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# **Syllabic Structure of Jamaican and Martinican**

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**ABSTRACT***Syllabic Structure of Jamaican and Martinican*

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**Phonetic changes** generally affect assimilated etymons in Afro-American languages. The topic of this paper is to compare in a **synchronic perspective** the transformations from English to Jamaican, an **English Lexicon Based Creole** (ELBC) and from French to Martinican, a **French Lexicon Based Creole** (FLBC). A **contrastive approach** of these changes on the lexicon can point out specificities of syllables in Creole languages from Jamaica and Martinique. Similar but not identical, reduction of consonantic groups is quasi-systematic in Jamaican and Martinican, no matter what position they have in lexical items : initial, final or mid-position. From european etymons to Jamaican or Martinican, lexical items are not simplified as it was said before but re-shapped on a different pattern, confirming that it is a syllabic re-structuration, a general open **bisyllabic tendency** based on **open syllable**.

*Keywords* : - prosthetic – metathetic – epenthetic – paragodic – bisyllabism –

*Words* : 149

## Syllabic structure of Jamaican and Martinican

Lexical items in Creole languages are provided essentially by European lexicons, English in Jamaica, French in Martinique. Phonetic changes related to syllabic structure generally affect assimilated etymons in Afro-American languages.

The topic of this study is the description of these lexical transformations using a **contrastive approach** : from English to Jamaican Creole (JC) and from French to Martinican Creole (CM) in a **synchronic perspective**.

These two languages, an English Lexicon Based Creole (ELBC), and a French Lexicon Based Creole (FLBC) can point out the specificity of **Afro-American languages**. It is relevant as no political or trading relationship has been established along the centuries between the two islands under different influences: English in Jamaica, French in Martinique.

According to Frederic G. **Cassidy** (1961), English etymons adopted in Jamaican are modified by a set of **phonetic changes** : Reduction of consonantic groups - Substitutions - Metathesis - Assimilations - Vocalic modifications, particularly diphthongs - Added sounds.

Among FLBC, Albert **Valdman** (1981) mentioned phonetic changes and transformations when French etymons are integrated to these languages. In CM for example : Reduction of consonantic groups - Phonetic changes – Nasalization - Agglutination – Aphesis.

Are there similarities between these changes in an ELBC pointed out by Cassidy and changes in a FLBC pointed out by Valdman ?

### 1 Reduction of consonantic groups

The reduction of consonantic groups is present in both Jamaican and Martinican Creole as observed by Cassidy (1961) and Valdman (1978). However different strategies operate depending on the position of these groups in the lexical item : initial, final or mid position.

#### 1.1 Initial position [ # S + C - ]

If a consonantic group is in an initial position, its reduction can be done in various ways in the different Creole languages.

### 1.1.1 Prosthetic vowel

A prosthetic vowel can be added before the initial /# s-/ in Martinican Creole as illustrated in the examples in Table 1.

<b>Martinican</b>		<b>French</b>	
/ɛsplādid/	<	/splādid/	« splendide »
/ɛstilo/	<	/stilo /	« stylo »
/ɛspesjal/	<	/spesjal/	« spécial »
/ɛstati/	<	/staty/	« statue »
/ɛstad/	<	/stad/	« stade »
/ɛstʃelet/	<	/skølet/	« squelette »

Table 1 : CM – Prosthetic vowel

**Fr [ # S + C - ] > [ # V + S + C - ] CM**

From French to Martinican, the consonantic group is modified by the added *prosthetic vowel*.

### 1.1.2 Drop of a consonant

The examples in Table 2 show that the drop of initial /# s-/ can actually reduce the consonantic group in Jamaican.

<b>Jamaican</b>		<b>English</b>
pider	<	spider
tuff	<	stuff
tocks	<	stocks
queeze	<	squeeze
corpion	<	scorpion
terlin / talin	<	sterling
kin	<	skin
tick	<	stick
pliti	<	split
tranga	<	strong

Table 2 : JC-Drop of initial consonant

**Engl. [ # S + C - ] > [ # C - ] JC**

In 1790, Moreton noticed the **drop of a consonant** /# s-/ before a stop of the initial group in English. Another phenomenon can be observed in the last example, JC tranga < strong Engl. According to Claude Tatilon, *DDLL* (1974 : 213), it is a vocalic harmony, *a type of metaphony, assimilation of the final vowel tone to the preceding vowel inside a word*.

In the last examples of Table 2, vocalic harmony (-a...a#) and (-i...i#) appear in addition to the usual phonetic change : the drop of initial « s ».

### 1.1.3 Epenthetic vowel

Another type of reduction of consonantic group from English to Jamaican is the use of an epenthetic vowel as shown in Table 3.

Jamaican		English
sitik	<	stick
sinorin	<	snoring
sunúk	<	snook
simit	<	smith

Table 3 : JC-Epenthetic vowel

Besides the dislocation of consonantic group by intrusive **epenthetic vowel** between successive consonants in the etymon integrated in Jamaican Creole, other phenomenons can occur. Different **metathesis** can be observed, such as the *inversion of phonemes* contiguous or not, in this example, Vital Gadbois *DDL* (1974: 215), presented in Table 4.

