

The Perception of Mixed Utterances by Jamaican Bilinguals

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1. Introduction

Language in Jamaica is marked by high variation (Patrick, 2004 as cited in Kennedy, 2017) among speakers across all linguistic contexts (Christie, 2003). This is caused by two broad factors: firstly, by the varying linguistic repertoires among speakers, with some speakers being dominant Jamaican Creole (JC) speakers, some dominant Standard Jamaican English speakers (SJE), and some balanced bilinguals (Kennedy, 2017) and secondly, by the blurred boundary between English, the language brought to the island by British colonizers in 1655, and Jamaican Creole, the de facto National language of the country and language of the majority (Farquharson, 2013), whose genesis is attributed to language contact between speakers of English and various African languages during the period of colonization in the country. Because of the relationship between these languages in their structure and usage, they are proposed to exist on a continuum, with forms closer to Jamaican Creole being *basilectal* forms at one end and forms closer to Mainstream English being *acrolectal* forms on the other end (DeCamp, 1971). These however, are idealized forms, as most speech lies between poles, and speech found here are called *mesolectal* forms. These forms are likely the result of language mixing that has been present since the creation of JC (Patrick, 2013) and continued contact between JC and its lexifier, SJE.

The purpose of this research project is to determine how Jamaican speakers process linguistic forms that do not neatly belong to either language by observing where they judge linguistic utterances to belong on a visual depiction of the proposed language continuum. The placement of these utterances by participants of this study will be tested against two social variables: the geographical location of speakers and their language attitudes. The first variable will be tested by including speech perception by Jamaicans living in the island and those living in the diaspora, namely various cities in Canada and the United States of America. The second variable will be tested by asking participants about their attitudes

towards language use in Jamaican contexts, specifically JC that has held an inferior social status to SJE in Jamaica, because of its perception as a broken variety of English (Kouwenberg et al., 2011), associated with poverty and a lack of education (Christie, 2003).

2. Background

The Jamaican language situation

In 1655, English was brought to the island of Jamaica through British colonizers. English has been the language of prestige (Beckford-Wassink, 1999) and the official language of the country for over 300 years (Sebba, 1993). Jamaican Creole is argued to have been formed because of the need for enslaved Africans who were speakers of different languages to communicate with each other (Kennedy, 2017; Lefebvre, 1998). These African languages include Akan, Koongo and Gbe (Farquharson, 2013) and are referred to as *substrate* languages, while English is the *superstrate* language because it is the primary lexifier of the Creole. In describing early colonial language contact, Siegel (2003) argues that “in attempting to speak a common L2, individuals transfer features from their L1 (the substrate languages) onto forms of the L2. This L2 may be some form of the superstrate language or a contact variety (a pidgin) lexified by the superstrate.” (p. 186).

The variation in language that results from the coexistence of English and Jamaican Creole is a common thread in literature about language in the country (Deuber, 2014). Today, the population is made up of mostly dominant Jamaican Creole speakers (Farquharson, 2013). There are also dominant Jamaican English speakers and balanced bilingual speakers of both languages. Additionally, there is a smaller Jamaican Sign Language Speech community and small speech communities of immigrants or their descendants who speak heritage languages. For example, a Jamaican participant of this study, residing in Jamaica listed Malayalam as the language that they speak with family.

English is the official language of education, government, the law (Brown-Blake, 2008) and virtually every other formal institutional setting. However, Jamaican Creole is also integrated into these contexts. The educated minority are said to be able to use both languages, using JC in private informal settings and SJE in public, formal settings (Devonish & Harry, 2008).

In the eyes of many Jamaicans, Jamaican Creole's history as the language associated firstly with slavery (Sebba, 1993), and later a lack of education (Christie, 2003) has caused it to maintain a lower status to English. Dominant Jamaican Creole speakers are often looked down on and legislatively disadvantaged because they cannot access governmental services in their primary language and are consequently discriminated against. (Walters, 2017).

One of the results of this discrimination is the use of hypercorrected forms by some dominant Jamaican Creole speakers (Pollard, 2001), for instance an over usage of the interdental fricative /θ/ in contexts where an alveolar stop /t/ would be required, for example /θru/ for /true/. These hypercorrected forms are then mocked by speakers with a greater competence in English as indicating a lack of intelligence.

Conversely, dominant Jamaican English speakers are judged if they cannot also communicate in Jamaican Creole, which is tied to an authentic Jamaican identity. An informant from research by Peter Patrick (1995) is quoted in Mair (2002) as saying that speaking English in certain linguistic contexts will result in a speaker being deemed *stush* (snobbish or uptight). This shows that there is a social value among Jamaicans in being able to command a linguistic range that includes both English and Jamaican Creole.

The Post-Creole Continuum

The Jamaican language situation has been a contested area of research in the field of Creole Linguistics since at least the 1960s (DeCamp, 1971; Bailey, 1971). DeCamp (1971)

argued for decreolization, which is the process by which an existing creole language gradually assimilates to the lexifier language. This has also been explained as a post-creole continuum consisting of one language with various forms. According to DeCamp (1971) as cited in Patrick (1999), speakers are said to occupy or speak a span of dialects along the continuum rather than one variety. It has been described as a “chain of minimally distinct speech varieties” by Patrick (2013) who emphasizes the fact that even towards the acrolectal point of the continuum, that speech “merges subtly” into what is known as Standard Jamaican English (SJE). This suggests that the distinctions between what is categorized as JC and SJE are very nuanced. Farquharson (2013) suggests that if the basilect and mesolect are collapsed, then 80% of the Jamaican population speaks Jamaican Creole.

DeCamp (1971) as cited in Day (1973) argued that decreolization occurs in societies where the superstrate is viewed as more prestigious than the substrate, which is the case in Jamaica. He proposed that because of this, gradual changes are expected in the structure of the Creole, including the adoption of semantic, syntactic, phonological or morphological features of the superstrate language.

It has also been suggested that demarcating speech as belonging to one or the other language can only be done on a clausal level (Deuber, 2014, p. 5) because beyond this, speakers are free to “to shift language varieties as their linguistic repertoires allow and as social factors require.” (Devonish 2003, p. 159 as cited in Deuber, 2014). It is also the case that speech that would traditionally not be seen as English is permitted and used in linguistic contexts where English is expected. Therefore, it is difficult to only look at ‘English’ features when observing spoken language in Jamaica (Deuber, 2014, p. 5)

Features that Distinguish JC and English

The notion of the (post) creole continuum has continued to shape the debate about variation within JC and SJE and between them, with scholars proposing different lexical, phonological, morphological, or syntactic criteria to aid in identifying varieties along the continuum. DeCamp (1971) looked at the implicational relationships between feature variables such as interdental fricatives versus th-stopping, past negator with particles in JC *no ben* as opposed to English *didn't* and lexical differences such as the use of *pikni* over *child* or *nana* over *granny* (as cited in Patrick, 1999, p. 8).

In terms of phonological features, there are numerous differences between JC and SJE. One phonological feature that has been looked at extensively is palatal glides. According to Patrick (1999) these occur after fronted velar stops and before low vowels in JC. This variable is said to exist in the speech of acrolectal speakers (Miller, 1987 and Irvine, 1988 as cited in Patrick, 1999). Examples of this JC variant include *kyar* (car), *kyan* (can), *kyatch* (catch), *kyandle* (candle), *gyas* (gas), *Kyanada* (Canada) and *kyari* (carry) (taken from Patrick, 1999, p. 100).

Other phonological variables that have been extensively studied in distinguishing JC from SJE features include interdental fricatives and the lack thereof in JC, the use of /a/ in places where /ɔ/ would be used in English and pre-consonantal/ pre-rhotic mid tense vowels /e/ and /o/ (Irvine, 2018).

In terms of morphosyntactic variables, Deuber (2009) lists the syntax of direct wh-questions, copula forms, past marking, agreement marking on verbs, main verb negation, noun morphology and pronoun morphology as the variables that “cover the most important Creole features that can be subjected to quantitative analysis” (p.9).

For example, Wh- sentences differ between Mainstream English and Jamaican Creole because the former uses do-support while the other uses clefting as seen in example (1)

(1) A-huu put i de?

A who put it there?

“Who put it there?”

(taken from Bailey, 1966, p. 88)

Deuber (2009) concludes that non-standard questions that do not include do-support are a feature of informal educated speech in Jamaica. Kortmann and Szmrecsanyi (2004) as cited in Deuber (2009, p. 11) are credited with pointing out that nonstandard questions lacking inversion are present in other varieties of English and are features of spontaneous English speech in general.

Another feature that has been studied in exploring variation is past tense marking. For instance, the use of the English *-ed* morpheme as opposed to past marking with a pre-posed past tense morpheme in JC. Mair (2002) argues that influence from JC results in a lack of the *-ed* morpheme in phrases like *as oppose to* (instead of *as opposed to*) as found in the Jamaican International Corpus of English (ICE) database (Mair, 2002).

Code switching

Another perspective on the language situation in Jamaica involves the notion of codeswitching. This is defined as “as an individual’s use of two or more language varieties in the same speech event or exchange” (Woolard, 2004, p. 73). Codeswitching can occur within a sentence or across sentences. Bailey (1971) agrees with the concept of Jamaican Creole and Jamaican English as the poles of a language continuum, however she differs from researchers such as DeCamp by arguing that all language that seems to fall between these two poles actually belongs to one of the named languages, and that speakers still recognize the presence of a primary language, even when juxtaposed with another language through codeswitching or borrowing. This perspective of speech in Jamaica consisting of frequent codeswitching has

been adopted by other linguists. Christie (2003) argues that Jamaicans across all social classes frequently switch between the two languages for different social purposes. Speakers may codeswitch from English to Jamaican Creole to perform their Jamaican identity, for humour or emphasis. Conversely, speakers may switch from Jamaican Creole to English to impress interlocutors or to discuss a serious matter. Codeswitching from the perspective of the insertion of Jamaican Creole into English includes not only accent, but also syntactic and lexical borrowing. (Mair, 2002).

This view of codeswitching presupposes that in Jamaica, there are two distinct languages in the mind of speakers and that there is a salient contrast between them that speakers use to index social meaning. This is related to a continuum proposed by Auer (1999) that includes Codeswitching (CS) and Fused Lects (FL) at either pole with Language Mixing (LM) in between them. Codeswitching is defined in this continuum as cases where the switching between two distinct codes is seen and interpreted as a meaningful event by speakers. This is contrasted with Language Mixing that occurs when the use of two codes is meaningful to participants because it indicates the social meaning of their bilingualism. At the other end of the continuum, Fused Lects describe cases where the languages stabilize and form mixed varieties. In essence, the continuum is based on whether juxtaposition is locally meaningful or not.

Auer's analysis can arguably be applied to the language situation in Jamaica. The language situation could involve a gradual codeswitch of features traditionally associated with either pole. It is the switching and borrowing of these features that determines the place of an utterance along the continuum (Patrick, 1999). Notwithstanding the formal description of these features and the continuum by linguists, it is less clear how speakers separate and process speech as belonging to either JC, SJE or as a mixture of the two because speakers

may differ in their perception of what is considered English and what is considered JC. This therefore complicates the analysis of codeswitching.

It has also been found that speakers employ some lexical, syntactic, and phonological JC features in their English speech but avoid using others (Irvine-Sobers, 2018), which suggests that some features are more salient than others, and that some features may be judged as being closer to the JC pole, and others closer to the SJE pole.

Feature Weaving

The use and combination of specific linguistic features thus affect the perception of speech as being JC or SJE. This suggests that an individual speaker's linguistic repertoire could influence how speech is perceived along the continuum. This is corroborated by Devonish & Harry (2008) who state that the idealised variety of English (SJE) is supposedly made available to speakers through formal education. Speakers can therefore approximate this variety to varying extents based on their exposure to the language. Conversely, speakers approximate Jamaican Creole to varying degrees and may fall short due to influence from English features. They therefore argue that the more education a speaker has, the more influence their JC speech will have from SJE features.

Kennedy (2017) found that speakers use varying combinations of English and Jamaican Creole features, *weaving* them together in everyday speech leading to mesolectal/mixed utterances. She argues that the practice of feature weaving becomes linguistic input for children, causing it to continue across generations. A feature weaving approach is applicable to this study, since it manipulates different combinations of English and Jamaican Creole features and seeks to determine how speakers perceive these combinations.

Language in the Jamaican diaspora

At various times during history, Jamaicans have migrated to other countries, often countries where English is the dominant language, bringing their language (Jamaican Creole/Patois) with them. Caribbean Creoles when transferred to a diaspora are said to continue to be used by immigrants and their descendants but in a simplified form (Mair, 2003). In its new environment, the Creole language changes from being the majority language used subconsciously by speakers to an optional language “used by blacks to “perform” their ethnicity and negotiate community boundaries when necessary or desirable.” (p. 232).

There are hundreds of thousands of Jamaicans in the UK, USA and Canada (Farquharson, 2013) and the differences between their language and that of their new home has been acknowledged by institutions in countries they have immigrated to. In London, as early as the 1950’s, children of West Indian immigrants were identified as speaking a Creole language at school (Sebba, 1993).

Rosen and Burgess 1980 (as cited in Sebba, 1993) are quoted as saying:

“...the range of different patois spoken reflects both the complexity of the linguistic situation in the Caribbean and also the modifications to these being made by children growing up within the overseas speech communities in London.”

This quote provides evidence for the complex language situation in the Caribbean that was then transferred to the London diaspora, resulting in the speech of Jamaicans to be said to consist of language mixing. It points to the difficulty in defining language as Creole or not where London Jamaican is concerned. British and Jamaican varieties of Jamaican Creole are said to be in a dynamic relationship because there is constant interaction between Jamaicans in the Caribbean and Jamaicans in Britain, with both groups having speakers who travel back and forth.

A similar situation obtains in the case of Jamaican immigrants to Canada. Jamaican Creole is “hyper-mobile” (Hinrichs, 2011), spread far and wide and retained by speakers, and is often passed down to the second generation while Jamaican English is often traded in favour of Canadian English by these speakers. Jamaican Creole is likely retained as a marker of cultural identity. Jamaicans in Canada are not isolated from Jamaicans living in Jamaica and vice versa. Additionally, speakers in the Toronto diaspora have access to linguistic features from Jamaican Creole and Canadian English and draw from both (Hinrichs, 2011).

Malcolm (2021) compared cross-linguistic influence among bilingual English and Jamaican Creole speakers in Jamaica and in New York. Bidirectional cross-linguistic influence was found in both groups with the group in New York exhibiting more cross-linguistic influence from English to Jamaican Creole, and the group in Jamaica exhibiting more cross-linguistic influence from Jamaican Creole to English. It was concluded that this was related to the language possibly used more by speakers in their daily lives (Jamaican Creole in Jamaica and English in New York). This is significant to the present research because it could be indicative of trends among participants in Jamaica and the Jamaicans living in a North American diaspora, in Canada and the United States.

Similarly, Patrick (1999) as cited in Deuber (2014:17) suggests that speakers with a full command of English view mesolectal forms as Jamaican Creole, while dominant Jamaican Creole speakers view mesolectal forms as English. Patrick (1999) as cited in Deuber (2009) also found a large consensus among respondents in Jamaica about what constitutes Jamaican Creole but not as much consensus about what constitutes English.

3. Methodology

The methodology chosen for this project was an online survey, powered by Survey Monkey. This methodology was easy to distribute among participants from different

geographical locations and of different social demographics. The survey was completed by Jamaicans living in Jamaica and those living in Canada and the United States of America to compare the results of all three groups.

This method was also chosen because it provided a certain level of anonymity for respondents. The survey questions were influenced by the work of Hoffman and Walker (2010), with some of the demographic questions adapted from this paper. Their research looked at the correlation between ethnic identity and linguistic variation in Toronto, Canada. The issue of identity and language use is paramount to this research that seeks to look at the possible impact of linguistic and social identity as well as language attitudes on speech perception.

The survey consisted of sixteen demographic questions and eight sample sentences with a sliding scale for participants to indicate where they would place a sentence along the Post-Creole Continuum. The utterances were recorded by a Jamaican-born man living in Toronto, Canada. He was chosen because he is a graduate of the Undergraduate Linguistics program at York University, and is therefore aware of seemingly small phonological, syntactic and morphological differences between the two languages. He was also able to read phonetic spellings of utterances which ensured that the most accurate recordings were made.

The recorded sentences

The following sentences were recorded by the aforementioned Jamaican:

1. wɪ goɪn tu di su:pa ma:kɪt
2. wɪ wɜnt dɪzɪ a:ftə:ɪ tʃə:tʃ
3. wəʃ yʊ fɪɛs bɪfʊoɪ yʊ go: tʊ sku:l
4. ʃɪ ʒos ke:m ho:m
5. te:k ðə blɪtə aʊt ɒv ðə fɪndʒ
6. do:z pi:pl ə:lwe:z kom ə:rlɪ

7. mɪ dɔ:ta ɡɒt into tʃɒbl at sku:l

8. a neva no: se ɪm goɪn tʊ sku:l

The sentences were created to model the natural mesolectal speech of actual Jamaicans.

The variables

The following variables have been described as distinguishing JC from SJE or are used to signal different points along the continuum. Some variables and their respective variants are not very salient to speakers, while others are common distinguishers for JC versus SJE speech. These variables were chosen for analysis in this research project to determine whether they are significant variables in the perception of speech along the continuum by speakers. One or more variables were manipulated in each sentence to determine whether speakers used them to perceive language as Jamaican Creole or English. As seen above, there were eight sentences in total and these will be discussed in further detail in the Results and Discussion section of the paper.

Morphosyntactic Variables

- Progressive aspect: Progressive aspect is marked by the copula and the /ing/ suffix in English while in JC, it is marked by the aspect particle /a/ before an uninflected verb (Patrick, 2013; Farquharson 2013). Additionally, a null copula is an accepted feature of Jamaican Creole in marking the habitual aspect in JC.
 - Velar vs alveolar nasal: For some English words that end in *-ing*, their ending is *-in* in JC for example the word *going*. This feature is also found in other varieties of English.

