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Jamaican Talk: English / Creole
Codeswitching in Reggae Songs

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ABSTRACT

In societies where two languages coexist there is a tendency towards a phenomenon known as Code-Switching (CS) which is the alternation of these two coexisting languages. In Jamaica, although the official language is Jamaican Standard English, there is a second language which is JamC. The alternations of the former and the latter is a daily life practice, although it is restricted to some sociolinguistic factors. The aim of my work is to describe how JamE/ JamC CS is used based on a compilation of 10 famous reggae songs belonging to different periods of time. These songs cover different topics, from ones one would enjoy at a nightclub to religious issues and social struggles. What is more, one can find in this compilation three different types of CS: lexical –rooted in sociolinguistic issues-, grammatical, and phonological. Through this study one can discern the different aspects that affect the use of CS in Jamaica.

KEYWORDS: Jamaican Creole (JamC), Jamaican English (JamC), Code-Switching (CS), reggae songs, and Rastafari.

En sociedades en las cuales más de un idioma existe, hay una tendencia hacia un fenómeno que se conoce como Code-Switching el cual consiste en la alternancia de estas lenguas. Por ejemplo, en Jamaica, aunque el idioma oficial es el Inglés Jamaicano Estándar, hay un segundo idioma que se conoce como Criollo Jamaicano. La alternancia del primero y del segundo es una práctica bastante común, aunque está restringida por elementos sociolingüísticos. El objetivo principal de mi trabajo es describir como se usa el CS entre Inglés Jamaicano y el Criollo basándome en 10 canciones famosas de reggae de diferentes años. En estas canciones se tratan diferentes temas, desde los más “superficiales” hasta los relacionados con la religión o la lucha social. En adición, en estas canciones encontramos CS del tipo léxico –el cual está arraigado a temas sociolingüísticos-, gramatical, y fonológico. Mediante éste estudio uno podrá apreciar los diferentes factores que influyen en el uso de CS en Jamaica.

PALABRAS CLAVES: Criollo Jamaicano, Inglés Jamaicano, Code-Switching (alternancia de lenguas), canciones de reggae, y Rastafari.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Code-switching (CS) is a phenomenon that occurs in almost every society where two languages coexist. It is a very common practice and it is present in all bilingual societies all around the world. Although it is true that not in all of them CS is seen as an acceptable practice. In some societies, people that use it are regarded as illiterate or even as people that are part of a lower status (Denovish, 1986). This vision has evolved in some of them, although others have a long way to go in order to eradicate this way of seeing people who code-switch.

This was the case in Jamaica, where English and Jamaican Creole –also called *Patois* or *Patwa*- coexist. People who speak Creole have always been seen as vulgar and uneducated, although nowadays this view towards Creole has somewhat changed and people are giving more importance to their language, Patois, as it is very much a part of the Jamaican identity. This way of seeing patois as “rough talk” has changed to the point that English and JamC intertwine, resulting in the use of CS in oral and written settings.

Within these settings, we find music, more specifically, reggae music. Songs are so much a part of written speech as they are a part of oral speech, which is why it is also important to consider them when doing a study about CS in Jamaican society. Since there are no studies on this specific field, with my research I intend to describe how CS is used in reggae songs by focusing on three main types of CS: lexical CS, grammatical CS, and what I will consider as CS on a phonological level.

My work is organized as follows: In section two and three I will give a general overview of the different sociolinguistic issues that affect language in Jamaica, what is known as language “continuum”, and provide a general description of the situation when two languages cohabit, in this case, English and Jamaican Creole. This section will also include subsections related to the Jamaican society, such as the Rastafari religion, and the importance of reggae music for Jamaicans and the world. Section four includes the purpose and the main objectives of my research, as well as the main works on which I will base my study on in order to successfully achieve my aims. In section five, the songs on which I will focus my description are stated and some background information of the songs’ authors and the circumstances under which these songs were written are provided. In section 6 I will dive into the description of the way CS is used in the selected songs,

dividing this section into three main subsections that deal with the three types of CS that I propose: lexical CS, grammatical CS, and CS on a phonological level. Finally I will present the conclusions derived from my work and propose further studies on the topic.

2. SOCIOLINGUISTIC ISSUES OF JAMAICAN CREOLE AND JAMAICAN ENGLISH

Jamaica is an island with a very interesting language situation due to its very convulse history. The mixture of languages and races that have coexisted in Jamaica has made of its language situation an exceptional one. Starting from the pidgin language created by the slaves -who were from all over the globe- in order to communicate among them, to its conversion into a Creole language, Jamaica has given birth to a mayhem of both sociolinguistic and sociohistorical issues that greatly influence the language usage.

Then a question arises, how does a pidgin language becomes a linguistically categorized language such as, in this case, Jamaican Creole?

A pidgin language arises from the contact of groups of people that do not share the same language. Its grammar is very simplified, since it is constructed impromptu (Bakker, 1994). A pidgin language does not have native speakers, and here is when the *creole* category comes in. A pidgin becomes *creole* when it starts to have native speakers, people that were born listening to it, and hence, have it as their mother tongue.

In order to deal with the sociolinguistic issues that affect Jamaica's language state, one has to bear in mind what Decamp calls the Creole "Continuum" circumstance (Decamp, 1971). What Decamp calls "continuum" is defined by Durrleman-Tame as a situation that oftentimes arises in societies where several numbers of 'lects'¹ exist (Durrleman-Tame, 2008). These "lects" tend to oscillate between the one that is considered the more prestigious, to the one that it is seen as the language of the 'commoners'. Durrleman-Tame classifies the former as the **acrolect** –the one that it is closer to Standard English, so socially it takes more prestige-, and the **basilect** –the one that is closer to the Creole, which is why it is also known as "deep creole"- (Durrleman-Tame, 2008). There is also a state in between, which is mentioned and develop by P. L. Patrick who refers to it as *mesolect* and which is defined as a "mixed and heterogeneous speech", that is to say, a more malleable and flexible language that could adapt features from both the acrolect and the basilect; whereas the acrolect and basilect, according to Patrick, are "homogeneous and invariant" (Patrick, 1999).

