

Jamaican

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1. Introduction

Jamaican,¹ often referred to in the linguistics literature as Jamaican Creole, is chiefly spoken in Jamaica, a Caribbean island of the Greater Antilles. The language is the mother tongue of the majority of the island's 2.8 million inhabitants, but Jamaican monolinguals make up well below 50 per cent of the population. Most Jamaicans are bilingual speakers of both Jamaican and (Jamaican) English. In addition to Jamaican spoken at 'home', there are hundreds of thousands of Jamaicans in diaspora communities in Canada, the United States of America, and the United Kingdom. In the case of the United Kingdom, Jamaican has given birth to a new variety referred to as London Jamaican (Sebba 1993; Menz 2004), which is a variety spoken largely by second- and third-generation immigrants. In Costa Rica, Jamaican has another daughter language, Limonense (called *Mekatelyu* by its speakers).

2. Sociohistorical background

The island of Jamaica was taken from the Spanish in 1655 by an army raised in Britain's eastern Caribbean colonies. The army had set out to take the Spanish side of the island of Hispaniola (modern Haiti and the Dominican Republic), but when that mission failed the commanding officers, Admiral William Penn and General Robert Venables, decided to try their luck at Jamaica. Those Spaniards who survived the attack eventually fled to Cuba, but their African slaves escaped into the mountains and formed the first bands of Maroons. During the second half of the seventeenth century, the European population was made up of soldiers, merchants, and colonists from the eastern Caribbean, Ireland, England, and Scotland, who responded to several deliberate attempts by the British Crown to populate the island. The earliest Africans imported to Jamaica during the British occupation came via their colonies in the eastern Caribbean (St. Kitts and Nevis, Barbados) and South America (Suriname), and it is likely that these Africans were already

¹ The variety of Jamaican which is the focus of this survey is basilectal Jamaican (see §2). All examples which are not attributed to a published source reflect my own native speaker competence in a western dialect of Jamaican. The attributed examples generally follow the orthographic system developed for Jamaican by Frederic Cassidy, which was first used in Cassidy (1961), and Cassidy & Le Page (1967). My examples are given in the updated version of that system (Cassidy-JLU) (Jamaican Language Unit 2009).

Jamaican

Autoglossonyms:	<i>Patwa, Jamaican Patwa</i>
English names:	<i>Jamaican, Jamaican Creole, Jamaican Dialect</i>
Number of speakers:	<i>c.3,000,000</i>
Major lexifier:	English
Other contributing languages:	Akan, Koongo, Gbe
Location:	Jamaica (also spoken in the USA, the UK, Canada); daughter languages in Costa Rica, London Jamaican
Official language of Jamaica:	English



Map 1.

familiar with some sort of English-based interlanguage (Farquharson 2011). Up to about the 1670s, Africans imported from other colonies in the Caribbean would have constituted a sizeable proportion of the enslaved population. However, within the final quarter of the seventeenth century these early arrivals were outnumbered by direct imports from the African continent.

Table 1. Enslaved Africans embarked for Jamaica, 1655–1700

Region	Number	%
Africa Unspecified	27,111	33.5
Bight of Benin	18,928	23.4
West-Central Africa	14,463	18.0
Bight of Biafra	10,933	13.5
Gold Coast	5,893	7.3
Senegambia	2,895	3.6
Sierra Leone	606	0.8
Southeast Africa	185	0.2
Windward Coast	0	0
TOTAL	81,014	

Source: Eltis et al. (1999)

Table 1 gives us an idea of the demographic composition of Jamaica's slave population in the second half of the seventeenth century, using embarkation figures as an indication of the existing trend at that time. Africa Unspecified refers to cases where we have evidence for shipment but no knowledge about the region or port of embarkation. Based on the trend suggested by Table 1, Africans from the Bight of Benin, West-Central Africa, and the Bight of Biafra would have been numerically dominant. This means that ethnolinguistic groups such as Gbe, Yoruba, Igbo, Duala, Efik, Ibibio, Koongo, and Mbundu were more than likely strongly represented among the enslaved. The few lexical items of African extraction which were recorded in the seventeenth century are from several of these languages (Farquharson 2008: 157). In the eighteenth century the Gold Coast (modern Ghana) became one of the top three suppliers of enslaved Africans to Jamaican plantations. Akan, which is spoken on the Gold Coast, is the chief African contributor to the lexicon of Jamaican.² On the side of the lexifier, it appears that Jamaican owes much of its vocabulary to Southwestern dialects of English and Scottish English.

