

1. INTRODUCTION – JAMAICAN ENGLISH

This study deals with the phonetics and phonology of Jamaican English. Jamaican English is a variety of English that is a part of a broad Creole family of the Caribbean area, sometimes also known as West Indies. To avoid misunderstanding, every time the term Jamaican English is used in the following text, I am referring to Jamaican Creole (some linguists tend to equate general Jamaican English with Jamaican English Standard). Jamaican English is the best known Caribbean dialect and since „(t)he most populous of the West Indian English-speaking territories is Jamaica in the Greater Antilles, with a population in excess of 2 million“¹ it is also the most common language of the area.

Considering its history, which is never a good thing to neglect, linguists have proved English-African origin of modern Jamaican English.² Jamaican English is a direct descendant of a provisory slave means of communication classified as pidgin. Pidgin is originally a form of communication developed between groups of speakers of differing languages who, having no language in common base their mutual understanding on a highly simplified version of the language of one group, with considerable influence from the language of the other group. Therefore pidgin has originally no native speakers.

Originally, the base for Jamaican pidgin was Portuguese. Due to the historical fact of Portugal being a marine supremacy in 17th century, its fleet soon became a prominent slave provider for newly found colonies in the Caribbean area. West Africans, seized and carried away from their homeland, spent in many cases several weeks on sea in dark ship cells surrounded by their jailers and prisoners of different African tribes. Makeshift development must have started somewhere at this point when two seemingly incompatible languages merged. The real flourish of Jamaican language did not occur before the land of Jamaica in West Indies was claimed for the British Empire. Portuguese which was present in early forms of West Africans' pidgin disappeared shortly after the British shored the Caribbean islands. Today there are no remnants of Portuguese in ordinary Jamaican speech. According to Cassidy,

¹ Wells (1982): *Accents of English*. Vol. 3: *Beyond the British Isles*. Cambridge: CUP, p.560

² See Lalla (1979), Devonish & Harry (2003), Rickford (1987).

all examples of early Jamaican vocabulary surviving in original lexicon of farming, irrigation or trade are of African or English origin.³

Africans turned into a traditional labour power and the time went on. Meanwhile, pidgin became established as the first language of the black community. „*This happens when children are brought up by parents who use a pidgin as their common language within the family, or ... the pidgin is the only common language of the adults with whom the child comes into contact.*“⁴ Since pidgin gained its first native speakers (i.e. the speakers who used the pidgin as their first-language) it started to be used for wider range of purposes than ever before. New vocabulary was coined and the language got more complex. This process is known as creolisation and its result is a Creole.

In 18th century the majority of white landholders, civil servants and tradesmen were Irish Catholics and one third of the white population were Scottish.⁵ A significant number of young West Indians (second generation of white emigrants) were sent back to Britain to receive English education. Historians estimate that in 18th century this was true of about three-quarters of the land-proprietors' sons.⁶ The exposure to Irish and Scottish English among black population who was in everyday contact with white Europeans rose accordingly. Former inhabitants of Africa kept steadily acquiring and nativizing the vernacular and dialectal British Englishes. This exposure to various English dialects and as well the English standard (RP) lead to various local English varieties existing along with each other. Jamaican (Creole) English is now what linguists call the creole speech continuum or simply the continuum, meaning that the variety of the language closest to the standard language (the acrolect) co-exists alongside with intermediate varieties (collectively referred to as the mesolect) and the most different out-of-town varieties (known as the basilect).⁷ This range of various co-existing English varieties in this area, also known as Jamaican Creole Speech Continuum, is referred to by Jamaicans themselves as Patois or Patwa.⁸ This term, however, has never been adopted by the linguistic community.

Yet the shaping of modern Jamaican English(es) was not completed during the era of British rule. A very significant period in present history of Jamaican

³ Cassidy (1984), p.24-26

⁴ Wells (1982), p.562

⁵ See Purcell (1937) and Pitman (1970)

⁶ Lalla (1979), p.37-51

⁷ Terminology gets a little complicated at this point, see *Index of Terms* (Tab.7.1 in last chapter).

⁸ Devonish & Harry (2004), 441.

English started in 1960's when Jamaica gained independence from the United Kingdom and became a fully independent by leaving the Federation of West Indies in 1962. In late 60s and early 70s Rastafari movement and Reggae music promotion reached its peak. These phenomena were primarily aiming inward, giving some unprecedented pride to West Indians who used to feel about their (broken) English as something they used but were ashamed of. Rastafari movement, or Rastafarianism, variously defined as a religion or as a political movement, developed its own kind of communication – Rastafarian speech is probably best described as a variety of Jamaican Creole with special lexis and morphology.⁹ Reggae music, which is undeniably connected with Rastafarianism, has also contributed to Jamaican English development. Besides, the role that reggae music played in promoting Creole among Caribbean population and later even popularising it on the global scale can never be accented enough.

Since the 70's the positive approach to the mother language has increased. It is clearly recognisable among the young generations of Jamaicans. Jamaican youngsters of today tend to use Jamaican Creole more than the generations of the first half of the 20th century when they express themselves in their everyday communication. Jamaican English is being used on air on popular radio stations and TV shows around the world more often than a few decades ago, more movies with Jamaican Creole have been recently shot and more likely than ever before an average internet user may run into Jamaican language used on a web blog, chat room or a plain site.

On the other hand the globalisation has taken its toll – in modern times, due to Jamaica's proximity to the United States and the resulting close economic and cultural ties and high rates of migration (plus the ubiquity of American entertainment products and aggressive advertising and promotion) the influence of American English has been steadily increasing and have already had a deep impact on Jamaican English.

⁹ Sebba (1993), 6.

