the adoption of the term substrate ‘beneath the surface’ from geology), the problematic aspect lies in the fact that these terms have been charged with connotative meanings in their respective academic contexts, which, in the case of creolistics, was influenced by the colonial paradigm in which the academic discipline arose.

- | From Africa to Jamaica and back: the Atlantic as a dynamic linguistic contact zone

the multilingual, multifocal and diverse realities on, for instance, Caribbean plantations during slavery and their complex entanglements, and when looking at the existing records of historic language practices and ways of speaking, it becomes clear that simplistic and non-neutral terms such as “superstrate”, “substrate”, “acrolect”, “mesolect” or “basilect” fail to grasp the complex realities of the contact scenarios and their multifaceted linguistic practices.

(3) Apart from the postcolonial criticism of the Creole paradigm, there are also purely linguistic concerns with the conceptualization of Creole languages as a typological class (creole exceptionalism). As pointed out by Kouwenberg and Singler (2008), the problematic nature of the linguistic concepts already becomes evident in the fact that the distinction between “Pidgin” and “Creole” based on clear-cut linguistic criteria is difficult if not impossible for many linguistic varieties and practices assigned to these groups of languages. Labels such as “pidgincreole”, “semicreole”, or “extended pidgin” illustrate the fuzziness and overlaps of the categories. More importantly, many scholars have criticized the notion of creole languages as a typological class as being based on “creole exceptionalism”, which grants a special status to creole languages that cannot be measured in those languages exclusively (see especially DEGRAFF, 2005, ANSALDO and MATTHEWS, 2007). Dimmendaal (2011, p. 230), for instance, highlights that “creoles vary among themselves regarding almost any structural feature that is claimed to be typical of them”. Therefore, scholars suggest breaking down the category of “Creole languages” and looking at contact languages as a unified object of study since Creole languages do not (linguistically or structurally) constitute a unique class of languages (ANSALDO; MATTHEWS, 2007, p. 3). Similarly, Faraclas and Bellido de Luna argue that the

[...] narrow interpretation of what constitutes a creole language is not only one of the cornerstones of the problematic edifice of creole exceptionalism, but also one of the primary motivations for marginalizing creole languages within linguistics and one of the main justifications put forward by linguists for their failure to take the potentially paradigm shattering insights from creolistics on board. (FARACLAS; BELLIDO DE LUNA, 2012, p. 38).

However, there is a range of authors who do argue for pidgin and creoles being a typological or structural class of languages that are different from other languages. And they do so by drawing on recent empirical data to exemplify their argument (see especially MCWHORTER, 2018). As often in the history of Creole Studies, this has become a very heated debate in which, at some point, seemed to lose track of the actual linguistic issues under study. As Bettina Migge states in her review of McWhorter (2018), she and other

- | From Africa to Jamaica and back: the Atlantic as a dynamic linguistic contact zone

creolists tend to find the strong binary between and the continued debate of creole exceptionalism versus creoles and other contact languages as a unified object of study not too relevant and representative for the actual current works of scholars working on so-called creole languages (MIGGE, 2020). Responding to McWhorter's argumentation for creole exceptionalism, she therefore recommends:

The nature of the linguistic enterprise clearly deserves more attention too. Linguistics has deep colonial roots and despite our best efforts, none of us can say that we are free from them because they permeate linguistic methods, themes, perspectives, approaches etc. We should follow sister disciplines such as anthropology and some researchers working on the African linguistic context and critically assess them in a mutually respectful and conducive manner. I propose that research on pidgins and creoles should take a lead in developing hospitable decolonial approaches to linguistic inquiry that are open to interdisciplinary standards of evidence. (MIGGE, 2020, p. 862-863).

One aspect that remains important in this debate about the Creole linguistics' paradigm is that its theories of the emergence of Creole language and its terminology focus on the description and analysis of language contact as processes that "happen" to the contact variety due to universal processes or imperfect learning, etc. Therefore, these theories assign a rather passive role to the speakers and linguistic innovators rather than highlighting their agency in the creation and development of the contact language (see FARACLAS, 2012, HOLLINGTON, 2020). This contribution aims at drawing attention to conscious language practices in the dynamic Atlantic contact area.

