

Exploring Contact Influence Between Caribbean and West African Creoles: A Typological Study of Verb Serialisation in Jamaican Creole and Cameroon Pidgin English

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1. INTRODUCTION

- My research explores contact influence between Jamaican Creole and Cameroon Pidgin English (CPE) through verb serialisation. Previous literature suggests Akan influenced Jamaican Creole and Jamaican Creole influenced CPE. My goal is to find evidence for or against this.
- Akan features are theorised to have spread to Jamaica via slaves, then Sierra Leone as freed slaves and finally, Cameroon via missionaries.
- If these languages have Akan features then it indicates contact influence. If not, influence came from elsewhere, possibly the local Cameroonian language Duala.
- My findings suggest a link between Fante-Akan, Jamaican Creole, and CPE when considering mutual features.



2. METHODOLOGY

I conducted a typological comparison using a corpus of CPE (Green, Ayafor, & Ozón) and comparing it to data I compiled from various literature (i.e. language grammars/religious texts) on the other languages.

3. WHAT IS A CREOLE LANGUAGE?

Creoles are languages that emerge from language contact and become a lingua franca, allowing communication between different language populations. There can be a power imbalance, e.g. between slaves and slave-owners in Jamaica. Creoles take their vocabulary from one language (usually European) but develop a different grammar.

4. THE LANGUAGES

- **Cameroon Pidgin English** is an English-based Atlantic creole spoken in Cameroon with 12,000,000 speakers (Ayafor & Green, 2017).
- **Jamaican Creole** is an English-based creole spoken by 3,000,000 people in Jamaica and its diaspora (Simons & Fennig, 2018).
- **Fante-Akan** is a dialect of Akan, from the Kwa language family, and is spoken in Ghana by 2,730,000 speakers (ibid).
- **Duala** is a Bantu language that is indigenous to Cameroon and has a population of 87,700 (ibid).

5. WHAT IS A SERIAL VERB CONSTRUCTION?

Serial verb constructions (SVCs) are a sequence of 2+ lexical verbs in the same clause that describe a single event. A SVC can have a different meaning to the verbs' individual meanings, e.g. example (1) (CPE corpus).

- (1) wi bi goe shidon deiy
we be go sit.down there
"We went and stayed there"

6. DUALA

- I have discovered that Duala does not have SVCs based on negative evidence
- This indicates that SVCs in CPE do not show Duala influence
- Not having SVCs is typical for Bantu languages (Hagemeyer & Ogie, 2011) although Vengo, a Bantoid Cameroonian language, displays evidence of SVCs. However, geographical limitations make it unlikely that Vengo influenced CPE.

7. TYPES OF SERIAL VERB CONSTRUCTION

LANGUAGES	7. TYPES OF SERIAL VERB CONSTRUCTION				
	MOTION	VALENCY INCREASING (increases arguments)	ASPECTUAL (relationship with time)	MODALITY (causes an action)	DEGREE (compares actions)
CPE	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑
JAMAICAN CREOLE	☑	☑ all but... ☒ benefactive	☑	☑	☒
FANTE-AKAN	☑	☑	☑	☑	?
DUALA	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒
EXAMPLE	Jamaican (Alleyne, 1980:94) Kya di buk kom gi mi Carry the book come give me "Bring the book for me"	Fante-Akan (Osam, 2003) Araba nyé ne maame kó-ò fie Araba be-with her mother go home "Araba went home with her mother"	CPE (Ayafor & Green, 2017:202) Wen dem don finis tok ashia When they done finish say sorry "When they have finished saying sorry"	Fante-Akan (Osam, 2003) Papa no má-à abofra no sú-ì Man the make child the cry "The man made the child cry"	CPE (Ayafor & Green, 2017:205) A laik Spanish pas I like Spanish pass "I like Spanish best"

8. FEATURES

LANGUAGES	8. FEATURES	
	REDUPLICATION	INTERCEDING ARGUMENT
CPE	☑	☑ with teik 'take'
JAMAICAN CREOLE	☑	☑
FANTE-AKAN	☒	☑
EXAMPLE	Jamaican (Cassidy & Le Page, 1980:116) Come come tek yu food Come take your food "come (and) take your food"	CPE (corpus) Teik naif bos bos-am deiy Take knife burst burst there "Burst them with a knife"

9. CONCLUSION

- Types/features of SVCs found in Fante-Akan tend to be found in Jamaican Creole and CPE. Some exceptions:
 - Reduplication: I did not find evidence for SVC reduplication in Fante-Akan. However, Akan has reduplication in general (Obeng, 2001) so it is possible that I did not have enough data for evidence.
 - Degree SVCs: CPE has degree SVCs but Jamaican Creole does not. Jamaican Creole has *paas* 'pass' which looks like a SVC but is technically not and is rare (Patrick, 2007).

10. IMPACT

In Cameroon, there is stigma around the use of CPE. The more languages are researched, the more legitimate they appear. Greater knowledge allows for greater intercultural communication and understanding, and exposes the west to CPE and its art e.g. rap music and poetry.

11. LIMITATIONS and FURTHER RESEARCH

My conclusions are tentative as my research is not exhaustive because my resources (i.e. resources regarding people/places affected by colonialism) are limited.

For future research, I will explore:

- The historical timeline, including the establishment of SVCs in CPE.
- Are SVCs a product of the creolisation process?
- Languages from somewhat neglected areas i.e. Bantu languages.

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