¹ According to Durrleman-Tame (2008), 'lects' is a sociolinguistic term used as a synonym for 'dialect'.

In Jamaica there is only one official language which is English –Standard Jamaican English (JamE, or the acrolect)-, although this is not the only language that is spoken by the people. There is a ‘national language’ which is the Jamaican Creole (JamC, or the basilect), also known as Jamaican Patois. The word *patois* comes from Old French, which nowadays, according to the Cambridge dictionary means “the form of a language spoken by people in a particular area that is different from the standard language of the country” (Cambridge, 2013). However, the etymology of this word could come from the French verb *patoire* which means “carelessly speak, or to speak roughly, without care”.

Although, JamC is seen as a less prestigious language –following the definition of *patoire*- and the official language of the Island is English –Standard JamE-, it is the creole language the one that most people use in Jamaica and the one that “decides the setting” (at least the oral setting, since JamC lacks of an accepted/ official writing system). If the conversation that is taking place is with one’s friends, family, etc., the language used would be JamC; whereas if the conversation is either with strangers –who do not have to be foreign-, or people that are not so close to the speaker, the conversation would be held in English, or there would be an alternation between languages depending on the person with whom the interaction is taking place or the formality of the situation.

Taking into account the different uses of these two languages according to formality and/ or familiarity of the context, the main sources of knowledge of English in Jamaica are formal education and writing, not families, which could lead us to think that in everyday situations JamE is not the most frequent option of communication for the majority of Jamaicans. Actually, according to Hinrichs “a great variation is observable in most settings of daily life between more Creole-like and more English-like ways of speaking.”

As a consequence of all of the aforementioned and because JamC does not have an official writing system, CS –written and spoken- is used nowadays in their everyday language, as a rather modern practice. In this work we will follow the Oxford Dictionary’s definition of CS, which is the following: “The practice of alternating between two or more languages or varieties of language in conversation.” Based on this definition, I will focus on two basic types of CS -Lexical CS, Grammatical CS- and also the use of CS at a different grammatical level: Phonetical CS.

Basing on this definition, CS in Jamaica is used, for instance, when talking to a relative that is outside the Island to reinforce the importance of JamC, so that the person that is not in regular contact with the language, or a person that is in a country where the only language that is used is English, will not forget it. This kind of situation is illustrated in (1) where part of an email that a friend sends to a relative that was not in the island at the moment is transcribed:

(1) A *wah a gwan?* mi know *seh* yu nuh have no body over deh

‘What’s up? I know that you have nobody over there to’

chat *patois*, so just *fi* mek sure *seh* when yu come back *a ja*

‘talk Patois with, so just to make sure that when you return to Jamaica’

yu still know how *fi* *dwit* mi *agi* yu *likkle*.

‘you still know how to do it I’ll write you a little’ (Hinrichs, 2006).

CS is also found in more formal (and written) settings such as literature and music. Within the former field, the novel *Small Island* by Londoner Jamaican parents’ descendant Andrea Levy is one case in point. Andrea Levy’s (2004) novel is focused on the clashing of Jamaican immigrants (Hortense- Gilbert marriage) with a new country –in this particular case, England- and the racial and language related problems that this situation brings.

Andrea Levy uses CS: Lexical –indicated in italics- and Grammatical –underlined- throughout the novel, as it is very much a part of the Jamaican characters as the example in (2) and (3) shows in which Miss Hortense is in Jamaica talking to Miss Jewel with whom she has a close relationship:

(2) When me modder did pregnant then she smoddy *obeah*’er.

“When my mother was pregnant then somebody cursed her”

(3) Sheep? *Dem nuh have* none ah dat in Jamaica.

“Sheep? They don’t have any of that in Jamaica”

In (2) the character that is speaking is Miss Jewel, who has not had a formal education in English and in words of Miss Hortense has “the rough country way”. However, she still mixes both the acrolect –“high” language or English- and the basilect –“low” language

or Creole- (e.g. According to P. L. Patrick’s grammar account of JamC, at the grammatical level, using the auxiliary *did* to mark past tense instead of the lexical *be* in past tense, and at the lexical level using the JamC verb *obeah* in an JamE sentential context). In example (3), even though Miss Hortense has had formal education in English, she still uses code-switching. Since these examples take place in informal settings we see that the use of CS is evident especially at the morphosyntactical level (e.g. using the accusative form *them* instead of the nominative one and using the negative form *nuh-“no”*- instead of the auxiliary “don’t”). If these characters were speaking in a more formal setting, the language used would be Standard English, as seen in (4), where Jamaican Londoner Gilbert is speaking to a fellow American soldier whom he has never met before:

- (4) “First” [Gilbert] told him “let me make it clear that I am not a soldier. I am a volunteer with the British Royal Air Force. The RAF”
 “A flying man”
 “Perhaps. My name is Airman Gilbert Joseph” (Levy, 2004)

In the case of the second setting where oral/ written CS can be found, CS is a rather recent practice present in reggae, rap, and pop music in general since the early 70s (Martis, 2016), and it was first introduced by trailblazer figures such as, Bob Marley, Damian Marley, Beenie Man, Buju Banton etc. Rihanna may be the most high end figure that has massively brought Jamaican Patois into mainstream culture since Bob Marley. We can hear her sing phrases in patois in songs² such as *Work* and *Man down*, reproduced in (5) and (6) respectively and indicated in italics:

- (5) Work, work, work, work, work, work
 He said me *haffi*
 Work, work, work, work, work, work!
 He see me do *mi*
 Dirt, dirt, dirt, dirt, dirt, dirt!
 So *me* put in
 Work, work, work, work, work, work
 When you *ah guh*
 Learn, learn, learn, learn, learn

² Although songs can be considered written texts, one cannot deny the importance of the oral dimension attached to them.

Me nuh cyar if him

Hurt, hurt, hurt, hurt, hurting.