The historic and sociolinguistic background of Jamaica

Jamaica is an island in the Western Caribbean and has a population of a little under three million people, most of whom are descendants of Africans who came to the island as enslaved or indentured laborers. The Taíno, who belong to the Arawak group, were the first inhabitants and gave the island its name Xaymaca. In 1494, Christopher Columbus arrived in Jamaica, and subsequently, the island became a Spanish colony. The Spanish era was characterized by colonial rule, the establishment of plantations, the genocide of the Arawak population, and the import of enslaved Africans. The English conquered Jamaica in 1655 and increased the number of sugar cane plantations while bringing in more and more enslaved Africans through the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

- | From Africa to Jamaica and back: the Atlantic as a dynamic linguistic contact zone

For the sake of understanding the complex nature of linguistic practices that characterized the development of linguistic practices in Jamaica, it is important to highlight that the plantation societies were very diverse: on the one hand, enslaved Africans, and later indentured laborers, came from vast areas in West and Central Africa. On the other hand, the Spanish and English settlers and workers constituted a very diverse group as well, and other Europeans, especially Portuguese, moved to the island as well. In the 18th century, missionaries from the United States also came to the island and played a significant role in resistance against slavery and for the abolitionist movement, while the 19th century, after the abolition of slavery in 1838 in Jamaica, saw increased immigration of contract workers from various parts of Africa, Asia, and Europe.

Moreover, there has been a lot of movement and migration between Caribbean islands and continental areas over the centuries. Taking all these aspects into consideration, we need to acknowledge that colonial Jamaican society has been multilingual, diverse, polylectal, and heterogeneous. This included not only a large number of African languages and varieties but also different Englishes, regiolects, dialects, registers, and ways of speaking as well as other languages including Arawak and Spanish.

With the occupation of Jamaica by the English, the emergence of Jamaican began. Creolists have discussed possible scenarios and theories for the development of Jamaican, in connection to other Atlantic contact varieties, by using demographic data and taking historic developments into account⁵. However, due to the lack of historical linguistic and demographic records, the existing accounts of the emergence of Jamaican are largely built on a few pieces of the puzzle and many assumptions. Linguistic influences from African languages may shed some light on the dimensions of language contact in Jamaica.

African influences in Jamaican

Jamaican has received much scholarly attention and systematic and extensive accounts and discussions of African influences have been published especially since the 1960s. One of the areas in which several researchers have explored influences from African languages is the lexicon. Farquharson (2012), who studied the African lexis in Jamaican extensively, discusses possible African etyma for the Jamaican lexicon in great depth:

⁵ A detailed description of the various and partly contested accounts of the development of Jamaican would go beyond the scope of this paper. For more information and an extensive summary of previous studies and likely scenarios see Farquharson (2012).

- | From Africa to Jamaica and back: the Atlantic as a dynamic linguistic contact zone

“217. **KOSKOS, KASKAS, KYASKYAS** ‘a dispute or quarrel; a “row”’. (2) Àkán (Akuapem) **akakásá** ‘dispute, contest, altercation, wrangling, quarrel’ (Christaller, 1933, p. 229). (3) The DJE derives this word from the Àkán verb **kasákàsa** ‘to dispute, contend in words’, and notes that the Jamaican word is ‘identified often with English dialectal *cuss* < *curse*’ through folk-etymology. While the DJE assigns the word to the Àkán verbal form, the DCEU derives it from the related nominal **akakásá** ‘dispute’ which is the etymology accepted here, since the Jamaican word is used as a noun and never as a verb.

The Jamaican form with the low vowel can be derived unproblematically from the Àkán noun by positing the clipping of the CVCVCVCV /kasakasa/ etymological form to CVCCVC /kaskas/, a process which is attested in other African-derived forms such as *potopoto* > *potpot* (entry 343). The Jamaican pronunciation with the palatal glide is my addition to the list from personal experiences. I believe that there is enough internal evidence to support the Àkán etymology. (4) Àkán (GOC).” (FARQUHARSON, 2012, p. 282).

Another domain in which African influences in Jamaican have been studied is Phonetics and Phonology (including phonotactics and suprasegmentals), where the discussions include, for instance, the presence of high nasal vowels [ĩ] and [ũ], a preference for CV-syllable structure but also tonal influences (see PARKVALL, 2000; DEVONISH, 1989, 2002; CASSIDY, 1961; MITTELSDORF, 1978).

