

# 13 Caribbean Englishes

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## 1 Introduction

The terms Caribbean Englishes or Restructured Englishes are roughly synonymous with other terms commonly found in the linguistics literature: English creoles, English-derived or English-based creoles, and even dialects of English (Mufwene, 2001). Creolists have never agreed upon a typologically distinct linguistic definition in terms of common structures, features, or processes that demarcate so-called creole languages from non-creole languages (Aceto, 1999a; DeGraff, 1999; Mufwene, 1994, 1996; cf. McWhorter, 1998). This absence of a typological distinction may at first seem troublesome or peculiar, but there is still no precise definition as to what exclusively distinguishes a "dialect" from a "language," yet linguists comfortably use both these terms in a general sense as if they precisely reference specific agreed upon language phenomena in the world. As linguists understand better the social factors surrounding the genesis of most so-called creole languages and the structural features they display, both synchronically and diachronically, it may be more appropriate in some cases to view some of these languages called creoles as simply dialects of their respective lexifiers (e.g., varieties of Bahamian English, Cayman Islands English); in other cases, this approach may be less appropriate (e.g., the creoles of Suriname).

The term "creole" derives more from the sociohistorical circumstances surrounding the genesis and emergence of these restructured varieties than from any single linguistic feature or cluster of features that might eventually prove to be diagnostic of this group of languages. The specifics of this term may vary from region to region in terms of lexical identification, since a creole with an English-derived lexical base is just one possible outcome of linguistic/cultural contact between and among peoples who originally spoke mutually unintelligible languages. That is, there are creoles with French, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, Arabic, and African languages (e.g., Kikóngo in Kitúba) as the source of most of the basic morphemes of the language. In fact, in some regions of the

Caribbean, restructured varieties of English co-exist in relatively small, well-defined geographical and cultural spaces (e.g., St Lucia, Carriacou) with chronologically older creoles that do not share the same lexical base (in these cases, French-derived creoles), even if usage of the earlier language appears to be decreasing among the population at large. Furthermore, the social and colonial histories of many creole languages with differing lexical bases are often similar (yet unavoidably different in some cases; see below), and it is here that we might find some common "definition" of what a creole is.

English-derived languages of the Caribbean reveal several sociohistorical factors in common with the emergence of creole languages around the world. These native languages seem to be the result of a disproportionate social/power relationship in which speakers of one language or, more commonly, a set of languages are dominated socially, economically, and/or militarily by politically (but, crucially, not necessarily numerically) more powerful speakers of another language. In the Americas, this dynamic between relatively more powerful and less powerful peoples was enacted within the crucible of European colonization and the institution of slavery, which forcibly brought immigrants from the west coast of Africa to the Americas. Out of this lopsided power dynamic emerged a new language (whatever term one decides is most appropriate, creole or dialect; see Mufwene, 2001) with many of its basic lexemes derived from the socially more powerful or dominant language. This more powerful language is often called the superstrate and the less powerful one the substrate. (From the perspective of language acquisition/creation, "substrate" can also refer to the language known natively, i.e., below the level of awareness, and "superstrate" to the language not known natively, i.e., above the level of awareness, in terms of a new language to be heard and (re)shaped in some way by speakers trying to make sense of and (re-)organizing this new language data.)

Not all the members of the subordinate group (e.g., West Africans in the Americas) shared the same language. In the Western Hemisphere, many of the ethnic groups represented by West African slaves in specific locations spoke mutually unintelligible languages, which made the emergence of any contact language perhaps crucial for intra-group communication as well as for initiating communication about survival under the control of Europeans. Within the Anglophone context, children born into these multilingual settings grappled with whatever local varieties of English they heard in the mouths of settlers, colonists, and perhaps Africans already familiar with some form of the language from early European contacts in Africa. Children restructured these varieties further, enforcing structural regularity on the second-language varieties they heard being spoken by the adults in their communities, drawing on processes made available through the common human genetic endowment of the language faculty.

What is or is not a linguistic effect derived from the superstrate(s), substrate(s), or common human linguistic processes is a matter of some differing opinions

among researchers. It seems uncontroversial that specific words and phonemes can be derived from substrate languages. For example, *dókunu* 'dumpling' is derived from Twi, a language of Ghana (known as the Gold Coast during the colonial period), and is found in several restructured Englishes in the Atlantic region; co-articulated stops such as /kp/ and /gb/ heard in Saramaccan, a mixed English- and Iberian-derived creole of Suriname in northern South America, are also articulated in several languages of West Africa but are conspicuously absent from European languages. However, the source of the creole language's structure or syntax is a subject of some controversy. Some scholars believe it to be related to the structure of the native language(s) originally spoken by the dominated group. This substratist position is a perspective that has dominated creole studies since the 1970s (see Parkvall, 2000 as the latest example of this perspective; see also Holm, 1988–9). Others believe (some of) a creole's structure to be related to features of the regional dialects of the language spoken by the European superordinate group; in the last half of the twentieth century, this perspective has most definitely been a minority voice (for important exceptions see Hancock, 1994; Mufwene, 2001; Niles, 1980; Winford, 2000). Still others insist that a creole language's grammatical structure is related to principles of Universal Grammar as pertaining to first-language acquisition/creation (see Bickerton, 1984, as the most vocal proponent of this view; also DeGraff, 1999), and yet others believe insights from second-language acquisition hold keys to understanding these languages (see Andersen, 1983). These structural issues have not been resolved to anyone's satisfaction (the best multidimensional approach is probably that of DeGraff, 1999) – and this question will certainly not be answered here. The complexity of the question most likely entails that components from all of the above categories have played some role in shaping the "look" or sound of specific creoles or dialects – and, for that matter, of languages everywhere. This observation raises the question again, in the absence of a typologically distinct definition for creoles, as to how these languages are different from any other human language.