(6) Rum bum bum bum, rum bum bum bum, rum bum bum bum

Mi say wah man down (a weh mi say)

Rum bum bum bum, rum bum bum bum, rum bum bum bum

When mi went downtown

In example (5), Rihanna is switching between Jamaican Creole and English. She uses Jamaican patois words and phrases (with an evident English base) such as *haffi* which means “have to” and *ah guh* which means “are going to”. The Jamaican-Canadian producers and songwriters Boi-1da, Sevyn Thomas, and PARTYNEXTDOOR, all worked on this track (Ritter, 2016). In example (6) Rihanna also alternates between patois and English, although she uses a more Bajan³ (Barbadian) accent to reaffirm her Caribbean roots, as she was born in Barbados (Thomas & Thomas, 2010).

As said before, reggae music is now more mainstream than it was 20 years ago, this might be due to the energy with which this type of music is associated, and the messages that it transmits which, although they are rooted in the Jamaican society, can be well interpreted it by other cultures. This is why in the present work I will focus on the use of CS in a very specific type of text and context: reggae songs.

3. THE INFLUENCE OF REGGAE MUSIC IN THE JAMAICAN SOCIETY:

Reggae is one of those musical genres that transcends cultures, this is due to the fact that it carries Jamaican values –such as identity pride- and, oftentimes, the lyrics and the overall message of the songs are political statements. Related to this, Dr. Gail Ferguson from the Academy of Global Engagement said to news writer Lesley Myrick:

“I’ve previously studied how young people get exposed to remote cultures, specifically teenagers in Jamaica, and how this can impact their development and cause them to take on different values and behaviors. So I became curious about how the values of Jamaica might be

³ Bajan Creole is a language proper of the island of Barbados. Since it is also a creole language, it does not differ widely from JamC. In fact, JamC can be spoken by a Bajan speaker, although the accent changes.

transmitted to other countries and if other cultures could become ‘Jamaican-ized’ by listening to reggae music and learning about the issues important to Jamaicans and the responses Jamaicans have had,” (Myrick, 2014)

To Ferguson, it is very important what Jamaicans think of reggae music and what values they associate to it, since Jamaica is the birth place of reggae. These values are responsibility, equality, social justice, etc., being the most important ones openness to change and self-enhancement, as Ferguson points out:

“The two values that tend to be more associated with enjoying reggae are “openness to change” (including self-direction and stimulation) and “self-enhancement” (including pleasure, achievement, and power),” (Myrick, 2014).

When analyzing the scope that reggae music has, Ferguson’s findings proved that empowerment that reggae music has is related to its popularity which is higher in moderately collectivistic cultures and societies such as Jamaica’s, or in countries like Brasil, the Philippines, Mexico, than in individualistic cultures such as those in the UK, America, or Asia. This led Ferguson to the conclusion that being more culturally similar allows for a more accurate transfer of the Jamaican values through reggae songs (Myrick, 2014).

The fact that reggae music can transcend societies means that the popularity of this music genre grows and it has been more valued by societies that are outside Jamaica, especially societies that are more similar to the Jamaican one (e.g. Haitian, Barbadian, Cuban, Trinidadian, etc). The use of English in reggae songs makes these songs more understandable and accessible for people that do not speak patois, and keeping some words or phrases in patois maintains the Jamaican “essence”. This Jamaican “essence” is mainly transmitted through borders by a musical genre such as reggae, whose evolution as a genre is very much related to the Rastafari or the Rasta religious movement.

3.1. The Rastafari religion

With the growth of reggae music, many Jamaican issues were brought out into the world. Rarely, a small cultural phenomenon draws the attention of so many scholars, young people, media, sociology, anthropology, etc., as the Rastafari or Rasta movement has. With a power force like reggae music behind, the Rastafari religion has grown in

popularity, not only within the Jamaican society, but also in a worldwide network of millions of reggae fans. The Rasta culture has also Bob Marley to thank for its international success, since the singer made of this movement an accessible one for everyone everywhere. (Murrel, s.f.)

Reggae music has been very important for the Rastafari and its core influence resided in the symbiotic relationship between reggae and Rastafari: The Rastafari movement became increasingly popular thanks to reggae music –because of the popularity that this genre has-, while at the same time reggae music grew in popularity thanks to the spreading of values for which Rastafari stands (e.g. humanity of god, divinity of man, etc). This relationship has made of reggae a global phenomenon, and with this, musicians and composers have incorporated more and more of “Jamaica” into it, starting by their JamC language.

Thanks to the rising of reggae songs and the Rastafari religion, two main pillars in Jamaican culture, CS has been more and more integrated into songs and into the Rastafarian sphere. All of this has led to an empowerment of the JamC, as it is very much a part of the Jamaican identity and roots that go back to an era of slavery and creation of a language.

3.2. CS and in reggae songs

Just like every other language, Jamaican patois is also evolving. New terms are being added on a daily basis and some terms that already existed have changed their meaning to suit the modern Jamaican society. Some of these terms are compound adjectives and words from JamE (i.e. *wotless* which is a clueless incompetent person) and others were heavily influenced by the Rastafari religion (i.e. *irie* which is Rasta talk for “everything is all right”).

CS has not always been used in reggae songs, although with the establishment of Rastafari religion in the Jamaican society, and the growing feeling of the Creole identity, the JamC gained strength and it started to be used in reggae songs with topics that let us know about the Jamaican society and their way of living. Some examples of CS we can find in Bob Marley’s Song “No Woman, No Cry”:

(7) *No woman, no cry*

No woman, no cry

Little darling don't shed no tears

No woman, no cry

In the chorus of this song, Bob Marley sings *no woman, no cry* in which “no” –*nuh*– is JamC for *don't*. Knowing this, the chorus could be translated as “No, woman, don't cry”. This song is a message of positivity and reassurance to the woman, that, even though he is leaving, everything will be alright and that she should not “shed no tears”. In this song we can also see the situation in which many Jamaican families live and their daily social struggles.