1.1. STANDARD vs. CREOLE

Since modern Jamaican English consists of more than a single dialect, there is a choice to be made as to which one should be used for the proper study material. Linguists referring to Jamaican Creole Speech Continuum distinguish at least four different dialects – the basilect, the higher and the lower mesolect and the acrolect (for differences among these varieties, see Tab.1.2.1.) Nevertheless, the nature of any of these four dialects is disputable. They serve only as virtual constructs to depict extremes within the span of the Continuum. There is actually no accurate boundary to be found in present language reality of Jamaica – no dialect can be clearly separated from the other. Still, all four of the above mentioned models show differing rate of divergence from the Standard and the features unique for a particular variety. However, the goal of my thesis is not commenting on the speculative nature of language continua and unclear boundaries of its formants. The goal is to find prominent phonological features of Jamaican English and demonstrating them on the most representative Jamaican variety.

Let us take a closer look at the varieties. Sociolinguistically speaking, a basilect is always the lowest variety of the language – it is spoken mostly in rural areas and by uneducated inhabitants of city suburbs. An acrolect, which lies at the opposite end of the scale, is the most posh variety and a mesolect is somewhere between the crudest Creole basilect speech and this “perfect“ Jamaican Standard English (acrolect).¹⁰ A mesolect is closer to an acrolect rather than a basilect because of the similarity of their speakers – both acrolect and mesolect are most likely to be spoken by inhabitants of urban areas and their neighbourhoods. Mesolect tends to abandon most of its African syntax and adopts its English counterpart instead. *In general, there is a gradual tendency of (especially higher varieties of) mesolect to approximate the higher forms of the Continuum.*¹¹

¹⁰ Irvine (1994), p.55-78.

¹¹ Irvine (1994), p.62

Tab.1.2.1.1. – A simple illustrative table of English-speaking West Indies Continuum:

Degree of Creolisation:	Variety of English-speaking West Indies Continuum:	Illustrative realisation of the variety:
<p>broad Patois, most Creole</p> <p>local English standard</p>	basilect	" <i>I'm a wok oba de-so.</i> "
	low mesolect	" <i>I'm workin ova de-so.</i> "
	high mesolect	" <i>(H)e (h)is workin' over dere.</i> "
	acrolect	" <i>He is working over there.</i> "

Tab.1.2.2. – A sample of basilectal Jamaican English (various sources) for consideration:

Ai hav twelv chiljren wit him, tuu dayd. Kieti waan wan neda buk. Ten touzn yirz ago dem did penichriet aal dem ting. Ii waan a piis a hais u bai. Wa di inglish stuor did niem agen? Sapuoz man ben get op an kyatch yu hin de? Ef dem neva bring op dis piis man, plenti piipl wuda ded. Jos bikaaz evribadi wena go luk pan fi Patsi uon. Mi ben de go dong de. Im woz a baaba ya nuu, im chrim and im sel ais kriim. Im se wan taim i yuustu sari fi dem, bot im duon sari fi dem agen. Yuu di nuu ya niem wuda go kaal? Mi wi go de sonde, but mi a go a tong nou.

1.2. WHY MESOLECT?

Basilectal and lower-mesolectal West Indian creole has many syntactic and morphological features differing sharply from anything found in traditional English varieties across the UK (see Tab.1.2.2.). The other extreme is the local standard which bears only a slight change in few phonological aspects if compared with any other standard in English-speaking world. The speech studied in this thesis is therefore not the broadest creole you can find in the countryside and mountainous regions of Jamaica, nor is it the upper-class acrolect (Jamaican Standard English) influenced extremely by British RP, which is more likely to be understood by strangers.

The speech data examined in this study comes from a mid-class neighborhood in Kingston, Jamaica and represents a usual form of Jamaican language. These recordings should form (out of the available data) a reliable sample of middle and lower-class urban speech of Jamaican English. I chose to work on mesolectal Jamaican simply because it is quite far from the standard English spoken in offices and legal institutions, instead this middle-class speech is more natural, unmonitored, informal, and dialectical. Mesolect avoids extreme features of both “broad Creole“ basilect and “near RP“ acrolect – that is why I consider mesolect the most suitable language variety for a phonological analysis.

Thus for sake of convenience every time I use term Jamaican English (or JE) later on in this study I will always be referring to the mesolectal variety of West Indies Creole.

1.3. SECONDARY DATA

English speech differs all around the world, mainly because of the different history development of the local English. Such a different kind of English is called the (local) English Variety, or, popularly the dialect. Phonological differences between various dialects concern differences in phoneme inventory (the number of phonemes employed in a particular dialect), different phonological rules (most predictable speech patterns executed by a speaker of a particular dialect) and differences in sound distribution and phoneme realization.

As a solid base for the analysis, the research data by Irvine (1994), Wells (1982) and especially Patrick (1999, 2003, 2004) will be used. Checking and

demonstrating language phenomena is possible thanks to the recorded set of JE samples. For tracing historic backgrounds of current language patterns I will consult works of Lalla (1979, 1983). Analyses of each separate phonological features, at last put together, eventually draws a demonstrative image of the dialect.

Of course, linguists use diverse methods and their prospects on same problem sometimes vary. For instance if we take Wells: “(t)he demography of the West Indies is as complicated as its linguistic history. One fact, though, is obvious: that this area of the native-English-speaking world is the only one which is overwhelmingly black in its ethnic affiliation. There are black minorities in the United States, in England, and elsewhere; but it is only in the Caribbean territories that black people constitute the great majority of speakers of English as a first language.”¹² At this point, there would be no objections on validity of the statement. The question is if it is the same about the statement’s implications. Which features of Jamaican English can be undoubtedly taken for exclusively Jamaican and which are in general marks of Black English? Many various opinions have been gathered and experts are simply unable to come to a conclusion accepted by everybody.

Although the line can not be drawn, there still is a universal agreement on majority of the subject matter. In cases where more options are possible I decided to go with Wells and Patrick. Their research in the field of synchronic Jamaican English is a long-lasting effort that has rewarded them with academic credit.