## 2 Where Are Restructured Englishes in the Caribbean Spoken?

Restructured Englishes are spoken along the edges of virtually every major ocean or sea in the world. The reason for this largely geographical distinction is straightforward. Contact between colonizers/settlers speaking regional dialects of British English and subsequently colonized peoples took place via shipping and sailing routes during the period of European expansion and colonialization in the seventeenth through early twentieth centuries. Therefore, contact between English speakers and speakers of non-European languages (e.g., West African languages in the Atlantic region and Oceanic languages in the Pacific region) were often established in coastal areas. Again,

in this regard, creole languages are no different from other languages: all natural human languages display the effects of cultural/language contact even if they do not share the social scenario described below as leading to "creolization" (and, again, not all "creoles" share the plantation scenario, either). What makes creole Englishes somewhat unique at this point in history is that they are relatively "new" languages. That is, they are only about 150 to 400 years old, which is young in the life of a language (English and Spanish, for example, are approximately 1,500 and 2,000 years old, respectively).

Dozens of English-derived creoles and dialects are spoken throughout the Americas and on the eastern edges of the Atlantic region in West Africa. Every former British colonial territory in the Caribbean reveals an English language variety spoken today, whether one considers it a creole or a dialect. Many of these languages are distributed across the islands of the Caribbean: Trinidad and Tobago, Grenada, Barbados, St Vincent, St Lucia, Dominica, Montserrat, St Kitts and Nevis, Antigua and Barbuda, Anguilla, the Turks and Caicos islands, the various islands of the Bahamas, Jamaica, and the Cayman Islands. The British Virgin Islands of Tortola, Virgin Gorda, Anegada, and Jost Van Dyke contain largely undocumented English varieties. The Dutch Windward Islands of Saba, St Martin, and St Eustatius also reveal English-derived varieties. The languages spoken on the United States Virgin Islands of St Croix, St John, and St Thomas have received little attention from linguists. In many nations largely associated with Spanish as a national language, English-derived restructured varieties have been spoken for more than a century: the Dominican Republic; Providencia and San Andres Islands (politically controlled by Colombia); and the Central American nations of Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, and Guatemala. Belize is the only country in Central America in which Creole English is widely spoken (English is the official language). Within the North American mainland, Creole English can be heard in the Gullah-speaking coastal areas of South Carolina and Georgia as well as among their descendants in southern Texas and northern Mexico (as well as among Caribbean immigrant communities in, for example, New York City, Miami, and Harford). Even South America contains English-derived creole speakers of at least four languages in the countries of Suriname and Guyana.

Local names for English-derived varieties may vary. In many locations, speakers may call their language *pidgin* or *creole*, but most simply call their native language *dialect*. Often, unfortunate qualifiers such as *bad*, *raw*, or *flat* (reflecting speaker attitudes) may be used to modify *English*; or they may simply call it *English*. Furthermore, several scholars still insist that all creoles spoken in the Western Hemisphere today derive diachronically from a pidgin on the West Coast of Africa (see McWhorter, 1998 as the most recent example; cf. Bloomfield, 1933); most others view the role of a pidgin in creole genesis as less a prerequisite and more of a variable factor available as the source of some features that would eventually reveal themselves in a particular creole.

### 3 Different Scenarios for the Emergence of Creoles in the Atlantic Region

Many scholars (e.g., Thomason and Kaufman, 1988) insist that creoles represent a case of broken transmission between the language providing the source of basic lexical material and the subsequent emerging creole or English variety. However, this perspective may be most (and perhaps, in the Western Hemisphere, only) appropriate when considering the English-derived cases for the Surinamese creoles *Sranan*, *Ndyuka*, and *Saramaccan* in which English, as a possible source of ongoing lexical and grammatical influence, was withdrawn from the emerging linguistic matrix when the British exchanged the colony with the Dutch for what was then, in the seventeenth century, New Amsterdam (later renamed "New York"). This description is clearly less accurate and appropriate for the vast majority of restructured Englishes that also bear the name "creole" (e.g., Jamaican, Gullah, Belizean, etc.), where English was established and persisted as an ambient language of power (and thus as one potential source of linguistic influence) before and well after the emergence of the local vernaculars.