Jamaican		English
siniek	<	[sneik] snake
sepia	<	[spiə] spear
simuok	<	[smouk] smoke
rakatuon	<	[rək stoun] rockstone

Table 4 : JC-Metathesis

Engl. /-ei-/ > /-ie-/ JC  
 /-ou-/ > /-uo-/

The first example (siniek < sneik) presents a type of metaphonic change (-i + i-) : the /i/ tone of the epenthetic vowel is added to the dislocation of the initial consonantic group /# sn-/ of this example : [siniek].

The last example, JC rakatuon < [rək stoun] rockstone, in addition to the epenthetic vowel *a*, JC [raktuon] > [rakatuon], a **vocalic harmony** to this change (-a + a-) in order to avoid an eventual consonantic group joining the successive dorsovelar stop /k/ and the apico-dental /t/ : /-kt-/.

This intrusive vowel /-a-/ and the assimilation of the final vowel tone, /-a-/ from [raktuon] operate a dislocation of the consonantic group by reduplication of the /-a-/ tone producing a **metaphony** : [rakatuon].

The deletion of consonantic group by an intrusive epenthetic vowel is producing an *additional syllable* which is never stressed, as shown in Table 5.

Jamaican		English
sumáal	<	small
sumúud	<	smooth

Table 5 : JC-Vocalic lengthening

Engl. [# S+C - ] > [# S + V + C - ] JC

The **vocalic lengthening** of the etymon can be quoted while assimilated to JC syllabic structure. Remark : in the last example, a *substitution* of the dental [d] to the apico-dental [ð] can be quoted from English to Jamaican :

JC sumúud < smooth [smu:ð] Engl.

This phonetic change is involved in Jamaican phonetics and phonology. (1)

The following Synthetic Table illustrates the phonetic changes operating reductions of initial etymologic consonantic groups from English and French lexical bases.

- Drop of initial consonant :	[# CC - ] > [# C - ]
- Intrusive epenthetic vowel :	[# CC - ] > [# C V C - ]
- Intrusive prosthetic vowel in Martinique :	[# CsC - ] > [# V + Cs + C - ]

Synthetic Table 6 : Reduction of initial consonantic groups in JC and CM

As shown in Table 6, three different kinds of deletions are quoted to remove initial consonantic groups : by simple drop of the first consonant, by an intrusive epenthetic vowel between two consonants of this group, or by an intrusive prosthetic vowel before the group of two consonants. Nevertheless, though reduction of consonantic groups is widespread in Creole languages, it doesn't affect all groups in CM.

#### 1.1.4 Preserved consonantic groups

In Martinican, at the exception of a hushing affricate consonant /C / and its voiced counterpart /ʃ / involving two intrinsic consonantic sounds (tʃ ~ dʒ) side by side ; the initial consonantic groups are made of stop or fricatives followed by /ʁ/ or /l/ illustrated in Table 7.

p	/pʁɔp/ « propre »	-	/plɛ̃/ « plein »
t	/tʁɔp/ « trop »	-	*/tl-/*
k	/kʁab/ « crabe »	-	/klu/ « clou »
b	/bʁa/ « bras »	-	/blã/ « blanc »
d	/dʁɛt/ « droit »	-	/dlo/ « eau »
g	/gʁã/ « grand »	-	/glas/ « glace »
f	/fʁɛt/ « froid »	-	/flãm/ « flamme »

Table 7 : CM-Consonantic groups

The phonetic characteristics of these phonemes, /ʁ/ or /l/, respectively resonant and liquid, can explain that these consonantic groups avoid reduction because they are easier to combine with stop or fricative. It is probably the reason why they can be observed in CM or JC syllabic system as shown in Table 8.

JC			
p	pri	« pretty »	- plaan « plant »
t	trii	« tree »	
k	cricri	« crying »	- kliin « clean »
b	bred	« bread »	- bluu « blue »
d	drap	« drop »	-
g	grani	« grand child »	- glami « moist »
f	floua	« flower »	- fried « afraid »

Table 8 : JC-Consonantic groups

So, these consonantic groups involving pr- or gr-, kl- or gl-, including a stop and a resonant or a liquid (r / l) can be involved in Martinican syllabic system as well as in Jamaican.

## 1.2 Mid-position

Reductions of consonantic groups occur similarly in mid-position.

Due to syllabic structure, French consonantic groups involving three or four consonants are reduced by drop of one of them when integrated to Martinican lexicon.

Martinican		French	
/ɛskize/	<	/ɛkskyze/	« excuser »
/ɛspɾe/	<	/ɛksɾe/	« exprès »
/aseleɾe/	<	/akseleɾe/	« accélérer »
/asepte/	<	/aksepte/	« accepter »
/gẽje/	<	/ganje/	« gagner »

Table 9 : CM Reduction of mid-position consonantic group

As we can see in Table 9, the palatal stop preceding a hissing vowel can drop, before a consonant, from first to fourth examples :

French /-ks-/ > /-s-/ Martinican

A **regressive nasalization** : nasality of the consonant of the etymon of the last example is transferred on the preceding vowel. Therefore, /n/ drop is inducing the reduction of this consonantic group :

French /-anje-/ > /-ẽje-/ Martinican

Among ELBC, similar consonantic groups reduction can be observed in Jamaican.