The grammatical structure, morphology, and syntax constitute a prominent field of investigation of the so-called “substrate influence” in Creole languages. Therefore, there are numerous examples of discussions of grammatical features in Jamaican and their suggested African origins, for example, the use of the third person plural pronoun *dem* ‘them’ as a marker of nominal plural, which is common in relevant (West) African languages such as Yoruba, Ewe, Igbo or Akan (see HOLLINGTON, 2015). Specific forms of reduplication also constitute another much-cited example of African substrate influence (see for instance KOUWENBERG; LACHARITÉ, 2004) as well as serial verb constructions and other forms of predication (see WINFORD, 1993; HOLLINGTON, 2015).

Exemplarily, I will illustrate a rather special grammatical phenomenon in Jamaican, namely predicate-clefting, as a focus strategy. To focus a constituent in Jamaican, the focused element is highlighted through fronting and introduced by the copula *a*. Example (1) shows the unmarked expression while example (2) illustrates the focusing of the direct object pronoun *yu*.

- | From Africa to Jamaica and back: the Atlantic as a dynamic linguistic contact zone

- (1) *mi a kal yu*
 1SG PROG call 2SG
 'I am calling you'
- (2) *a yu mi a kal*
 COP 2SG 1SG PROG call
 'It is you that I am calling'
 (HOLLINGTON, 2015, p. 58)

This process of fronting is cross-linguistically very common and reflects an iconic principle of moving an emphasized constituent to a prominent position. A more outstanding phenomenon in this context is usually referred to as predicate clefting. Here, the focused predicate is highlighted through fronting and introduced with the copula while a copy of the verb (or 'adjective')⁶ is left in its original slot. This focus strategy can also be used in different serial verb constructions (SVC), where the verbs of the SVC can then be highlighted separately (example 3).

- (3) a. *a kyari mi kyari di akii go a maakit*
 COP carry 1SG carry DEF ackee go LOC market
 'I **carried** the ackee to the market'
- b. *a go mi kyari di akii go a maakit*
 COP go 1SG carry DEF ackee go LOC market
 'I carried the ackee **to the market**'
 (adapted from VEENSTRA, 1990, p. 33)

In Ewe, verbs in SVC can be highlighted in a similar way, albeit without the highlighter copula, as example (4) illustrates.

- (4) *sí wò-si dzó*
 flee 3SG-flee leave
 'fled she fled away'
 (AMEKA, 2006, p. 140)

Cultural conceptualizations and semantic structure

Apart from the classical areas of investigation for so-called "substrate influences", as illustrated here with predicate clefting and serialization, African influences can be observed in cultural conceptualizations and semantic structures of Jamaican. This approach is based

⁶ Adjectives in Jamaican can function as predicates and exhibit verbal qualities.

- | From Africa to Jamaica and back: the Atlantic as a dynamic linguistic contact zone

on cognitive linguistics, and cultural linguistics in particular, where linguists aim at studying the cognitive basis of linguistic expressions. It deals with cognitive processes that the human mind undertakes to process the experiences people make in their lives and the ways in which we share them within our (linguistic) communities (see KÖVECSES, 2006). The ways in which meaning is linguistically encoded reflect our conceptual system, which in turn, is shaped by our (cultural, social, and individual) experiences.

Looking at semantic structures of specific expressions, we can therefore learn more about the underlying conceptualization of linguistic utterances. Since our conceptual system is so much based on our human, bodily and cultural experiences, embodiment plays an important role in these processes. This will become very clear when looking at the examples of body part metaphors below. Once particular experiences and their cognitive processes are shared by members of a cultural group, conceptualizations can become systematic and shared knowledge (see SHARIFIAN, 2011). Shared cultural conceptualizations often result in strong manifestations in language practices, such as metaphor. As Lakoff and Johnson (1980) illustrated in their seminal work, large parts of our cognitive system are structured metaphorically, and we often understand one thing in terms of another. Oftentimes in these processes, we use concrete things to represent abstract concepts as in Lakoff and Johnson's (ibid.) popular examples "time is money" and "argument is war".