In fact, in Creole Studies, rather than considering the Surinamese creoles as exceptional cases of language emergence, these languages are often considered as the baseline against which all Englishes in the Anglophone Atlantic region are measured. Not surprisingly, all other English-derived Atlantic creole languages appear to be lacking in assumed "creole" features in this comparison, despite the fact that no satisfactory typological inventory of creole features has been established within the field. The distorted assumption that all English-derived creoles once looked more like one of the Surinamese creoles (or, from some adjusted theoretical perspectives, so-called "basilectal" Jamaican Creole English) thus ensures that all other Restructured English varieties in the Atlantic region will appear less "creole-like" in comparison, despite the fact that the specific sociohistorical factors that gave rise to the Surinamese creoles are uncontroversially unique in the Americas.

It is likely that comparing the Surinamese creoles to other creoles in the Anglophone Atlantic region has encouraged researchers to perceive "decreolization" as an all-pervasive universal force moving restructured Englishes in a unidirectional manner toward features associated with metropolitan or more standard varieties of English. Any language, creole or otherwise, has options for variation and change unrelated to the pressures of lexically related (even if politically and socially prestigious) metropolitan languages (see Aceto, 1999a). Even if the purported effects of so-called "decreolization" could be rigorously distinguished from what is regular and "normal" diachronic change, which all languages exhibit everywhere (whether they are called "creole" or not), this concept has a tendency to obscure language change that is not derived from contact with metropolitan varieties of English and to discourage research on creole varieties which are considered, from this

perspective, to be less "creole-like" and thus less deserving of attention from scholars who identify themselves as creolists. (See Aceto, 2001 for details.)

The slave plantation is often considered the prototypical environment for the emergence of creoles because this colonial context brought together components of a social matrix that seem especially conducive for the emergence and restructuring of these languages. That is, out of the matrix of social factors discussed above in terms of a disproportionate demographic ratio between the socially subordinate (i.e., often slaves, in the Atlantic scenario) and the numerically smaller superordinate group who were the original sources of most European language forms emerged a variety of English that began to be used by African slaves at least initially as a *lingua franca* and then later as a first language by children born into this context. This general scenario accounts for many of the creole Englishes spoken in the Atlantic region, such as Sranan in Suriname and Jamaican, but it often obscures the likelihood that a range of English-derived varieties may have emerged in any geographical and cultural space where English was spoken as a language of colonial power (see Alleyne, 1971). Furthermore, though most of the participants on the dominated side of the equation were in fact originally slaves in the Americas, not all the languages called creoles, and not even all those varieties with an English-derived lexical base, historically emerged within the context of the slave plantation.

There are several cases of language emergence that resist being neatly classified within the plantation experience, even if some of them are outgrowths and extensions of that same general experience. For example, Barbuda, an island to the north of Antigua in the Eastern Caribbean, was populated with slaves for the explicit function of raising food crops and manufacturing goods to supply plantations on nearby islands such as Antigua (in fact, slaves on Barbuda were often threatened with transfer to plantations on Antigua). These Barbudan slaves often came in contact with no more than a handful of Europeans. In West Africa, Krio in Sierra Leone did not emerge as a plantation creole, nor did Liberian English. The status of Krio is still a subject of some debate, with most scholars insisting it is an import from Jamaica (e.g., Schuchardt, 1883; von Bradshaw, 1965; Hall, 1966; Coomber, 1969; Bauer, 1975; Wilson, 1976; Fyle and Jones, 1980; Boretzky, 1983; see Huber, 2004 who claims an early form of Gullah influenced the formation of Krio), while others (e.g., Hancock, 1986; Aceto, 1999b) maintain that some form of restructured English most likely emerged in the area of the Guinea Coast of West Africa before the arrival of Jamaican immigrants in Sierra Leone in the early nineteenth century (see McWhorter, 2003, who argues that restructured English emerged on the Lower Guinea Coast but *not* the Upper Guinea Coast before the nineteenth century). Nonetheless, the role of immigration and immigrant varieties of English spoken by African slaves and their descendants in the Atlantic region, especially as the descendants of slaves began to move about the Caribbean in search of work in the mostly post-emancipation period, is a topic that has largely been ignored by creolists (except for the case of Krio and perhaps Liberian).

Several of the English-derived creoles spoken in areas and islands of the Caribbean are clearly the result of intra-Caribbean migration. Many of the tens of thousands of speakers in Panama, Costa Rica, Honduras, and Guatemala are the result of English-derived creole-speaking immigrants from Caribbean islands migrating to Central America in search of work in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Holm, 1983, 1988–9; Aceto, 1995). In Central America, Belize and the community of Bluefields in Nicaragua appear to be exceptions to this categorization, but neither case falls neatly within the plantation scenario sketched above, either (see Holm, 1983). Winer (1993) demonstrates that the emergence of Trinidadian Creole English in the nineteenth century is the result of immigration by a variety of ethnic groups who already spoke pre-existing and wholly formed creoles and Englishes. Out of this matrix, a new English-derived language variety has emerged.