- Past tense marking: Simple past tense is marked by –ed and or changes to the verb stem in English, while in JC, it may be unmarked on active verbs, or may be marked by a preverbal tense-mood-aspect marker (Durrleman-Tame, 2008).
- Personal pronouns: English distinguishes between subject, object and possessive pronouns, (e.g. *I, me, myself*), while in Jamaican Creole, a single form is used in all three syntactic environments (e.g. *mi*) (Farquharson, 2013). While Jamaican Creole and English thus share certain pronoun forms (with different pronunciations), these may be used in different grammatical environments, for example *mi* (my/I) or *dem* (they). It is predicted that the choice of pronoun (whether JC or SJE) especially sentence-initially in subject position will be significant to participants when perceiving an utterance along the continuum. Another variant of the first-person singular pronoun is *A* for *I* or *mi* which is seen in Sentence 8 of the test sentences.

Phonological Variables

- Monophthongs vs Diphthongs: In Jamaican speech, a preconsonantal mid-tense vowel can be produced as a monophthong or diphthong. The diphthongs [ie] and [uo] in this context are associated with JC, while the monophthongs [e] and [o] are associated with SJE (Devonish & Harry, 2008; Beckford-Wassink, 2001; Irvine-Sobers, 2018).
- Consonant cluster simplification: In some phonological environments, consonant clusters are simplified in JC, resulting in the deletion of one of the consonants, for example /t/ in *just* /jos/ (Akers, 1981). Patrick (1999) refers to this as T/D deletion and found that it occurs in otherwise Standard English utterances. It is therefore possible that this cluster simplification is a JC feature that converges

with English through mesolectal speech, causing it to be acceptable in English speech. Patrick (1999) found that variation of this form by speakers was influenced by “age, sex, social status and education of speakers” (p. 124). Therefore, the results may show trends that reflect a similar pattern where these variables affect whether participants judge sentences to be closer to the basilectal end or acrolectal end of the schematized continuum. T/D deletion is also influenced by the preceding and following linguistic environments of the segment being deleted. This type of deletion is not unique to Jamaica as consonant cluster deletion, including T/D deletion is found in many other varieties of English.

- Retraction and R-deletion: This refers to cases of words beginning with /tr/ becoming the affricate /tʃ/ in words such as /truck/. In basilectal varieties, the /r/ is also deleted resulting in words like /chok/ (truck). (Akers, 1981).
- Interdental fricative deletion/ Th-stopping: This process describes the changing of /th/ sounds [θ̪] and [θ] as in the words *this* and *think* to stop consonants [d] and [t] as in the words *dis* and *tink* by speakers (Akers, 1981). This feature is not unique to Jamaican speech and is a feature of other varieties of English.
- Post-vocalic Rhoticity: This feature refers to words that end in *-er* in Standard English orthography. The equivalent variant for SJE /er/ in JC is [a] or [ʌ] in words such as *mada* (mother) or *waata* (water). Jamaican Creole is argued to be non-rhotic (Farquharson, 2013). This differs from SJE but non-rhotic pronunciations can be heard in contexts where Jamaican English is expected for example, in a word such as *suupamaakit* (supermarket). This is not unique to Jamaican speech as it can be found in many varieties of English.

4. Results

Demographic identification

The survey was circulated virtually on WhatsApp from July 13-19, 2023. Originally, the survey was targeted towards Jamaicans living in Jamaica and Canada however, it was completed by Jamaicans living in Jamaica, Canada, and The United States of America. 114 results were gathered and of this number, 110 were used for analysis. Four participants were excluded because they did not provide any demographic information. The graphs reflect the number of participants for each question rather than percentages.

The year of birth of participants ranged from 1940-2004. Figure 1 shows the age of participants, differentiated by country. It is important to note that many participants were born between 1960-1970.

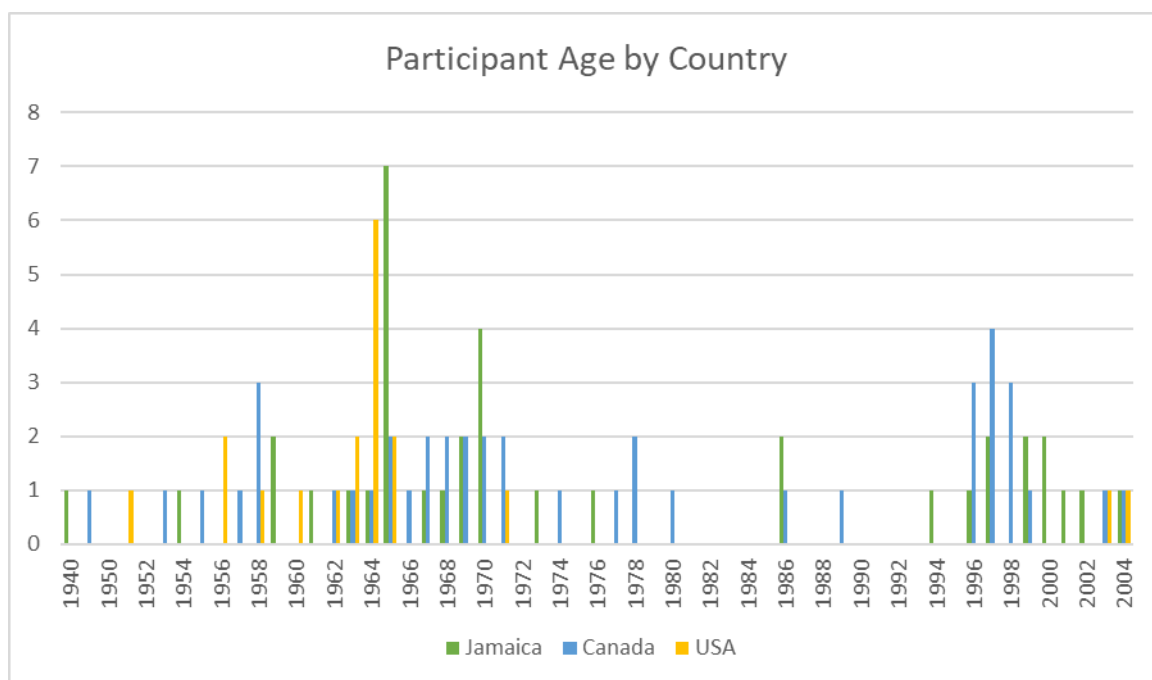


Figure 1. Participant Age by Country

Figure 2 illustrates the gender of participants by their respective country. In Jamaica and the USA, there were more male participants than female while the opposite obtained for participants in Canada. Additionally, two participants identified as non-binary in Jamaica and

several participants indicated that they preferred not to disclose their gender or left the question blank.

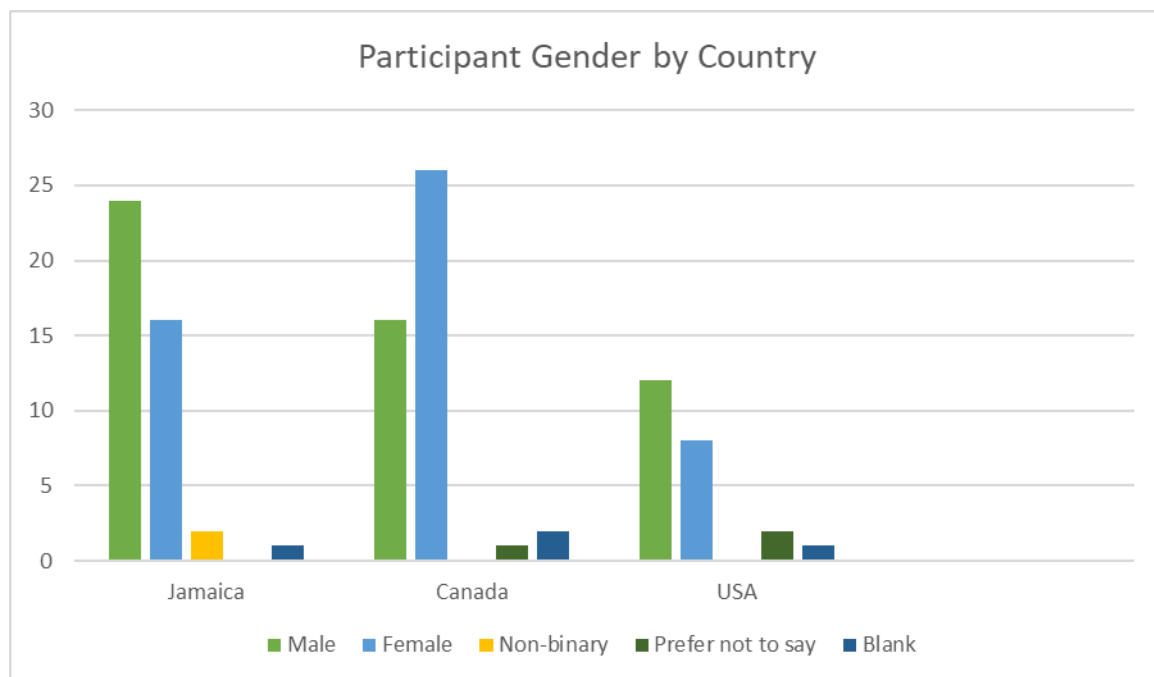


Figure 2. Participant Gender by Country

Participants were also asked about how they identified themselves in terms of a national/cultural identity. In the survey, participants were prompted to select: Jamaican, Canadian or Jamaican-Canadian. Figures 3-5 show the results for how participants identified themselves by country of residence. They show that participants identified not only by these labels but also by others.

While most participants in Jamaica identified as Jamaican, several identified themselves as Jamaican Canadian and one specified their ethnicity in their personal identification as Jamaican Indian.

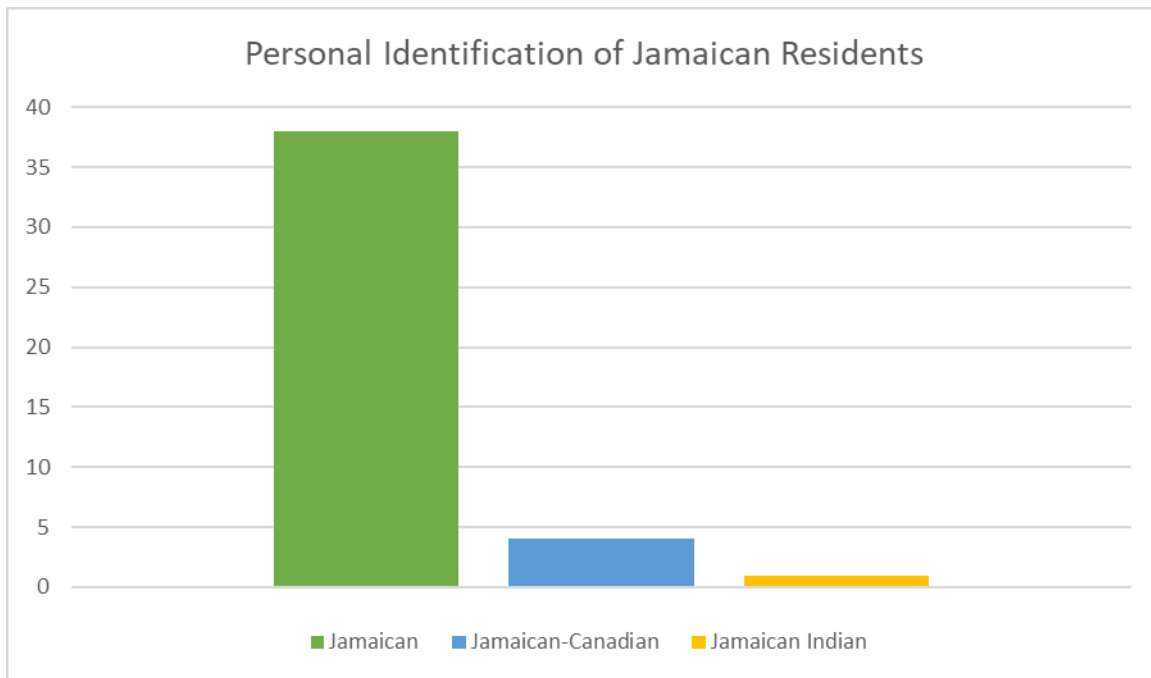


Figure 3. Personal Identification of Jamaican Participants

For Canadian residents, the most common identification was Jamaican-Canadian, followed by Jamaican. Participants also identified as Canadian Jamaican, Jamaican Chinese and Canadian.

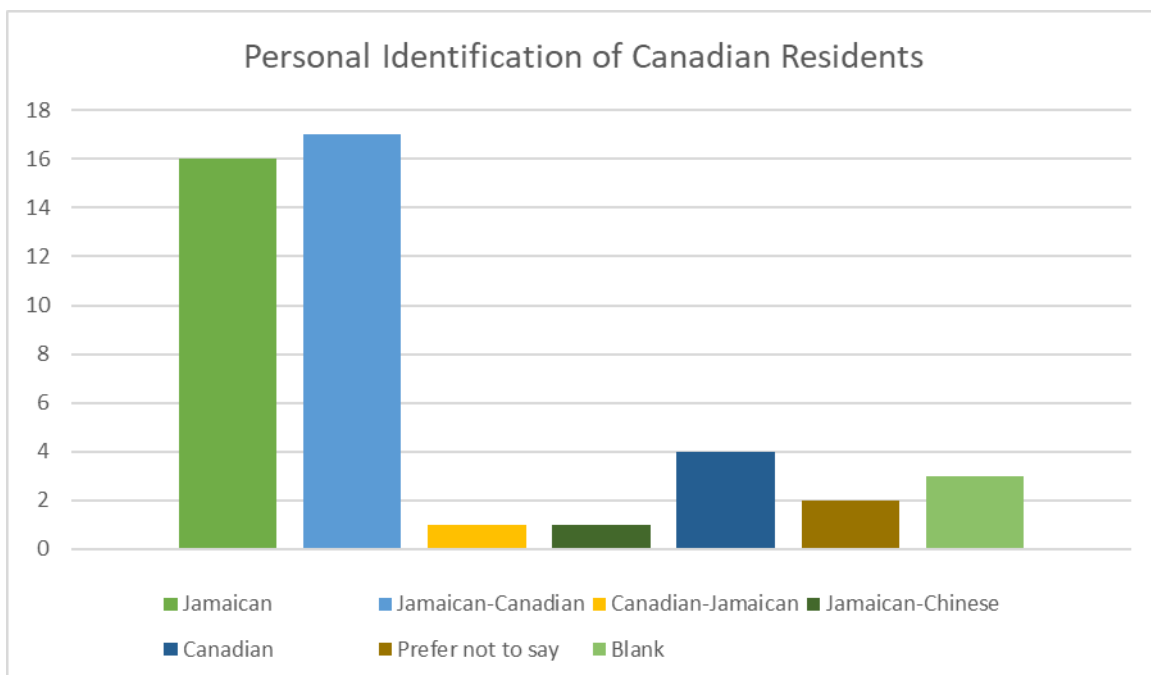


Figure 4. Personal Identification of Canadian Participants

For American residents, the most common identification was Jamaican. Participants also identified as Jamaican American, American and Caribbean/American.

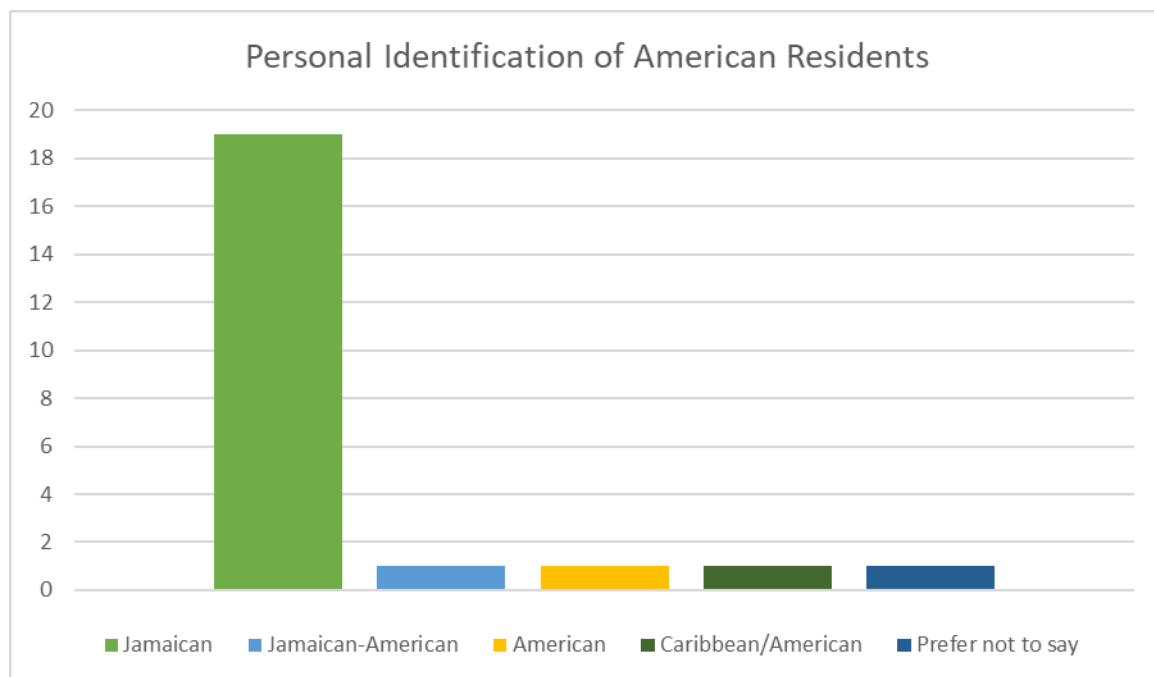


Figure 5. Personal Identification of American Participants

Social Networks

The next series of questions sought to understand the social networks of each participant. The survey asked about whether participants interacted with other Jamaicans in their daily lives. Figure 6 shows the results to the question *Are most of your friends Jamaican?*. The chart shows that most participants' friends were Jamaican regardless of their location. Of the participants who indicated 'no' most were living in Canada. These participants spanned years of birth from 1953-2004 and all of them lived in large cities in their country of residence.

It can therefore be inferred that most participants' casual, friendly communication is with Jamaicans, making them familiar with the extensive variation that can occur within Jamaican speech contexts.