There is another famous example of CS made famous by the Mighty Diamonds in their song “Pass the Kutchie”, 1981 (*Changes*) which is the term “kutchie” which we can see it used in the title of the song and in (8):

(8) Pass the *kutchie* pon the lef' hand side

Pass the *kutchie* pon the lef' hand side

It a go bun, it a go dung, Jah know

“Kutchie” is a term popularized by the Mighty Diamonds which according to the Urban Dictionary is “a pipe used by Rastafarians for communal Marijuana smoking”. This word has become part of the Creole language and the Rasta movement given the ritualistic value that Rastafarians give to this plant and its relationship with the “kutchie”. Because this word is considered to be a part of the JamC, we can consider that in this case there is lexical CS, which will be developed and explained in depth in following sections.

4. A PROPOSAL OF ANALYSIS OF JAMC/JAME CS IN REGGAE SONGS

My aim with this research is to make a linguistic description of the use of JamC/JamE code-switching –Lexical, Grammatical, and Phonetical- in Jamaica, by focusing, specifically, on some of the most well-known reggae songs and how this linguistic phenomenon reflects somehow the Jamaican people’s values and the different peculiarities that the Jamaican society has and that have been previously referred to in section 3, especially when it comes to lexical CS.

From this perspective, and following P. L. Patrick’s *Jamaican Creole and Jamaican English: Morphology and Syntax* (2004), I intend to describe the way CS between these two languages is used focusing on the different grammatical and lexical patterns that affect certain structures and how this is reflected in a very specific form of written / oral speech which is reggae songs. At the same time, I also intend to describe the way some words are articulated and what it is that changes and makes them different from the Standard English pronunciation.

In order to carry out this study, in the following section a brief description of the methodology used is presented.

5. METHODOLOGY

In order to successfully accomplish and develop the previously stated purposes, 10 of the most popular reggae songs written by some of the most successful Jamaican artists of all time were analyzed. These songs are the following:

- Wa Do Dem, 1981 (*Wa Do Dem*) by Eek-a-Mouse
- Batty Riders, 1992 (*Mr. Mention*) by Buju Banton
- Girls Dem Sugar, 2000 (*Art and Life*) by Beenie Man
- Police, 2003 (*Street Knowledge*) by Anthony B
- God Above everything, 2003 (*Street Knowledge*) by Anthony B.
- Khaki Suit, 2005 (*Welcome to Jamrock*) by Damian Marley featuring Bounty Killer and Eek-a-Mouse.
- Welcome to Jamrock, 2005 (*Welcome to Jamrock*) by Damian Marley
- Inna Di Red, 2007 (*Mind Control*) by Stephen Marley
- Wah We a Guh Do, 2014 (*Devotion Riddim*) by Alkaline

- Blaze Up Di Fire, 2015 (*Peace Is the Mission*) by Major Lazer feat Chronixx.

5.1. Background information of songs and authors

The reason behind the selection of these songs is mainly rooted in the sociological aspect under which all of them have been written. As mentioned before, the success of reggae music is partly due to the emergence of the Rastafari movement. From that moment onward, JamC has been getting stronger and all of these songs have been written and become popular in a society that gives more importance to their patois, and that do not –or in less measure- look at people who speak patois as illiterate.

In modern society JamC has become a part of the mainstream culture and reggae artists are somewhat taking advantage of this by transmitting their culture, their religion, and making political statements while at the same time expanding their language and making it more accessible to other cultures and societies. This is accomplished thanks to two main genres of reggae music that became popular in Jamaica in the 1960's and the 1970's respectively: Hip Hop/ Rap and Dancehall (Rocksteady: The Roots of Reggae, 2009).

In Jamaican hip hop and rap we can find artists such as Damian and Stephen Marley – both sons of the late Bob Marley- Anthony B, etc. Although these artists would mainly sing hip hop, we can also find them in dancehall music which, alongside root reggae⁴, was one of the genres that has triumphed worldwide. Some representative figures of dancehall are Beenie Man, who is also known as the “King of Dancehall”; Eek-a-mouse, Buju Banton, Alkaline, and Chronixx –also known as “Little Chronicle”-.

There is something that is also worth mentioning about these songs which is the fact that they belong to different periods of time, therefore the topics these singers sing about differ a little. All of them use JamC more openly a more frequently than singers pre-Rastafari movement, although the topics do differ from one singer to the other. Whereas Eek-a-Mouse, Buju Banton, and Beenie Man's songs from the 80's, 90's, and early 2000's, respectively, treat mainstream topics that would be enjoyed at a nightclub such as what girls like, what they think they are like, or what is a man to do to get a girl's heart; the other artists sing about social struggle, racism, corruption, and religion.

⁴ Root reggae is a more “spiritual” type of music. It deals with religious Rastafarian matters such as the worshipping of God –Jah to the Rastafari- (Thompson, 2002).

5.2. Classification of CS

In order to analyze how CS is used in the previously mentioned songs the following classification will serve as the variables to carry out the analysis of CS cases:

There are three basic types of CS that will serve as the base of the classification of CS in the present work: Lexical CS, Grammatical CS, and what I will consider as CS on a phonological level.

Lexical CS occurs when word from the L2 is inserted in the L1 grammar, and vice versa (Edwards, 2001) as seen in Beenie Man's reggae song "Better Learn", 1999 (*The Doctor*) instantiated in (9):

(9) You see di fire burn a words without works

Fire burn up di *obea* man shirt

Fire burn *oonu* better learn

In (9) Beenie Man alternates between English and patois which is clear by the use of the word *obea* (also spelled *obeah* or *obia*) which means spell or something related to black magic (Jamaican Patwa, 2017). Roughly this sentence could be translated as "Fire burns up the shirt of the witch man". *Uno* –also spelled *oonu*–, on the other hand, is the plural form of the pronoun "you" (2 person plural) in Patois (Cassidy, 2007). Therefore, this sentence could be translated as "Fire burns, you all better learn".