At least two Surinamese creoles (Ndyuka and Saramaccan) are Maroon creoles that emerged as runaway slaves and rebels formed independent societies in the interior of the country. Maroon languages also emerged in remote mountainous areas of Jamaica, while non-English-lexifier creoles also reveal similar cases (e.g., Palenquero, an Iberian-derived creole of Colombia, is believed to have its roots in a Maroon community; for the Surinamese Maroon creoles, see Smith, 1987; for Jamaican Maroon language, see Bilby, 1983). These creoles may still be considered related to the plantation creole phenomenon since in the Americas many of the new recruits to these independent societies were speakers of or at least familiar with the restructured English emerging on plantations closer to population centers near the coast. However, what makes Maroon languages truly unique (other than the specific matrix of contributing languages in any individual case of language emergence) is that they developed in greater isolation from European influences than languages emerging on plantations.

Other creoles or Englishes are the result of transference of property from one colonial power to another (again, similar to yet crucially different from the Suriname case discussed above). Several former French-held colonial territories in the Caribbean such as St Lucia, Grenada, and Carriacou, where a French-derived creole had earlier emerged, were subsequently transferred to British colonial control in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. British dominion over these French Creole-speaking islands for the last two centuries has resulted in the emergence of local varieties of English that seem to have been significantly calqued (i.e., translated word-for-word) from the earlier French-derived creole as the functional usage of English expanded more strongly into social domains (e.g., education, government) previously reserved for French or the French-derived creole (see Garrett, 1999, 2003 for the case of St Lucia). These interesting cases of language emergence have largely been ignored by researchers and are only now beginning to be studied (as many cases of non-plantation creoles have similarly been neglected; see Aceto, 2001 for a detailed description of Englishes and creoles in the Western Hemisphere that have received little or no attention from linguists).

Non-Afro-American Anglo-Caribbean varieties – i.e., those English varieties spoken among the descendants of Irish, Scots, and English settlers – have largely been ignored in research paradigms, except for the work of Williams (1985, 1987, 1988, 2003). These English-derived varieties spoken largely by Euro-Caribbeans on Saba, Bequia, the Cayman Islands, Barbados, and Anguilla (see Williams, 2003) may shed light on the English-derived component heard by Africans or Afro-Caribbeans working alongside many of these European immigrants. White indentured servants were often treated socially no differently from African slaves; some of them even joined African-derived Maroon communities (see above).

To sum up: in the Americas, there are Englishes and English-derived creoles that have emerged due to the general colonial plantation experience and its influence, the result of immigration, and/or the result of colonial transference in which the ambient European language of power has been switched. The fact of the matter is that even in the straightforward cases of plantation creoles, such as Sranan in Suriname and Jamaican, the results of all three scenarios have made themselves felt diachronically in a specific geographical location. That is, it would be difficult to find a location in the Anglophone Caribbean that has not been affected by the languages and English varieties spoken by immigrants since emancipation in the nineteenth century and by varieties of the colonial language heard in local metropolitan population centers.

#### 4 Basic Features of Restructured English in the Caribbean

What follows in this section is a brief generalized grammatical and phonological sketch applicable to many English-derived creoles and/or dialects in the Caribbean. Of course, it must be pointed out that all Anglophone creoles spoken in the Caribbean reveal synchronic differences in terms of lexicon, phonology, morphology, and syntax, even if they share many general similarities. Features presented here are not exclusively associated with any specific creole language; that is to say, these features are not, for example, all derived from Jamaican or Guyanese Creole English. This presentation is an abstraction of possible features based on what I have heard spoken in the Caribbean or researched from other sources. The treatment in this section is not in any way intended to be exhaustive. For syntactic features associated with specific creoles, including the Surinamese creoles, readers should consult the survey presented in Hancock (1987); for a discussion of phones and phonemes in Anglophone Atlantic varieties, Wells (1982). The goal of this section is to highlight basic features found in a range of Anglophone Caribbean Englishes.

It is important to remember that the varieties of English that Africans in the Western Hemisphere originally heard were regional, social, and ethnic (e.g., Irish and Scottish) dialects of British English as spoken in the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries. As Africans and African-descended peoples

began to acquire English forms, initially as a second language, they would have heard varieties of English spoken by Europeans and whatever earlier restructured forms they might have encountered on the West African coast or perhaps at slave entrepôts in the Caribbean, such as St Eustatius or St Kitts (see Baker and Bruyn, 1998 for references to a scenario in which St Kitts influences emerging Englishes on other islands). Later, as local varieties began to emerge in the decades to follow, slaves would have acquired local varieties as first languages or as native-speaker varieties spoken in the relevant communities by peoples of both African and European descent. Thus, from a diachronic perspective, English-derived Caribbean varieties in general are more British-oriented, at least in their phonologies, though in the last century American and Canadian influence can be expected and documented (e.g., see Van Herk, 2003).