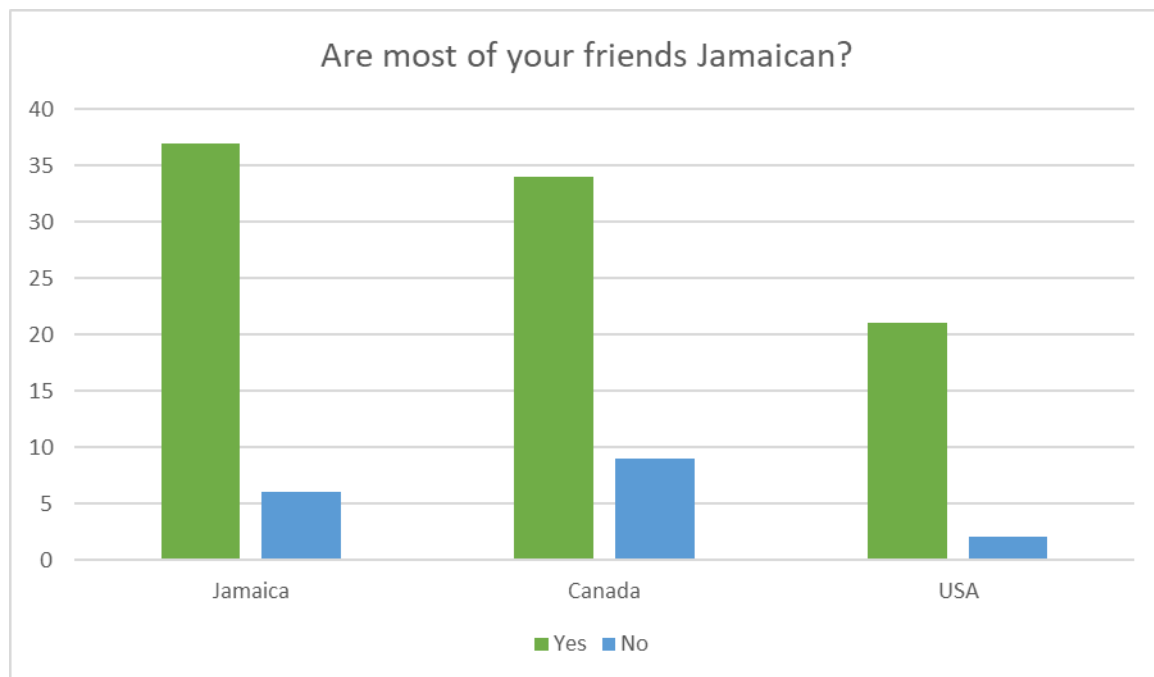


Figure 6. Responses to the question *Are most of your friends Jamaican?*

When asked about the people they work with, unsurprisingly most Jamaicans living in Jamaica indicated that they worked with Jamaicans. The only person who indicated *no* was a pilot, so it is understandable why they did not indicate *yes*. For Jamaicans living in Canada, more participants indicated that they do not work with Jamaicans than that they do however, the distribution is fairly balanced. For those who indicated ‘no’ their social characteristics ranged across age and gender. These participants included those who indicated that they were retired.

In the USA, there was an almost equal distribution of participants who worked with Jamaicans and those who do not. For those who indicated *no*, they were more likely to work in more skilled occupations for example as an Architect, Engineer or Deputy Commissioner while a number of those who indicated that they worked with Jamaicans in the USA were employed in less skilled occupations for example as a Driver, Customer Service Agent or a worker in sales. However, there were also Medical Professionals and other skilled professionals who indicated that they worked with Jamaicans.

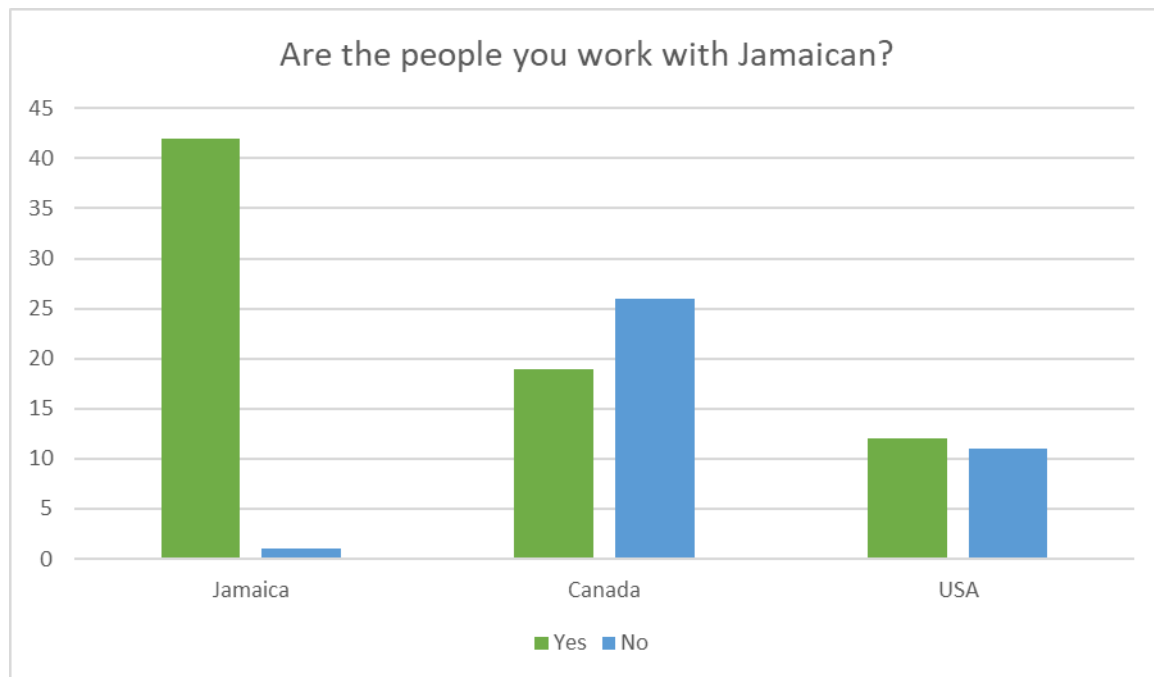


Figure 7. Responses to the question *Are the people you work with Jamaican?*

Participants were asked whether they speak Jamaican Creole/Patois. Both names were used because the language is not known as Jamaican Creole to some speakers. All but one person living in Jamaica indicated that they spoke the language. This individual was female, born in 1959 and identified as Jamaican-Canadian. They also listed English as the language that they speak with family and friends and listed *Group Sales Agent* as their occupation.

All participants in the USA indicated that they speak the language while all but 6 participants in Canada indicated that they speak it. Of the 6 participants who did not speak JC, 5 were born in Jamaica but had spent the majority of their lives in Canada and 1 was born in Canada. Their years of birth ranged from 1958-2003. Most of the Jamaicans who indicated that they do not speak Jamaican Creole also rated the sentences highly (closer to English), and this could be a factor affecting the wide range of responses in the diaspora as seen in the *Test sentences* subsection of the Results through box plots.

It should be noted that an indication that one does not speak the language does not mean that the speech of Jamaicans whether Jamaican English, Jamaican Creole or a mesolectal mixture (as in the test sentences) would not be at least partially understood especially if speakers interact with Jamaicans regularly. These participants may therefore be passive or receptive bilinguals (Hummel, 2014) because although they do not speak the language, they can understand some if not a lot of the language.

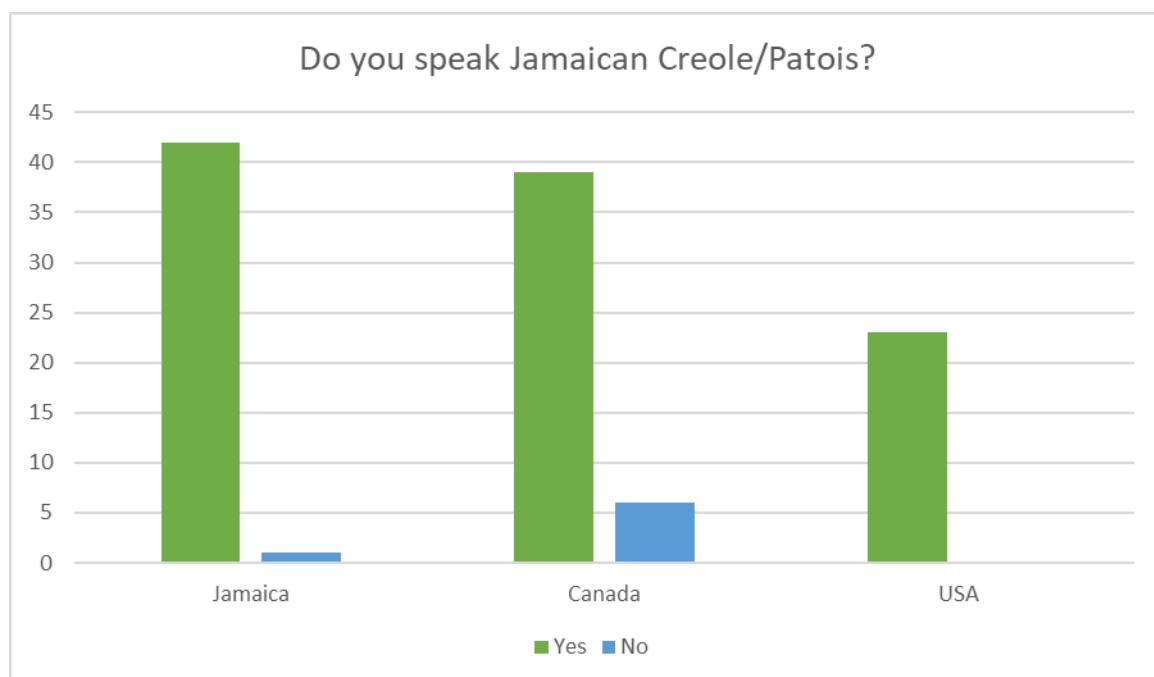


Figure 8. Responses to the question *Do you speak Jamaican Creole/ Patois?*

In addition to asking about participants' competence in Jamaican Creole, the survey also asked what language(s) they spoke with family and friends. Figure 9 shows the language patterns for participants and their families. Participants indicated that they either spoke solely English, mostly English, a mixture of the two languages or solely Jamaican Creole. Additionally, two participants indicated that they mostly speak a different native language along with English. It was interesting that some participants explicitly used the word *mixture* when referring to their use of Jamaican Creole and English. This could indicate that some

participants recognize that they use both languages in a combined manner. The chart demonstrates that in Jamaica, most participants speak both languages with family. In Canada most participants speak English with family and among participants in the USA, there is a marginal majority who speak Jamaican Creole, followed by a close number of participants who indicated that they use both languages.

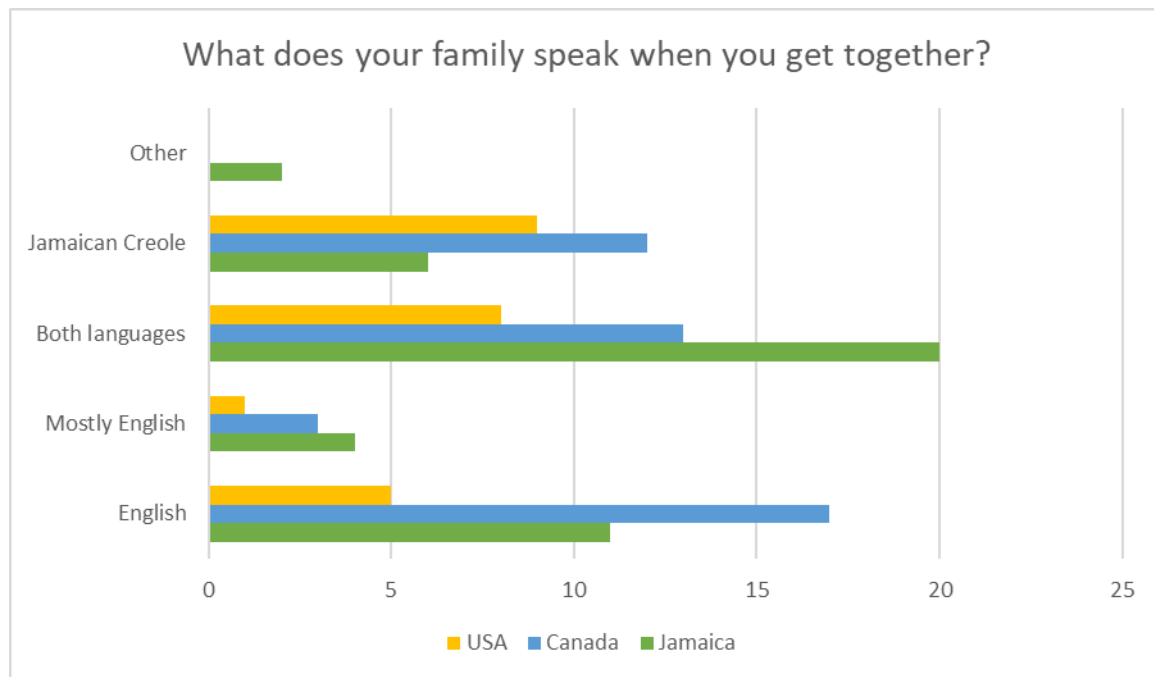


Fig. 9. Responses to the question *What does your family speak when you get together?*

The data was then broken down by the country of birth of participants (Figure 10) and by the age of participants (Figure 11). It is evident that most participants were born in Jamaica and of this subgroup, speakers were most likely to speak both languages with family followed by only English and then only Jamaican Creole. This differs from participants born in Canada who were most likely to use only English and then only Jamaican Creole with slightly less participants indicating that they use both languages.

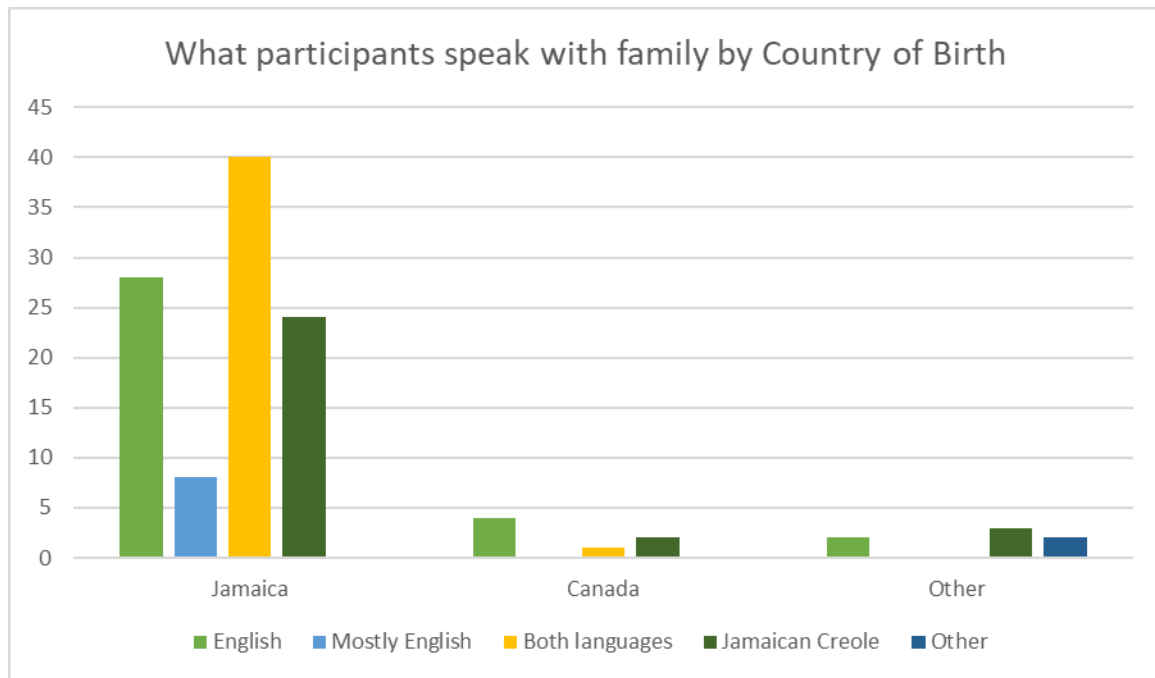


Fig. 10. What participants speak with family by Country of Birth

When broken down by Age, it was interesting that older groups were more likely to indicate that they spoke only English than younger groups. This could be an indication of changing language usage towards Jamaican Creole. It was also interesting that all groups except the oldest group indicated that they spoke a mixture of both languages more than only Jamaican Creole with the oldest group having both languages and solely English at the same frequency.

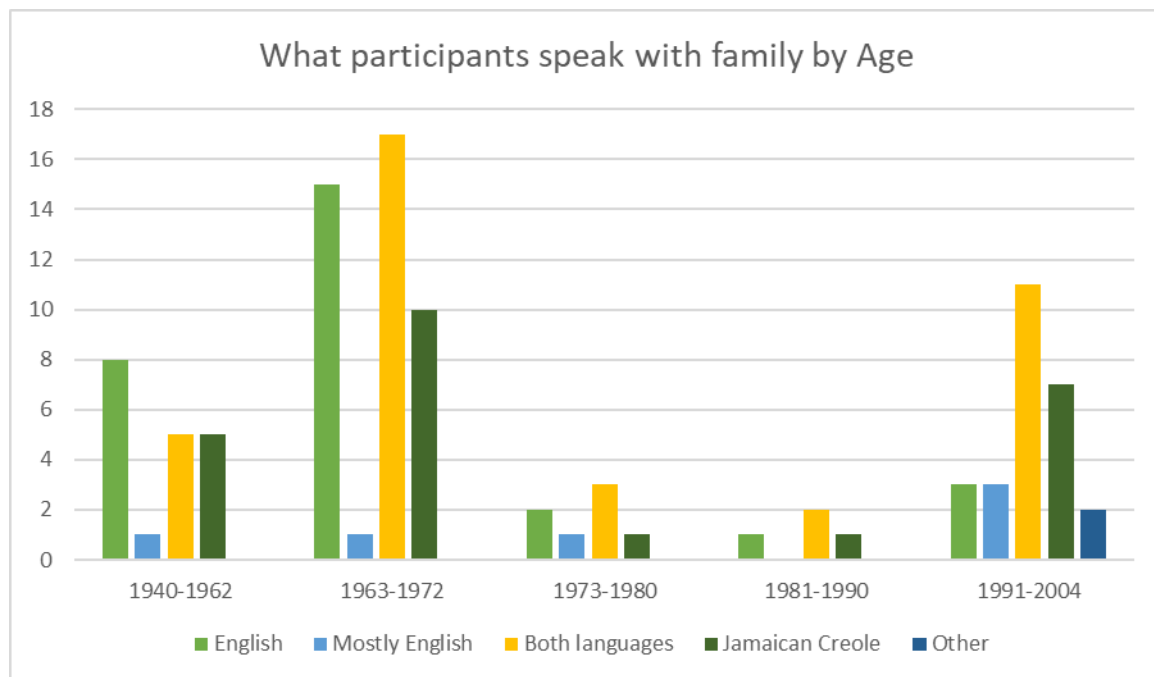


Fig. 11. What participants speak with family by Age

Figure 12 displays the results of asking participants what language they speak with friends. The chart shows that in Jamaica, most participants use both languages while in Canada, most participants use English. Among Jamaicans in the USA, most indicated Jamaican Creole. A few participants also indicated that their choice of language depended on who they were speaking to. For instance, they would use Jamaican Creole when speaking with a Jamaican but English when speaking with a non-Jamaican. These participants ranged across various age groups, genders and personal identification, especially in Canada.