Grammatical CS occurs when two different grammatical systems from two different languages are alternated (Edwards, 2001), as occurs in Beenie Man's Jamaica Way, 2000 (*Art & Life*) transcribed in (10):

(10) The gal dem all a run me *dung*

"All the girls are running me down"

The gal dem all a hunt me *dung*

"All the girls are hunting me down"

The gal dem all a draw me *dung*.

"All the girls are drawing me down"

In (10) the examples of the patois grammar inserted in the song are underlined. Firstly, we have *gal dem* which is the way of expression plural in patois (a Noun + a plural Pronoun), and we can also find the structure *a hunt*, which is the way in which progressive aspect (with the particle “a” followed by the lexical verb) is expressed in patois (Patrick, 2004).

Lastly, I will describe what in this work I will refer to as changes in the pronunciation of English words. One should bear in mind that in places where this kind of diglossia⁵ exists, there is a linguistic convergence in which speakers modify their linguistic systems to achieve a one-to-one equivalence between elements that belong to the languages that coexist (Gumperz and Wilson, 1971). Trying to achieve this equivalence, nevertheless, has its consequences which are reflected when one of the linguistic systems is more complex than the other. This complexity translated in phonetic terms can be seen in changes that Jamaicans do in English phonemes –in this case- due to the fact that the patois phonetic system is less complex⁶ when it comes to certain phonemes. Some examples of these changes are *sekkle* instead of *settle* (i.e. changing the spelling *-tl-* into *-kk-*), or *cyar* instead of *care*. Granted, these words are considered to be pronounced in a patois-like way, rather than English, and although the changes are basically on a phonemical level, I will refer to them as cases of Phonetical CS since they also serve to reaffirm the Jamaican identity through their use in reggae songs.

⁵ Places where two languages coexist.

⁶ One should bear in mind that an L2 phonetic system can be more complex for speakers of an L1 due to the linguistic constraints of their L1.

6. ANALYSIS OF JAMC/JAME CS IN THE REGGAE SONGS COMPILED

Once all the CS cases have been compiled, these were classified according to the typology described in section 5.2. Therefore, the analysis will be divided into different subsections that correspond with each CS type.

6.1. Lexical CS

Although lexical CS is not really common in these songs, as most of the words are in JamE, there are some words that are repeatedly used, and most of them revolve around one topic: the Rastafarians. One should bear in mind that most of the words we can find in Rastafarian speech come from African languages and they were adapted and made part of the JamC vocabulary.

In Major Lazer's "Blaze up Di Fire" (2015), Chronixx sings as (11) shows:

(11) *A Rastafari* seh him break di seven seal
Again I she fi ease and sekkle and cease

Rastafari was one of the proper nouns taken by the movement and adapted into the JamC. This word comes from the Ethiopian name Haile Selassie who was born as Tafari Makonnen Woldemikael and who was an Ethiopian regent (Page and Penny, 2003). When Tafari reached the monarchy he became Ras Teferi Makkonem, name in which Ras literally means "head" as which Rastafarianism see him: The head of their religion. This movement, originated in Jamaica in the 1930's, see Ras Teferi –or Haile Selassie– as the messiah of the Bible that has returned to save them all and lead them into a golden age of prosperity and peace. He is, according to the Rastafarians, God incarnate (Barrett, 1997).

The word *Rastafari* can be found in many reggae songs since religion is one of the main topics developed by Jamaican reggae artists such as Bob Marley, Israel vibration, etc.

Another proper noun, that exists in standard English but has been analyzed here as a CS case because it has been conceptually adapted by the Rastafarians into the JamC, is *Babylon*, that we can also encounter in (10) from Major Lazer's "Blaze up the Fire" (2015):

(12) Nah beat dem with batten fi dem go fatten inna prison

When *binghi* drum start whistle

Babylon drop and cripple

The theme of *Babylon* appears in the majority of reggae songs regardless if the person singing is a Rasta believer or not. *Babylon* comes from the Greek tradition and it means “the gate of Gods” (Babylon, n.d.), however, for Rastafarians, Babylon is everything that is wrong with the system: corruption, violence, the church, materialism, etc. Babylon is the complete opposite of what Rastafarians stand for, and it is also the opposite of what Rastafarians call Zion⁷. Some examples of songs where the theme of *Babylon* can be found are Damian Marley’s “Khaki Suit” (2005) and Alkaline’s “Weh We A Guh Do” (2014) as seen in (13) and (14):

(13) Like Stephen and Julian, Rasta dem nuh coolie-man

Babylon dem truly wrong, but dem waan fi fool di man

(14) But mi haffi wonder, weh wi a go do?

Babylon, tell me, weh wi a go do?

Found also in (12), the word *binghi* comes from the proper noun Nyabinghi which is the name of a legendary Rwanda/ Uganda tribe queen who inspired a rebellion movement against the African authorities at the time (19th century) (African Women Warriors, n.d.). This woman inspired a great number of Jamaican Rastas to create what they call Nyabinghi chants which are mainly reading of Psalms and some of the most well-known Christian chants adopted by the Rastas (Bradley, 2009). These Nyabinghi chants are heavily influenced by reggae rhythms, as well as other genres such as ska and rocksteady. There is another patois noun that it is very recurrent in reggae songs with Rastafarian themes which is *irie*. Example in (15) shows the following lines sang by Stephen Marley (2007):

⁷ This another word that has been adapted into the Rasta culture. According to Barret, 1997, Zion is the Promised Land. The place where there is no corruption or violence and where everyone can live in peace.

(15) Eh, now I'm in a *irie* place
Now I'm in a *irie* space
Now I man can I-ditate
Free ourselves from all that hate

The meaning of *irie* changed and developed with the emergence of the Rasta religion. This patois word is Rasta slang for “positive vibrations”, “the ultimate positive feeling”, etc. Before the rising of the Rasta religion, *irie* was used as a synonym of “hello”⁸, it could also mean “all right”, “I’m fine”, or “good quality”. Actually many companies and traders in Jamaica contain *irie* in their brand.