<b>Jamaican</b>		<b>English</b>
(1) arready	<	already
(2) arright	<	allright
(3) yesidie	<	yesterday
(4) lifop	<	lift up
(5) ham risk	<	hand-wrist
(6) brenot	<	breadnut
(7) sista	<	sister

Table 10 : JC Reduction of mid-position consonantic group

As seen in Table 10, three types of reductions of consonantic groups can be observed :

- (1) – (2) Reduplication : when there is juxtaposition of a liquid and a resonant = « lr » is reduced by reduplication of the last one : /-lr-/ > /-rr-/

- (3) - (4) Drop of a consonant /-t-/ voiceless dental stop following a hissing : /-st-/ is changed by the drop of the stop (3) /-st-/ > /-s-/.

Drop of the dental stop /-t-/ following a fricative /-ft-/, drop of the stop : /-t-/ : /-ft-/ > /-f-/ (4)

- (5) - (6) Drop of the voiced dental stop /-d-/ before a nasal : /-dn-/ > /-n-/  
or after a nasal /-nd-/ > /-n-/.

- (7) is an exception : only the drop of final consonant « r » of the English etymon « sister » remove the close final syllable in JC *sista*, in order to integrate the Jamaican syllabic structure. The synthetic Table 11 summarizes three types of reduction of consonantic group observed in mid position.

	<b>English</b>		<b>Jamaican</b>	
<b>Reduplication</b>	/- lr- /	>	/- rr- /	[ - l + r - ] > [ - r + r - ]
<b>Drop of a consonant</b>	/- st- /	>	/- s- /	[ - s + C- ] > [ -s- ]
	/-ft- /	>	/-f- /	[ - f + C- ] > [ -f- ]
<b>Keep /-n- /</b>	/-dn- /	>	/-n- /	[ - d + n- ] > [ - n - ]
	/-nd- /	>	/-n- /	[ -n + C- ] > [ - n - ]

Synthetic table 11 : JC Reduction of consonantic group in mid-position

Reductions of consonantic groups occur in initial position as well as in mid-position in Creole languages from Jamaica or Martinique.

### 1.3 Final position

Most of the time, the reduction of the consonantic group by a drop of one consonant is observed in these two Creole languages, and more often in Martinican than in Jamaican.

### 1.3.1 Drop of a consonant of final consonantic group

In final position, different types of reduction of consonantic groups can operate.

In Table 12 are shown examples of the drop of a consonant « r » which can be observed in Jamaican or in Martinican.

CM		Fr.		JC		Engl.
/vãt/	<	/vãtr̥/	« ventre »	fin	<	find
/zõg/	<	/zõgl̥/	« ongle »	kam	<	camp
/sik/	<	/sykr̥/	« sucre »	las	<	last
/pɛd/	<	/pɛdr̥/	« perdre »	kris	<	crips
/ʃãm/	<	/ʃãbr̥/	« chambre »	fos	<	first
/trub/	<	/trubl̥/	« trouble »	wom	<	worm
/kap/	<	/kãpr̥/	« câpre »	haas	<	horse
/zapɔt/	<	/apɔtr̥/	« apôtre »	sef	<	self
/lapɔt/	<	/pɔtr̥/	« porte »	hep	<	help
/vɛt/	<	/vɛtr̥/	« verte »	saaf	<	soft

Table 12 : JC-CM Drop a consonant of final consonantic group

The **resonant « r » drop** can be quoted in Jamaican or in Martinican no **matter what position** it takes in a consonantic group.

**Before consonant :** CM /vɛt/ < /vɛtr̥/      JC haas < horse  
**After consonant :** CM /vãt/ < /vãtr̥/

When the reduction of consonantic group doesn't concern the last consonant, the penultimate is concerned.

	CM			JC
1	/pɛd/ < /pɛdr̥/	« perdre »		fos < first
	/vɛt/ < /vɛtr̥/	« verte »		wom < worm

In these examples, the drop of the resonant “r” from the etymon can be observed in French (verte / perdre) or in English (worm).

The drop of the resonant “r” induces as well the drop of the stop /-b#/ of “chambre” which close final syllable could have been a problem /-mb#/.

**JC      Engl.**  
 2 sef < self  
 hep < help

In this example, the drop of the penultimate concerns the liquid /-l-/.

It makes the pronunciation easier according to the phonetic changes **economic principle** of lesser effort, in French “**la loi du moindre effort**”, in Martinet (1955) [2005: 24]. This reduction doesn't prevent to understand the message and adapt the item to Jamaican syllabic structure.

	<b>JC</b>		<b>Engl.</b>
3	saaf	<	soft
	kris	<	crips

Like previously observed, the drop of the penultimate is related to the *economic principle* because the pronunciation of the labio-dental fricative /-f-/ alone, is easier if the stop /-t-/ is not following this phoneme.

Therefore : /-ft #/ > /-f #/ (saaf).

Likewise, the dorso-velar spirant /-s#/ is easier to articulate alone than following the bilabial stop /-p #/.

Therefore : /-ps #/ > /-s #/ (kris)

Other phenomenon are induced by the drop of a consonant of the group in Jamaican.