2. VOWELS

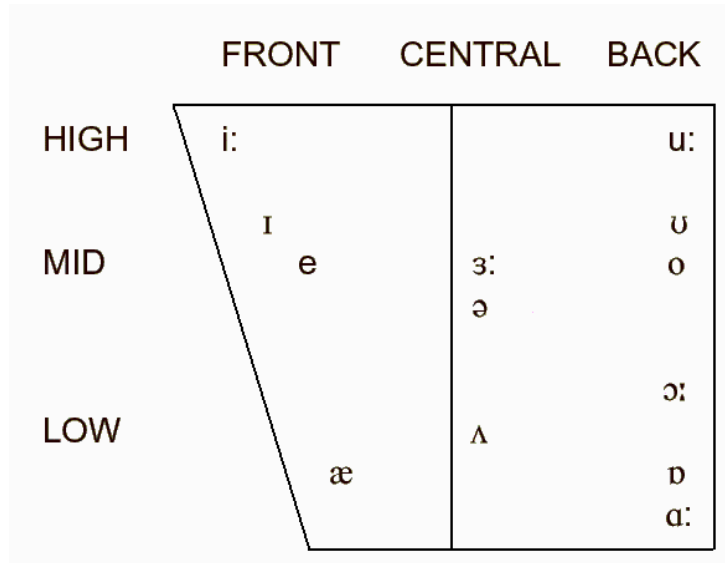
In this chapter, I will first describe vowels of Standard English. Later on I will discuss and compare various drafts of JE vowel system focusing on phonemic inventory. Next phase is listing of phoneme distribution differences and last but not least come phonological rules.

2.1. GENERAL VOWEL CHART

Dialects differ, if we speak only for vowels, in the tongue position (its body’s height, the frontness or backness of its tip) or in the degree of lip rounding. It is common for phoneticians to compare vowels employed by speakers of a particular dialect with those vowels employed by speakers of the standard British English (RP).

¹² Wells (1982), p.561

Fig.2.1.2. – RP Vowel Chart (in courtesy of Ladefoged, 1993):



2.2. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF JE VOWELS

In Standard English, either RP or GA, it is differences of vowel quality (lax/tense, tongue height) and vowel quantity (vowel length) that determinate the total number of phonemes. On the contrary, JE is less concerned with vowel length. Furthermore, phonemic inventory is considerably simplified due to the creole roots of the language. Length distinction appears to be getting more distinctive in the modern period of JE, but it still has not achieved wider phonological importance. Vowel quantity is simply not a determining element for phonemic distinction in Jamaican English. This is unsurprising as it is a well-known feature of all Africa-based dialects that vowel length and vowel quality are independent of each other. *“Many instances of length in modern JE can be traced to a V + /p/ source, where /p/ has been lost with compensatory lengthening (RP ‘more’ -> JE ‘mo’).* ¹³

Languages that emerged from pidgins have their phoneme inventory reduced as phonemic contrasts that are not common to the language start to dwindle when not used.¹⁴ This must be how JE vowel system developed. The quality distinctions between high and lower high front /I,ɪ/ or high and lower high back /ʊ,Y/ are not always maintained and further on, JE, same as other creole languages and a vast

¹³ Lalla (1983), p.122

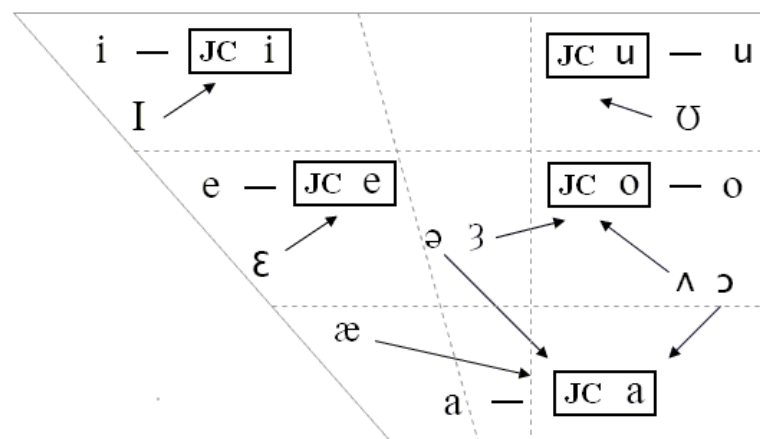
¹⁴ Hall (1966), p. 27-31

number of West African languages, has only one a-sound. There is only /ɑ/ present in JE vowel chart. The other significant feature is the absence of central or unstressed vowels /ə, ə̃, ɛ̃/, apart from the fact that the mid and low vowels are more centralised than their RP counterparts.

There is a theory behind these language symptoms. According to Hall (1966) and Lalla (1983), a few phases of vowel change have taken place during JE development. Most likely there were three changes under way during creolisation of the pidgin.

The first and the second phase reduced the whole system. In the first phase, the vowel length was removed; during the second phase a merging of vowels must have taken place to reduce quality distinctions like tense/lax and high/lower high. Nobody can be sure of the real nature of this process, but perhaps it went along the following scheme:

Fig.2.2. – Vowel Reduction scheme as suggested by Lalla (1983):



The third phase was the expansional one. In this historic phase gained the JE vowel system lengthening and diphthongisation. For example simple lower high front vowel /ɛ/ expanded to /ɛ̃/ which later in some cases diphthongised to /ɛ̃ɛ/.

There have been other phases under way since then. These next steps in vowel development completed diphthongisation and lengthening of JE vowels.

short vowels by the symbols /α/, /ε/, /I/, /o/, /Y/. This decision has been made for structural reasons.

Next I am pointing out significant vowel features of modern Jamaican English. One of the most salient features in JE is the absence of central and unstressed vowels /Θ, ↔, ε/. Central vowels are not present in JE phonemic inventory. The mid and low vowels are however more centralised than their RP counterparts. In positions where standard English applies central or unstressed vowels, a West Indian speaker is most likely to use unreduced vowels. The omission of reduced vowels actually takes place even within Jamaican diphthongs.

