# A typological analysis of loan translation in contact languages

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# Defining loan translation

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

Best definition so far:

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

Example: Jamaican *gad-aas* (god+horse) < Hausua *dokin Allah* (horse+god)

# Loan translation in Creolistics/Contact linguistics

- Main treatment of loan translations in descriptive work by lexicographers, e.g. *Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage* (Allsopp 1996)

- Often ignored by theorists, with the exception of Lefebvre (1998)

- Allow us to look at substrate lexical influence (e.g. lexical Africanisms) but from the perspective of (cognitive) semantics.
    - Morphemic retentions, e.g. *nyam* 'eat' – identity in form, similar/close meaning
    - Loan translations, e.g. *hand-belly* 'palm' – identity in meaning, camouflaged form

# Data source

Parkvall, Mikael, Philip Baker. *2012. Black through White: African Words and Calques which Survived Slavery in Creoles and Transplanted European Languages.* [Westminster Creolistics Series 11] Angela Bartens and Philip Baker (eds.). London: Battlebridge Publications, 231-248.

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

- Approximately 100 potential loan translations listed

- 41 secure bi-morphemic constructions (mostly compounds) selected for this study

- Focus on the Atlantic Creoles

# Greater use of richer documentation?

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Jamaican | 22 | 54% |
| Haitian | 15 | 37% |
| Bahamian | 12 | 29% |
| Krio | 11 | 27% |
| Sranan | 6 | 15% |
| Saramaccan | 4 | 10% |
| Berbice DC | 1 | 2% |

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

# Directionality parameter

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

# Directionality parameter: human propensity

- English 1 (Noun-Adjective)
  - *sea-sick*
- English 2 (Adjective-Adjective) – most common
  - *stiff-necked* (cf. *black bird*)
- Jamaican 1 (Adjective-Noun) – most common
  - *iez-aad* [ear+hard]
  - Substrate or JC Subject-Predicate structure? E.g. *Im iez aad.* (3sg ears hard)
- Jamaican 2 (Noun-Adjective)
  - *aad-iez* [hard+ear]
- English NP (Adjective Noun)
- Jamaican NP (Adjective Noun)

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- Different lexifiers or different substrates?
- TOE
  1. Duala (?)
     a) *fiŋga-fut* Cameroonian EC
     b) *udedu ope* Principense
  2. Ga foot-finger
     a) *foot-finger* Trinidadian EC
     b) *boi vingre* Berbice Dutch Creole

# Issues affecting source languages

1. We are constrained by the comprehensiveness of descriptions of African languages/etymology
   a) Words that are synchronically simplex but diachronically complex
   b) Older relevant forms now obsolescent
   c) Quality of the sources
2. Researcher's familiarity with orthographic conventions
   a) Akan *nsam* 'the palm of the hand' (s.v. *nsá* 'hand' in Christaller 1933:416)
   b) Akan *nsá-yam* 'the palm of the hand' (Christaller 1933:432)

# Distribution of loan translations according to lexifier

| Lexifiers | Examples |
| --- | --- |
| English-only | Jamaican *red-yai* (red+eye) 'jealous(y)', *han-beli* (hand+belly) 'palm (of the hand)' |
| French-only | Haitian *tèt-chaje* (head+troubled) 'problematic (person)' |
| Portuguese-only | Guinea Bissau PC *biska palabra* (search+talk) 'chercher querelle' |
| Dutch-only | No examples in database |
| English + French | Jamaican *jrai-yai*; Haitian *je-chèch* (dry+eye) 'audacious (person)' |
| English + French + Portuguese | Sranan *watra-ai*; Dominica FC *glo zje*; Cape Verdean *agul oju* (eye+water) 'tears' |
| English + Portuguese + Dutch | TrinEC *foot-finger*; Principense *udedu ope*; Berbice DC *boi vingre* (foot+finger) 'toe' |
| Caribbean (?) | Jamaican *swiit-taak* (sweet+talk) 'flatter(y)' |
| | |