While we can set no fixed date for the formation of Jamaican, it is believed (see Kouwenberg 2009; Farquharson 2011) that the late seventeenth century was crucial in the development of the language. While there are brief eighteenth-century comments about the speech of imported Africans and black and white creoles, none provides sufficient evidence for a full-blown language. However, based on reports by Europeans about the language used by (white and black) creoles and enslaved Africans in the eighteenth century, it appears that Jamaican was already in place by the middle of the eighteenth century (see Farquharson 2011: 32–3). Given attitudes to the linguistic varieties used by Africans in that period we can deduce from the writing of Edward Long (1774) that labels such as “broken English” and “bad English” are references to Jamaican:

² The latest research on the vocabulary of Jamaican (Farquharson 2011) has assigned secure African etymologies to 289 lexical items.

The Africans speak their respective dialects, with some mixture of broken English. The language of the Creoles is bad English, larded with the Guiney dialect, owing to their adopting the African words, in order to make themselves understood by the imported slaves; which they find much easier than teaching these strangers to learn English. (Long 1774: 426)

This extract also corroborates the sociohistorical and sociolinguistic facts by suggesting a multilingual situation in which Africans regularly codeswitch and creoles borrow lexical items from them. Long's eighteenth-century work also provides evidence for morphological reduplication, the use of the English oblique pronoun *me* as subject, and the use of adjectives as predicates in the absence of a copula (Long 1774: 427).

Emancipation (1834/1838) would have allowed for stabilization of the language since the importation of enslaved Africans dwindled until it ceased altogether. With the cessation of new imports, African languages continued to yield to the local creole language. Rapid urbanization of the twentieth century and the rural to urban migration which fed it led to dialect levelling in many areas. However, distinct dialect boundaries are still strong and are still observable today mainly through lexical differences.

3. Sociolinguistic situation

The language situation in Jamaica has been described as a creole continuum (see DeCamp 1971) with a variety of English at one end which is mutually intelligible with metropolitan varieties of English, and at the other end a variety which is historically related to English but differs from it in several marked ways. If we collapse both the basilectal and mesolectal ranges of the continuum, then Jamaican is spoken by over 80 per cent of the population. Many Jamaicans are bilingual in Jamaican and Jamaican English. A recent language-competence survey conducted by the Jamaican Language Unit reveals 46.4 per cent bilingualism as well as 17.1 per cent and 36.5 per cent English and Jamaican monolingualism, respectively.

With regard to mesolectal varieties, much of the current research focuses on varieties created by (near-) basilectal speakers approximating the acrolect, but not a lot has been said about the varieties created by native acrolectal speakers (few though they be) who learn the Creole in their teenage years and beyond. The second phenomenon is at least hinted at by DeCamp (1971: 350). We now have an established tradition of writing poetry in Jamaican (e.g. Louise Bennett and Joan Andrea Hutchinson), but it is mainly used for comic verse, and even when the theme is tragic, the tone tends to lean towards comedy. The language has been used in novels and short stories at least since the nineteenth century to mark characters and help create setting (Lalla & D'Costa 1990: 140–1), but not many works employ the Creole for narration. Jamaican is now the default language of the annual national pantomime. Outside of a few columnists who reg-

cently been updated by the Jamaican Language Unit (JLU) at the University of the West Indies (Mona) and is now referred to as the Cassidy-JLU System.

5. Noun phrase

In addition to its head, the noun phrase (NP) in Jamaican can maximally contain a plural marker to the right of the noun, one or more adjectives directly before the noun, a numeral or quantifier preceding the adjective(s), and the definite article at the left edge of the phrase (3).

- (3) *di tuu ogli man dem*
 DET NUM ADJ N PL
 ‘the two ugly men’

Generic nouns are unmarked, as in the following example:

- (4) *Rat nyam chiiiz.*
 rat eat cheese
 ‘Rats eat cheese.’

Natural gender is regularly indicated by compounding the gender-denoting words *man* ‘man’ and *uman* ‘woman’ to nouns which refer to humans (e.g. *(u)man-dakta* ‘(fe)male doctor’), fauna (e.g. *man-foul* ‘rooster’, *uman-foul* ‘hen’), and flora (e.g. *man-papaa* ‘a papaya tree that [probably flowers but] does not bear fruit’, *uman-papaa* ‘a papaya tree that bears fruit’). Nominal plurality may be achieved by using various quantifiers (e.g. numerals) in front of the noun, but there is a designated plural marker *dem*, which is placed after the noun. Note, however, that the plural marker is also associated with definiteness, as it is only used in noun phrases containing the definite article. The definite article (*d*)*i*, is distinct from the demonstrative. Jamaican also possesses an indefinite article *wahn*, which is etymologically related to the numeral *wan* ‘one’, but differs from it in that the article contains a nasal vowel whereas the numeral has a nasal consonant in its coda.