There appear to be some satisfactory reasons for dividing the region of the Caribbean linguistically into geographically designated western and eastern varieties on the basis of comparative phonology and syntax (see Holm, 1988–9: 445; Wells, 1982, 1987; Le Page, 1957–8; Hancock, 1987). However, the grounds for this division are largely abstract and impressionistic, since it is my experience, having done fieldwork in both general locations, that there are few specific features that one may find in one region that absolutely cannot be found in the other. In general, creolists are often comfortable with the highly questionable assumption that earlier varieties of creole languages were monolithic and that contemporary synchronic variation is a more recent (i.e., post-emancipation) phenomenon. However, whether these overlapping patterns represent parallel historical developments or are due to intra-Caribbean migration, especially in the post-emancipation period, is open to debate. As has been made clear in dialect studies over the last 50 years, it is not any specific feature that is diagnostic of a dialect (whether it is a regional, ethnic, or social one), but the bundle of features that are associated with a particular designation. And it is on these grounds that one may find some validity in the motivation for separating Caribbean Englishes into western and eastern varieties. I discuss below features heard in the general Caribbean, while making reference to features believed to be representative of both the eastern and western Caribbean. (The Surinamese creoles are ignored here, since they are largely unintelligible with Anglophone Caribbean varieties spoken outside Suriname.) The data is provided in phonetic symbols within a mostly phonemic presentation.

### 5 Syntax

#### 5.1 Copula

The verbal complex in Caribbean Englishes has received significant attention from linguists (see Winford, 1993), and the form and distribution of the copula

has often been at the center of this discussion. The three basic functions of the copula (attributive, locative, and nominal) are heard in the following forms. Attributive constructions: /ʃi de gud/, /ʃi aarait/ or /ʃi iz gud/, 'she is good, she is doing fine, she is all right'. The verb /de/ or /iz/ is often the copula form in these cases but no overt verb may be realized at all. The locative form is often /de/ as in: /we im de/ or /we im iz/ 'where is he/she/it?' Inversion between the copula and the noun is not required for questions in these languages. Rising intonation often indicates interrogatives. (Furthermore, the question word "where" can take several forms: /we/, /wepaat/, /wiʃpaat/, /wiʃplees/, etc.) The nominal form of the copula displays the following forms: /a/, /iz/, /bi/ and no overt realization at all, e.g., /ʃi a mi sista/, /ʃi iz mi sista/, /ʃi bi mi sista/, /ʃi mi sista/ 'she is my sister.'

### 5.2 Past tense

The past tense marker, as with most of the overt grammatical markers in creole languages, often occurs as a discrete, free morpheme before the main verb of an utterance. It is common for unmarked non-stative (or dynamic) verbs to have a past interpretation. That is, an utterance such as /mi iit aredi/ could translate as 'I ate already', even though the main verb /iit/ 'eat' is unmarked overtly by any marker. However, both stative and non-stative verbs may be preverbally marked for the past with one of a range of past tense markers. Depending on the context, an utterance may be interpreted as conveying the simple past or what is sometimes called the past perfect. For example, the grammatical information conveyed by /mi iit aredi/ can similarly occur as /mi dan iit/ or more generally as /mi bin iit/, /mi woz iit/, /mi di(d) iit/, /mi mi(n) iit/. The latter four utterances would translate as 'I ate' or 'I have eaten', depending on the context. The utterance /mi dan iit/ displays the completive marker /dan/, which would more closely match 'I already ate/I have already eaten', or 'I'm done eating', 'I done ate already' in other varieties of English.

### 5.3 Future tense

The preverbal future tense marker is some reflex of either /go/, /a go/, or /goin/ and sometimes /wi/ 'will'. For example, the standard English translation 'they will dance' or 'they are going to dance' will variously correspond to the following utterances: /dem go dans/, /dem wi dans/, /dem gwain dans/, /dem goin dans/, /dem a go dans/, and even /dem wan dans/. In the last instance the future marker *wan* seems to be a grammaticalized form of the verb "want." *Gwain* is often associated with the western Caribbean.

### 5.4 Progressive aspect

The preverbal markers /de/, /da/, or /a/ and the verbal bound morphological suffix /-in/ are those features most commonly associated with the progressive

aspect in Anglophone Caribbean varieties. For example: /di gyal a kaal yu/, /di gyal de kaal yu/, and /di gyal kaalin yu/ all correspond to 'the girl is calling you'.

### 5.5 Pronouns: subject, object, and possessive

Most of the pronouns below may occur as subject, object, and possessive pronouns with the following exceptions: both /ai/ and /a/ 'I' seem to be only subject pronouns; /ar/ 'her' is an object pronoun with exclusive reference to females; /om/ may refer to 'him, her, it' in object position (its distribution is largely limited to the eastern Caribbean). /(h)im/ indicates males or females or even non-human referents in either subject or object position. The plural pronouns *aayu* and *aawi* are largely heard in the eastern Caribbean, and *unu* is more common in the Western Caribbean.

|     | Singular                                             | Plural            |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1st | /mi/, /a, ai/ (subject)                              | /wi, aawi/        |
| 2nd | /yu/                                                 | /unu, aayu, yaal/ |
| 3rd | /(h)i(m)/ 'he, she, it'                              | /de, dem/         |
|     | /(h)i/ 'he, she, it'                                 |                   |
|     | /ʃi/, /ar/ (object), /om, am/ 'he, she, it' (object) |                   |
|     | /i(t)/                                               |                   |

The following utterances illustrate that subject, object, and possessive pronouns are often identical in their distribution: /mi gat a san fu unu sin/ 'I have a song for you (pl.) to sing', /dem no stie laik dem/ 'they're not like them', /ʃi doz sii ʃi sista evri en da wiik/ 'she sees her sister every weekend' (note the common habitual marker /doz/ is often associated with the eastern Caribbean; many Caribbean Englishes do not overtly mark this distinction; some use /de/ to mark this function (see progressive aspect above)), and /mi mi fait wid om/ 'I fought with him/I have fought with him/her'. The second-person plural pronoun /unu/ is the one pronoun that seems not to be derived from a superstrate source.