“ability” /↔βIλIτI/ → /αβIλIτI/
 “channel” /τΣα↔λ/ → /τΣα↔Iλ/
 “a bad man” /↔βΘδ μΘ↔/ → /α βαδ μα↔/
 “ago” /↔γ↔Y/ → /αγoY/

The Jamaican English phonemic inventory also lacks “typically British” low back rounded vowel /□/ (as in “lot”). Instead, JE makes use of a typical /o/ phoneme, described as half-rounded short central or mid-back. It is the reflex of RP /□/ or /ϕ, ε/. There are simply no real central or unstressed vowels in modern JE.

/□/ → /o/
 “chopstick” → [τΣoπ|στIk]

One of the features which has been just lately introduced to JE, although being still of a minor importance, is appearance of low back unrounded vowel /A/. This sound was adapted by means of GA intrusion and it is getting rather influential. Originally only one a-sound was employed in JE phonemic system (low front unrounded vowel /α/).

3. CONSONANTS

This chapter is divided into three indivisible segments: the first of them is dealing with consonant phonemic inventory in general, the second part focuses on consonant chart of Jamaican English and the last segment consists of phonological rules that are typically Jamaican.

3.1. GENERAL TABLE OF CONSONANTS

Following chart (Fig.3.1. – Main IPA table of consonants) lists all consonants possible in pulmonic sound production. The places of articulation are listed on top (horizontal axis), starting from the most forward articulation (bilabial) and going toward the sounds made in the back of the mouth (velar). The manners of articulation are on the left side (vertical axis) of the chart. If there is a pair of symbols in a cell, it indicates the voiced-voiceless distinction. It is given by convention that voiceless symbols are placed to the left of the voiced ones.

Fig.3.1. – Main IPA table of consonants (IPA 2005)

THE INTERNATIONAL PHONETIC ALPHABET (revised to 2005)

CONSONANTS (PULMONIC) © 2005 IPA

	Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Postalveolar	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Pharyngeal	Glottal
Plosive	p b			t d		ʈ ɖ	c ɟ	k ɡ	q ɢ		ʔ
Nasal	m	ɱ		n		ɳ	ɲ	ŋ	ɴ		
Trill				r					ʀ		
Tap or Flap				ɾ		ɽ					
Fricative	ɸ β	f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ	ʂ ʐ	ç ʝ	x ɣ	χ ʁ	ħ ʕ	h ɦ
Lateral fricative				ɬ ɮ							
Approximant		ʋ		ɹ		ɻ	j	ɰ			
Lateral approximant				l		ɭ	ʎ	ʟ			

Where symbols appear in pairs, the one to the right represents a voiced consonant. Shaded areas denote articulations judged impossible.

The chart listing all possible consonants that can be produced by egressive pulmonic airstream is too extensive for purposes of a dialectal research. Range of general tables is always too wide, they provide general overview of the language system by giving full-scale information. For this study, however, such a coverage is not necessary.

3.2. JAMAICAN ENGLISH CONSONANT CHART

To record only consonants that are actually in use in JE, one must focus on its phonemic inventory. The structure of the following chart (Fig.3.2. – Jamaican English consonant chart) is much the same as the structure of the general chart. The difference is in its contents. The JE chart shows only those symbols reflecting

consonants that are a common occurrence in a regular everyday speech of a West Indian.

There is a familiar case of ambiguity that we face when trying to give a complete list of consonant phonemes of JE. It is the same problem with Jamaican consonants that we previously experienced with Jamaican vowels – studies that have been published on the topic, namely those by Devonish & Harry (2003), Llala (1983), Patrick (1999) and Wells (1982) differ in approach and general conception so it is impossible to extract the perfect description of the consonant system.

Fortunately enough, there are still characteristics that are common for all the consonant system studies mentioned. It is especially the absence of post-alveolar fricative /Z/ and glottal fricative /η/. The other salient feature of JE consonant chart are palatal stops /χ, ʎ/. These features are maintained also in recent research papers (Beckford Wassink 2005, Meade 2003) so I eventually consider them a suitable measure to present most accurate chart of JE consonants.

Fig.3.2. – Jamaican English consonant chart

	Labial	Alveolar	Post-alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Nasal	μ	ν			N	
Stop	π β	τ δ		χ ʎ	κ γ	
Fricative	φ ω	σ ζ	Σ			
Affricate			τΣ δZ			
Approximant		◆		φ	ω	
Lateral		λ				

4. PHONETIC REALIZATION OF PHONEMES

Phonological features are an indispensable part of every dialect study. Each phonological feature of Jamaican English can be classified according to variety for which it is typical. Jamaican English is the Post-creole Language Continuum which

means that there is more than a single English variety in use in the area. In fact, there are at least four varieties co-existing in modern Jamaican English. There are characteristics for each of these varieties. I am however focusing only on mesolectal JE so this part of the study deals with phonological features that operate in high and low mesolectal variety.

Jamaican English exhibits social variety in speech. This applies even to each of the four dialects. It is a patchy nature of the Jamaican language that allows wide range of socio-linguistic features within a single variety. There are features to be found in all Jamaican dialects (unaspirated stops, clear lateral liquids, TH-Stopping, H-Dropping and affrication), then there are features that could be found in both varieties of mesolect and basilect (cluster reduction, metathesis, palatalization of velar stops) and finally there are phonological rules that are especially to be found in lower mesolect and basilect (semi-vowel insertion, V-B confusion, velarization of alveolars and deletion of word-initial fricatives). The order of phonological rules will follow this previously sketched direction.

Voiceless stops /p/,/t/,/k/ are always unaspirated in initial positions. Unaspirated stops rule is a rule which is typical for all Africa-based creoles and thus common in Caribbean area and Jamaica.

“pot“ → [pɔt]

Clear lateral liquids are used at all positions in JE. Jamaican /l/ is, as in all West Indies, clear in all environments. JE simply does not operate with its velarized allophone. So “milk” is always [mɪlk] and not [mɪɫk] as in RP or GA, where a dark lateral liquid is frequently employed.