As shown in Table 4, the pronominal system of Jamaican makes a two-way distinction involving person and number. In basilectal Jamaican, the default lect of the database, pronouns show neither case nor gender distinctions. Some (mesolectal) varieties contain a case contrast in the first-person singular. The

Table 4. Personal pronouns and adnominal possessives

	Subject	Object	Pronominal possessive	Adnominal possessive	Reflexive pronouns
1SG	<i>mi</i>	<i>mi</i>	<i>fi-mi</i>	<i>mi</i>	<i>miself</i>
2SG	<i>yu</i>	<i>yu</i>	<i>fi-yu</i>	<i>yu</i>	<i>yuself</i>
3SG	<i>im/ihn</i>	<i>im</i>	<i>fi-im</i>	<i>im/ihn</i>	<i>imself</i>
1PL	<i>wi</i>	<i>wi</i>	<i>fi-wi</i>	<i>wi</i>	<i>wiself</i>
2PL	<i>unu</i>	<i>unu</i>	<i>fi-unu</i>	<i>unu</i>	<i>unuself</i>
3PL	<i>dem/dehn</i>	<i>dem</i>	<i>fi-dem</i>	<i>dem/dehn</i>	<i>demself</i>

form *A* (< English *I*) is used in subject position only, while *mi* is used in object position and also as possessive. In the third-person singular, some lects contain a gender distinction and/or a case distinction. To indicate gender differences, these lects employ *shi* in subject position and *ar* in object position to identify feminine entities, and *im* in both subject and object positions to designate masculine entities. As with several other Atlantic English-lexifier Creoles, one of the prominent features of the pronominal paradigm is the presence of a non-English-derived pronoun in the second-person plural, *unu* (< Igbo *unu* ‘second person plural’). Pronominal possessives are morphologically complex forms created by prefixing the preposition *fi* ‘for’ to the personal pronouns, as in *fi-yu* ‘yours’, *fi-dem* ‘theirs’.

As shown in Table 4, reflexive pronouns are derived by affixing the reflexive morpheme *-self* to the personal pronouns, with no change for number (e.g. *yuself* ‘yourself’, *demself* ‘themselves’). In some varieties of Jamaican the first person singular reflexive pronoun can be used in subject position for emphatic purposes (5).

- (5) *Miself de ya de chai mek likl oslinz.*
 1SG.REFL LOC.COP here PROG try make little hustling.PL
 ‘I (myself) am here trying to make ends meet.’

Nominal possession is regularly expressed by the juxtaposition of the possessor and the possessed, in that order (6). Adnominal possessives, which are all homophonous with the corresponding personal pronouns, precede the noun (7).

- (6) *Di nieba-dem ous wash we ina di laas flod.*
 DET neighbour-PL house wash away in DET last flood.
 ‘The neighbours’ house got washed away in the last flood.’
- (7) *Yu buk de pan im tiebl.*
 2SG book LOC.COP on 3SG table
 ‘Your book is on her table.’

In constructions involving pronoun conjunction, Jamaican prefers a pronoun + conjunction + noun sequence. While this appears to be the more natural order, the alternative is not ungrammatical.

- (8) *Mi an Mieri go daans yeside nait.*
 1SG CONJ Mary go dance yesterday night
 ‘Mary and I went to a party last night.’
- (9) *Mieri an mi go daans yeside nait.*
 Mary CONJ 1SG go dance yesterday night
 ‘Mary and I went to a party last night.’

The adnominal and pronominal demonstratives are complex lexemes which show a two-way contrast for distance; proximal *dis-ya* ‘this’, distal *dat-de* ‘that’, and a two-way contrast for number, singular *dis-ya* and *dat-de* vs. plural *dem-ya* ‘these’ and *dem-de* ‘those’. In some varieties the simplex forms

dis and *dat/da(a)* are used instead of the complex ones, while some varieties exhibit variation between the simplex and complex forms. Adnominal demonstratives are special because they have both conjoint and disjoint forms. The conjoint forms are used before the nouns they modify (e.g. *dis-ya bwai* ‘this boy’), while for the disjoint forms the noun interrupts the first and second element (e.g. *dis bwai ya* ‘this boy’).⁵ The demonstratives can also be inflected for number by replacing the first element with the pluralizing particle *dem* (*dem-de bwai* ‘those boys’). The forms inflected for plural also exhibit the conjoint/disjoint behaviour (e.g. *dem bwai ya* ‘these boys’). The use of the pronominal demonstratives is illustrated in (10).