It can also be noted that participants in Jamaica were more likely to include Jamaican Creole in their speech with friends than with family, as indicated by the higher score for *English* in Fig 9. and a higher score for *Both languages* in Fig. 12. This could be tied to the negative attitude towards Jamaican Creole passed down in some families to children who are encouraged to ‘speak properly’ (I.e.: speak English instead of Patois) because that will allow them to get ahead in life. (Kennedy, 2017, p. 6)

In Beckford-Wassink's study of language attitudes in a Jamaican community (1999), it was found that when asked about using JC in different relationships (child, friend, teacher, supervisor, stranger) participants were more likely to choose a friend relationship (p. 72). Additionally, and interestingly, they were more likely to be okay with a friend speaking to them in JC than speaking to a friend in JC.

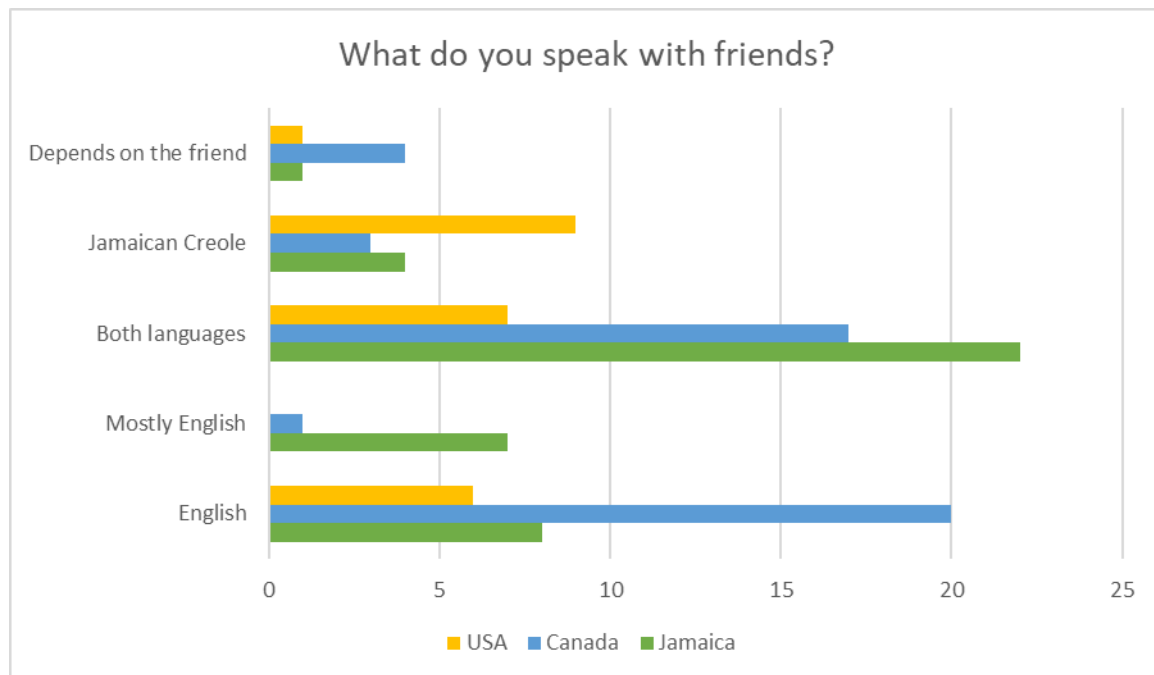


Fig 12. Responses to the question *What do you speak with friends?*

Language used by participants with friends was also broken down by Country of Birth and Age. It was found that among friends, there was a trend for both those participants born in Jamaica and those born in Canada to use both languages the most and then English.

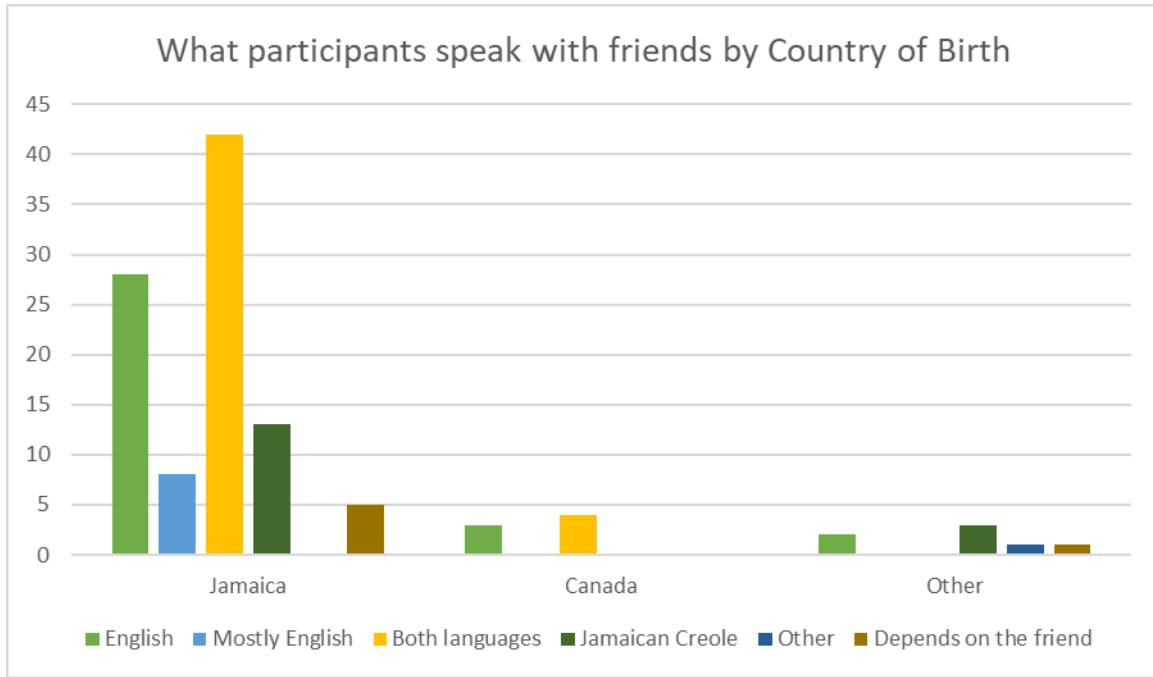


Fig. 13. What participants speak with friends by Country of Birth

When looked at by age, it was found that all age groups but the oldest were more likely to speak both languages with their friends. The exclusive use of English only was more common among older age groups than younger ones.

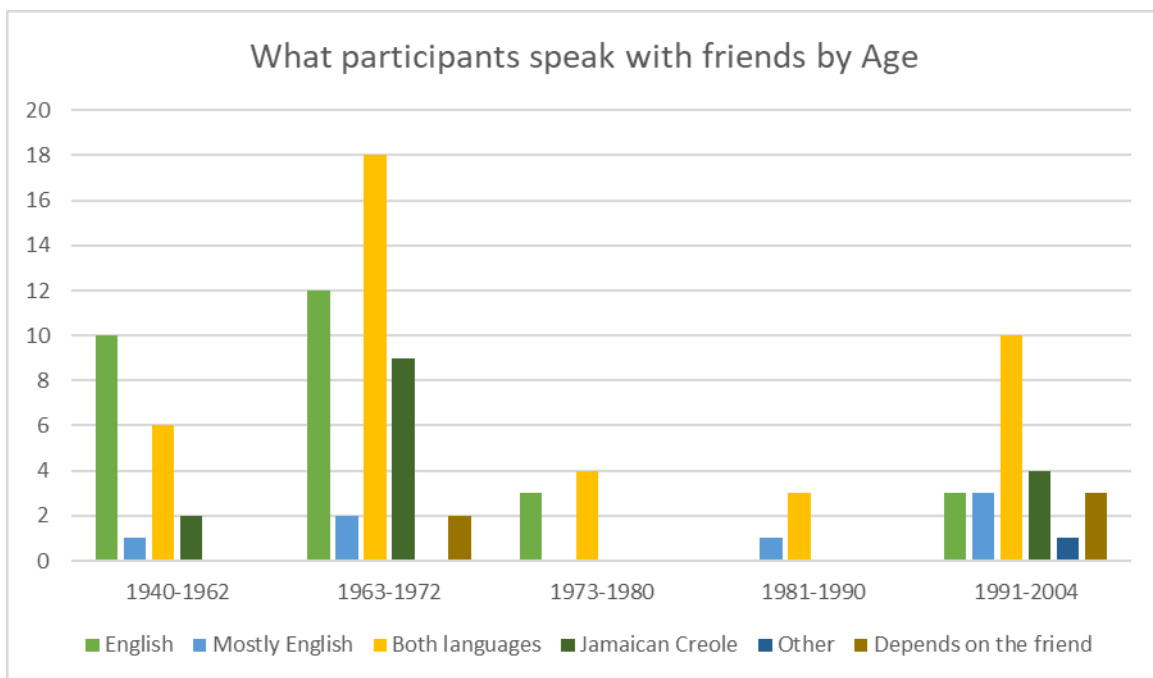


Fig. 14. What participants speak with friends by Age

Place of Residence

The next section of the survey sought to uncover where participants were born and currently resided. Figure 15 illustrates responses to the question of where participants were born while Figure 16 illustrates where participants currently reside. The results show that among all groups: persons residing in Jamaica, Canada and the USA, that most participants were born in Jamaica and in the case of diaspora, most residents migrated to these other countries. Most Jamaican residents have lived in the country for all if not most of their lives. For Jamaican immigrants living in Canada, their length of residence ranged from 5 months to 51 years. There was also a Jamaican-identifying individual who was born in Canada. She was born in 1977 and listed English as the language used with family and friends. None of the American residents were born in the USA. Length of residence for these participants ranged from 10 months to 54 years.

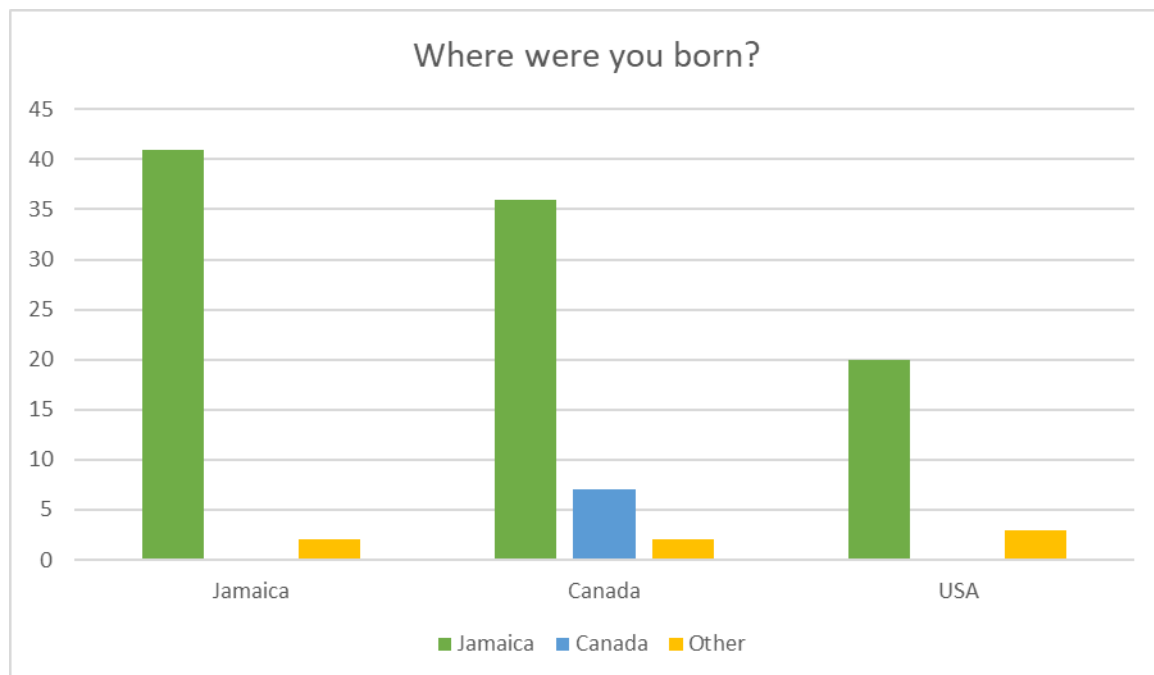


Fig 15. Responses to the question *Where were you born?*

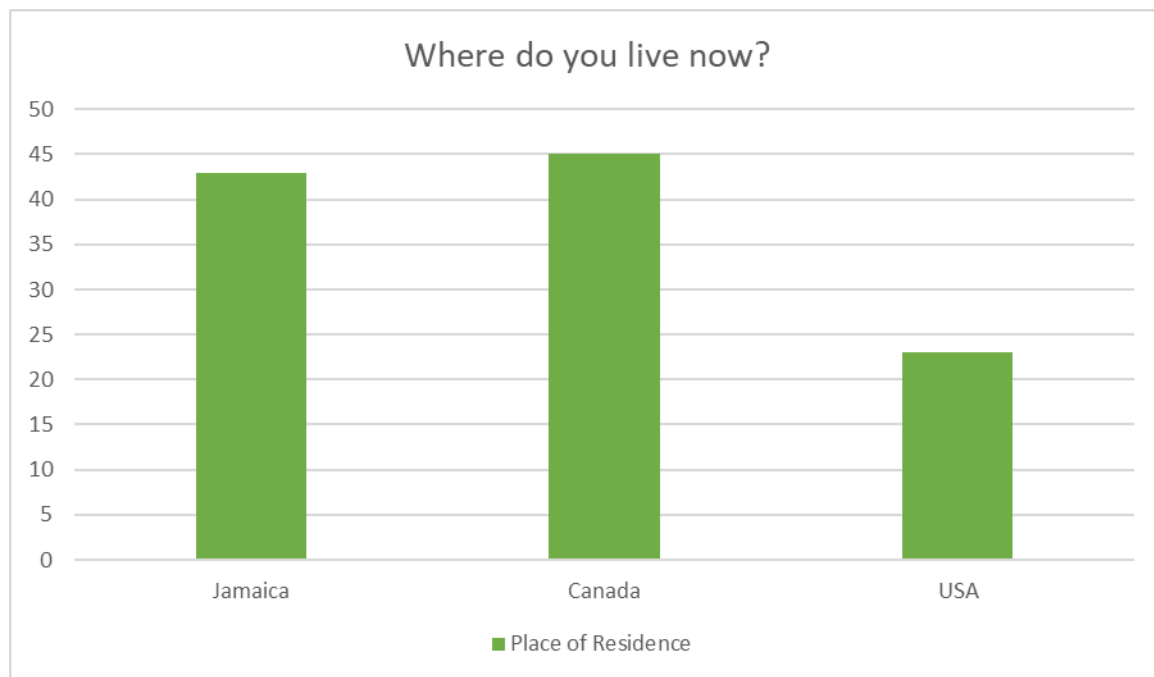


Fig 16. Responses to the question *Where do you live now?*

Occupation

Occupations ranged from less skilled to more skilled in all three countries. Respondents who live in Canada reported professions such as Engineer, Travel Consultant, Teacher, Student, Hydrogeologist, Actuary, Administrative Assistant, Mechanic, Artist, Banker and Lawyer among others. Respondents living in Jamaica reported professions such as Doctor, Content Creator, Banker, Analyst, Teacher, Student, Pilot, Software Developer, Swim Coach and Actuarial Analyst among others. Respondents in the US reported professions such as Caregiver, Executive Assistant, Driver, Nurse, Bookkeeper, Student and Courier among others.

Language Attitudes by Country of Residence

The following section of the survey sought to understand participants' language attitudes by asking them their views on the inclusion of Jamaican Creole in certain formal linguistic contexts, namely in education, in the media and in reporting official government

information. Language attitudes towards JC are said to be changing due to the popularity of Dancehall music and culture and increasing Nationalistic “consciousness” (Beckford-Wassink, 1999).

Patois in Education

Figure 17 shows the attitudes of participants towards the use of Jamaican Creole as a medium of instruction in schools by their current country of residence.