# Distribution of loan translations according to lexifier

| Lexifiers | Num. |
|---|---:|
| English-only | 17 |
| French-only | 4 |
| Portuguese-only | 2 |
| Dutch-only | 0 |
| English + French | 10 |
| English + French + Portuguese | 4 |
| English + Portuguese + Dutch | 1 |
| Caribbean | 1 |
| Total | |

# Model (i.e. substrate) languages

1. One source language identified so far

   Haitian < Fon

   *nukun-ton-no* (eye+burst-ATTRIB)

   'blind (person)'

   These tend to be the more opaque of the lot

2. Multiple possible source languages

   (eye+water) 'tears' < Malinke, Mandinka, Akan, Ewe, Yoruba, Igbo, Kishikongo, Sango
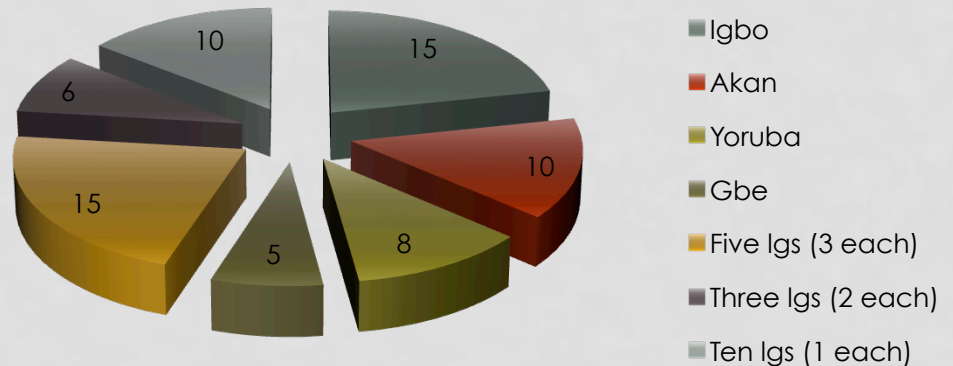
   These tend to be the more transparent of the lot

# Model (i.e. substrate) languages

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

**Three lgs with 2 each**: Ga, Mandinka, Edo

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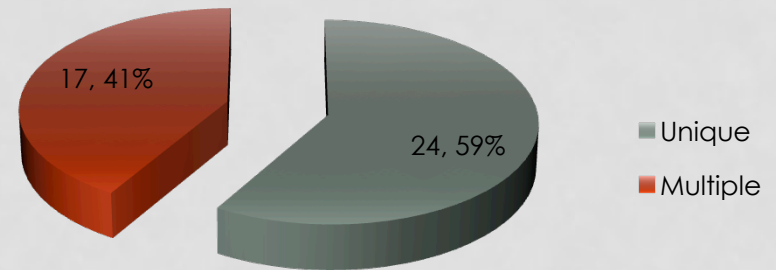
# Unique vs. multiple models

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

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

(Farquharson 2012)

# Lexifiers and Creoles

3. Pan-lexifier (found in only one lexifier)

   (door+mouth) 'threshold' in: Gullah, Bahamian, Jamaican, Guyanese, Sranan, Saramaccan, Ndjuka, Krio, Cameroonian PC

   These tend to be in the middle of the transparency scale

4. Pan-Creole (found in multiple Creoles of different lexifiers; 3>)

   (eye-water) 'tears' found in: Belizean, Bahamian, Jamaican, Haitian, Antiguan, Tobagonian, Dominican FC, Grenada FC, Sranan, Saramaccan, Krio, Cape Verdean, Sao Tomense, Annobonese