A large field that exhibits versatile examples of embodied metaphor comprises cultural conceptualizations that involve the human body and its parts. This section will focus on body part metaphors, which express emotions and characteristics as this is a domain which exhibits culture-specific conceptualizations that serve as excellent examples of African influences in semantic structures. The human body is an important source for conceptualizations as we make different experiences with our bodies which can be mapped onto various concepts. However, these can be quite culture-specific. For example, while the English expression *needle eye* draws on the eye as the source for this metaphor, the German *Nadelöhr* involves the ear and the Hausa expression *hancin àlluuràa* conceptualizes the small hole in the needle as nose (cf. HOLLINGTON, 2015). The centrality of the human body in our experiences and cognitive and linguistic processes is also reflected in the great variety in which these manifest themselves in language, from body part metaphors to adpositions which grammaticalized from body parts. Moore *et al.* (2004, p. 23) state:

- | From Africa to Jamaica and back: the Atlantic as a dynamic linguistic contact zone

[...] the human body, its feelings, postures and orientations, extend into the natural and cosmic worlds through physical engagement and linguistic reflection. The body is both the starting point of one's own experience and the origin of a set of culturally constructed imaginative domains [...].

Regarding emotions, this is also connected to the role of our body in the perception of feelings and the location of emotions/feelings in the human body (e.g. the heart, the stomach, the liver). We often perceive emotions as something felt in the body, and therefore, emotions are usually seen as bodily experiences, yet they are psychological phenomena and abstract concepts at the same time. Moreover, descriptions and expressions of feelings are often rooted in different cultural experiences and may vary across societies. In many languages, body parts are commonly used in expressions of feelings and emotions, whereby concrete experiences that we make with our body also help us to conceptualize abstract emotions.

Due to the culture-specific nature of cultural conceptualizations, their linguistic manifestations in Creole languages can also reveal language contact phenomena as semantic structures might be translated (or “calqued”) into the new contact variety. In the context of the Jamaican examples below, I will speak about African cultural conceptualizations. My aim here is not to essentialize African cultures or that there is a single way of expressing emotions in African languages. As Batic (2011) shows, there is a great diversity of emotional expressions in African languages. However, it can be illustrated that there are several cultural conceptualizations and their corresponding linguistic manifestations that are quite common and wide-spread in larger parts of Africa and exist in more than one African language (which might be due to genetic relationships as well as areal diffusion). To illustrate this kind of language contact, I will present two examples, namely the Jamaican expressions *red yai* (‘envy, jealousy’ literally ‘red eye’) and *bad main* (‘envy, malevolence, begrudging’, literally ‘bad mind’) and some of their African counterparts (HOLLINGTON, 2015).

Jamaican

- (5) im red yai di man fi im moni
 3SG red eye DEF man for 3SG money
 ‘s/he envies the man for his money’
 (HOLLINGTON, 2015, p. 118)

- | From Africa to Jamaica and back: the Atlantic as a dynamic linguistic contact zone

Twi (Akan)

- (6) *m'ani* *a-bere*
 1SG-eye PRF-become.red
 'I am jealous/covetous'
 (GYEKYE, 1995, quoted in AMEKA, 2002, p. 51)

Ewe

- (7) *ɲútsu-á* *biã* *ɲkú* *dé* *ɲúnye*
 man-DEF redden eye DIR 1SG
 'the man envies me'
 (HOLLINGTON, 2015, p. 119)

It is interesting to note that in Jamaican, the expression *red yai* can be used in verbal, nominal, as well as adjectival position. This is significant since Akan and Ewe, as well as other West African languages, can also use the word for 'red' with a predicative function. Ameka (2002, p. 51) states that "[t]he connection between red eyes and envy and related emotions is not only an Ewe phenomenon but seems to be an areal feature in Ghana and West Africa" while he also assumes that the semantic concept has been calqued into Ghanaian English as well.

Like *red yai*, the expression *bad main* refers to a negative emotion and may also describe a person's character in general.

Jamaican

- (8) *mi* *sii* *nof* *bad* *main* *piipl*
 1SG see enough bad mind people
 'I see many malevolent people'
 (HOLLINGTON, 2017, p. 85)

Twi (Akan)

- (9) *adwene* *bone*
 mind, thought bad
 'wish someone ill, be malevolent, jealous'
 (HOLLINGTON, 2017, p. 86)

- | From Africa to Jamaica and back: the Atlantic as a dynamic linguistic contact zone

Ewe

- (10) $\text{d}\check{\text{o}}$ $\text{t}\check{\text{a}}\text{-me}$ $\text{v}\check{\text{ɔ}}$ $\text{d}\acute{\text{e}}$ ame $\eta\acute{\text{u}}\acute{\text{t}}\acute{\text{i}}$
 bear head-inside bad, wrong DIR person at
 ‘to have bad intentions towards a person’
 (HOLLINGTON, 2017, p. 86)