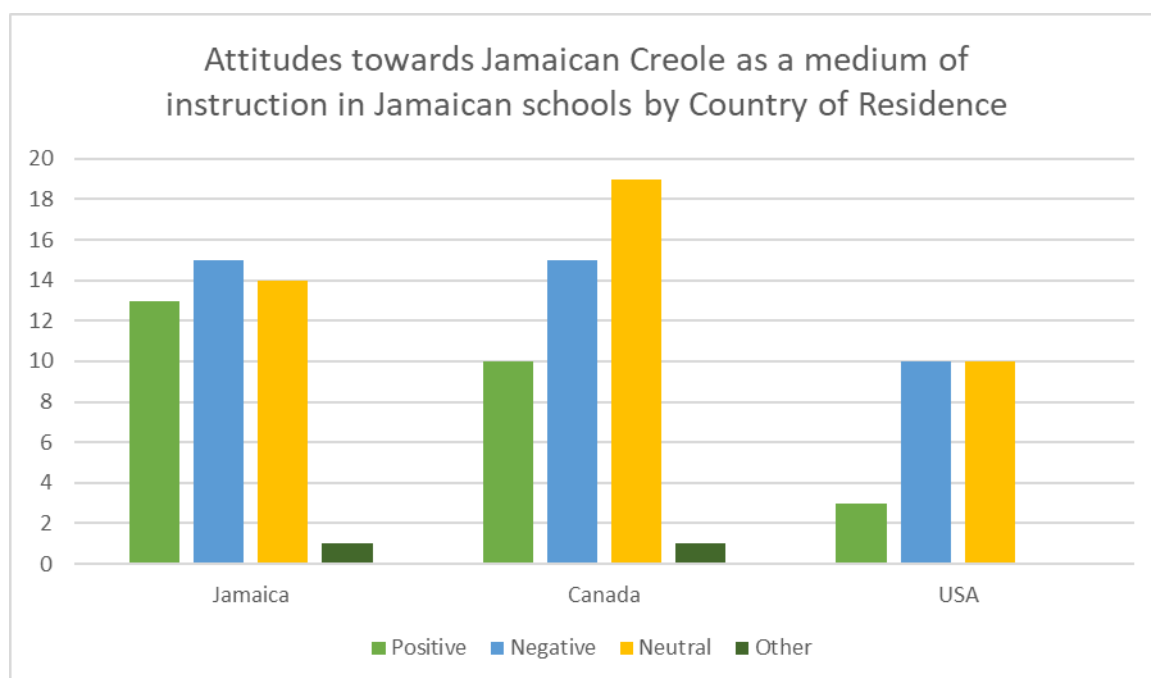


Fig 17. Responses to the question *What do you think about classes being taught in Jamaican Creole (Patois) in Jamaican schools?* by Country of Residence

There was a concern by some participants that JC should not be the only medium of instruction, probably because the sentence was interpreted as JC being a medium of instruction over English in Jamaican schools. There was also the concern that formal exams such as regional exams are written in English and therefore students would be at a disadvantage when compared to students from other Caribbean countries. It was also

commented that the use of Patois depended on the subject and should be mixed with English in classes. The attitudes of individuals who work in education will be discussed in a separate section below. Generally, the age group of the participants influenced their responses.

More than 20 years since Beckford-Wassink's study of language attitudes, the results of this present study seem to be more favorable towards JC in contrast to the participants in Beckford Wassink (1999) where only 29% of participants indicated that they would use JC to teach older children in schools.

Patois in the Media

Figure 18 illustrates the results of asking participants about their views towards the use of Jamaican Creole in different media.

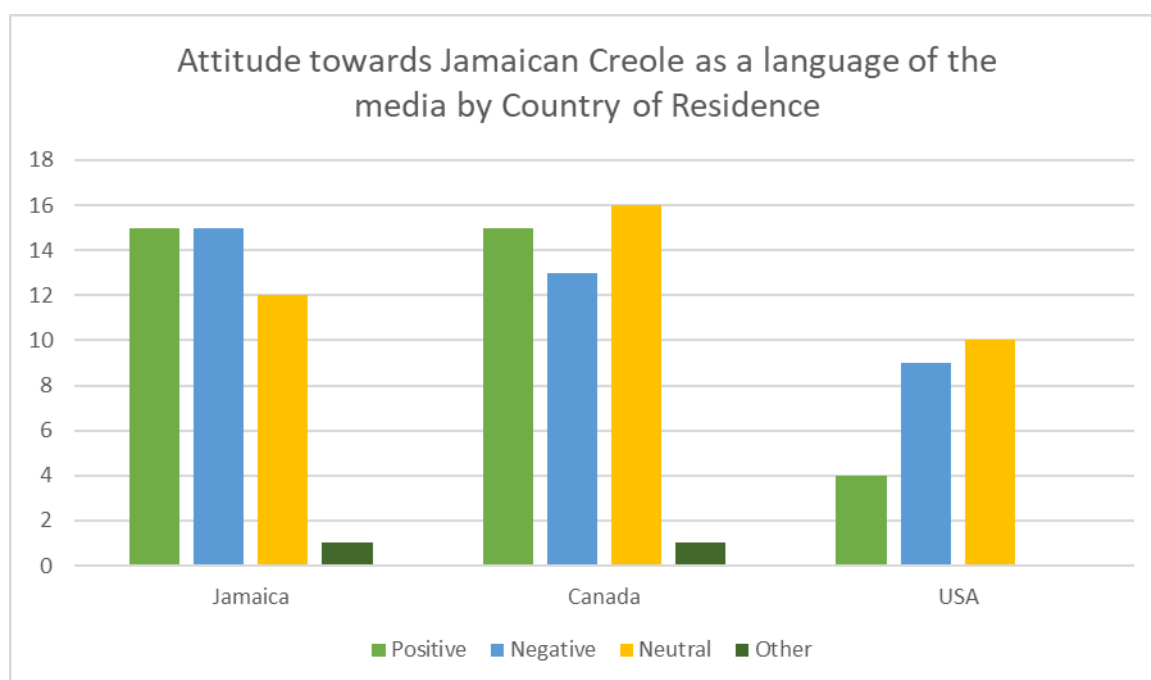


Fig 18. Responses to the question *What do you think about the local news being reported in English and Jamaican Creole (Patois) on the radio, television and social media in Jamaica?*

The responses to this question yielded mixed results across countries. In Jamaica, there were equal numbers of positive and negative responses. This can be compared to

participants in Beckford Wassink (1999). 45% believed that JC was appropriate for use by a public figure e.g. a television newscaster and only 29% would use JC for public writing e.g. a newspaper.

The graph shows that in Canada, there were slightly more positive responses than negative. Meanwhile in the USA, there were more negative responses than positive responses.

Patois as a medium of Government information

Figure 19 illustrates the results of asking participants about their views towards the use of Jamaican Creole in the translation of government information by country of residence.

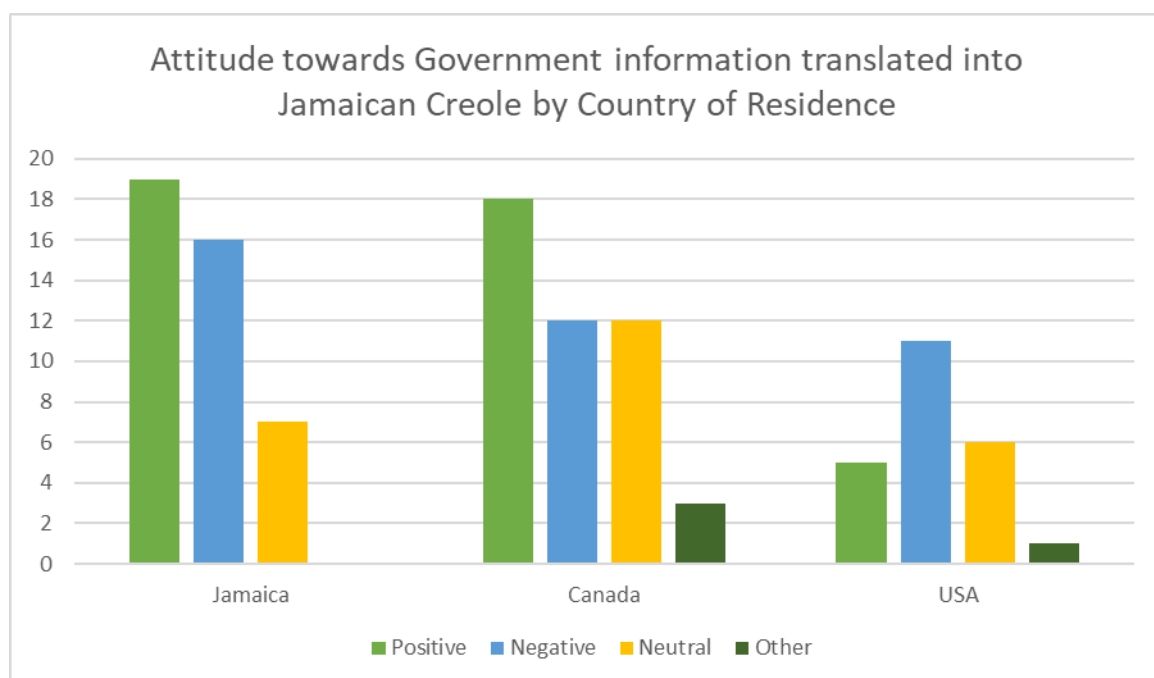


Fig 19. Responses to the question *What do you think about government press conferences conducted in English being translated into Patois/offering translation into Patois.*

This question yielded slightly more positive results across all three countries, with positive being the most selected option among residents in Jamaica and Canada. A few participants asked why this should be done or said that translating Patois was unnecessary.

Responses to Language Attitudes Questions by Age

The results for the language attitudes questions were analyzed by Age. Age was broken down into the following ranges: 1940-1962, 1963-1972, 1973-1980, 1981-1990 and 1991-2004. These age ranges are representative of shared experiences by the persons born in these groups. The first group (1940-1962) represents participants born during British rule and before Jamaican Independence in late 1962. The second group (1963-1972) represents the early years of Jamaican Independence. The third group (1973-1980) represents participants born during the Free Education initiative implemented by the government which made all education in the country free (Petgrave, 2011), thus increasing the amount of access to education. The fourth group (1981-1990) represents the period after this initiative was ended and during this time (1989), there was a call by the National Association of Teachers of English for Jamaican Creole to be validated in schools (Beckford-Wassink, 1999). This reflects a possible period of change regarding the status of JC in Jamaica. The fifth period represents the youngest adult generation in the country, some of whom were born around the time that the government drafted (but did not make official) the Language Education Policy (2001) which described Jamaica as a bilingual country with English and Jamaican Creole as the languages used, with the latter being more widely used within the society (Brown-Blake, 2007).

Figure 20 below shows the results of the question of whether Jamaican Creole should be used as a medium of instruction in schools, broken down by age range. It is interesting to note that within each age group except the youngest, participants gave a negative response more than a positive response. It is also interesting to note that for three age groups, that the neutral response was the most common response.

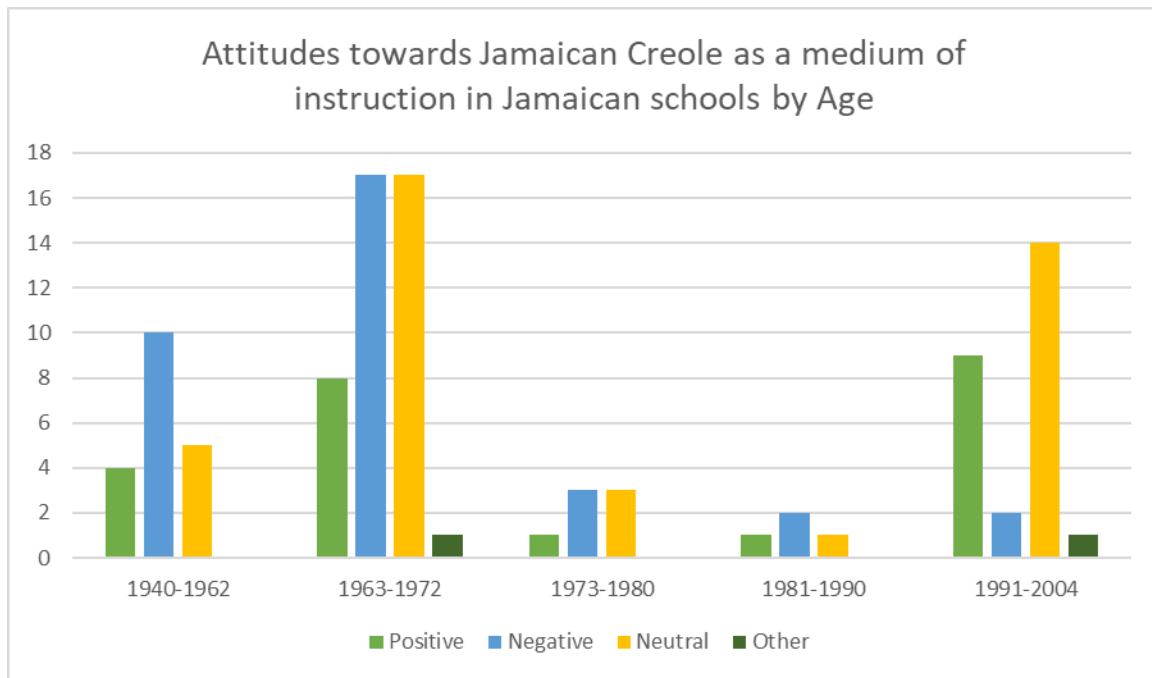


Fig. 20. Attitudes towards Jamaican Creole as a medium of instruction in Jamaican schools
by Age

Figure 21 below shows the results to the question of whether Jamaican Creole should be used as a language of the media. Again, the only age group with more positive than negative responses was the youngest age group. A negative response was the highest choice for two age groups while a neutral response was the highest choice for two age groups.

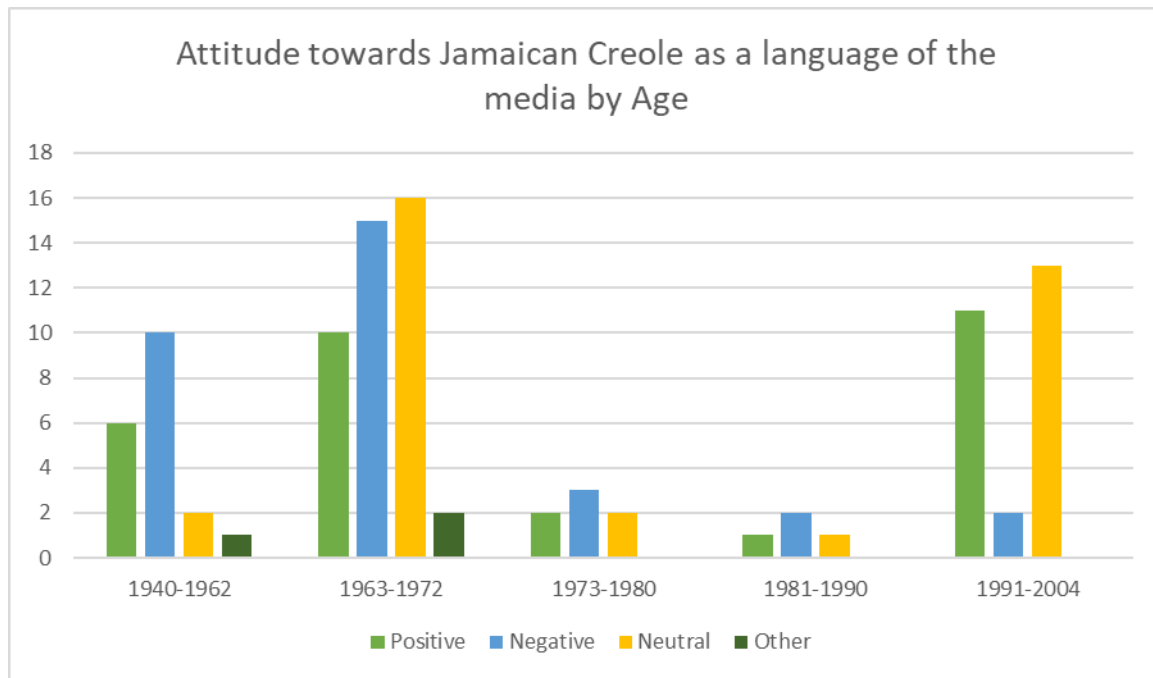


Fig. 21. Attitudes towards Jamaican Creole as a language of the media by Age

Figure 22 shows the responses to the question of whether information from Government press conferences should be interpreted into Jamaican Creole by Age. Again, only the youngest generation chose a positive response more than negative or neutral responses. Every other group selected negative responses more than positive or neutral responses.

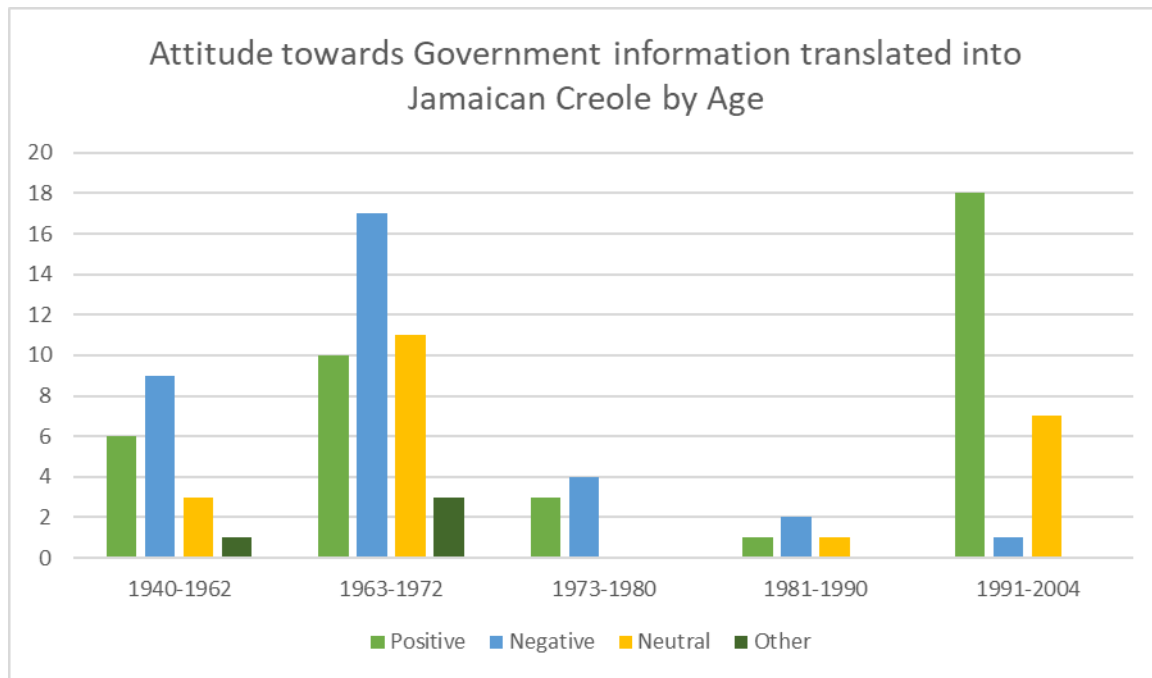


Fig. 22. Attitude towards Government information translated into Jamaican Creole by Age

Attitude Questions by Occupation

The attitudes questions were then analyzed by looking at individuals in an occupation related to the question. For instance, the responses of teachers and students were looked at in relation to the use of Jamaican Creole as a medium of instruction as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Individuals with Occupations related to Education			
Occupation	Year of Birth	Country of Residence	Views
Educator	1955	Canada	Bad idea
Paralegal/Student	1958	USA	Bad idea
Retired Teacher	1959	Jamaica	Bad idea
Professor	1966	Canada	Neutral

Teacher	1967	Canada	Neutral
Tutor	1970	Jamaica	Bad idea
Teacher	1986	Canada	Bad idea
Teacher	1986	Jamaica	Bad idea
Lecturer/ Instructional Designer	1986	Jamaica	Neutral
Teaching Assistant	1989	Canada	Good idea
Teacher	1997	Canada	Neutral
Student	1998	Canada	Neutral
Student	2002	Jamaica	Neutral
Student	2003	Canada	Good idea
Student	2003	USA	Neutral
Student	2004	Canada	Neutral
Student	2004	Jamaica	Neutral
Student	2004	USA	Neutral
Principal	-	Jamaica	Good idea
Retired Teacher	-	Canada	Neutral

Table 1 illustrates that like the Figure 20, there was a general trend for the older generation to choose a negative response rather than a positive response. It is also interesting that besides one student (who is older than all the other students), students thought that Jamaican Creole as a medium of education was a good idea or they were neutral to it. This could indicate that the younger generation feels less strongly about decisions related to language use. It is also interesting that most teachers indicated a negative response.