### a. Vowel lengthening

The lengthening of the preceding vowel is induced by the reduction of the consonantic group as shown in Table 13 in JC.

<b>JC</b>		<b>Engl.</b>
saaf	<	soft
taas	<	task
haas	<	horse
kyaad	<	card
kaan	<	corn
yaad	<	yard
kyaan	<	can't

Table 13 : JC-Vowel lengthening

### b. Diphtong and metathesis

Likewise, a metathesis of the preceding diphtong is induced by the reduction of the consonantic group. See the following Table 14.

<b>JC</b>		<b>Engl.</b>	
uol	<	ould	“old”
cuol	<	kould	“cold”
rakatuon	<	rokstoun	“rockstone”
guodi	<	guəd	“gourd”
kyar, kye	<	‘kæri	“carry”
uona	<	oun	“own”

Table 14 : JC - Diphtong and Metathesis

In this Table, the five examples out of six involve a metathesis : /-ou- / > /-uo-/.

In a less obvious manner, the fifth example shows the English diphtong, /-æ-/ reversed :

/-ej-/ > /-je-/ > /-ja-/

### c. Muffle of final consonant

Like the resonant « r » in the previous examples (horse, card, corn), the drop of the penultimate liquid /-l-/ in the final consonantic group, affects the following consonant.

<b>JC</b> twef < twelve <b>Engl</b>
-------------------------------------

Table 15 : Final consonant muffled

The final voiced fricative /-v#/ is muffled and changed to /-f#/, its voiceless phonetical counterpart.

### 1.3.2 Intrusive epenthetic vowel

An intrusive epenthetic vowel can induce the deletion of the consonantic group reduced in final or initial position referring to Alleyne (1980 : 47).

<b>JC</b> worom < worm <b>Engl.</b>
ferin < fern »

Table 16 : Epenthetic vowel

A **vocalic harmony** is involved in the choice of the epenthetic vowel in Jamaican. The intrusive epenthetic vowel /-o-/, second vowel of *worom* is causing the deletion of the final consonantic group, (-rm), and is nothing but a *metaphonic reproduction of the vocalic phoneme* of the English etymon.

(NB : The added syllable is never stressed.)

### 1.3.3 Final substitution

A substitute vowel instead of the last consonant of the final consonantic group is sometimes observed as shown in Table17.

<b>JC</b>	apu < apple	<b>Engl</b>
	tabu < table	
	taki < talk	
	<b>Substitution</b>	
	/-u#/ < /pl#/	
	/-u#/ < /-bl#/	
	/-i#/ < /-lk#/	

Table 17 : JC- Final substitution

Furthermore, a reduplication can be added to the final vowel substitution of the consonantic group as a Jamaicanism : JC wasi- wasi < wasp Engl.

Therefore, it is possible to conclude that :

**Different types of reductions can affect consonantic groups in Jamaican and in Martinican, no matter what position they had inside the English and French etymons.**

### 1.3.4 Preserved consonantic groups

Nevertheless, the examples in Table 18 show that final consonantic groups are observed in Martinican.

<b>CM</b> [-lt #]	/filt/ < /filtʁ/ “filter”
	/kilt/ < /kylt/ “culte”
[-ks #]	/taks/ < /taks/ “taxe”
	/fiks/ < /fiks/ “fixe”

Table 18 : CM- Final consonantic group

Following a stop, /-s#/ in final position can be kept, at the opposite, « s » preceding the consonant is removed by a **metathesis** in JC, shown in Table 19.

Engl.	>	JC
crisp	>	<b>crips</b>
ask	>	aks
husk	>	huks
shortage	>	shotrage

Table 19 : JC- Metathesis

**Metathesis:** [-C<sub>1</sub> + C<sub>2</sub>#] > [-C<sub>2</sub> + C<sub>1</sub>#]      **Ex:** [-SC#] > [-CS#]

Phonetic change will probably modify such consonantic groups in order to assimilate these items and let their pattern integrates JC syllabic structure. As re-structured *crips* in Table 12.

JC kris < crips Engl.

CM /flim/ < film Fr.

This metathesis is not systematic in CM : most of the time /l/ is removed before a nasal consonant, and especially if a definite determiner is after the liquid consonant as in the following example.

CM [fimla] « le film » \*[flimla] almost impossible to articulate.

According to the **economic principle**, Martinet (1955) [2005 : 24], the drop of the liquid /l/ makes the pronunciation easier and doesn't prevent to understand the message. These two convergent factors related to the reduction of consonantic groups and this economic principle, make the drop of /l/ more likely.

### 1.4 Between two monemes

When two successive consonants occur between two English lexemes, an intrusive vowel is introduced between these two etymons in Jamaican.

JC Bans a more man « Lots u more men »

Analysed as a proclitic vowel, it is functioning like a prepositional prefix of an indirect construction. A consonantic group can be heard in a speech between two monemes in English. Assimilated in Jamaican, this consonantic group is reduced by the drop of the final consonant /-t#/:

JC mekjəs « make haste »

JC /-kjəs-/ < /-khejst-/ Engl.

This phonetic change related to syllabic structure can involve a **metathesis** :

JC /-je-/ < /-ej-/ Engl.