The transatlantic dimension

The expression *bad main*, apart from being used as a situational emotion, is also commonly used in Jamaican to characterize a person with this negative character trait. It is an expression that is extremely frequent in current and popular culture and features prominently in lyrics of Dancehall music. But also on the other side of the Atlantic, this expression is commonly used in various languages and songs lyrics, as in several Nigerian songs from the legendary Fela to the well-known Wizkid (see HOLLINGTON, 2017). Moreover, the expression *bad mind* also frequently occurs in Ghanaian Dancehall music, which is in close relation to Jamaican Dancehall, featuring a lot of influences, mutual exchanges, and transatlantic collaborations (ibid.). In this and other international contexts, Jamaican Reggae and Dancehall music function as vehicles for small-scale language contact in the respective local, discursive, and dynamic settings. Such manifestations and practices include, with examples from many different parts of the world, MC’s of Dancehall sound systems using Jamaican language forms, lyrics of Dancehall songs featuring Jamaican influences or adaptations, artists and other creators, innovators, and stakeholders in their communicative practices with each other, with fans and the general public and much more. Due to the role of Jamaican as a marker of authenticity and stylistic practice, Jamaican music has not only served as a vehicle to spread the content and message of the music but also linguistic expressions. Hence, salient and trending linguistic expressions, pronunciations, and stylistic means may become adopted in Dancehall and Reggae’s practices around the world.

In Jamaica, the term *bad mind* is frequently used in Dancehall lyrics. This is evident in the fact that even when just looking at the titles of Dancehall songs, we come across this expression many times (e.g. Vybz Kartel “Too badmind”, Mavado “Badmind a go kill dem slowly”, I-Octane ft. Bounty Killer “Badmind dem a pree”, Beenie Man “Badmind people”, Elephant Man “Bun bad mind” see ibid.).

The example of *bad mind* illustrates the contemporary linguistic connections between Jamaica and Africa, which become important in the language ideologies and

- | From Africa to Jamaica and back: the Atlantic as a dynamic linguistic contact zone

identity contexts. For many Jamaicans, African identity plays an important role. As many enslaved Africans lost their home through slavery and deportation, there have been conscious and diverse efforts to preserve linguistic, musical, and other cultural practices in Jamaica. Examples include for instance naming practices, music, and food. Furthermore, new connections to Africa have been established as well, and they exemplify the dynamicity of the transatlantic contact zone.

The conscious identification with Africa and African heritage is also a strategy to resist the Eurocentric hegemonic discourse, which is still dominant in Jamaica. This attitude is especially important for Rastafari, a movement that emerged in the 1930s in Jamaica among descendants of enslaved Africans. Panafrikanism, Ethiopianism, Black Consciousness as well as the Black Power Movement (among others) had an impact on the development of Rastafari (see BARSCH, 2003). Central to Rastafari is a focus on Africa and African identity, the divinity of Emperor Haile Selassie, and the (historical) role of Ethiopia as well as Christian and Jewish ideologies and other Afro-Jamaican religious practices. Based on this ideological basis, repatriation to Africa is a central thematic of Rastafari. There are different interpretations of repatriation, yet Ethiopia can be regarded as the main center of repatriation to Africa. Apart from the connection outlined above, this is also due to the special status awarded to Ethiopia as a country that symbolizes African independence, history, and Christianity. Over the decades, Rastafari has become a global phenomenon with people who identify themselves as Rastafari around the world.

In Ethiopia itself, a significant community of repatriated Rastafari (not only from Jamaica but from different parts of the world) has settled since 1948, when Emperor Haile Selassie granted a piece of land nearby the small rural town Shashemene to members of the African Diaspora. The Rastafari community in Shashemene in Southern Ethiopia comprises members from more than 20 different countries and constitutes a diverse group of people and families with various linguistic repertoires and backgrounds amidst a multilingual and diverse Ethiopian setting (RAS MWEYA MASIMBA, n.d.).