Table 2 illustrates the responses of persons in fields related to government towards the question about whether government information should be translated/interpreted into Jamaican Creole. Unfortunately, the only related listed occupations were all related to the Judicial arm of the government, and there was no representation from the Legislative or Executive arms of government. The motivation behind this question came from the recent increase in special government press conferences during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, the Prime Minister, Minister of Health and Chief Medical Officer would share vital information to the population through scheduled press conferences at least once per week. These press conferences were held in English with a Jamaican Sign Language Interpreter interpreting for the Jamaican Deaf Community. While this is a very good effort, the question of whether dominant Jamaican Creole speakers could understand everything that was being related could also be posed.

Table 2: Individuals with Occupations related to Government			
Occupation	Year of Birth	Country of Residence	Views
Judge	1954	Jamaica	Bad idea
Deputy Commissioner	1962	USA	Neutral
Attorney	1967	Jamaica	Good idea
Lawyer	1980	Canada	Good idea

This table also illustrates a trend for negative attitudes among older participants and more positive attitudes for younger participants. However, there were too little participants to make a definitive statement about this. Notwithstanding, it was interesting to observe this trend among the small number of participants.

The Test Sentences

Participants were presented with 8 audio files containing one sentence each. They were also presented with a sliding scale after each sentence and asked to pick a point indicating where they believed that the sentence belonged between Jamaican Creole/Patois and English. The point 0 can be taken to represent the variety of Jamaican Creole that is the furthest from Jamaican English, i.e. the basilect, while the point 100 represented English at its most distinct form from Jamaican Creole. The results of each sentence will now be presented below.

Sentence 1

Sentence 1 was *wi goin tu di suupamakit* [wɪ goɪn tu di su:pa ma:kit] ‘we are going to the supermarket’. This sentence was formulated to test the following variables discussed in section 3 above: JC pronunciation of the pronoun ‘we’ with a shortened vowel in contrast to an acrolectal long vowel, formation of the progressive with zero copula and gerund, in contrast to basilectal preverbal marker /a/ plus bare verb, and acrolectal copula plus gerund, *th*-stopping in JC in contrast to the presence of interdental fricatives in English, a basilectal non-rhotic vowel and lengthened vowels in *suupamaakit* in contrast to an acrolectal rhotic vowel in the second syllable of su|per|mar|ket and vowels that are not as lengthened. It should be noted that the word /tu/ is phonologically homophonous in basilectal and acrolectal speech.

Figure 23 displays the overall distribution of responses for Sentence 1. It shows that the results range from 0-100 with a large number of responses in the middle of the chart, representing the middle of the continuum. When divided by participants’ country of residence as in Figure 24, the results illustrate that place of residence had an impact on where participants placed the sentence.

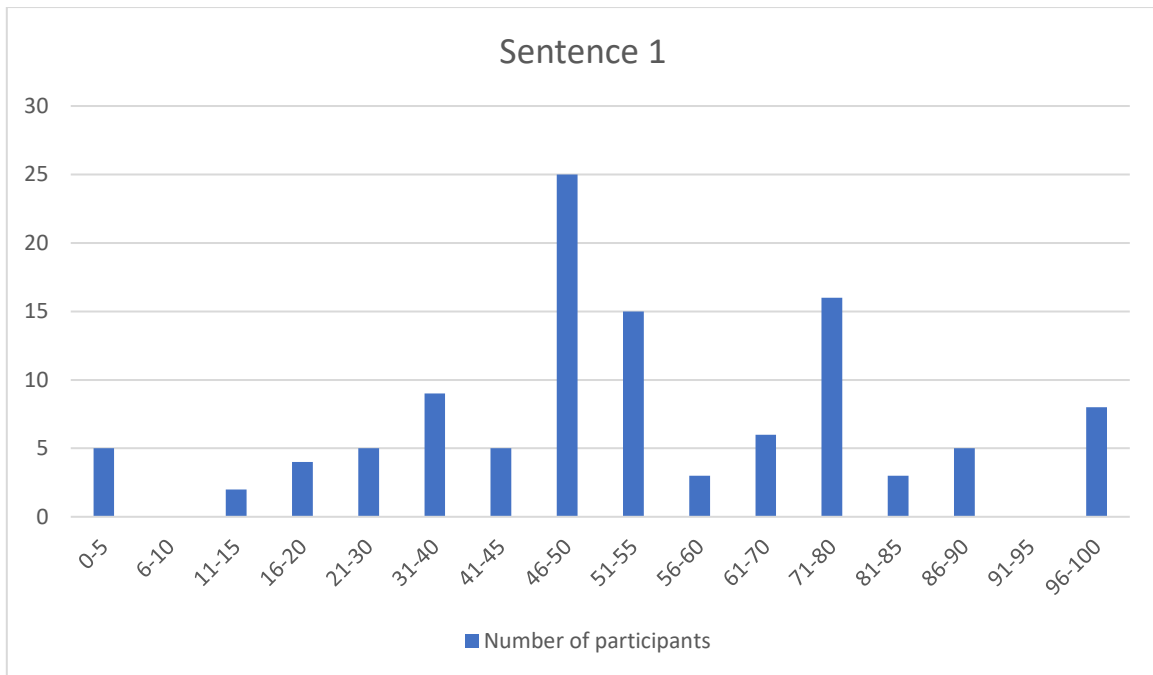


Fig 23. Overall distribution of responses for Sentence 1

Figure 24 below shows that, while the average rating is similar for all three groups, Jamaican residents were more likely to agree on Sentence 1's placement in the middle of the continuum than residents in the diaspora. There was the least agreement among residents in the USA.

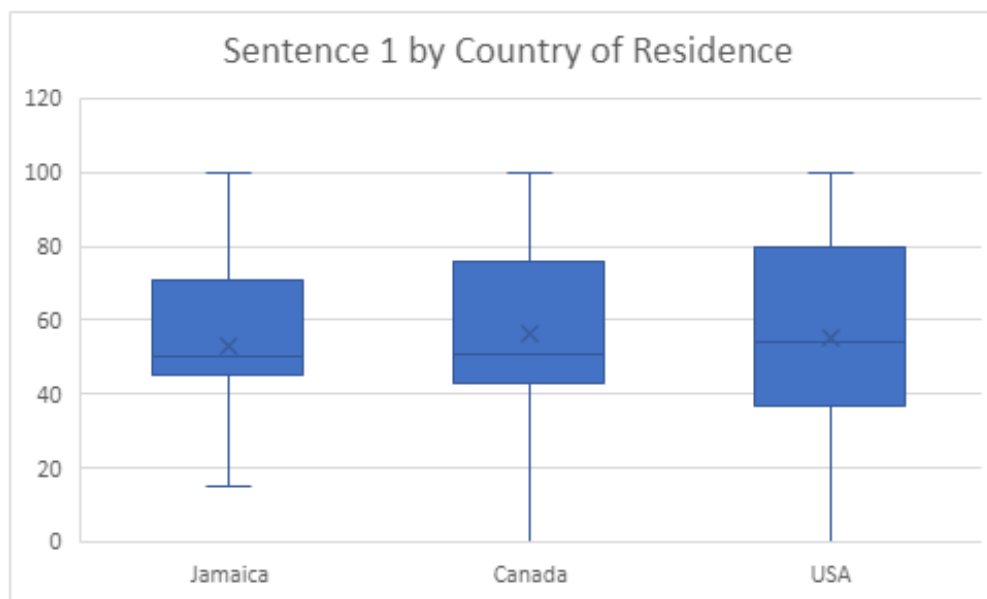


Fig 24. Responses to Sentence 1 by Country of Residence

Sentence 2

Sentence 2 was *we went dere after church* [wi: wɜnt dɪɜ a:ftə:ɪ tʃə:tʃ] ‘We went there after church’. This sentence was formulated to test the use of an English pronunciation of the pronoun ‘we’, the acrolectal inflected past tense verb form where an uninflected /go/ would occur in the basilect, th-stopping and diphthongization in the mesolectal word *dier* in contrast to basilectal *de* or an interdental fricative and monophthong in English *there*, the English pronunciation of the word *after* with a rhotic word-final /er/ which is contrasted with a basilectal JC non-rhotic sound /a/ and often consonant cluster simplification through the deletion of /t/ (*aafɪ/aafa*) and English rhotic pronunciation of the word *church* in contrast with a JC non-rhotic pronunciation of the word *choch* with r-deletion and retraction.

Figure 25 shows the overall distribution of responses by participants. It is evident that unlike sentence 1, there is a spike in respondents selecting this sentence as being closer to English, which could be caused by the type of variables being tested. While two phonological variables involve a basilectal variant, the morphosyntactic variable of past tense marking involves an acrolectal or English variant.

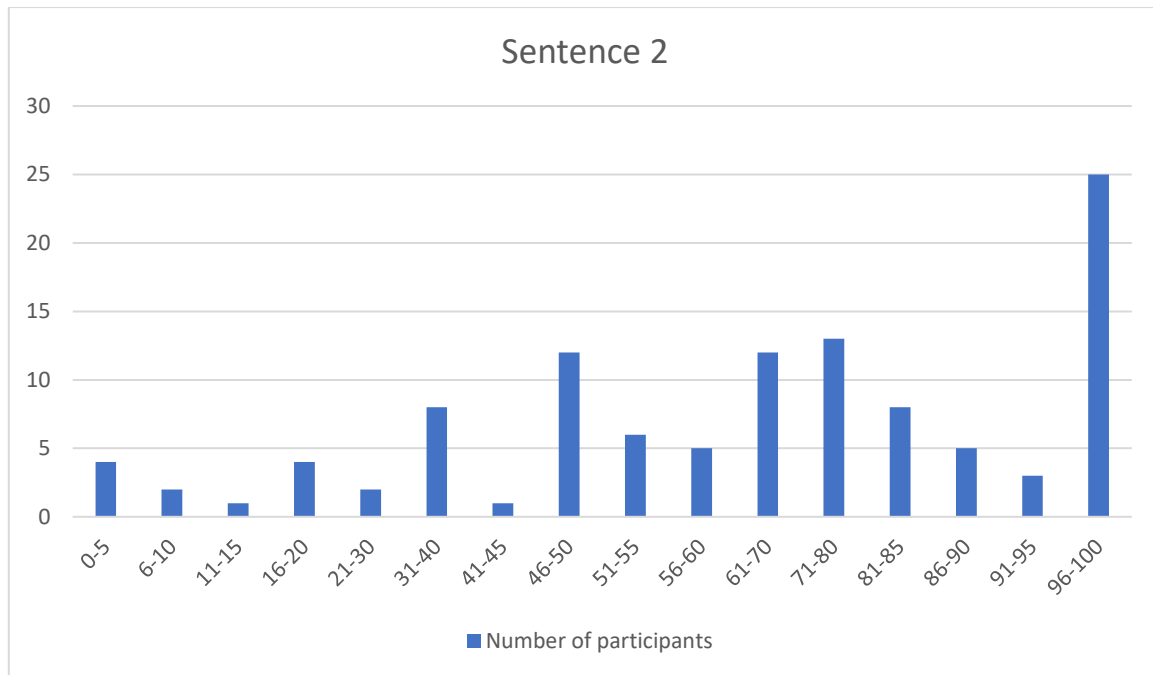


Fig 25. Overall distribution of responses for Sentence 2

Figure 26 shows that again, Jamaican residents were more likely to place the sentence in the middle of the continuum and to agree with one another while in the diaspora, there was less agreement on the placement of the sentence, a wider distribution of responses from 0-100 and Jamaicans in the diaspora more likely to consider the sentence to be closer to English.

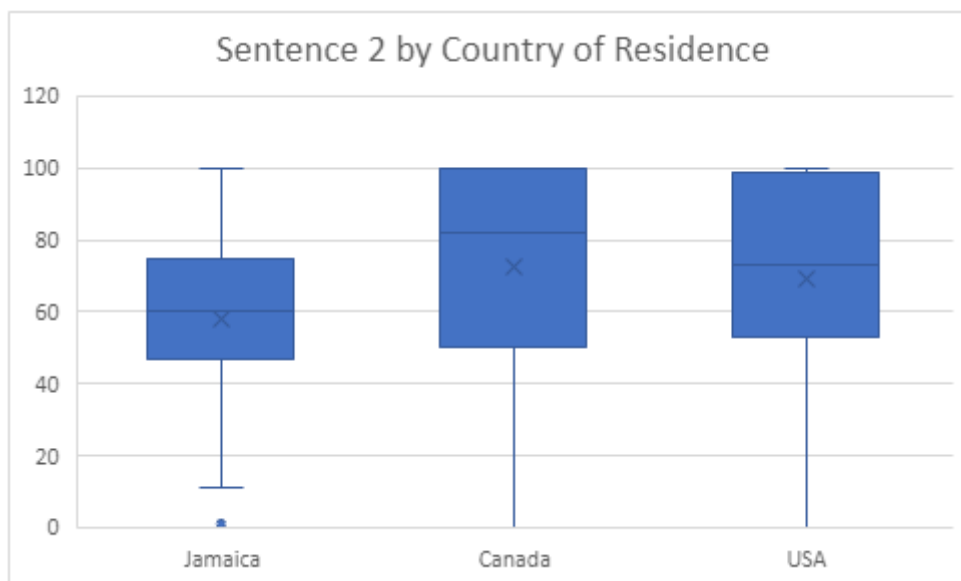


Fig 26. Responses to Sentence 2 by Country of Residence

Sentence 3

Sentence 3 was *wash yu fies before you go to school* [waf yu fies bifuo: yo go: to sku:l] ‘wash your face before you go to school’. This sentence was formulated to test the pronunciation of the 2nd person possessive pronoun in JC *yu* in contrast to the English pronunciation *your*, the pronunciation of the word *fies* with a diphthong in JC contrasted with a monophthong in English *face*, the pronunciation of the word *before* in English in contrast to the JC non-rhotic pronunciation *bifuo*, the lengthened vowel in the English pronunciation of *you* in contrast with the shortened vowel in *yu* and the structure *go to* in English contrasted with JC *gaa a*. It should be noted that *wash*, *to* and *school* have the same pronunciations in English and JC.

Figure 27 shows a wide distribution of responses across the continuum with an increasing number of participants selecting from 50-100, with a spike at 100, marking the English pole.

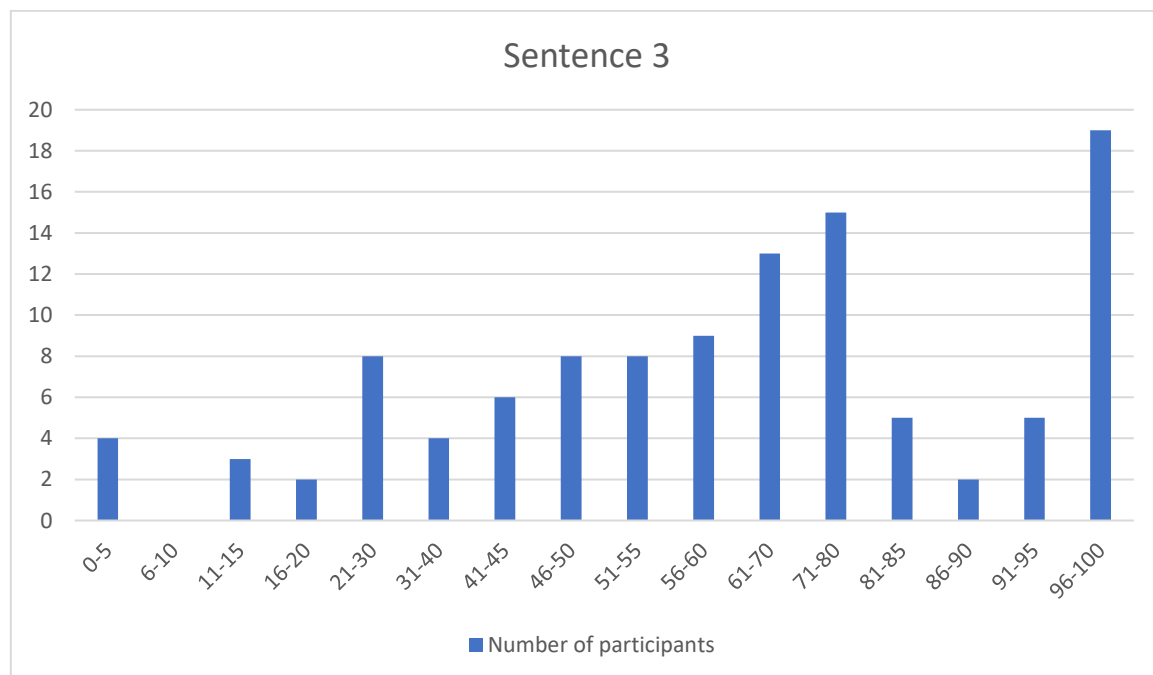


Fig 27. Overall distribution of responses for Sentence 3

When analyzed by country of residence, Jamaican residents were more likely to place the sentence closer to the middle, residents in Canada were more less likely to agree on the position of the sentence while US residents were more likely to place the sentence closer to the English pole and were more likely to agree with each other than those in Canada.