The reduction of the consonantic group can induce a **vocalic harmony** on /i / observed in the Jamaican lexical item (i + i).

### 1.5 Conclusion : Restructuration of syllabic structure

In a similar but not identical way, the reduction of consonantic groups is quasi-systematic in Jamaican and Martinican, no matter their position, initial, final or mid-position, in the lexemes. From European etymons to Creole languages, lexemes are **not simplified** as it was said previously. They are **re-shaped** into **different syllabic structures**.

To illustrate this restructuration, Valdman refers to an idiom from West Cameroon « Wès Cos » involving the same types of reductions of final consonantic groups from English Lexicon Based etymons.

Wès Cos sitik < stick English  
simol < small

Represented in Table 20, five rules regimenting these phonetic changes due to syllabic structure of Krio (KR), Jamaican (JA), Ndyuka (ND), Sranan (SN), Saramaccan (SR) and other Afro-American languages are pointed out by Alleyne (1980 : 45).

	English		Afro-American	
(1)	#CCC-	>	CC-	all dialects
(2)	#CC-	>	CVC-	all dialects
(3)	#[s + t, k, p]	>	[t, k, p]	JA, KR
(4)	[-l-]	>	[-r-]	
(5)	#C+V+liquid	>	a- C+liquid-	SR, JA, KR
			b- C+V-	SM, ND

Table 20 : Phonetic changes and Syllabic structure

However, not all of Alleyne rules are present in every language.

Indeed, the fourth rule, as (4) [-l-] > [-r-] and the second part of the fifth, (5b) (concerning SM and SN) cannot be used in JC or CM.

In Jamaican, four rules are observed : the first rule, (1) (#CCC- > CC-), the second one, (2) (#CC- > CVC-), the third (3) and the fifth, (5a).

Only two rules, the first (1) and the second (2) are present in Martinican.

In initial position, every group of three consonants is reduced in Afro-American languages : one of the consonants is removed or the deletion of the group of two consonants is made by an epenthetic vowel.

In Jamaican like in Krio, if the consonantic group is introduced by /# s-/ before a stop /t /, /k / or /p /, the drop of the hissing consonant can be observed. Like in Krio and Sranan, the drop of the vowel before a final liquid of a close initial syllable can be heard in Jamaican.

About this type of **syllabic re-structuration**, Alleyne observed that all Afro-American languages, at different levels, involve etymons with close syllables from languages like English, but used with open syllables.

Other linguists like Turner (1949) and Bikerton (1972), consider as well this syllabic re-structuration as originated from Africa.

## 2 Syllabic structure in Creole languages

When French etymons are assimilated to Martinican, or when English etymons, to Jamaican, phonetic changes concerning syllabic structure can be observed.

### 2.1 Syllable in initial position

Phonetic change is depending on a consonantic or a vocalic first phoneme in initial position.

#### 2.1.1 Drop of initial vowel

In initial position, examples of a drop of initial vowel in Martinican and Jamaican are shown in Table 21.

<b>French</b>	<b>Martinican</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>Jamaican</b>
“oublier”	/ublɪje/ > /blɪje/	alone >	lone
“arriver”	/aʁive/ > /ɾive /	upon >	pon
“enjamber	/ãʒãbe/ > / ʒãbe/	enough >	nuff
“envoyer”	/ãvwaje/ > / vweje/	assurance >	shorance
“entendre”	/ãtãdɛ/ > /tãŋ/	away >	weh
“américain”	/ameʁikẽ/ > /mexitʃẽ /	about >	bout
“affaisser”	/afese/ > /fese/	along >	long

Table 21 : Drop of initial vowel

Creole languages tend to **bisyllabic structure** by to the drop of initial vowel.

In all these examples, the drop of initial vowel like /#a-/ can be observed : this phonetic change adapts French etymons following the FLBC syllabic structure of Creole languages. Three syllabic items remaining after this change will, most likely be further modified.

### 2.1.2 Agglutination and Prosthetic consonant

In Martinican Creole, if an **initial vowel** doesn't drop, a prosthetic consonant is added, originated from a French connection between words. This agglutination can affect a definite determiner /#l-/ from the French etymon, shown in the following Table 22.

Martinican		French		Liaison	
/nõm/	<	/ɔm/	« homme »	- / õnɔm/	« un homme »
/zãmi/	<	/ami/	« ami »	- / lezami /	« les amis »
/zo/	<	/ɔs /	« os »	- / lezo /	« les os »
/ze/	<	/œf/	« œuf »	- / lezø /	« les œufs »
/zje/	<	/œj/	« œil »	- / lezjø/	« les yeux »
/zepẽŋ/	<	/epẽgl/	« épingle »	- /lezepẽgl/	« les épingles »
/dlo/	<	/o/	« eau »	- /dɔlo/	« de l'eau »
/lɛ/	<	/œʁ/	« heure »	- /lœʁ/	« l'heure »
/lekɔl/	<	/ekɔl/	« école »	- /lekɔl/	« l'école »
/lẽpo/	<	/ẽpo/	« impot »	- /lẽpo/	« l'impot »

Table 22 : CM Prosthetic consonant by Agglutination

The prosthetic consonant is coming from a French connection between words, most of the time with a plural moneme : /zo /, an indefinite determiner /nõm /, definite determiner /lẽpo / or partitive /dlo /.