TH-stopping is another feature which is frequently used in JE. It is one of the most striking features of Jamaican English. TH-stopping means avoiding dental fricatives, oppositions /t/ & /θ/ and /d/ & /ð/ are neutralised in words with “th“. This neutralisation is carried out by the majority of Jamaican English speakers, the only exception is the most educated West Indians who dismiss this TH-stopping law in favor of correct British-like pronunciation. All other Jamaicans make use of alveolar stops that are applied to both dental fricatives and alveolar plosives of standard accents. This makes TH-stopping one of the most significant features of JE.

Words like “faith, fate” and “thin, tin” or “though, dough” and “breathe, breed” are homophonous.

”thing” → [τIN]
 ”father” → [φᾱδ̄α]
 ”faith” → [φε̄τ]

Hypercorrect TH is “the other side of the same coin”. A linguist who deals with a dialect spoken by speakers of very wide social spectrum must take into account a degree of illiteracy among users of the dialect. In lower JE, there is no agreement on clear distinction whether to use /T/ or /τ/ in words like “faith, fate” or “thin, tin” – but this inability works as well the other way. In other words, not only that speakers incompatible with spelling can not check if it is correct to use /τ/ in the last sound of “faith”, because they can not read, but as well they can not know whether it is proper to employ /T/ for last sound of “fate”. Some of them carry out this hypercorrect TH insertion anyway. And after speakers of the whole continuum get used to both ways of pronouncing a word, they simply can not recognize the difference between using /T/ or /τ/ in for example “faith” and start to mix it randomly. A new phonological rule is set.

Next salient feature of JE is the H-dropping rule. H-dropping is performed when /η/ is in initial position. Such words like “hear” and “ear” or “hold” and “old” form allophonic pairs. H-dropping initially is in most Jamaican areas basically identical with H-dropping in England. *As a phoneme, /η/ does not exist in popular everyday speech, yet with [η] as a speech sound it is a completely different situation and this sound is quite frequent.*¹⁷ Same as in England, H-dropping is the demonstration of a low class origin – it is considered incorrect and on higher social levels avoided while speakers little lower on the social scale use it variably.

“hear, ear” → [ɪ♦]
 “have” → [αφ]

Alongside the frequent H-Dropping, there could be also heard a common use of /η/ sound in words such “egg, off, end”. This is called hypercorrect /η/ rule. A speaker attempts to upgrade his speech by attaching /η/ to words beginning with a

vowel but he/she is not successful in identifying the lexical items for which it is appropriate to employ /ŋ/. This attaching can also be used as an emphasizing device for a word beginning with a vowel.

Affrication of /t/'s is another very frequent rule. An affricated /t/ especially appears in environments where /d/ sound follows. Sometimes two phonetic rules like TH-stopping and affrication take place simultaneously (as the example below shows):

“three“ → [tʃɪd]

The African-based feature of present JE is absence of voiced alveo-palatal fricative /ʒ/ in phonemic inventory. The most common replacement for /ʒ/ in JE is an affricate:

“pleasure“ → [tʃɪləʒ]

Cluster reduction is a feature which is shared by all black Englishes. However, according to Wells (1982), it is mostly prominent in West Indies English, which tends to reduce range of possible consonant clusters. It is supposed that most frequent ellipsis of consonants is in word-final clusters, namely in those composed of past tense ending (-ed). These clusters are missing phonetically as well as morphosyntactically – Caribbean Creole does not use tense flexion. Cluster reduction is a feature “sociolinguistically sensitive“ which simply means that, again, this rule is most probable to be executed by a basilectal or lower mesolectal speaker. A reliable indicator of a social background is a pronunciation of words that consists of clusters involving an obstruent plus /t/ or clusters /vδ/ and /λδ/:

“touched“ → [tʃʌtʃ]

“send“ → [sɛnd]

“build“ → [bɪld]

Another feature of Jamaican English is metathesis. Metathesis is quite an extraordinary phonological rule, which is remarkable not for a change in quality of a sound in a word (typical for other phonological rules or features), but for a change in order of produced sounds. The most frequent type of metathesis is reversed order of

¹⁷ Wells (1982), p.568

two neighbouring phonemes. There must be a reason for this phoneme shift. Having sought for origins of the phenomena I came to three possible explanations:

Folk etymology – misleading assumptions of common people result in altered pronunciation of an unfamiliar word. This happens mainly due to misunderstanding of language ancestry of a particular word and making up a false etymology.

Differing sound laws – a loan-word is adapted into the language in its original form but its pronunciation is subject to different sound laws that prevail in the language.

Pronunciation difficulties – a word is pronounced differently not because of the speaker's laziness, it is more likely continuous difficulties faced when trying to pronounce a word properly that leads speaker to phonetical metathesis.

Of course there is only a single explanation for each case of metathesis but it is often completely inaccessible for someone not native or familiar with country's language ancestry to decide which metathesing process determined pronunciation of a particular word.

“ask” → [α]κσ]
 “turkeys” → [τΣ ♦ ακΙσ]
 “christen” → [κΙ ♦ στεν]

Palatalization of velar stops /κ,γ/ appears in JE in environments where a low vowel follows. This rule however does not apply to words in which a low vowel is pronounced on surface level yet the a-sound vowel is not present in written form of a word:

Original written form of a word:	Realisation in Standard English (RP):	Underlying Level (JE):
"cat"	/κHΘτ/	/κθατ/
"gas"	/γα]σ/	/γθασ/
"cot"	/κH □ t	/κατ/

Semi-vowel insertion is a typical rule of the lower mesolect. Labial-velar semivowel (glide) /w/ is inserted between a bilabial stop preceding a diphthong /αɪ/. Note that a certain vowel must be included in the original written form of a given word, in this case it is o-sound vowel:

Original written form of a word:	Realisation in Standard English (RP):	Underlying Level (JE):
"point"	/πHοɪντ/	/πωαɪντ/
"boy"	/βοɪ/	/βωαɪ/
"pint"	/πHαɪντ/	/παɪντ/
"buy"	/βαɪ/	/bαɪ/