### 5.6 Possession

Possession is marked solely by word order in creoles, rather than by a combination of word order and bound inflectional morphology as is the case in more standard varieties of English, e.g., /mi brada uman de de/ 'My brother's wife/woman is/was there'.

### 5.7 Infinitival marker

The infinitival marker in many Anglophone Caribbean creoles is often some reflex of "for": /fu/ or /fi/, e.g., /unu ha fu du it/ 'You (pl.) have to do it'. The marker /tu/ associated with other varieties of English is also heard. Some

creole constructions not commonly found in metropolitan varieties of English use the form /fu/ or /fi/, e.g., /a fiil fi smuok/ 'I feel like smoking'.

### 5.8 Pluralization

Pluralization is most often marked by a post-nominal /dem/ rather than a bound inflectional morpheme (the marker can occur in a pre-nominal position as well), unless a number of more than one has already been established previously within the phrase or clause, e.g., /di daag dem/, /di daag an dem/, and /dem daag/ 'the dogs'; cf. /di ʔri daag/ 'the three dogs', which has no plural marker other than the previously established number three. Nouns like "people" and "children," which are not usually pluralized in other varieties of English, are often pluralized in Caribbean Englishes, e.g., /hau di pipl dem trai fi liv/ 'How do the people manage to live?'

### 5.9 Negation

Negation in most Anglophone Caribbean creoles is designated by a single preverbal negator. This negator is usually some reflex of "no," "not," or "never," e.g., /fi no sin/, /fi na(t) sin/, /fi neva sin/ 'she didn't sing'. It is also possible to find a negator based on auxiliary "don't" or "ain't," e.g., /fi duon iit/ or /fi en iit/ 'she didn't eat'.

### 5.10 Serial verbs

One of the most heavily researched areas of Restructured Englishes (though, again, this feature is not structurally diagnostic, since it is also displayed by many non-creole languages) is serial verb constructions (see Winford, 1993). That is, verbs may occur serially with no intervening coordinator or infinitival markers, e.g., /dem gaan iit/ 'they went to eat/they went and ate', /yu wan paas di die wi mi/ 'Do you want to spend the day with me?' Other varieties of English reveal similar serial verb constructions such as "come bring me my food" and "go get my car."

## 6 Lexicon

An English-derived or -based creole is given that designation because much of its basic lexicon is based upon colonial varieties of English heard in the seventeenth through twentieth centuries. Consequently, many English-derived varieties maintain words that are archaic today in other varieties of English. For example, /krabit/ 'mean, disagreeable' or 'rough, cruel' can be found in several Caribbean Englishes and can be traced to Old English and to usage in Scotland; /fieba/ or *favor* 'to resemble' as in /fi fieba you/ 'she resembles you' (this usage of the verb "favor" can also be heard in the American South); and

/beks/ or *vex* 'to anger' as in /wamek yu beks so/ 'Why are you so angry?' are also related to features of older English varieties. *Beg* 'to ask' as in /a wan beg yu wan tin/ 'I want to ask you something' is preserved in most other varieties of English only in the frozen expression "I beg your pardon."

Other words in many creoles reflect the historical usage of language used by sailors. For example, /haal/ transparently derived from "haul" means 'to pull' but seems to be used more frequently in the Caribbean than in other varieties of English, and /gyali/, derived from "the galley or kitchen on a ship," can mean simply 'the kitchen of any household'.

Many African-language-derived words may also be found in the lexicon. Several words found in the Anglophone Caribbean derive from Twi, a language spoken in Ghana on the Lower Guinea Coast (see Aceto, 1999b): /kongosa/ 'gossip', /fufu/ 'common food of yam and plantains', /mumu/ 'dull, dumb, silent', /potopoto/ 'mud, muddy'. Other African languages are represented as well: /ɕuk/ 'to stab, poke' or 'to have sex with' appears to be from Fulani, a language spoken in Nigeria and other locations on the Guinea Coast.

The influence of African words can be traced beyond straightforward borrowings. Many English-derived expressions in Caribbean creoles seem to be based upon word-for-word translations or calques from African languages. For example, *big-eye* meaning 'greedy' has a number of correspondences among languages spoken on the Guinea Coast in Africa. *Day-clean* 'daybreak' appears to be another such case.