No matter which consonant is added in initial position, its function is to modify the initial syllable in Martinican by **agglutination** to fulfil the Creole language syllabic structure. See the following Table 23.

CM		Definite + Noun:	Fr.	CM
/legliz/	« église »	<	« l'église »	/legliz/ /legliz la/
/loto/	« auto »	<	« l'auto »	/loto/ /loto a/
/labe/	« abbé »	<	« l'abbé »	/labe/ /labe a/
/lopital/	« hôpital »	<	« l'hôpital »	/lopital/ /lopital la/
/lizin/	« usine »	<	« l'usine »	/lyziŋ/ /lizin la/
/lapli/	« pluie »	<	« la pluie »	/lapliqi/ /lapli a/
/lasid/	« acide »	<	« l'acide »	/lasid / /lasid la/
/laksã/	« accent »	<	« l'accent »	/laksã/ /laksã ã/

Table 23 : /#l-/ CM Agglutination of definite determiner from the etymon

This agglutination can touch a final plural consonant /#z-/ from a French etymon like in the examples listed in Table 24.

CM		Plural + Noun :	Fr.	CM
/zɛlwɔ̃/	« aileron »	<	« les ailerons »	/lezɛlɔ̃/ - /sezɛlwɔ̃ ɔ̃/
/zakasja /	« acacia »	<	« les acacias »	/lezakasja/ - /sezakasja a /
/zafɛ/	« affaire »	<	« les affaires »	/lezafɛ/ - /sezafɛ a/
/zesɛl /	« aisselle »	<	« les aisselles »	/lezɛsɛl / - /sezɛsɛl la/
/zamãŋ/	« amande »	<	« les amandes »	/lezamãd / - /sezamãŋ l ɔ̃ /

Table 24 : /#z-/ Agglutination of final plural consonant

Finally, this agglutination can also affect an indefinite determiner /#n-/ from the French etymon as shown in Table 25.

CM		Indefinite + Noun :	Fr	CM
/nãm /	« âme »	<	« une âme »	/ynam/ = / ãnam /
/nõm/	« homme »	<	« un homme »	/õnõm/ = / ãnõm/

Table 25 : /#n-/ Agglutination from indefinite determiner

The agglutination of definite determiner /#l-/ and final plural consonant /#z-/ frequency is more in use than /#n-/ from indefinite determiner (un), or partitive /#dl-/ from partitive (de l').

## 2.2 Number of syllables

As Afro-American languages tend to a bisyllabic structure, more than often, trisyllabic or monosyllabic items can get changes.

### 2.2.1 Drop of initial syllable

By the drop of initial syllable, **trisyllabic lexemes** are reduced to two syllables both in JC and CM as shown in the examples in Table 26.”

CM	Fr.	JC	Engl.
/gade/	< /ʁəgaʁde/ « regarde »	fence	< defence
/gãme/	< /elegã/ « élégant »	gesta	< digester
/ʒɔdi/	< /oʒuʁdɥi/ «aujourd'hui »	flecta	< reflector

Table 26 : Bisyllabic structure in JC and CM

An apheresis reduces such French or English trisyllabic items to bisyllabism to fulfil JC and CM syllabic structure.

This reshaping can affect as well monosyllabic items

### 2.2.2 Prosthetic syllable

In Martinican, a **prosthetic syllable** is added to **monosyllabic lexemes** by agglutination. Seen in Table 27

	CM	Fr.		CM
« lune »	/laliŋ/	< /lyŋ/ + Def	« la lune » :	/laliŋ la/
« mer »	/lãmɛ/	< /mɛʁ/ + Def	« la mer » :	/lãmɛ a/
« guerre »	/ladʒɛ/	< /gɛʁ/ + Def	« la guerre » :	/ladʒɛ a/
« pluie »	/lapli/	< /plqi/ + Def	« la pluie » :	/lapli a/
« nuit »	/lãnwit/	< /nuʃi/ + Def	« la nuit » :	/lãnwit la/

Table 27 : CM Prosthetic syllable

A prosthetic syllable is added by agglutination to any monosyllabic etymon in CM in initial position. A syllable coming from a definite article preceding the French etymon, is producing a bisyllabic structure in Martinican.

### 2.2.3 Agglutination

If the matter is to find an origin to agglutination observed when French lexical items are integrated to Martinican, or English items to Jamaican, it may be inherited from West African languages where this phenomenon is not scarce, according to Parkvall (2000), in Upper Guinea, numerous Kwa languages (akpose and fante) and Delto-Benuic (edo).

Agglutination is used in all FLBC : a substratic influence is manifest in this phonetic change related to the canonic [CV] syllabic structure in most Atlantic Creoles. In initial position, before a vowel, a prosthetic consonant is added.

This [CV] syllabic structure is predominant in Lower Guinea. In Wolof and Mandinka, 90% of the verbs and nouns present this very structure.

### 2.2.4 Bisyllabic structure

In JC a final syllable is added to any monosyllable to get a bisyllabic structure alike in the words rata and tranga in JC.