   These tend to be the more transparent of the lot

# Semantic domains

Very different from morphemic retentions. E.g. Jamaican:
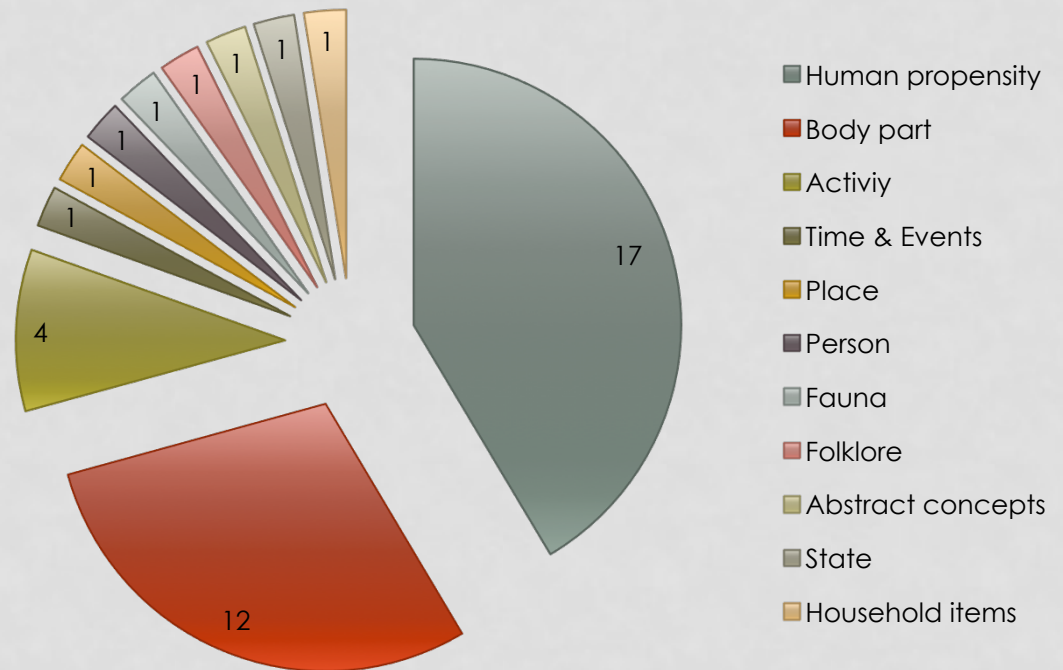
Food and drink 17.3%
Descriptors  13.5%
Fauna 9.7%
Material culture 9.3%
People 8.9%

Farquharson (2012:146)



Legend:
- Human propensity
- Body part
- Activiy
- Time & Events
- Place
- Person
- Fauna
- Folklore
- Abstract concepts
- State
- Household items

# Lexical Africanisms and loan translations

- Africans retained substrate morphemes to:
  - Fill lexical gaps e.g. Jamaican *fufu*
  - Refer to items/states/events that are more typical of African ways of being than European ones.
- When and why did Africans use loan translation?
  - For a wide variety of things, but more often
  - To name (mostly) undesirable human characteristics
  - To name body parts

# Seeking explanations: body-part terms

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

# A different approach

1. Need for an approach that overcomes:
   a) Researcher bias (expertise, preference)
   b) Documentation bias
2. From documentation to documentation and experts
3. From chance samples to domain-specific samples

# A different approach

| Jamaican | English | Akan |
|----------|---------|------|
| *hed* | *head* | |
| *hed-skol* | *skull* | |
| *iez* | *ear* | |
| *yai* | *eye* | |
| *yai-huol* | *socket of the eye* | |
| *yai-kaana* | *corner of the eye* | |
| *mout* | *mouth* | |
| *(mout-)lip* | *lip* | |
| *nek* | *neck* | |
| *nek-bak* | *nape of the neck* | |

# Looking for models

- SKULL
    - Jamaican *hed-skol* (head-skull)
    - Gbari *tugo bure* (head-shell) (Blench & Doma 1981-93:51)
- NOSTRIL
    - Jamaican *nuoz-huol* (nose+hole) 'nostril'
    - Gbari *ebwabu* (nose+turn out) (Blench & Doma 1981-93:13)

# Other languages

1. What can we learn from loan translations or loanwords in a specific domain from high-contact non-creole languages?
2. We can discover which concepts in a specific domain are more susceptible to borrowing and/or loan translation, e.g.
   a) Old English *palm* < Old French *palme*
   b) Old English *stomach* < Old French *stomaque*, *estomac*
   c) Old English *orbit* < Old French *orbite* 'eye socket'
3. Stability: borrowing and loan translations
4. Are loan translations of body-part concepts more typical of Creole languages (in a specific area)?

# THANK YOU!