Next feature of Jamaican English, which is considered rather lower mesolectal is so-called V-B Confusion. Although there have been some linguistic discussions questioning mesolectal nature of this rule (Akers 1981, Patrick 1999), there would be no mistake made if we take its classification for granted. V-B Confusion means that voiced labiodental fricative /ɸ/ is replaced by voiced bilabial stop /β/. Words like "love" and "lab" are thus allophones. This example is a clear demonstration of basilecting process taking on influence on lower mesolectal levels of the Continuum. The rule which avoids /ɸ/ seems to be of African origin – most African languages lack this phoneme in their inventory. Words "love" and "lab" are felt to be, whatever their position in a sentence might be, freely interchangeable by most basilectal and lower mesolectal speakers. This interchangeability of words like "love" and "lab" is however stigmatized, and is usually avoided by speakers with any education.¹⁸

Other situations where replacement of voiced labiodental fricative /ɸ/ by voiced bilabial stop /β/ takes place can be easily traced to anticipatory assimilation:

"give the" → [γɪβ|δα]

Velarization of alveolar consonants applies to alveolars /τ,δ/ before syllabic /λ/. This feature has the widest occurrence among socially lower-classed speakers,

¹⁸ Wells (1982), p.568

so classifying velarization of alveolar consonants as a mesolectal rule is disputable. Although it is basilectal JE where this feature gets its highest prominence it also appears in mesolectal JE very often.

”bottle” → [βακλ̄]
 ”fiddle” → [φIγλ̄]

Deletion of word-initial fricatives is the last rule that can be plausibly considered mesolectal. If this deletion takes place, it is usually on word-initial unvoiced alveolar fricative /σ/. For mesolectal and basilectal JE speaker, pairs like “spit, pit“ or “skate, Kate“ sometimes sound homophonous. This rule, however, lies on the border line of mesolectal JE and can more likely be classified as a basilectal feature. Nevertheless, even speakers of lower mesolect sometimes tend to delete an alveolar fricative in initial position. Occurrence of this rule is probably the similar to occurrence of V-B Confusion.

“scratch“ → [κρατΣ]

5. SAMPLE

The speech sample analyzed in the study is taken from the original Jamaican movie “The Rockers”. The film was shot completely in Jamaica (Kingston and nearby suburbs) in 1978 with all actors featuring being native speakers of Jamaican English. The speakers studied in the sample are Leroy “Horsemouth” Wallace and Richard “Dirty Harry” Hall. If I had to put the speakers into the context of JE classification I would most likely place them both into the mesolectal variant. However, Wallace seems to lie little closer to the bottom of mesolectal JE meanwhile Hall is a representative of an upper mesolect.

5.1. TRANSCRIPTION OF JE SAMPLE

What happened Horsie?

ω↔ Ηαπμ̄ ᾱ]♦σI

Right, no rasta you wanna see the broke rasta. What happened

♦αI/ νο ♦αστα φY ωα]σIδ↔μ β♦οκν̄ ♦αστα ω↔ απμ̄

what happened about the money that I say I give them rasta ?

ωΥαπμ β□P↔ μο]νI Δ↔δαI σε /α γIβεμ παστα

Well, rasta the man know the session be that. Me and Tommy and
ωY ♦αστ↔ Ρεμαν νοP↔ σεΣαμ βIΔα/ μIθαν τΗα]μIθ αμ

Bobby and Marquis are over that tune now for the last
βα]βIθ αμ μα]κ↔ζ α ♦ο]β↔ Δα/ τΣυν ναφ↔ P↔ λασ

two days, rasta. Man know the session business.
τΗυ δε] ♦αστα // μανο δ↔ σεΣαμ βIζ↔

Got twenty dollars a side I and I get.
γατ τωεPⓈI δαλα] σαI ΡαI ↔PⓈαI γετ

The man played two LP's (for) Bunny Wailer, rasta. Me know that.
δ↔ μαν πι↔ τυΩΕλπι βωανI πιE ♦α ♦αστα μI νο δατ

Rasta just give me the one, two man.
♦αστα δZασ γIβ|μI ↔ ω ρν ↔ μ ρⓈν

Ah, who tell the man that?
/α ωο τΗελ δ↔ μαν δα/

Me know that from bigger source ... [inaudible]
μι νο α/ φαμ βIγα σο]σ

Horsie, what you want the money to do?
α]σI ωοτ φι ωαν↔ μονI τYδ↔

Rasta no shit, man. Evil time(s) Dirty Harry I know, rasta.
♦αστα να ΣI↔ μαν // ειτ↔μE δυ↔ ΡαI ♦α νο ♦αστα

Me a (gonna) buy a bike, rasta. What you do to the bike?
μIο βαI ↔ βαIk ♦αστα // ωα φY δυ P↔ βαI/

More sell, distributing, rasta. More sell record(s). Ya see.
μο σελ διστΣ♦Iβθυτιν ♦αστα μο σελ ♦εκα] φ↔ σι

Bunny Wailer know they're no good man (for) Wailer's business rasta.
βαI ♦αIλ↔ νοα δε]νο γYδ μαν ο ωαIλ↔ βIζνIσ ♦αστα]

That's true, I am a brethren. And I say true is up since

Δετσ τΣ♦ιθαμ ↔ β♦∈δΖΙν ↔ να σε αν τΣρΥ ιΡαπ σΙντσ

I prove this to my ideal(s), see. I – I support that
αΙ π♦υβΙσ τΥ μα] αδι↔λ σι // αΙ αΙ σΥπο] Δετ

to the fullness, seen. Yes sir. I lend you the money, seen?
τΥ δ↔ φΥλνΕσ σιν // φΕσα] // α] λΙν φα ↔ μονΙ σιν

Sure. Control this. Man cool, yo! A'ight. All right.
Σο] ♦ // κΗαντΣ♦ο] λ ΔΙσ // μαν κΗυλ φο] // α] Ι // αΙ] τ

Nice to meet you. I-rie! Yes sir.
νΕσ τ↔ μιτΣε] // αΙ ♦ ι // φεσα]

5.2. SAMPLE ANALYSIS

The analysis of the sample is based on the smaller segments of the speech recording that correspond to particular features of Jamaican English. I am comparing the theoretical predictions with the actual occurrence of each feature. Arrangement of segments follows the traditional order starting with most common phonological features of mesolect and closing with those least frequent (the last features listed are very close to basilect).