- (10) *Dem-de nofi miks-op wid dem-ya.*
 PL-DEM.DIST NEG.MOD mix-up with PL-DEM.PROX
 ‘Those should not be mixed with these.’

The indefinite pronoun *smadi* (< English *somebody*) is used in affirmative sentences for human reference (11), while *nobadi* (< English *nobody*) is used in negated sentences (12), in questions, and with unspecified reference in affirmative contexts. The non-human indefinite pronoun *sitn* and *notn* are used in affirmative and negated contexts, respectively (13). The latter can co-occur with the negative particle *no* in the same clause without altering the negative polarity of the clause (13).

- (11) *Smadi tel mi se a yu dwiit.*
 somebody tell 1SG COMP FOC 2SG do.it
 ‘Somebody told me that you were the one who did it.’
- (12) *Nobadi no tel mi se a yu dwiit.*
 nobody NEG tell 1SG COMP FOC 2SG do.it
 ‘Nobody told me that you were the one who did it.’
- (13) *Efnotn no apm dat miin se sitn*
 if nothing NEG happen DEM mean COMP something
no rait.
 NEG right
 ‘If nothing happens that means that something isn’t right.’

Cardinal (*wan, tuu, ch(r)ii, fuo(r), faiv, siks, sebm, iet, nain, ten*) and **ordinal numerals** (*fos, sekan, tod, fuot, fif, siks, sebm, iet, naint, tent*) precede the noun and are all English-derived.

6. Verb phrase

Time reference (tense) in Jamaican is sensitive to the lexical aspect of the predicate. For the purpose of tense assignment, the language divides predicates on the basis of whether they are **active** or **stative**. Active predicates have a simple past (or a pre-

⁵ As far as I am aware, there is no meaning difference between the conjoint/disjoint forms of the demonstratives.

Table 5. Tense–aspect–mood markers

	Tense/aspect	Mood
<i>wehn</i>	Anterior	
<i>de/(d)a</i>	Progressive	
<i>ago, goo</i>	Prospective	
<i>wi</i>	Future	
<i>don</i>	Completive	
<i>uda</i>		Conditional
<i>mos(a)</i>		Epistemic/deontic
<i>maita</i>		Epistemic
<i>afi</i>		Necessity
<i>kuda</i>		Necessity
<i>shuda</i>		Deontic
<i>kyahn</i>		Potential/permission
<i>fi</i>		Necessity
<i>suuhn</i>	Proximate future	

sent habitual) reading when they occur without an overt tense marker (14), while stative predicates have a present tense reading in the absence of a tense marker (15). When predicates denoting activities co-occur with the preverbal anterior marker *wehn*, the event receives a past-before-past reading (16), while those denoting states receive a simple past reading when they are used with the anterior marker.⁶ It is worth pointing out here that lexical items in Jamaican that are etymologically derived from English adjectives pattern with (stative) verbs in several respects. However, they still exhibit the prototypical characteristic of adjectives by participating in adnominal modification.

- (14) *Jan daans.*
 John dance
 ‘John danced/dances.’
- (15) *Jan sik.*
 John sick
 ‘John is sick.’
- (16) *Jan wehn daans.*
 John ANT dance
 ‘John had danced.’

As shown in example (14) above, an active verb without any preverbal marker is ambiguous between a simple past tense and a **habitual** reading. Jamaican does not usually mark present habitual aspect overtly, but Christie (1986: 185) has reported the use of the progressive marker for habitual in a few varieties of the language (17). The marker *de/(d)a* combines with active predicates to produce progressive aspect (18). Only a small

⁶ The anterior marker *wehn* in most western dialects of Jamaican has other phonetic variants. The form *be(h)n* is associated with conservative western dialects (the parish of St. Elizabeth being a stereotypical centre), *e(h)n* is common in central dialects, while the variant *min* occurs in the eastern dialect of Jamaican spoken in the parish of St. Thomas. The form *did* is also used to mark anterior tense. It is most associated with central dialects and mesolectal varieties. However, *did* has the widest geographical distribution since it is used right throughout the island, and not necessarily in geographically contiguous areas.

number of stative predicates can combine with the progressive marker to indicate a continuous state (19). When *de* is combined with some stative predicates it produces an inchoative reading (21).⁷ The anterior and progressive markers may be combined with an active predicate to produce a progressive in the past (= past imperfective), as in (20). As expected, only those stative predicates which can occur with the progressive can enter into this construction (see 20).