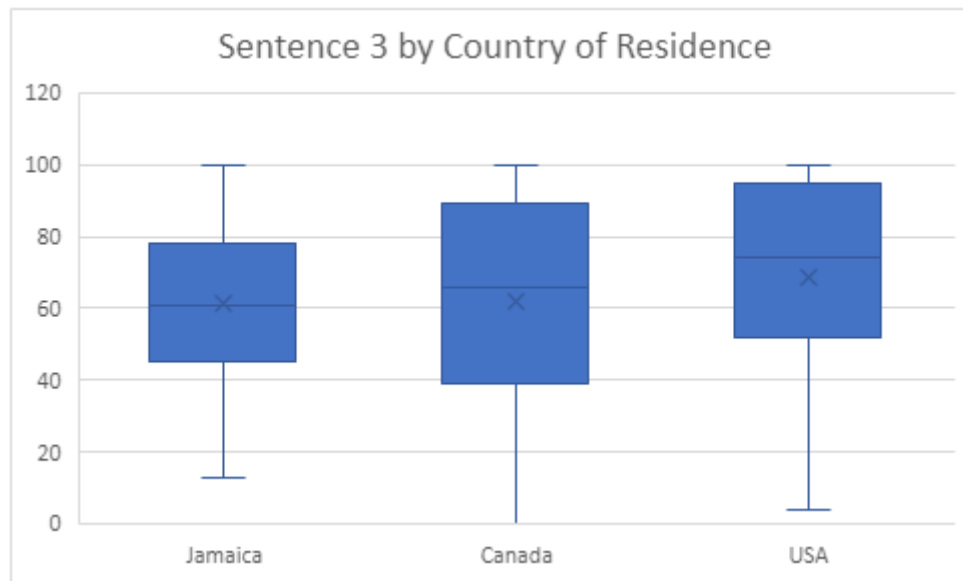


Fig 28. Responses to Sentence 3 by Country of Residence

Sentence 4

The fourth sentence was *shi jos came home* [ʃi ʒos ke:m ho:m] 'she just came home'. This sentence was formulated to test the JC pronunciation of the 3rd person singular pronoun *shi* with a shortened vowel in contrast to a lengthened vowel in English *she*, the JC pronunciation of *jos* with a consonant cluster simplification in contrast with the complex final cluster in English *just*, the English inflected past tense verb form *came* in contrast with the JC uninflected *come* and the English pronunciation of *home* with a word initial /h/ sound in contrast with the JC pronunciation of *uom* without /h/ and with a diphthong.

Figure 29 shows an increasing number of participants choosing to place the sentence closer to English than Jamaican Creole. Figure 30 emphasizes this by country of residence. It shows that while US residents' responses span from 0-100, that residents in Jamaica and

Canada did not display as wide a range and were more likely to place the sentence closer to 100, especially the Canadian residents. This is similar to Sentence 2, because there is an inflected past tense verb form rather than a bare verb with a preverbal marker.

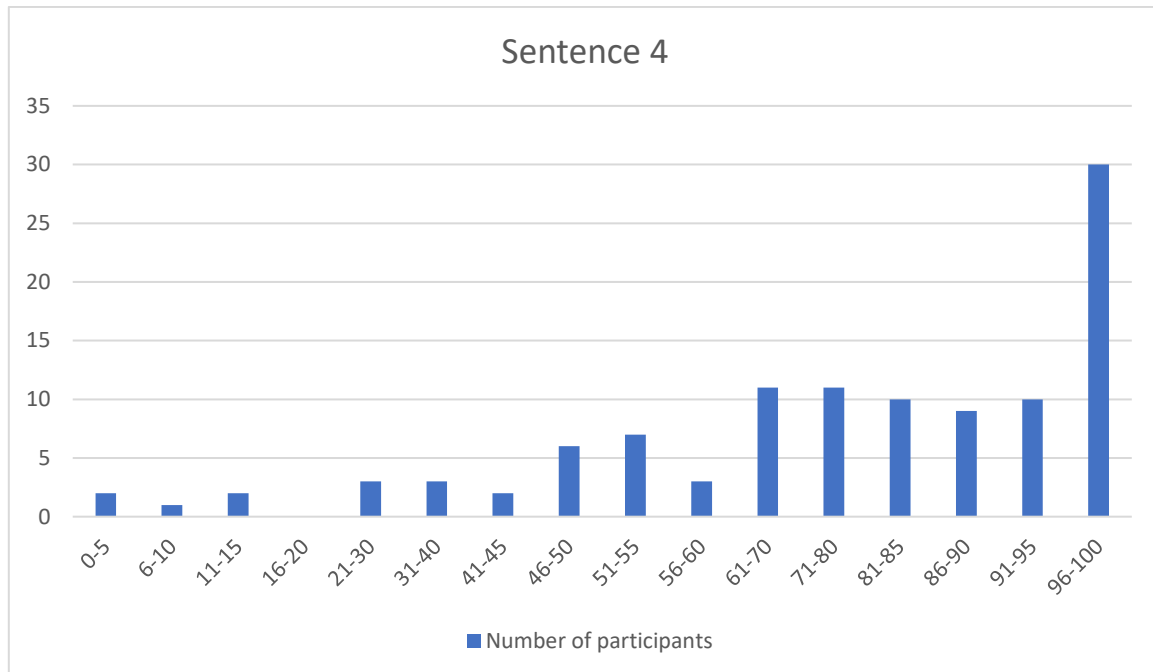


Fig 29. Overall distribution of responses for Sentence 4

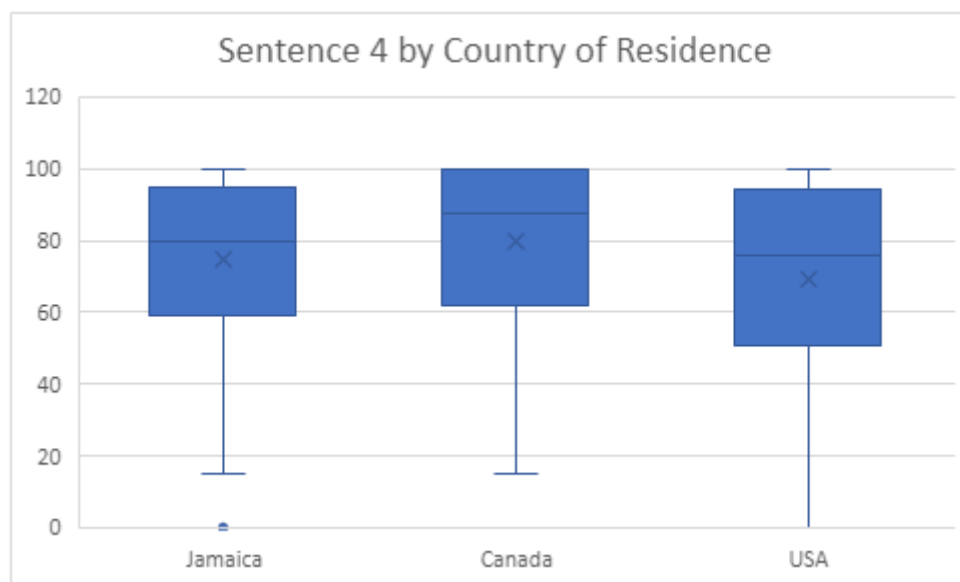


Fig 30. Responses to Sentence 4 by Country of Residence

Sentence 5

Sentence 5 was *take the butta out of the fridge* [te:k ðə bʌtə aʊt ɒv ðə frɪdʒ] ‘take the butter out of the refrigerator’. This sentence was formulated to test the English pronunciation of the word *take* in contrast to the JC pronunciation *tek*, the use of an interdental fricative in the English pronunciation of *the* in contrast to th-stopping in JC *di*, the absence of post-vocalic rhoticity in the JC word *butta* in contrast to the English pronunciation *butter* with post-vocalic rhoticity, the use of the English word *of* in contrast to the word *a* in JC and the word *the* with an interdental fricative in contrast to th-stopping in the word *di*. It should be noted that *out* and *fridge* have the same pronunciation in JC and SJE.

Figure 31 shows the overall distribution of responses for sentence 5. The chart shows that the responses were more distributed than previous sentences. Figure 32 gives a clearer picture of the distribution of participants’ responses by country of residence.

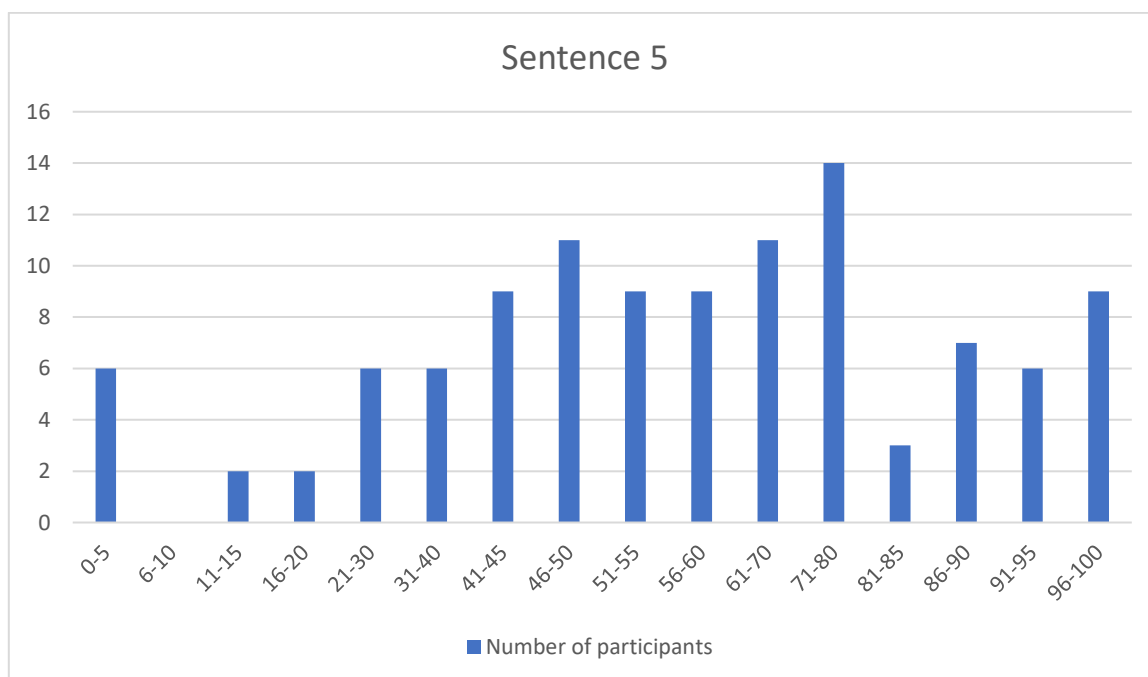


Fig 31. Overall distribution of responses for Sentence 5

The chart shows that all participants' choices range from the Jamaican Creole to the English poles. The majority of responses vary by country of residence with Jamaican residents more likely to agree that the sentences belong in the middle of the continuum. Residents in the US were also more likely to perceive the sentence as closer to English than those living in Jamaica and Canada.

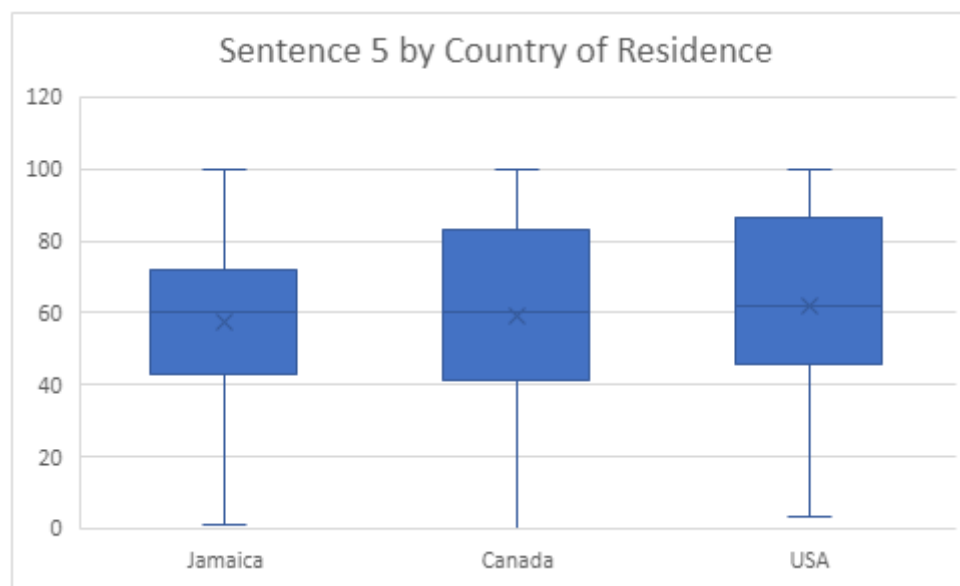


Fig 32. Responses to Sentence 5 by Country of Residence

Sentence 6

The sixth sentence was *dooz people always come early* [do:z pi:pl ə:lwe:z kom ə:rlɪ] ‘those people always come early.’ This sentence was formulated to test the use of a JC pronunciation of the word *dooz* with th-stopping in contrast to the English pronunciation with an interdental fricative *those*, the English pronunciation of *always* in contrast to the JC pronunciation with a lengthened initial vowel and a diphthong final vowel *aalwiez* or the use of the word *eva* instead of *aalwiez* and the English word *come* in contrast with the Jamaican *come* with the same pronunciation or the absence of the word in JC. It should be noted that *people* and *early* have the same pronunciation in SJE and JC.

Figure 33 shows the results of responses for this sentence and show that overall responses are low closer to the Jamaican Creole end of the continuum and increase in the middle with a peak at the English range of the continuum.

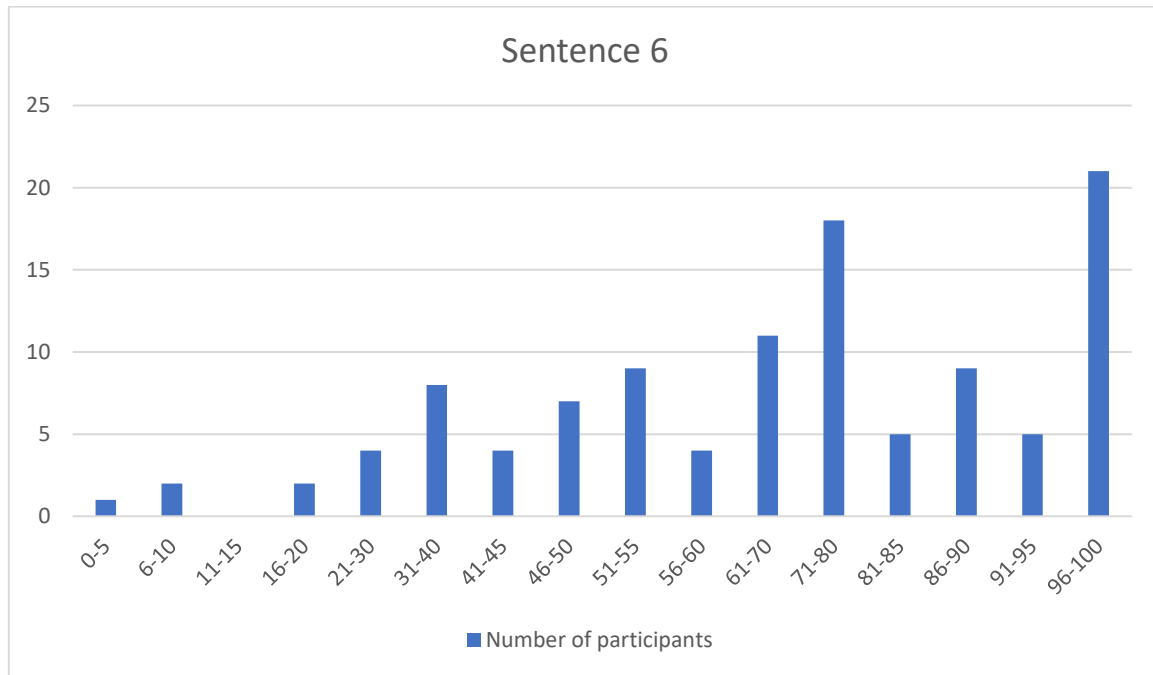


Fig 33. Overall Distribution of responses for Sentence 6

Figure 34 illustrates these results by country of residence and shows that overall, participants perceived sentences to be closer to English, with Canadian and American residents more likely to perceive the sentences as closer to English than Jamaican residents, and less likely to agree than Jamaican residents.