It is not socio-linguistics what is the key factor, though we might be able to comment on the social background of the speakers from the results of this study. The main point is to find the true relation of theoretical knowledge to reality. To what extent do all those scholarly theories reflect real use of the features in the language?

The first phonological feature are unaspirated stops. This feature should be easily detected in every random speech recording as it is listed as one of the most common and prominent features of JE. However, frequent use of unaspirated stops seems to be a myth. With only 4 out of 10 cases showing this rule being actually carried out and the rest revealing a clear aspiration, I conclude that alleged omnipresence of the unaspirated rule remains something of a mystery.¹⁹

“control“ → [κΗαντΣ♦ο] λ]
“cool“ → [κΗυλ]

¹⁹ See and hear files in a “Unaspirated stops“ folder on the CD attached to the study.

“played“ → [πι↔→]
 “tell“ → [τHελ]
 “Tommy“ → [τHᾱμI]

Clear lateral liquids is the next feature which is announced to be one of the most common features of Jamaican English. Laterals in all positions should be clear, no velarized laterals should take place in any Jamaican conversation. This rule, at least from available data, seems to be true. Indeed, there are no other liquids than clear ones present in the sample, so this rule fully reflects the language reality.²⁰

“cool“ → [κHυλ]
 “fullness“ → [φYλνEσ]
 “sell“ → [σελ]

TH-stopping is another rule that is said to be universally used in JE. TH-stopping is according to Wells (1982) and Rickford (1987) one of the most striking Jamaican English features. I checked whether dental fricatives are truly neutralised in words that include “th“. Both speakers from the sample tend to prefer alveolar stops to dental fricatives.²¹

“control this“ → [κHαvτΣ♦ο̄λ δIσ]
 “support that“ → [σYπō Δετ]
 “know that“ → [vo δατ]
 “see the broke“ → [σIδ↔μ β♦οκv̄]
 “the man that“ → [δ↔μav δα/]

Hypercorrect TH and hypercorrect H were nowhere to be found in the sample. I guess the real nature of this phenomenon must be truly basilectal with appearance of such features reduced to only those speakers who cannot read and are therefore unable to check the proper spelling and pronunciation of a word. This assumption can be supported by the both speakers’ background. Neither Wallace or Hall are speakers of basilectal variant of JE so that might be the reason why there is no TH or H hypercorrection in the sample.

²⁰ See files of “Lateral liquids“ folder on the CD.

²¹ See files of “TH-stopping“ folder on the CD.

H-dropping is another prominent rule of Jamaican English. Usually it is the case of initial position where we can predict this rule to take place. There are only three words that begin with /η/ in the sample and they are all subjects to H-dropping. I can say it is the perfect proof for considering H-dropping a salient feature of Jamaican English. Theory in this case accurately reflects the real state of the rule's usage.²²

“Dirty Harry“ → [δυ↔Pα♦Iα]
 “Horsie“ → [α]σI
 “what happened“ → [ω↔απμ]

Affrication is also very frequently employed in the sample. There are affricates taking prominence in words where front high vowel /υ/ follows (“tune”), there are affricates in words where two phonetic rules like TH-stopping and affrication take place simultaneously (“a brethren“) and of course, there are affricated /τ/'s appearing in environments where /♦/ sound follows.²³

“a brethren“ → [↔β♦∈δZIυ]
 “control this“ → [κHαντΣ♦ο]λ δIσ
 “distributing“ → [δIστΣ♦IβθυτIυ]
 “tune“ → [τΣυυ]

Cluster reduction is a common feature of all West Indies Englishes. The most frequent ellipsis of consonants is in word-final clusters, namely in those including past tense ending. Again, there was no problem detecting the rule in the sample.²⁴

“I lend“ → [α]λIυ
 “records“ → [♦εκκ]
 “what happened“ → [ω↔απμ]

Even though there is no evidence of a single occurrence of metathesis in the sample I would rather hold back any resolution. If there is not an example of metathesis in a minute-long recording does not mean it is an uncommon phenomena or something unfamiliar to mesolectal speakers. Simply said, by a common sense we

²² See files of “H-dropping“ folder on the CD

²³ See files of “Affrication“ folder on the CD

know that most words where metathesing process takes place are of a different language origin, and such words are rarely used on a daily basis by ordinary Jamaicans. Furthermore, metathesis is a rule which is more common to basilectal variants of Jamaican English.

Frequency of palatalization of velar stops is the next rule which cannot be empirically measured due to a low occurrence of syllables beginning with velar stops and followed by a low vowel.

We face the same situation when searching for representatives of a semi-vowel insertion. Nor any knowledge is made about the true nature of V-B Confusion since the only two detected cases of a voiced labiodental fricative /ɸ/ being replaced for voiced bilabial stop /β/ turns out to be in the first case an ordinary anticipatory assimilation and the phoneme employed in the other case being auditory disputable.²⁵

“give them“ → [γIβεμ]
 “are over“ → [α♦o |β↔]

Equally to previous features we cannot make any statements on occurrence of velarization of alveolars and deletion of fricatives. Although it was expected there would be no trace of these Creole features in mesolectal variants of the Jamaican Continuum, we still cannot take the absence of this rule as the satisfying evidence implying that such rules can never surface into mesolectal speech. The sample is not long enough for us to judge.