- (17) *wan plies we dem a plie haki mach*
 INDF place where 3PL HAB play hockey match
 ‘a place where they play hockey matches’
 (Christie 1986: 185)
- (18) *Piita de sing di sang.*
 Peter PROG sing DET song
 ‘Peter is singing the song.’
- (19) *Im aid we frahn yaad wen im de bad.*
 3SG hide away from yard when 3SG PROG bad
 ‘She hides away from home when she is being rude.’
- (20) *Im wehn de plie di mout-aagan.*
 3SG ANT PROG play DET mouth-organ
 ‘He was playing the harmonica.’
- (21) *Di fuud de kuol.*
 DET food PROG cold
 ‘The food is getting cold.’

Jamaican has a number of preverbal modal markers: *mos* ‘ought to (have)’, *mait(a)* ‘may, might’, *kuda* ‘could’, *shuda* ‘should’, *wuda* ‘would’, *hafi* ‘have to’, *mos* ‘must’, *mosa* ‘might’, *kyahn* ‘can’, *fi* ‘ought’. Since the work of Bailey (1966: 44–6) on the subject of modals, Durrleman (2000, 2008) has brought us a long way in understanding the behaviour of modal particles in Jamaican. However, I believe we still do not have the full picture.

Jamaican allows double and triple modals. In sequences with three modal particles Durrleman (2000: 206) has worked out the order in (24).

- (22) *Jan mos nuo.*
 John MOD know
 ‘John ought to know.’
- (23) *John mos kuk.*
 John MOD cook
 ‘John ought to have cooked.’⁸

⁷ For a recent and comprehensive treatment of the behaviour of Jamaican stative verbs in combination with the progressive marker, see Forbes (2012).

⁸ Note that *mos* in examples (22) and (23) expresses epistemic modality, and the modal marker is prosodically more prominent than the verb. There is another *mos* which expresses deontic modality, which has roughly the same stress as the verb.

- (24) [Mod1 *kuda/wuda/shuda/mosa/maita*] > [Mod2 *mos*] > [Mod3 *haffi, kyahn*] . . .

Jamaican allows several pre-verbal markers belonging to different grammatical categories to co-occur. When this happens, the order of the elements attested so far is mood > tense > aspect (i.e. MTA).

7. Simple sentences

The canonical **word order** of Jamaican at clause level is Subject–Verb–Object. The language contains three **voice** distinctions: **active**, **passive**, and **middle**. The active sentence in (25) below illustrates the canonical SVO word order as well. Some researchers have analyzed Jamaican as not having a **passive construction**, but this view has been challenged by LaCharité & Wellington (1999), who argue that while the passive is phonetically empty it is syntactically active. The language exhibits a preference for active constructions with an impersonal subject (26), but the language contains a regular *get* passive construction (27), and also a regular middle construction (28) (on the *get* passive, see Bailey 1966: 81).

- (25) *Di bucha kil di kou.*
 DET butcher kill DET cow
 ‘The butcher killed the cow.’
- (26) *Dem kil di kou.*
 3PL kill DET cow
 ‘The cow was killed.’
- (27) *Op tu nou dem no nuo ou di fuud get kuk.*
 up to now 3PL NEG know how DET food get cook
 ‘Even now they still don’t know how the food was cooked.’
- (28) *Di chrii kot an wi no nuo a huu kot i.*
 DET tree cut and 1PL NEG know FOC who cut 3SG.
 ‘The tree was cut but we don’t know by whom.’

The **imperative** can be recognized because of its special syntax (29). A pronominal subject cannot be overt when the command is directed at a second person singular addressee (30). However, when the addressee is plural the presence of the second person plural pronoun *unu* is optional (31). An **exhortative** construction (32) is also found which involves *mek* + pronoun + NEG + verb (see Huber on Ghanaian Pidgin English, in this volume).

- (29) *Kyar di fuud go gi Jan!*
 carry DET food go give John
 ‘Carry the food to John!’
- (30) **Yu kyar di fuud go gi Jan!*
 2SG carry DET food go give John

(31) *(Unu)kyar di fuud go gi Jan!*
 2PL carry DET food go give John
 ‘Carry the food to John!’

(32) *Mek yu no tel di chuut?*
 make 2SG NEG tell DET truth
 ‘Tell the truth! Won’t you?’

In **double-object constructions** the benefactor precedes the theme argument, regardless of whether the direct object is a pronominal element or a full NP (33). Quite a few ditransitive verbs occur regularly in serial constructions (34). In these instances, the direct object (theme) occurs first.

(33) *Jan gi Mieri/im di bag a manggo.*
 John give Mary/3SG DET bag of mango.
 ‘John gave Mary the bag of mangoes.’

(34) *Jan sen mechiz go gi Mieri.*
 John send message go give Mary
 ‘John sent a message to Mary.’

8. Complex sentences

The word *a(h)n* is used for both **noun phrase** and **verb phrase/ clause conjunction** (35). In narrative speech, multiple clauses occurring in a sequence do not need the conjunction (36).