<b>JC</b>	rata	< rat	<b>Engl.</b>
	tranga	< strong	
	luku	< look	

Table 28 : JC Paragogic vowel

This paragogic vowel is added to any monosyllabic moneme to get a bisyllabic item in order to fulfil the syllabic structure of Afro-American languages.

The drop of initial /#s-/ reduces the initial consonantic group /#str-/ > /#tr-/ (tranga/strong) and induces the opening of the vowel /-o-/ > /-a-/. The added vowel is determined by vocalic harmony : final /-a#/# is echoing /-a-/ vowel of the etymon, like /-u#/# echoing /-u-/ (luku/look). A final vowel is added to monosyllabic monemes in order to avoid a final close syllable. It can be induced by the removal of a consonantic group (str-). Therefore a correlation can be found with reduction of consonantic group and paragogic vowel in Jamaican.

In table 29, are mapped out the paragogic phonetic changes occurring in JC.

Paragogic vowels						
Engl.	must	>	mos	>	mosa	JC
	like	>	laik	>	laka	

Table 29 : JC- Paragogic phonetic change

JC uno mosa en ron "You must have run"  
 him en tuu waiz fi go du sinting laka dat "He is too wise to do a thing like that"

The close final syllable of *must* or *like*, [-CVC-], cannot remain against the canonic open syllabic structure of Creole languages.

An added **paragogic vowel** involves a change of the syllabic structure of this moneme.

<b>Jamaican</b>	mosa / laka	<	must / like	<b>English</b>
	[-CVCV#]		[-CVC#]	

Table 30 : JC-Engl. Compared syllabic structures

Reshaped, this items can be assimilated to the canonic structure of Creole languages. English etymons get this type of phonetic change to be assimilated to Jamaican syllabic structure.

B.L. Bailey (1966) describes phonetic changes of some monemes such as prepositions or deontic modals, called *tool words* (mots-outils, in French) by M-C. Hazaël-Massieux (1996).

#### a. Syllabic structure of prepositions

JC a < at Engl.  
 ina < in  
 anda < under  
 [-VCV #] < [VC#]

The first example presents a reduction from close to open syllable by the drop of final consonant : *at* > *a*. The same change is concerning the final syllable in the last example :

Engl. « - er » > - a# JC.

Nevertheless, a vocalic opening is added to this reduction in two examples :

Engl. [ʌndə] > [anda] JC - Vocalic opening : /#ʌ-/ > /#a-/  
 /-ə #/ > /-a#/#

A paragogic vowel *a* is added to the second example while assimilating this item to Jamaican syllabic structure : *in* > *ina*

JC *ina* < *in* Engl.

This type of phonetic change is affecting JC deontics as a whole.

#### b. Syllabic structure of deontics :

Compared to English etymons, a syllabic change is involved in every Jamaican modal of the following list :

JC *kuda* « could » - *shuda* « should » - *wuda* « would »

*maita* « may, might » - *mosa* « must » - *wi* « will »

The drop of final consonant of *will* or a paragogic final vowel change closed final syllables of English etymons to open syllables in Jamaican.

Jamaican deontics present a systematic open final syllable [-CV- / -CVCV-] opposed to closed final syllable [-CVC-] of their respective English etymons, no matter if they are monosyllabic or bisyllabic, see Table 31.

Jamaican		English	
CVCV	<i>kuda</i>	-	<i>kud</i> CVC
	<i>ʃuda</i>	-	<i>ʃud</i>
	<i>wuda</i>	-	<i>wud</i>
CVCV	<i>mosa</i>	-	<i>mʌst</i> CVCC
CVCCV	<i>majta</i>	-	<i>mej / majt</i> CVC / CVCC
CV	<i>wi</i>	-	<i>wil</i> CVC
	<b>Open syllable</b>	-	<b>Closed syllable</b>

Table 31 : JC Deontic syllabic structure

The eventual final consonantic group (*must*) is reduced by a paragogic vowel. All these phonetic changes occur in order to fulfil the canonic syllabic structure of Creole languages which let these new lexical items be assimilated into Jamaican.

This phonetic change is probably inducing an analogous structure from Twi, a West African language, the Jamaican substrate, according to Cassidy and le Page (1967).

### 2.3 Conclusion : Restructuration and syllabic structure in JC and CM

One and the same syllabic structure is shaped by quasi-systematic reduction of consonantic groups no matter what is their position : initial, final or mid-position.

These changes re-structure similarly etymons of JC and CM as shown in Table 32.

- **Drop of initial vowel** of any European trisyllabic etymon
  - **Reduction from three to two syllables** of any trisyllabic moneme
  - **Prosthetic vowel added** to any monosyllabic moneme
- General **open bisyllabic tendency** : [CVCV#] or [CV#]

Table 32 : Syllabic restructuring of JC and CM etymons

One syllabic structure in Creole languages on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean is common to Jamaican and Martinican : in Afro-American languages as well as in numerous African substratic languages.

### 3 Syllabic structure and Jamaican non English etymons

Most of Jamaican etymons are coming from the English lexicon. According to Robert Le Page & Andrée Tabouret-Keller (1985), numerous items are coming from Ghana, a few from Spanish and Portuguese, others from Amerindians via Spanish and scarcely from Chinese or French. Even while identifying Jamaican etymons in *Acts of identity*, R. Le Page and A. Tabouret-Keller are pointing out etymons from West African and Bantu languages. As a whole, the examples present a diversity of Jamaican lexical origins, most of them from today Ghana.