5.3. CONCLUSION

The intention of my paper was to confront theoretical description of one of the Jamaican varieties with a recorded sample of actual speech of this dialect. Although it is not always easy to unite many different approaches and terminologies of various scholars, it was eventually the recorded sample which was problematic – its length did not grant occurrence of all Jamaican English features listed in the theoretical part of the paper. Next thing which must be taken in account is the performed nature of the sample rather than natural flow of the speech. Anyways, if

²⁴ See files of “Cluster reduction“ folder on the CD

²⁵ See files of “V-B Confusion“ folder on the CD

we get over the difficulties with the quality of the recording, we can consider it an illustrative sketch that gives us a rough insight into Jamaican phonology.

By comparing this sample with the summary of JE features gathered from academic sources – books, papers and articles, we come to a rather surprising conclusion. Despite the questionable character of the recording, there are still most of the theoretically predicted mesolectal features of Jamaican English also appearing in the sample. This is true about the use of clear lateral liquids, TH-stopping, H-dropping, affrication and cluster reduction. Unaspirated stops, which is considered one of the most common and prominent mesolectal features was, however, nowhere to be found in the sample. The other features analyzed in the paper, though by some linguists believed to be mesolectal, proved to be very close to the lower (basilectal) forms of the Continuum. These features (hypercorrect TH & H, palatalization of velar stops, velarization of alveolars, V-B confusion, deletion of fricatives and metathesis) were little or not ever performed as both of the speakers seem to avoid elements of basilectal speech.

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7. INDEX OF TERMS

Tab.7.1 – Index of terms:

Acrolect	The highest variety of the English-speaking West Indies continuum, basically it is the speech of educated crust of Jamaican professionals. Acrolect is Jamaica's local English standard (i.e. Jamaican English Standard).
Basilect	The lowest variety of the <i>continuum</i> , this English variety differs from Standard English most distinctively. Sociolinguistically speaking, it is the language of rural areas and poor outskirts.
Continuum	For purpose of this study I use the term <i>continuum</i> in reference to English-speaking " <i>West Indies Continuum</i> " or " <i>Jamaican Creole Speech Continuum</i> " respectively. Jamaican Creole Speech Continuum is a range of various language varieties that have developed due to the typical situation of a Creole language being in constant contact with its standard (in this case Jamaican Standard English) and other English varieties. This exposure resulted in various co-existing dialects.
Creole	Creole is the pidgin used as the first language. Creole becomes more complex than the former pidgin since it serves for all various purposes not only the original crude dealings, see " <i>Pidgin</i> ".
Jamaican Standard English	i.e. educated West Indian English (also called the Jamaican acrolect), differs only trivially from other varieties of standard English.
JE	In this study JE refers not to Jamaican Standard English but instead to Jamaican Mesolect, the most frequent present-day local English variety.
Mesolect	The in-between variety of the language spectrum (<i>continuum</i>), mesolect is the most wide-spread Jamaican variety and there can be distinguished its various degrees (eg. low or high mesolect).
Patois	The French loan word representing the local term for Jamaican Creole, sometimes spelled <i>Patwa</i> .
Patwa	see " <i>Patois</i> ".
Pidgin	Originally a provisory artificial form of communication developed between groups of speakers of differing languages who, having no language in common base their mutual understanding on a highly simplified version of the language of one group, with considerable influence from the language of the other group. In this sense a pidgin has no native speakers.
West Indies	Refers to islands which used to be or still are British territories located in the Caribbean Sea. British West Indies comprise of many islands of Greater and Lesser Antilles.

8. SUMMARY

Náplní této práce je jamajská angličtina nejrozšířenějšího typu. Hlavním cílem, který studie sleduje je shromáždění a utřídění akademických poznatků na téma jamajské angličtiny, a konfrontace takto vytvořeného systému se skutečným jazykem zastoupeným nahrávkou jamajské řeči.

Teoretická část se skládá z postihnutí fonetických rysů jamajské angličtiny – přesněji mezolektální varianty post-kreolního dialektu karibského typu – a načrtnutí nejpravděpodobnějšího samohláskového a souhláskového systému a jejich srovnání s britským standardem (RP). Dále následuje výčet a popis fonetických jevů a znaků typických pro tento dialekt. Tato součást teoretické přípravy obsahuje nejen charakteristické fenomény, které se běžně vyskytují v mezolektální variantě jamajské angličtiny či v jamajské angličtině obecně, ale také projevy a tendence nižších sfér post-kreolního kontinua, které hraničí a v mnoha případech i sounáleží se znaky bazilektálních variant jamajské angličtiny. Do první skupiny byly zahrnuty tyto jevy: “unaspirated stops”, “clear lateral liquids”, “TH-stopping”, “H-dropping”, “affrication”, “cluster reduction”, “metathesis”. Druhá skupina jevů obsahuje “semi-vowel insertion”, “V-B confusion”, “velarization of alveolars”, “deletion of word-initial fricatives” a “hypercorrect TH” a “hypercorrect H”.

Praktická část práce, tedy nahrávka živé řeči, je zastoupena minutovým úryvkem z původního jamajského filmu “The Rockers”. Film byl celý natočen v roce 1978 na Jamajce a všichni herci v něm účinkující jsou rodilými mluvčími aktivně užívajícími jamajský dialekt angličtiny.

Závěr plynoucí ze srovnání obou částí však není zcela nezpochybnitelný, ačkoliv se podařilo nalézt většinu charakteristických rysů mezolektální angličtiny (výjimkou jsou snad jen “unaspirated stops”) a dokázána tak věrohodnost syntézy utříděných teorií, musíme brát v potaz hlavně jistou problematičnost použité nahrávky. Řeč užitá ve filmu má totiž hodně daleko k řeči přirozené, což je první fakt, který může významně ovlivnit výskyt a četnost fonetických jevů. Další věci jsou délka nahrávky a její kvalita, které znemožňují dokonalejší analýzu řeči a tím pádem i srovnání obou částí studie.

Přes veškeré nedostatky použitých zdrojů však studie může sloužit za ilustrativní popis fonetických aspektů jamajské angličtiny a umožnit letmé nahlédnutí do jedné z variant angličtiny karibské oblasti.