(35) *Di fat uman an di pikni-dem nyam di kiek ahn*
 DET fat woman CONJ DET child-PL eat DET cake CONJ
chuo we di baks.
 throw away DET box
 ‘The fat woman and the children ate the cake and threw the box away.’

(36) *Im tek up di fuon, kaal di man, kos im aaf, ahn*
 3SG take up DET phone call DET man curse 3SG off CONJ
eng op.
 hang up
 ‘She picked up the phone and called the man, cursed him, and hung up.’

The word *se* is a multifunctional item in Jamaican. As a main verb *se* takes an NP complement, but it can be used as a **quotative marker** introducing direct speech (37). As an extension of this latter usage, *se* also acts as a **finite complementizer**, used after *verba dicendi* (*chat* ‘to chat’, *taak* ‘to talk’, *baal out* ‘to shout’, etc.) to introduce **indirect-speech constructions** (38). Its use as a finite complementizer also extends to verbs of cognition (*nuo* ‘to know’, *tingk* ‘to think’, *uop* ‘to hope’, *biliiv* ‘to believe’, etc.) (39). This multifunctional item has an additional use which has been overlooked in the literature. It occurs in sentence-final position in a special (direct or indirect) inter-

rogative construction which indicates the speaker’s lack of confidence/faith in the addressee’s ability to execute the activity of the verb (40).

(37) *Jan se ‘Kaal di dakta.’*
 John QUOT call DET doctor
 ‘John said “Call the doctor!”’

(38) *Jan de chat se a mi (wehn) tiif di bag.*
 John PROG chat COMP FOC 1SG (and) steal DET bag
 ‘John is saying that it was I who (had) stole(n) the bag.’

(39) *Jan nuo se a yu.*
 John know COMP FOC 2SG
 ‘John knows that it’s you.’

(40) *Mi no nuo we yu de kuk se.*
 1SG NEG know what 2SG PROG cook say
 ‘I don’t know if you can call what you’re doing cooking.’

The word *mek* (< English *make*), in addition to its use as a main verb, can also be used as a causative complementizer introducing a tensed clause (41).

(41) *A chuu Jan lef i ous opm mek dem (wehn)*
 FOC through John leave DET house open CAUS 3PL ANT
tiif di tingz-dem.
 steal DET thing.PL-PL
 ‘It is because John left the house open why they (had) stole(n) the things.’

According to Veenstra (1990: 32), **serial verb constructions** (SVC) are associated with the meanings direction/location (*go, gaan, kom*), argument (*giv, tek, se*), aspect (*gaan, go, don*). In SVCs with *go* and *kom*, these verbs combine with verbs of locomotion, occur in V2 position, and indicate movement away from and towards the speaker, respectively (42). The verb *gaan* can occur as either the initial or non-initial verb in an SVC. In both positions it has a directional reading (*pace* Veenstra 1990: 35), but only in non-initial position does it have a completive reading. SVCs involving the verb *tek* (< *take*) variously have the following readings: instrumental (43), theme (44), comitative (45), and manner (46) (these examples are from from Veenstra 1990: 37).

(42) *Im kyar di yam go/kom.*
 3SG carry DET yam go/come
 ‘He carried the yam(s)/ he brought the yam(s).’

(43) *Mi tek stik pik mango.*
 1SG take stick pick mango
 ‘I pick mangoes with a stick.’

(44) *Dem tek guot put pon di BarBQ.*
 3PL take goat put on the BarBQ
 ‘They put goat (meat) on the BarBQ.’

(45) *Di bwai tek di gyalgaan a muuvi.*
 DET boy take DET girl gone LOC movie
 ‘The boy has gone to the movies with the girl.’

(46) *Wi tek taim dweit.*
 1PL take time do.it
 ‘We do it carefully.’

The verb *gi(v)* (< *give*) is used as the non-initial member in serial constructions. When *gi* co-occurs with a chain such as *sen . . . go* (*send go*) it introduces a beneficiary argument (47), i.e. the person may or may not have received the thing which was sent. When *gi* is used with a verb such as *bai* ‘buy’ it introduces a recipient (48). Hence, (48) would be ungrammatical if Susan did not actually receive the book (49). Some SVCs can have up to five verbs in the chain (50). This phenomenon appears to be more common with verbs of locomotion and directional verbs.

(47) *Juoziv sen di buk go gi Suuzan.*
 Joseph send DET book go give Susan
 ‘Joseph sent the book to/for Susan.’

(48) *Juoziv bai buk gi Suuzan.*
 Joseph buy book give Susan
 ‘Joseph bought the book for (and gave it to) Susan.’