Nonetheless, with the Rasta movement, the meaning of *irie* became deeper than that and it is used in numerous songs, as seen in Stephen Marley’s, and in many other songs that have religion as their main theme. Any one from your compilation?

Just like *irie*, there is another noun that were found in our compilation of reggae songs: *merther*. In Damian Marley’s “Welcome to Jamrock”⁹ (2005) we can hear this word in a line that is repeated throughout the song “Out in the street they call it *merther*. This line comes from a sample¹⁰ of Ini Kamoze’s song “World a Music”. There is actually a misinterpretation of this lyrics since usually what people hear is “murder” when it is instead *merther*. This noun is defined by Urban Dictionary as “the sensations produced by smoking marihuana while listening to reggae” (Anon, 2004). What we hear in Kamoze’s song corresponds to this meaning, rather than to the meaning of “murder”:

Out in the streets they call it *merther*, when riddims spacing out your head, world a
reggae music on yah-eh

In Bob Marley’s “Welcome to Jamrock” this word is used with the same meaning as it used in Kamoze’s song, since Marley uses the same first line of that verse as seen in (16):

⁸ Rastafarians do not say “hello” because it contains the word “hell” and “lo” –“low”-. According to Bakker (1994), language is very important for Rastafarians and therefore, they are very careful with the wording they use.

⁹ Jamrock is another way by which Rastafarians call Jamaica.

¹⁰ According to Ryan Lott (Ryan Lott, 2013) in his podcast “History of sampling”, sampling is the act by which a musician takes a portion of a previously recorded piece and uses it in a new song or piece.

(16) Out in the streets they call it *merther*.

As one can see, lexical CS is very much influenced by the Rastafari religion and the different names and terminologies taken from African languages and African culture, and conceptually adapted into their society and religion. The Rastafari religion is very much shaping the JamC and, at the same time, JamE and the way people use CS, and the words that people code-switch. Since Rastafarian themes are present in most of reggae songs, we can clearly see the heavy influence of Rastafarianism upon language and the daily life of the Jamaican society and in different periods of time (from the early 2000's up until 2016).

6.2. Grammatical CS

As mentioned before, according to (Edwards, 2001), grammatical CS takes place when a grammatical system from an L1 –let us call it also a base language- is alternated with the grammatical system of an L2, for instance:

Body, it *a swing* like mi grandfather clock

In this case the L1 would be JamE and a grammatical construction from a second language –L2- in this case *a swing* (is swinging), JamC is introduced into the base language. These grammatical constructions of JamC are sometimes introduced into JamE in many reggae songs. Even though some of the words that are used in these constructions are in English, the structure *per se* is considered as patois.

To instantiate the abovementioned I will analyze the compiled songs by focusing on three main grammatical categories: verbs (progressive –and habitual- aspect and negation), nouns (plural marking), and pronouns.

6.2.1. Progressive aspect

As a general definition, the progressive aspect is the way in which we use a verb so that it expresses an on-going action. In English we do it when we use *be* as an auxiliary verb (in past, present or future tense) followed by a lexical verb in its present participle form (that is to say, the –ing form), as the examples show:

-Past: She was shouting (progressive tense)

They were playing (progressive tense)

We had been running (perfect progressive tense)

-Present: I am singing (progressive tense)

He is leaving (progressive tense)

You have been crying (perfect progressive tense)

-Future: You will be eating (progressive aspect)

I will be sleeping (progressive aspect)

We will have been talking (perfect progressive aspect)

These progressive forms are also found in reggae songs, although the progressive and habitual aspects are expressed differently. The habitual aspect is expressed the same way as progressive in JamC, which is why, I would refer to both when discussing this grammatical structure. Most of reggae singers would use the basilectal or JamC form of progressive and habitual aspect. Let us take a look at the following lyrics by Eek-a-Mouse from his song “Wa Do Dem” (1981) showed in (17):

(17) De two a we¹¹ *a walk* an' de two a we *a talk*
She *a wear* rose an' a me *a wear* black

The progressive aspect in this song is marked in italics: *a walk* would be translated as “are walking”, and same thing happens with *a talk*, and *a wear*. These lines of the song could be interpreted –regarding aspect- as progressive or habitual (*The two of us are walking and the two of us are talking, She is wearing rose and I am wearing black*).

¹¹ This is translated as “The two of us”, *a we* is a way of saying “of us”.

On the other hand, whereas in English habitual aspect is expressed using the present simple (*i.e.* I –usually- drive to college), in JamC it is expressed in the same way as progressive aspect as seen in Damian Marley’s “Khaki Suit” (2005) instantiated in (18):

(18) When we *a burn* some ganja splif¹²f weh build up bigger than cigar

Here Damian is saying that when they burn –habitually- a spliff (slang for “joint”) this one is bigger than a cigar. As one can see, the habitual is expressed with the same structure with which progressive aspect is expressed, *a + verb*, as seen in (13). Derek Bickerton, who gave the most influential account of TMA for creoles in general, stated that habitual situations and events that are progressive can all be said to have a non-punctual aspect. He also claims that these creole grammatical constructions describe a grammar that “clearly bears no relation to the system of English” (Bickerton, 1976).

In (17) the progressive aspect is expressed with the basilectal form, which is to say, the form that is closer to the JamC, hence the resulting grammatical CS. In general, all descriptions of JamC agree on the fact that whereas native English people use auxiliary verbs, agreement-marking, and inflectional suffixes, JamC speakers mix unmarked verb stems with invariant pre-verbal particles (*i.e.* *a*) to express progressive and habitual aspect (Patrick, 2004).

Therefore, progressive aspect is regularly signaled by a tense neutral pre-verbal *a* –we know that it is tense neutral because when expressing the past, JamC speakers usually precede this construction with other particles such as *as ben*, or *was-*. (Patrick, 2004). We can find examples of this grammatical construction in other songs from different periods such as Buju Banton’s “Batty Riders” (1992) and Anthony B “Police” (2003), shown in (19) and (20), respectively:

(19) What dem *a do*? What dem *a try*? Who dem *a try* stop?