While the repatriated Rastafari in Shashemene and Ethiopia at large⁷ come from various countries, it can be observed that the Jamaican cultural and linguistic influence in the community and beyond is the largest. This is especially due to the fact that Rastafari as well as Reggae music, which often serves as an important (translocal) vehicle for the messages of Rastafari, originated in Jamaica. Therefore, the Jamaican language is also a marker of authenticity in these practices. Especially through Reggae music, but also through Rastafari and the presence of Jamaicans, Jamaican language forms have been

⁷ Many repatriates have also settled in Addis Ababa and other cities

- | From Africa to Jamaica and back: the Atlantic as a dynamic linguistic contact zone

adopted and used. In fact, when looking at the relation and exchange between repatriated Rastafari and their various linguistic backgrounds and repertoires, we can observe that the local language contact scenarios exhibit mutual influences, which can be regarded as fluid linguistic practices in the midst of a diverse and multilingual Ethiopian setting. In this complex and also contested space, language ideologies illustrate different attitudes and perspectives and shed light on the local and translocal dynamics of (linguistic) identities (see HOLLINGTON, 2016). Despite the existence and constant negotiations of tensions between Ethiopians and repatriates, the Jamaican and English language practices (with no clear border between the two) enjoy relatively high prestige in Ethiopian society (for example, numerous repatriates have found positions as English teachers in Ethiopian schools).

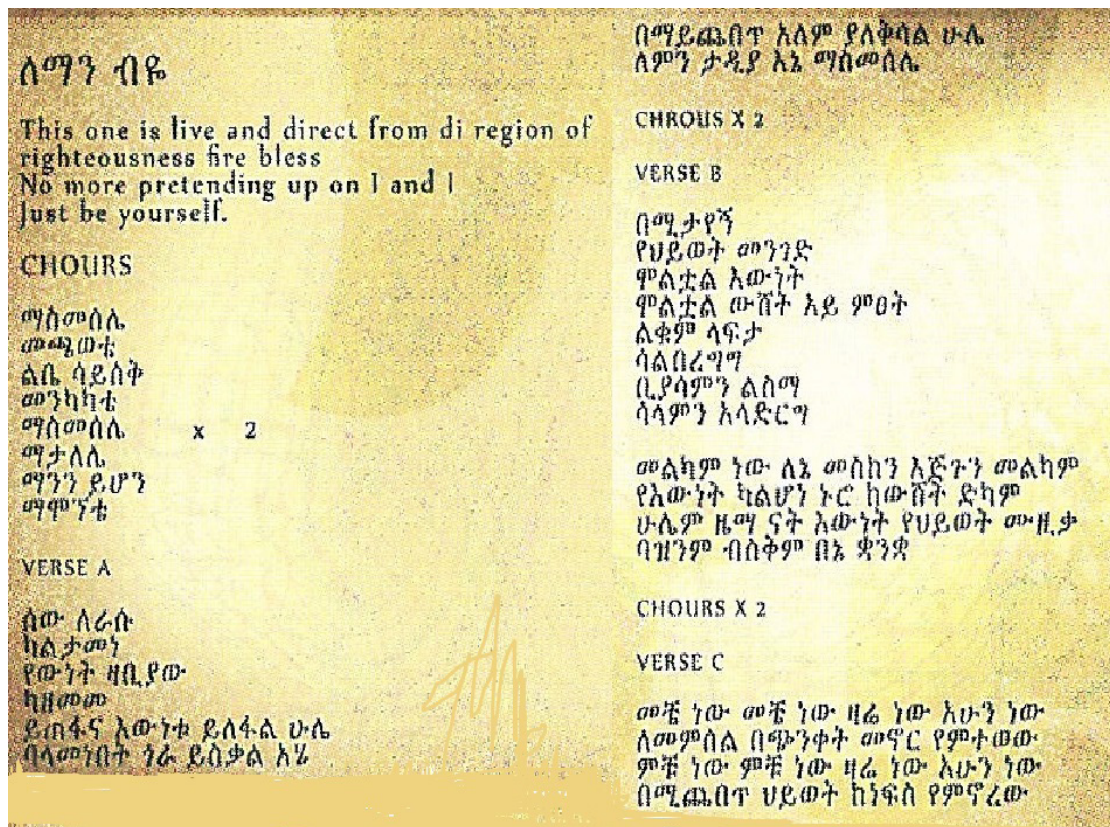
Moreover, in the music scene, especially in Reggae and dancehall contexts, the use of Jamaican is very popular, which is also intensified through collaborative practices that bring Ethiopians and repatriates together. Therefore, and through the popularity of Jamaican music, it is especially in the domains of music and youth language that we can observe Jamaican linguistic influences in Ethiopia. As Erin MacLeod (2014, p. 169) states: “[i]n order to address the relationship between Rastafari and Ethiopians it is also essential to look at the importance and impact of music - specifically reggae music - in Ethiopia”. For example, Ethiopian Reggae artists such as Jonny Ragga, Jah Lude, or Haile Roots frequently employ Jamaican speech forms (including lexical borrowing, the calquing of metaphors, and the use of emblematic idioms) and Rastafari rhetoric in their songs. The artists also use other ways to index Rastafari and Reggae culture, for instance, through hairstyle, clothes, and accessories⁸. Haile Root’s song ‘Leman Biye’ is a Reggae song with lyrics mostly in Amharic. However, the song starts with an English intro which is full of linguistic expressions commonly found in Rastafari discourse and Reggae music, such as *live and direct, righteousness, fire, bless, and I and I*.⁹ On the phonetic level, the rendering of the direct article as *di* marks the Jamaican adaptation of English ‘the’ which would usually be rendered *ze* in Ethiopian English (see figure 1, see also HOLLINGTON, 2016).