## 7 Morphology

It is often claimed that creoles display few if any bound morphemes. McWhorter (1998: 792) qualifies his claim by stating that creole languages rarely have more than one or two inflectional affixes. However, this feature is not diagnostic of any lexifier creole, since non-creole languages (e.g., Chinese languages) also reveal a profound lack of inflectional affixes. At any rate, in the Anglophone Caribbean, bound morphology is illustrated by the following examples: /go/ + /-in/ or /goin/ may function as a future tense marker, e.g., /mi goin iit/ 'I'm going to eat', and a similar combination is found as the progressive aspectual marker when a verb combines with the /-in/ suffix, e.g., /mama kaalin me/ 'mama is calling me'. Many English-derived creoles form comparatives with inflectional affixes and nouns from adjectives through bound derivational and inflectional morphology, e.g., /fas(t) + -a/ 'faster', /wikid + -nis/ 'wickedness', even if many researchers insist these are not features of so-called "deep" or "basilectal" creoles. Many restructured Englishes of the Caribbean have also created phrasal verbs that appear not to be found in contributing British dialects of English or American dialects today, e.g., *kiss up* 'to kiss', *wet up* 'to soak' (cf. with *show up* 'to appear', *cook up* 'to cook' in other dialects of English).

## 8 Phonology

This section is largely based on Holm (1989–9, vol. 2), Wells (1982), Aceto and Williams (2003), various specific articles referenced below, and the author's own notes from fieldwork whose results have not yet appeared in published articles.

### 8.1 Vowels

Vowel quality in the Caribbean differs from that of the metropolitan varieties of English.

#### 8.1.1 Long vowels

The off-glides [ei] and [ou] of metropolitan varieties of English are often not found in the eastern Caribbean, where these sounds most often correspond to [e:] and [o:]. However, recent work by Childs, Reaser, and Wolfram (2003) suggests that in some Bahamian communities the sound [ei] can be heard. In the Leeward Islands, specifically Montserrat (see Wells, 1982: 587), words that historically had long vowels are shortened and they have no off-glides (e.g., [e<sup>l</sup>]), as they do in metropolitan varieties, e.g., /ki/ *key* and /de/ *day*. In many western Caribbean varieties, these same sounds correspond to those with on-glides, e.g., /ie/ and /uo/ as in [fies] *face* and [guot] *goat*. These same vowels can be realized as diphthongs with variants such as [ie] and [uo].

#### 8.1.2 Unreduced vowels

Even in positions not associated with word-final or postvocalic /r/, West Indian varieties of English often display a preference for unreduced vowels, e.g., [abɪlɪtɪ] *ability*, [tawɪl] *towel*, where other dialects of English often display schwa [ə] in the third and second vowel positions respectively. In some dialects of metropolitan English, these word-final segments such as [l] in *towel* or nasals in words like *cotton* may become syllabic consonants. Many varieties in the eastern Caribbean (except for Bajan) have no mid-central vowels, i.e., /ə/ or /ʌ/.

#### 8.1.3 Other vowels

The low front vowel /æ/ found in many metropolitan varieties of English in words such as *trap* is often realized further back in the mouth as [a] in the Caribbean, e.g., cat /cæt/ is pronounced as /kyat/ (note the off-glide found after the velar stop /k/ which can also be heard after the voiced segment as in [gyaadin] 'garden'). The /ʌ/ of words like *strut* in metropolitan varieties is backed and close to [ɔ]. However, some varieties of English in the Turks and Caicos Islands (as well as in Bermuda) reveal the presence of [æ].

Eastern Caribbean English-derived varieties often maintain the difference between sounds in words in metropolitan dialects like the /ɔ:/ in *jaw* and the

/a:/ in *jar* (which often has an r-less pronunciation in many varieties but not all, e.g., Bajan). Both sounds have typically merged into /a:/ in the western group.

Words commonly found in all dialects of English often contain different vowels in Caribbean varieties due perhaps to the preservation of older regional British pronunciations that have changed in contemporary forms. For example, *spoil* and *boil* are commonly pronounced as /spail/ and /bail/, especially in the western Caribbean.

### 8.2 Consonants

Some notable features of the consonants are the following.

#### 8.2.1 Rhoticity

Except for varieties of English in Barbados, and to some degree in Jamaica and Guyana, postvocalic /r/ is often not heard in the Anglophone Caribbean. Bajan English is recognized by its full rhotic nature at all levels of society. Van Herk (2003) states that Bajan is "if anything, more rhotic than North American [Standard English]." This is not the case in other areas, in which full r-lessness after vowels (e.g., in Trinidad and the Bahamas) and the variable nature of [r] across a geographical space (e.g., in Guyana) are salient dialect features. In non-rhotic dialects, additional phonemes such as /ea/ (e.g., /nea/ *near*) and /oa/ (e.g., /foa/ *four*) are often created by absence of /r/ after vowels.

#### 8.2.2 /v/-/w/ merger

Many dialects of Caribbean English (e.g., Bahamian, Bermudan, and Vincentian) may alternate [w], [β] (the voiced bilabial fricative), or [v] (the voiced labiodental approximant) for words which in metropolitan varieties begin with [v], e.g., *village* [wɪldʒ]. This feature may be related to component dialect varieties of English heard in the Caribbean in the eighteenth century which contain this same alternation (e.g., Cockney) or possibly to African languages that lacked the /v/ segment. Some Anglophone Caribbean communities may reveal /b/ where metropolitan Anglophone varieties display /v/, e.g., *vex* 'angry' [beks], *river* [riba], and *love* [lab].