(20) Me look and see: laws and order *a collapse*

¹² According to the Urban Dictionary, this is slang for “Marijuana and tobacco rolled into a cigarette.”

6.2.2. Pronouns:

Following Patrick's account of JamC pronouns, we can see them described in Table 1 (Patrick, 2004):

Person	Singular	Plural
1	<i>mi, a (ai)</i> ¹³	<i>wi</i>
2	<i>yu</i>	<i>unu</i>
3	<i>im, i, (ii) (shi) (ar)</i>	<i>dem</i>

The first person pronoun *ai* is a distinctive feature of Rasta talk and we usually find it in compound forms such as *I-man, I-an-I, I-dren, I-self* (Pollard 1994). This *I (ai)* pronoun should not be confused with the everyday standard usage of *I* which is the Standard English pronoun, and which is also strictly acrolectal (Patrick, 2004).

One example of this difference of the basilectal usage of *I (ai)* can be seen in Stephen Marley's "Inna Di Red" (2007) transcribed in (21):

(21) So *I* took a walk inside

Talked to *I, I self*

Trying to ease these pains of mine

Oh, Jah give *I* strength

This *I* is the basilectal subjective *I* whose meaning, as said before, is very much related to the Rasta religion. Here S. Marley is referring to himself as not only a man, but also a religious person. In Rasta talk, the use of *I* as *I/ I self/ I man/* refers to a Rasta man or a Rastafari believer.

We also find this use of the patois pronoun *I* in the second verse of Marley's song, transcribed in (22):

(22) Now *I-man* can *I*-dictate

Free ourselves from all that hate

¹³ This pronoun can also be found as *I* which sometimes leads to confusion with the acrolectal *I*.

Now I'm in an irie state

Now *I-man* can *I*-dictate.

Another case of the insertion of JamC pronouns that is closely related to the meaning of the patois *I* can be found in (23) with Damian Marley's "Khaki Suit" (2005) featuring Bounty Killer:

(23) But dem waan fi gi we jumped, and dem war dem truly man

I an I a nuh fool cause mi 'side to school di man

According to E. E. Cashmore, *I an I*¹⁴ is a very complex term that refers to the oneness of Jah and his presence within every human being and every Rasta believer (Cashmore, 1984). *I* is the most important and significant letter for Rastafarians, since they believe that while using it they are including the Almighty (Jah) in his speech while speaking. This term is also used among Rastafarians instead of "we" or "you and I" to highlight the wholeness and unity of God and his ubiquity (Cashmore, 1984).

6.2.3. Number marking

When it comes to number marking in nouns, whereas in Standard English –and Jamaican Standard English- we use the plural –s, or –es, in JamC the plural is expressed by adding the particle *dem* to the noun. Historically, this particle *dem* is derived from the third person plural *dem* which in Standard English is "they".

A clear example of the use of this patois particle (*dem*) to express the plural is found in (24) which is part of Beenie Man's song "Girls Dem Sugar" (2000):

(24) Beenie Man a *di girls dem* sugar

Di girls dem worl' class lover

Di girls dem need this n***a

Well, mi love dem shape and figure

We a *di man dem* weh di girls admire

¹⁴ This can also be found as *I un I*, *I an I*, or *I and I*. As mentioned in section 2, this is due to the fact that JamC does not have an official writing system.

Love *di girls dem*, make dem bawl out fi Jah Jah

Man, a me got *di girls dem* power

In (24) we can see how *dem* is used for number marking. First of all, we have the plural marking *dem*. We see it attached to the noun “man (dem)” to express “men”. Although the plural structure noun-*s-dem* is relatively rare, we can see that sometimes the plural marking *-s* and *dem* can coexist (Patrick, 2004), as we can see in the construction *girls dem* and so showing a double plural marking. According to Patrick, there is a strong tendency to precede these definite nouns (man, girl, etc.) with *di* when expressing the plural in JamC, as one can see in (22), although this article could be interpreted as a phonological variation of the Standard English article *the*.

6.2.4. Negation

The most common and simplest structure that one can find when looking into how JamC expresses negation is *no* –sometimes reduced to /*na*/ before any lexical verb in the bare infinitive form (Patrick, 2004) as we can see from (25) and (26), where part of Damian Marley’s “Khaki Suit”(2005) and Anthony B’s “God Above Everything” (2003) transcriptions are shown . In some cases, another negation marker is used, *dount*, although this negative cannot be found in any of the selected songs, the most common one is these songs is *no -nuh-*.

(25) Who *nuh* know me from dem see me

Me a living top-a-notch

(...)

Well pitty dem *nuh* know seh every dreadlocks is a star

(26) True you get rich ya *nah* remember Rasta again

Nah remember say God was your only friend

As one can see, grammatical CS JamC/ JamE does not necessarily mean the introduction of an L2 structure with foreign words, but in the case of Jamaica, this CS is given by a different usage of English structures which might be rooted in the early grammar of the JamC. One should not forget this language is a combination of different

languages –predominately English- that one way or another heavily influenced this Creole grammar.

6.3. Phonological CS

As Gumperz and Wilson state, in places where two languages cohabit, there is a convergence of two linguistic systems, and therefore, there is a number of consequences to this phenomenon, among which we can find changes of phonemes and consonant clusters. In numerous cases, Jamaicans apply these changes to give their speech a more patois-like pronunciation, so they modify English words by changing English phonemes for patois phonemes. Sometimes, these changes are free variations of the language, which is why I decided to consider this as a type of CS, as the inclusion of Patois phonemes into words where the rest of phonemes are pronounced in JamE. One example of a phonological CS would be the one in (27), where Buju Banton changes the phoneme /ei/ for /ie/ in “shape” and the phoneme /oo/ for /uo/ in “coke” in his song “Batty Rider” (1992)

(27) Full of *shape* like a *coke* bottle without the top

JamC, being a combination of other languages as it is, has many phonetic peculiarities, and, as any other language, several linguistic constraints. It is due to these linguistic constraints that certain English phonemes are modified by JamC speakers. The most common type and which is the one found in the selected songs refers to consonant cluster constraints, that is, consonant clusters –or consonant sequences- that occur when the onset or the coda contains more than one consonantal element. The task of studying what phoneme combinations a language allows and which combinations are not accepted falls upon Phonotactics. This includes vowel sequences that vowel sequences, as well as syllable structures, and consonant clusters on which I will focus this section of my work.