8 The mutual exchange between Ethiopians and repatriated Rastafari in Ethiopia is versatile and multifaceted. While only a few short examples are illustrated in this paper, the interested reader is referred to Hollington (2016) for a more nuanced picture.

9 *I and I* is often used to replace other personal pronouns, particularly in direct communicative situations. The expression is also charged with a signifying and spiritual meaning (MCFARLANE, 1998).

- | From Africa to Jamaica and back: the Atlantic as a dynamic linguistic contact zone

Figure 1. Lyrics of the song *Leman Biye* by Haile Roots



Another domain which features the creative incorporation of Jamaican linguistic practices is youth language. In Yarada K’wank’wa, a dynamic and fluid street language associated with young people in Addis Ababa and other parts of Ethiopia, speakers incorporate Jamaican lexemes and calque metaphors into Amharic, as shown in examples (11) and (12).

- (11) ነፍ /näf/ ‘many, numerous’ from Jamaican *nuff* /nof/ ‘many, much, a lot’
- (12) ቅዱስ ቅጠል /k’ədus k’ət’äl/ ‘marijuana’, this expression literally means ‘holy leaf’ which is a calque of the Jamaican idiomatic metaphor *holy herb, holy leaf*

Moreover, and beyond the circles of Yarada K’wank’wa speakers, the popularity of Reggae music and Bob Marley, in particular, has also led to similar practices of calquing emblematic expressions such as *one love* (very well known through Bob Marley’s song of the same name), which is rendered ኦንድ ፍቅር /and fək’ər/ in Amharic.

- | From Africa to Jamaica and back: the Atlantic as a dynamic linguistic contact zone

While this section has mostly focused on illustrating how Jamaican features in Ethiopian linguistic practices, it is important to stress that the influences in this contact scenario are mutual and diverse. To be sure, repatriated Rastafari also learn and use Amharic and other Ethiopian languages (especially Afaan Oromo, the major local language in Shashemene), repatriated Reggae artists such as Sydney Salmon and Ras Kawintseb use Amharic in their song lyrics alongside other Ethiopian musical practices in combination with Jamaican and Caribbean rhythm and bass (see HOLLINGTON, 2016).

Conclusion

With regard to African influences in Jamaican, we have seen examples of language contact that are mostly credited to the historic period of the Transatlantic Slave Trade and which are found in different linguistic domains, including lexicon, phonology and phonotactics, grammatical structure, and semantic patterns based on cultural conceptualizations. There are also newer practices of strengthening and adapting African practices in language, music, art, and other cultural practices, as we have seen in the example discussed for the Rastafari, that is also in direct relation to the final part of this paper, which looked at the African continent again, and at Ethiopia in particular, to exemplify the dynamic relationship between Africa and Jamaica. Firstly, the paper has shown that the transatlantic linguistic flows are more dynamic, conscious, and multidimensional than the historic language contact during the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Secondly, if we acknowledge the holistic view of the transatlantic contact zone with its dynamic practices, this therefore also includes a critical perspective towards the paradigm, methods, and terminology of Creole Linguistics as discussed above, which supplements other existing approaches. Finally, and this has been illustrated with regard to linguistic practices in music on both sides of the Atlantic, shared practices may also express continuing relations between Africa and its Diaspora, and it is also facilitated through shared or similar historic and current experiences, including colonialism, exploitation, racism, etc. This, again, becomes evident in music practices when looking at the ways how Jamaican and African Reggae and dancehall artists collaborate in songs.

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