#### 3.1 Preserved etymons

Even though phonetic and semantic changes occur, some lexical items keep their etymological forms from Tupi (Carib), Hindi, Spanish, Amerindian, Yoruba or French. Not anyone consonantic group in these etymons could have facilitated preservation of etymological forms probably due to ponctual contacts. For example, scarce Amerindian etymons coming from brief contacts of languages

#### 3.2 Etymons formal changes

Some changes affect specificities of the substratic language like *monophonematic* prenasalized stops widespread in African languages.

The translated definition of : **Prenasalized** phonemes is connected to *monophonematic*.

**Monophonematic Phonol.** Referring to a group of sounds functionally considered as only one phoneme ; when the commutative test is negative, that is to say that every element of the group can commute, the frequency of occurrence of each element can be determined by comparison with the group frequency of occurrence. That is how prenasalized stops in many African languages can commute with two elements of the group [mb], but such group frequency is much more important than each element alone [m] and [b].

Nicole Moutard, *DDLL*, (1974 : 219)

Examples of restructured non-English etymons are described in Table 34 with Ibo word “mba” which becomes -himba- in JC.

<b>Ibo</b>	mba	>	himba	“a yam root”	<b>Jamaican</b>
<b>Kongo</b>	ndingi	>	dingki	“funeral danse”	<b>Jamaican</b>
	ndundu	>	dundus	« albinos »	

Table 34 : Restructured non-English etymons

Generally, these phonetic changes consist in a drop of this type of prenasalized phonemes no more distinctive in Afro-American languages.

At the opposite, some terms present a reverse process :

<b>Portuguese</b>	sapato	>	sampata	<b>Jamaican</b>
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Table 35 : Prenasalization in JC

This example presents the intrusion of a prenasalized stop in Jamaican which was not in the Portuguese etymon. It is as if phonemes from the substratic languages reappear during the creolization process when phonetic changes affect the European lexemes integration into JC.

### 3.3 Reduction of syllables number

In Jamaican, the third, fourth or fifth eventual syllable is removed from Spanish and Portuguese etymons :

<b>Portuguese</b>	pekenino	>	pikney / pikni	<b>Jamaican</b>
<b>Spanish</b>	embarcadero	>	barquadier	<b>Jamaican</b>

Table 36 : Reduction of syllables number

### 3.4 Two etymons for one semantic unit

The African origin of this type of changes is related to syllabic structure of Creole languages pointed out by I.F. Hancock C (1969) who compares English with different Creole languages on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean : Krio, Sranan-(Djuka), Saramaccan, Cameroons, Guyanese, Jamaican, Gullah.

Similarly to English in which two terms, *pig* and *pork* for one animal are issued from two etymons, German and Latin, Hancock quotes two terms in Atlantic Creole languages, one issued from an African etymon and another one, from a European etymon, both of them functioning together.

Verbs :

1-« to abuse »

> / kɔs / common to all Creole languages, probably from African etymon.

> /bjuz/ in Krio, Guyanese and Jamaican, probably from English etymon after a phonetic change : the drop of initial syllable /#a-/ in Guyanese, Jamaican and Gullah, lets an initial consonant in accordance with Creole languages - CV- syllabic structure.

- 2- « agree »

> /gri / in all languages : Krio, Sranan, Cameroons, Guyana, Jamaican, Gullah.

The drop of initial vowel is inducing the lengthening of the following final vowel in Jamaican, Gyanese and Gullah : /gri:/.

- 3- « annoy » > two forms :

> One close to English « trouble » with different phonetic changes : from /trɒbl / in Krio, to /tra'bl / in Jamaican, through /trobi/ in Sranan, /toobi/ in Saramaccan, /trobu/ in Cameroons where an added final vowel reshapes this moneme on African languages syllabic structure.

> Another one, /ambo'k/ in Cameroons, /ambo'g/ in Krio and in Jamaican, probably from the same African etymon.

- 4 – « ask »

> /aks / in Krio, in Cameroons,

> /a:ks / in Guyanese and in Jamaican, the metathetic reduction of consonantic group is inducing a lengthening of the preceding initial vowel /#a :-/ from : short /a / > /a: / long. In JC, aspirated /# h-/ is added before initial vowel to change the syllabic structure of Creole starting on an initial consonant.

### 3.5 CONCLUSIONS : Similar syllabic restructuring in Afro-American languages

The phonetic changes point out **syllabic structure** based on **open syllable** in these Creole languages and a general tendency to **bisyllabism**.

**Outline :[CVCV#] or [CV#]**

Common to Jamaican and Martinican and Creole languages a syllabic structure on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean : in Creole languages on the American continent and on the West Coast of Africa like in numerous substratic languages which assimilate the European lexicon.

According to Alleyne (1980), Bickerton (1972), Turner (1949) and many more linguists, this syllabic structure is inherited from African languages.

As well as verbal system, personal markers, a specific type of passive, serial verbs and topicalization, **this syllabic structure can be considered as markers of a linguistic kinship of a new family of Atlantic Creole languages.**

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