Some consonant clusters that are common in one language may not exist in another language. For example, in Spanish the consonant cluster /s/ + *consonant* at the beginning of a word does not exist, whereas in English this cluster is very common and we find it in words such as “star”, “stop”, “specifically”, etc. When an L1 consonant cluster is a linguistic constraint in an L2 language, the L1 speakers make modifications to better adapt it into their pronunciation. Let us think again about the Peninsular Spanish and English. Since in Spanish, the initial word combination /s/ + *consonant* is a linguistic constraint, Spanish speakers usually place an /e/ sound at the beginning of the English

word. For instance, the word “stop” would be pronounced by a Spanish speaker as /es'ta:p/.

A very similar phenomenon occurs from the combination of both JamC and JamE. I will refer to this as phonological CS, since, unlike in Spain, in Jamaica, JamC and JamE coexist. This phenomenon is also present in reggae music as it is exemplified in (28) and (29), both examples taken from two different periods, Buju Banton’s “Batty Rider” (1992) and Anthony B’s “Police”(2003), respectively:

(28) Full of shape like a coke *bottle* without the top

(29) From me a *little* youth me know

If one pays close attention to the way the words in italics are pronounced by Buju Banton and Anthony B, one would see that these words are not pronounced as we would pronounce them in Standard English. While we would pronounce these words in Standard English as /'bɑ:təl/¹⁵ and /'lɪtəl/, Buju Banton and Anthony B pronounce them as /'bɑ:kəl/ and /'lɪkəl/. This happens because in JamC /t/ and /d/ are cluster formation constraints, so the speakers adapt those English sounds following the linguistic pattern of JamC. An example of a word with a /d/ pronounced as /k/ can be found in the same Buju Banton’s song transcribed in (30):

(30) Shorts hitch up pon your *saddle*, ride up pon your back

If one pays close attention to the way the word *saddle* is pronounced, one will see how this /d/ construction is changed into /k/.

One could argue that since the changes that are applied to words come from the JamC, one could consider it as a special type of CS. This could be supported by the other uses of CS that we can find in the proposed songs.

As one can see phonological CS is, mainly, changes of phonemes of JamE words into a more Creole way which gives a Creole flavor to them. The reason behind the changes in these words could be rooted in the Jamaican identity and the power, strength, and popularity that nowadays the JamC has. Even in music that is more mainstream, artists like Rihanna, Nicky Minaj, Sean Paul, etc., are going back to their Caribbean roots and we can hear them sing songs with their Caribbean accent and utilizing the

¹⁵ For phonetic transcription I will use broad transcriptions rather than narrow ones, always following the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA).

aforementioned types of CS. What is more, unlike Nicki Minaj –who is Trinidadian-, Rihanna –who is from Barbados-, and Sean Paul –who is Jamaican-, artists that do not have a direct relationship with Jamaica (or any Caribbean island at all) are introducing verses in Patois in their songs, especially rap artists that sing about social issues. One example of these artist is Kendrick Lamar who introduces verses in patois in his song “The Blacker the Berry”, 2015 (*To Pimp a Butterfly*), as seen in the example:

How you *no* see the whip, left scars *pon'* me back
But now we have a big whip parked *pon'* the block

7. CONCLUSIONS

The main objectives of my work were to describe the way JamE-JamC CS is used in Jamaican reggae songs because, to our knowledge, there are no studies that cover the use of CS in songs, which, even though they can be classified as written texts, they also have an enormous oral importance attached to them.

When selecting the songs that have analyzed, I took into account the genre to which these songs belong, which was reggae. The selection of this musical genre is very much related to the power that it has over Jamaican language, Jamaican society and the Jamaicans themselves. Reggae music was born in Jamaica and it is a core part of the Jamaican identity, and, at the same time, it is enjoyed by people all around the world.

Basing on these songs, I described how CS is used in an island where English and Jamaican Creole coexist even in songs. As one knows, when two different linguistic systems clash, a number of phenomena arise from this, including CS. I distinguished three different types of CS that I could find throughout the ten selected songs: Lexical CS, Grammatical CS, and CS at the phonological level. As the results reflect, Lexical CS in Jamaica is very much influenced by the Rastafari movement or religion, since new words are being added on a daily basis to the patois and are coming to be a part of this language amalgamation.

Grammatical CS, on the other hand, is present in all of the ten songs. Even though sometimes, the words that are used are in English, the grammar is that of the Patois – basilect- which is very different from the Standard English grammar that is used in the acrolect-. It is part of their bilingual identity to mix both languages even at the level of grammar, not necessarily indicating confusion between them. Although, they will often use Patois constructions with closer relatives and friends, and this is derived from the negative connotation that patois has had since its emergence.

Another aspect that I described was what I considered as CS at the phonological level. I considered phonemical changes of English words as CS, since these changes are basically rooted in the JamC phonetic system. A Standard English Jamaican speaker can perfectly pronounce the word “settle” as /'setəl/, however, in songs where the aforementioned types of CS are used, these words with the consonant clusters /t/ and /d/ are changed to /k/, which is due to the linguistic constraints of the JamC, and also to a free variation of the speaker to give the words a more patois-like pronunciation.

To further analyze and develop this work, it would be interesting to analyze the way CS is used in songs written in English and other language where these languages coexist in the same society (e.g. Miami, Florida). Of course, the type of lexical CS may vary from one culture to another, but grammatical CS could share some characteristics and differ in others. As for phonological CS, it would be interesting to find out what other English consonant clusters can be codeswitched in other languages and if it is closely related to the identity of song writers (or speakers in general) as part of a bilingual society.

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