(49) **Juoziv bai buk gi Suuzan bot im no giit tu*
 Joseph buy book give Susan but 3SG NEG give.3SG to
ar.
 3SG.FEM
 ‘Joseph bought the book for Susan but did not give it to her.’

(50) *Piita, ron kom go kyar di bag gi yu mada.*
 Peter run come go carry DET bag give 2SG mother
 ‘Peter, come and carry this bag to your mother quickly.’

9. Interrogative and focus constructions

Declarative sentences (51) are converted into **yes–no questions**, not morphologically or syntactically, but prosodically by the use of rising intonation (52). **Wh-questions** such as (53) can be formed using the question words *wa/we* ‘what’, *wich-paat ~ we(-paat)* ‘where’, *uu* ‘who’, *wa-mek* ‘why’, and *wen ~ wa-taim* ‘when’, *fiu* (< *fi-uu* [for + who]) ‘whose’. In both main (53) and embedded (54) clauses the question word may be preceded by the focus marker *a*.

(51) *Stiesi gaan a skuul.*
 Stacy gone LOC school
 ‘Stacy has gone to school.’

(52) *Stiesi gaan a skuul?*
 Stacy gone to school
 ‘Has Stacy gone to school?’

(53) *A wen yu de go pahn liif?*
 FOC when 2SG PROG go on leave
 ‘When (is it that you) are going on leave?’

(54) *Jan aks mi a wen mi de go pahn liif.*
 John ask 1SG FOC when 1SG PROG go on leave
 ‘John asked me when I was going on leave.’ [i.e. to remind him]

As we saw in example (53), Jamaican has a designated focus marker *a* which is placed at the left edge/periphery of the clause (main or embedded). The focused element is placed right after the marker. The focusing of objects and adjuncts involves movement (56), while the focusing of predicates involves movement and copying (57). NPs and PPs are focused but there appears to be a strong dispreference for focusing VPs. Hence, for most complex predicates (e.g. verb–particle collocations), the verb is focused but a copy is left in situ with the other components of the collocation.

(55) *Piita biit op di man kaaz im iizi a beks.*
 Peter beat up DET man because 3SG easy of vex
 ‘Peter beat up the man because he [Peter] is irritable.’

(56) *A di man Piita biit op kaaz im iizi a beks.*
 FOC DET man Peter beat up because 3SG easy of vex
 ‘Peter beat up *the man* because he [Peter] is irritable.’

(57) *A biit Piita biit op di man kaaz im iizi a beks.*
 FOC beat Peter beat up DET man because 3SG easy of vex
 ‘Peter *beat up* the man because he [Peter] is irritable.’

In **predicate cleft** constructions, the fronted verb can co-occur with markers for mood (58) and negation (59), but only the *in situ* verb may take tense and aspect markers. Another interesting feature of the fronted verb is that it appears to have nominal properties since it can be used adjacent to the definite article *di* (60).

(58) *A uda rait dehn rait i.*
 FOC MOD write 3PL write 3SG
 ‘They would have *written* it.’

(59) *A no rait dehn rait i.*
 FOC NEG write 3PL write 3SG
 ‘They did not *write* it.’

(60) *A di fait im fait mek im taiyad.*
 FOC DET fight 3SG fight make 3SG tired.
 ‘Fighting is what caused him to be tired.’

10. Conclusion

The only book-length grammar of Jamaican that we have is Bailey’s (1966) 158-page work. While quite a bit has been done in articles and chapters, all of this work needs to be brought to-

gether and verified. We still need an up-to-date reference grammar of Jamaican. On the lexical side, the Jamaican Lexicography Project (Jamlex)⁹ has begun work on the *Jamaican National Dictionary* (JND) and a *Dictionary of Africanisms in Jamaican* (DAJ) which will substantially update the work recorded in Cassidy and Le Page's (1967) *Dictionary of Jamaican English* and Allsopp's (1996) *Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage*.

Glossed text

This extract is from a recording made in August 2009. It has been edited to delete breaks and repetitions. The speaker, an 11-year-old boy from rural (western) Jamaica talks about an incident which he witnessed at the market.

[...] *muor lika ahn bai sigaret. So, aafta ihn kom bak*
more liquor and buy cigarette so after 3SG come back
[...] more liquor, and bought cigarettes. So after he returned,

nou i uman di de stil an a krai. Chaali
now DET woman LOC there still and PROG cry Charlie
the woman was still there crying. Charlie

biit im op; an den Chaali gu bak opa we im
beat 3SG up and then Charlie go back up where 3SG
beat her up, and then Charlie went back up where he

a sel. I man gu bak agen ahn lik i uman.
HAB sell DET man go back again and lick DET woman
sells. Charlie went and hit the woman again.