#### 8.2.3 Word-initial /h/

In the Leewards (Antigua, St Kitts, Nevis, Montserrat, Anguilla, Barbuda), unlike in Jamaican and other western Caribbean varieties, /h/ is most often *not* dropped from the beginnings of most words. So-called "h-dropping" or word-initial "h-deletion" is common in Jamaica and in the Bahamas as well. H-dropping also occurs in other dialects of English; often British Cockney is cited as the source of h-dropping in English-derived Caribbean varieties. In dialects with this feature, which is generally not found in the eastern Caribbean, pairs such as *hair* and *air* are homophonous (both are sometimes [ɪər]).

In many Caribbean Englishes, word-initial [h-] does not appear where it would commonly be found in other English varieties, e.g., *whole* [uol], *half* [aaf], but this feature is common in many non-Standard English dialects in Great Britain. On the other hand, words that begin with vowels in many dialects of English often are spoken with a word-initial [h], e.g., *egg* [heg], or even [w-], e.g., *ugly* [wogli] in Caribbean varieties.

#### 8.2.4 Nasals

Syllable- or word-final alveolar nasals following /ʌ/ are often velarized or become /ŋ/, e.g., /dʌŋ/ *down*, which often creates new homonyms (e.g., in this case with *dung*). A variant of this type of pronunciation, although likely archaic, is where the preceding vowel becomes nasalized instead of displaying a consonantal segment, e.g., [dɜ̃].

#### 8.2.5 Th-stopping

The neutralization of /ð/ and /θ/ as /d/ and /t/, e.g., /tɪŋ/ *thing* and /fada/ *father*, is a common feature of many dialects of Caribbean English as well as in regional, ethnic, and social dialects spoken in North America and Great Britain (which often display reflexes different from those in the Caribbean). This process creates new homonyms in the specific dialects in question. Some of the many examples are: *thin-tin* [tɪn], *faith-fate* [fet], *though-dough* [do], *breathe-breed* [brid].

Neutralization appears to operate particularly readily in the environment preceding an /r/ in an onset consonant cluster: *three-tree* [tri:], *through-tru* [tru:], though often these segments are realized as palatalized allophones [ʃru:] or [ʝru:]. Sometimes interdental fricatives in metropolitan varieties do not correspond to a stop consonant in Caribbean Englishes. In Kokoy, a variety of creole English spoken in Dominica, where /θ/ occurs in onset consonant clusters in metropolitan varieties with /r/, the output often becomes [f], e.g., *three* [fri], *through* [fru] (Aceto, forthcoming a).

Many speakers of Caribbean Englishes realize interdental fricatives as similarly articulated in metropolitan varieties. In St Eustatius, many speakers, at all levels of society, display interdental segments, while the stop correspondences are still the preference for most speakers (Aceto, forthcoming b). Cutler (2003) makes a similar observation about this feature in the English of Gran Turk Island as does Williams (2003) about some varieties of English spoken in Anguilla.

#### 8.2.6 Consonant cluster reduction

As is typical in many dialects of English around the world, the word-final /t/ segment in consonant clusters preceded by an obstruent is often not realized, e.g., /-ft, -st, -kt/. For example, words such as *left*, *nest*, and *act* are realized as /lef/, /nes/, and /ak/. Consonant clusters in codas in which /d/ is in the final position are also often not realized in many restructured West Indian Englishes, e.g., /sen/ *send* or /bɪl/ *build*.

The reduction of consonant clusters in codas also affects the realization of past tense allomorphs as heard in metropolitan varieties of English, as in *pushed* /puʃt/, *stopped* /stɒpt/, and *staged* /steɪd/. The past tense allomorphs [-d], [-t], and [-ɪd] are generally absent in creole varieties of English, but it is difficult to be certain if they always were. However, they are part of the metropolitan speech varieties spoken by many Anglophone Caribbeans today.

Word-final clusters of a nasal and a voiceless consonant are heard in West Indian varieties of English, e.g., [lamp] *lamp*, [tent] *tent*, *tenth* (see description above regarding *th*-stopping), and [bank] *bank*. Clusters in codas are also found in combination with liquids (in combination with [l] and [r], if it is a rhotic dialect such as Bajan), e.g., [mɪlk] *milk*, [ʃelf] *shelf*, [part] *part*, and [hard] *hard*. Other consonant cluster combinations occur freely such as /ks/, e.g., [aks] *ask*, [baks] *box*, [sɪks] *six*. In some creole Englishes, consonant clusters in onsets or word-initially are dispreferred, e.g., [ta:t] *start*, [tan] *stand*, [tap] *stop*.

## 9 Conclusion

Many of the locations in the Anglophone Caribbean have never even been documented by linguists. Readers may consult Aceto (2001) for a list of underdocumented or undocumented Englishes. This descriptive observation should entice scholars, new and old, into the field to describe these interesting language varieties. Today's synchronic descriptions can help to inform future generations of linguists to accurately compare how, when, where, and perhaps why these languages have changed.

See also Chapters 18, PIDGINS AND CREOLES; 23, LITERARY CREATIVITY IN WORLD ENGLISHES; 28, WORLD ENGLISHES AND DESCRIPTIVE GRAMMARS.

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