So, siem so ihn dash we i uman sipaz. So aafta
So same so 3SG dash away DET woman slippers So after
And he threw the woman's slippers away just so. So, after

dat nou, dehn di de. Ier i uman nou "Bot yu
that now 3PL LOC there hear DET woman now but 2SG
that, they were there, and the woman said: "You

no aadineri. Yu dash we mi gud bran nyuu
NEG ordinary 2SG dash away 2SG.POSS good brand new
must be crazy. You threw away my perfectly new

sipaz we mi jos bai laas wiik? A lik im shuda
slippers REL 1SG just buy last week FOC lick 3SG MOD
slippers that I bought just last week? Man, he should have

lik yu ina yu fies man." An di wol a dem
lick 2SG in 2SG face man and DET whole of them
punched you in the face." And all of them

se "Me wi giim sohn lik rait ya so nou".
QUOT make 1PL give. 3SG some lick right here so now
said "Let us give him a beating right now."

⁹ The official website of the Jamaican Lexicography Project can be found at www.jamlex.org

Wahn kroud, yu no. Wol iipa piipl soroun
INDF crowd you know whole heap-of people surround
A crowd, you know; a whole lot of people surrounded

im; wahn iip. So den, afta wen ihn di de nou,
3SG INDF heap so then after when 3SG LOC there now
him. A whole lot. So, while he was there

di de a ron-ron op ihn mout, so, wahn neks
LOC there PROG run-run up 3SG mouth so INDF next
running off at the mouth, well, another

man kom aafta i rasta-man de nou, wahn
man come after DET rasta-man there now INDF
man, a non-Rastafarian, went up to the male Rastafarian

baal-ed man ahn se "Bot yu no aadineri! Ku
bald-head man and QUOT but 2SG NEG ordinary look
and said: "You're just crazy! Look

ou yu fu-fuul." "I man no tel yu yu afi du
how 2SG fool~fool DET man NEG tell 2SG 2SG MOD do
how stupid you are." "Didn't the man tell you that you had to do

dat an yu afi dwiit?" I man guwe ahn kom
that and 2SG MOD do. 3SG DET man go away and come
it, and didn't you have to do it?" The man left and

bak an dehn si se dehn stil di de; ier i
back and 3PL see COMP 3PL still LOC there hear DET
returned and they saw that they were still there. Listen

man nou "Gwaan man, a mos nuo wa fi du
man now go-on man 1SG must know what INF do
to what he said: "Carry on like that. I will know what to do

yu". So i rasta-man se "Kom aan me wi biit
2SG so DET rasta-man QUOT come on make 1PL beat
with you!" So the male Rastafarian said: "Come on, let's beat

dem op nou. Kom aan". Ye, wahn sitn de nou. . .
3PL up now come on yes INDF thing there now
them up now. Come on!" Yes, an ahm

wa yu uda kaal im? Wahn igla, "You! A wahn
what 2SG COND call 3SG INDF higgler hey FOC INDF
what-would-you-call-him-again? A higgler. "Hey! That man

lukl jonki bwai dat-de ino, ahn mi no
little drunken boy DEM-DIST you.know and 1SG NEG
is an old drunk, you know, and I don't

laik wen ihn de roun mi ino, kaa ihn
like when 3SG LOC round 1SG you-know because 3SG
like having him around me, you know, because he is

aalwiesz a biit biit op ihn waif ahn dehn sitn
always PROG beat beat up 3SG.POSS wife and 3SG thing
always beating his wife and things of the

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de”. *Antil dehn tel im fi tap i naiz. So i*
there until 3PL tell 3SG INF stop DET noise so DET
sort.” Until they told him to stop the noise. So the

man tek wahn kyaat ahn guwe an dehn ron im
man take INDF cart and go.away and 3PL run 3SG
man took a cart and went away and drove him

we. So afta a mail nou ihn tek out i
away so after INDF while now 3SG take out DET
away. So after a while he took out the

moni ihn nehn don i wol a i moni
money 3SG NEG.ANT finish DET whole of DET money
money. He hadn't finished all of the money

yet ino. So ihn tek out som a i moni
yet you.know so 3SG take out some of DET money
yet, you know. So he took some of the money

ahn gi bak i uman; aafia i wol a dem
and give back DET woman after DET whole of them
and gave it back to the woman; afterwards all of them

disaid se dehn mos muuv frahn ya so ahn no
decide COMP 3PL must move from here so and NEG
decided that they had to move from there and not

kom bak yaso kohn sel agen.
come back here.so come sell again
return here to sell again.

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