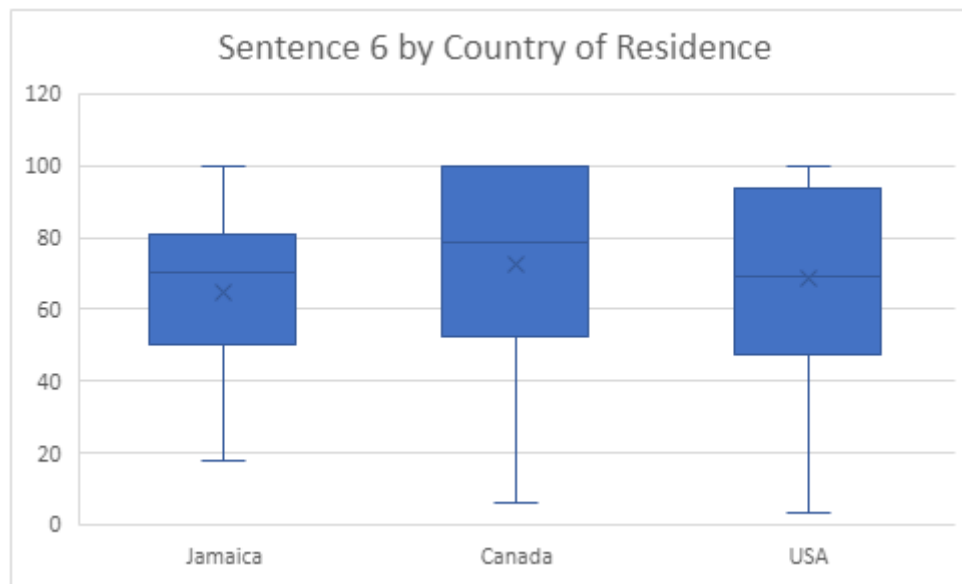


Fig 34. Responses to Sentence 6 by Country of Residence

Sentence 7

Sentence 7 was *mi daata got into chobl at school* [mi dɔ:ta got intʊ tʃobl at sku:l] ‘My daughter got into trouble at school’. This sentence was formulated to test the use of a JC pronoun *mi* in contrast to an English pronoun *my*, the JC pronunciation of *daata* with a lengthened initial vowel and a non-rhotic final vowel in contrast to the English pronunciation of *daughter* with a rhotic final /er/, the English inflected verb form *got* in contrast to the uninflected JC verb form *get*, the English word *into* in contrast to the JC word *ina*, the JC pronunciation *chobl* with retraction and r-deletion in contrast to the English pronunciation of *trouble* and the English word *at* in contrast to the JC phrase *dung a* (down at). It should be noted that the word *school* has the same pronunciation in JC and SJE.

Figure 35 shows the overall distribution of responses for this sentence, indicating that there is a wide distribution of responses from the Jamaican Creole end of the continuum which peaks in the middle of the continuum and tapers off close to the English pole.

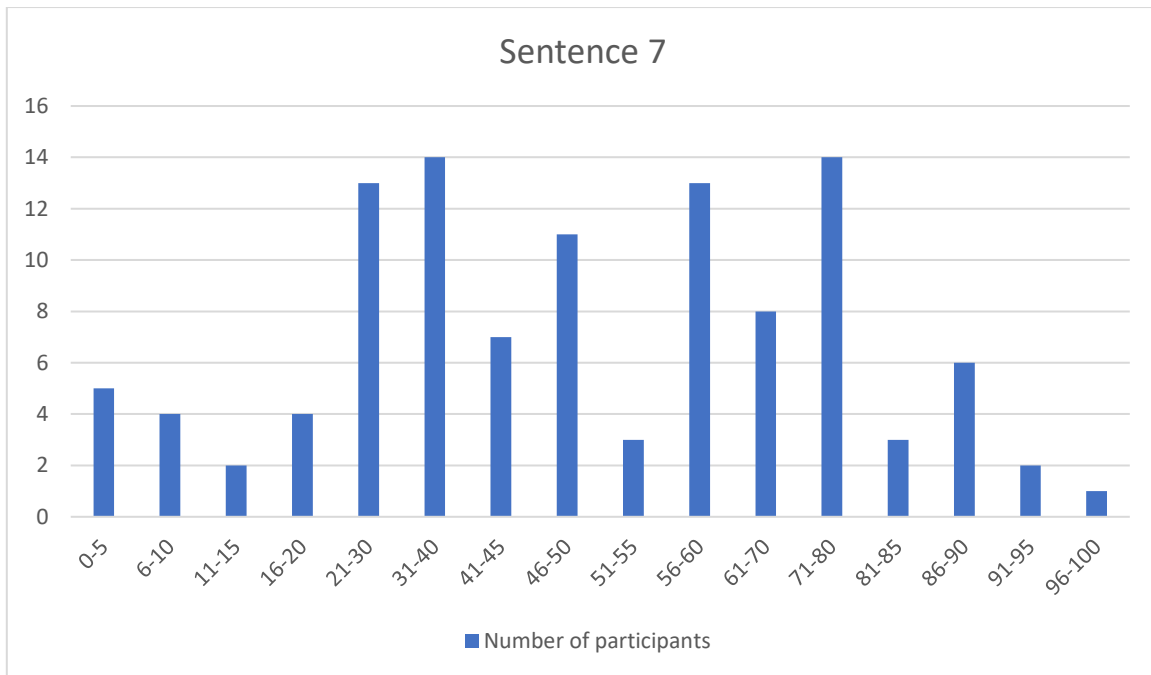


Fig 35. Overall distribution of responses for Sentence 7

Figure 36 shows these results by country of residence and illustrates that the Jamaican residents were more likely to agree on the placement of the sentence in the middle of the continuum. The Canadian residents were less decisive about the placement of the sentence but like the Jamaican residents, no one in this group placed the sentence at the English end of the continuum. The US residents had the widest range of responses from close to 0 to 100. This group was more decisive about where to put the sentence and on average placed it higher than the Jamaican or Canadian residents.

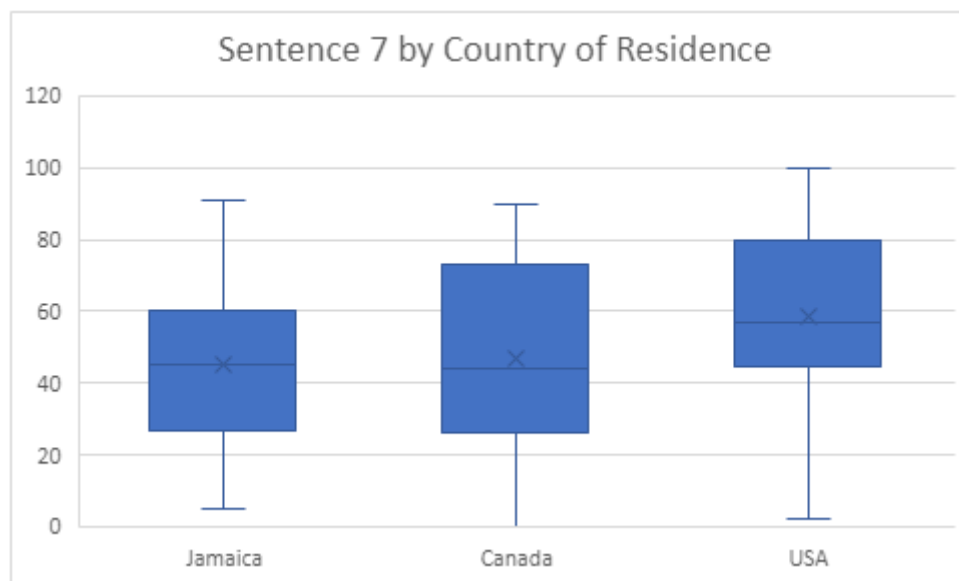


Fig 36. Responses to Sentence 7 by Country of Residence

Sentence 8

Sentence 8 was *A neva know se im goin tu school* [a neva no: se im goin tɔ sku:l] 'I did not know that he goes to school'. This sentence was formulated to test the use of the mesolectal pronoun form *A* in contrast to the English *I* or JC *Mi* forms, the mesolectal form *neva* in contrast to English *did not* or JC *nehn*, the English pronunciation of *know* in contrast to JC *nuo* with a diphthong, the JC complementizer *se* in contrast to English *that*, the JC pronoun *im* without word-initial *h* which is used as an object pronoun in English in contrast to the English subject pronoun *he*, null copula as found in this environment in JC in contrast to English progressive *is*, the mesolectal gerund form in *goin* without the velar nasal in contrast to English *going* with a velar nasal and JC *a go* with the bare verb. It should be noted that the words *to* and *school* have the same pronunciation in JC and SJE.

Figure 37 shows the overall distribution of responses for this sentence. It illustrates that the responses were higher on the Jamaican Creole end of the continuum.

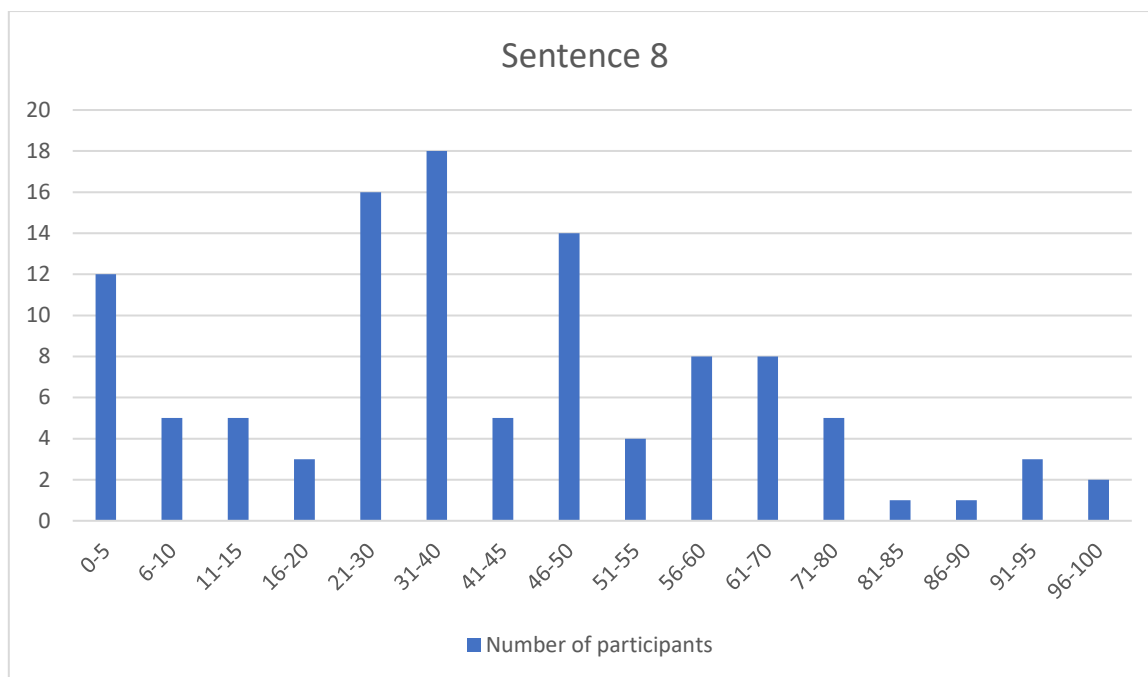


Fig 37. Overall Distribution of Responses for Sentence 8

Figure 38 illustrates the responses by country of residence. The Jamaican residents were more likely to agree that the sentence is mesolectal. The US residents had the widest range of responses. It is interesting that the range of responses from US and Canadian residents has a lower reach than the range of Jamaican respondents, meaning that many Canadian and US-based respondents view these as basilectal forms. It could be argued that this is caused by the possibility that Jamaicans in the diaspora have less opportunities to hear basilectal varieties.

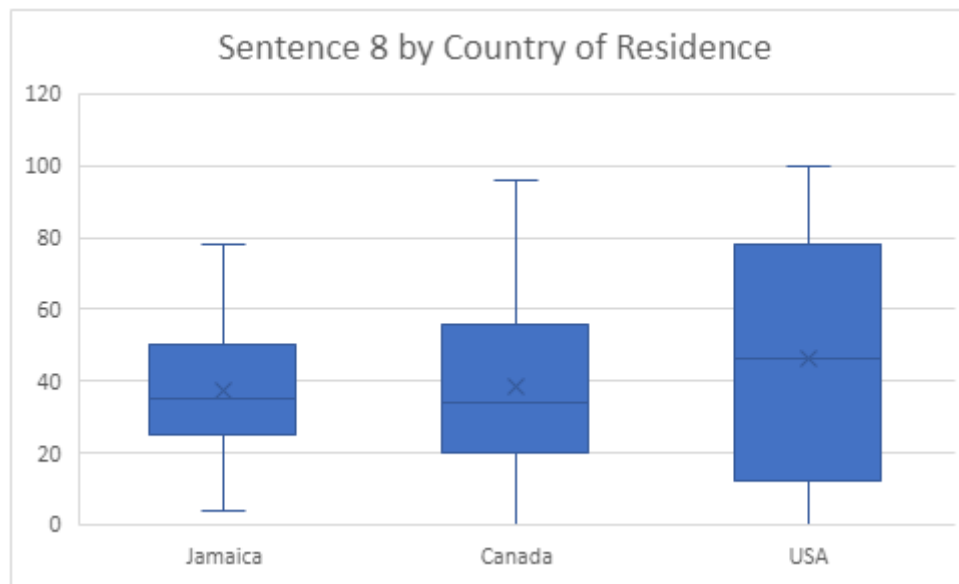


Fig 38. Responses to Sentence 8 by Country of Residence

5. Discussion

A significant finding from this experiment was that morphosyntactic variables had a greater impact on a sentence being viewed as Jamaican Creole than phonological variables. This is supported by the low scores for Sentence 8 with the most morphosyntactic features that differed from English. Mair (2002) argues based on an analysis of ICE data that the “Jamaican Creole phonological substrate is a strong influence on the pronunciation of Jamaican English on all levels.” (p. 55). Therefore, it is understandable that ‘mixed’ sentences with JC phonological features may be judged as being closer to English than those with JC syntactic or lexical features. This is seen in sentences like Sentence 6 with a JC phonological feature and mostly English phonology and English syntax. Each feature will be discussed in greater detail below.

Morphosyntactic variables

Progressive aspect

This feature was tested in Sentence 1 and Sentence 8. Recall that in both sentences, the feature was in the form of a JC variant null copula and a mesolectal gerund form with an alveolar nasal *goin*. The first sentence was taken to belong in the middle of the continuum by respondents. Sentence 8 was also found to belong close to the middle of the continuum, but closer to the Jamaican Creole pole. Therefore, it can be deduced that the presence of this feature in a mixed or JC form results in the sentence being perceived as mesolectal.

Past tense marking

This feature was tested in sentence 2, 4 and 7. In all three sentences, the English variant was used. Sentence 2 and 4 were perceived as close to English while sentence 7 was viewed as closer to the middle of the continuum. It should be noted that in all cases, this feature was preceded by a JC feature. It is possible that the use of the English past tense variant played a role in the perception of these sentences however it is difficult to make a definitive statement because the JC variant was not used in any sentence for comparison.

Pronouns

This feature was tested in sentence 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7 and 8. All but one of the pronouns used were JC variants while the other one was mesolectal (A). It was noted that there were no observable patterns across sentences with the pronouns. Therefore, it could be argued that although they may contribute to the perception of a sentence, they do not have as strong of an influence on the sentence perception as other features. It is interesting to note that in sentence 6, where the mesolectal variant of the pronoun was the only non-English variant in the sentence, that the sentence was perceived as close to English.

Phonological variables

Monophthongs vs diphthongs

This feature was tested in sentence 2, 3 and 6. Sentences 2 and 3 had JC variants of this feature (diphthongs) while sentence 6 had an English variant (monophthong). All sentences were viewed as closer to English than other sentences which could indicate that the use of the JC variant of this feature did not have as great of an impact on sentences being perceived as mesolectal as expected.

Consonant cluster simplification

This feature was tested in sentence 4. In this sentence, the Jamaican Creole variant (deletion of a second consonant in a consonant cluster) was present. This sentence was perceived as more English-like than other sentences. This can be explained by the fact that this was the only feature in the sentence that differed from English. Therefore it can be concluded that on its own, consonant cluster simplification of the nature tested in this experiment was not a major factor in determining that a sentence was mesolectal or English.

Retraction and r-deletion

This feature was tested in sentence 7 by the use of the JC variant *chobl* (trouble). This sentence was found to be perceived as mesolectal especially by Jamaicans residing in Jamaica and Canada. The sentence also included other JC variants (JC pronoun and mesolectal pronunciation of *daata* [daughter]). It is unclear whether this feature has a great impact on the perception of a sentence on its own however, it could be argued that it has a greater impact on sentence perception than pronouns which did not demonstrate an easily observable pattern.

Interdental fricatives versus th-stopping

The feature was tested in Sentence 1, 2, 5 and 6. In sentence 1, 2 and 6, th-stopping was present while an interdental fricative was present in sentence 5. Sentence 1 was taken to belong in the middle of the continuum by participants across countries of residence. Sentence 2 was rated by Jamaicans in the diaspora as being very close to if not English while it was rated as closer to the middle of the continuum by Jamaican residents. Sentence 5 was found to be rated as closer to English than JC for participants residing in the diaspora while it was perceived as less like English to Jamaicans residing in Jamaica. Finally, sentence 6 was rated closer to English than the middle of the continuum, even more so than Sentence 5. Besides sentence 1, all the other sentences with this feature were rated as closer to English regardless of the variant of the feature. This could mean that the use of this variant is not a strong indicator in the perception of these sentences because the use of the JC variant did not result in the sentence being viewed as mesolectal or basilectal.

Post-vocalic rhoticity

This feature was tested in Sentence 1 and 5. In both cases, the non-rhotic (JC) variant of the feature was used. Sentence 1 was perceived as mesolectal while sentence 5 was perceived as closer to English especially by participants living in the diaspora. It can be deduced that sentence 1 was perceived as more mesolectal because of the presence of other JC features however in sentence 5, a non-rhotic syllable was the only JC feature. Therefore, it can be concluded that on its own, non-rhoticity in an otherwise English sentence does not lead to it being perceived as Jamaican Creole.

Language Attitudes and Sentence Perception

Several participants who held negative attitudes towards JC in formal linguistic contexts also had high ratings for sentences with some commenting that the sentences were

mostly English with bad grammar rather than the presence of Patois. This is interesting because it shows a direct relationship between language attitudes and language perception. Also interestingly, participants who had a neutral or positive attitude towards JC in formal linguistic contexts were more likely to say that sentences contained Patois or contained some degree of mixture between the two languages.

As mentioned before, the data from the language attitudes sentences also showed that age and context of language use played an important role in participants' attitudes towards the use of JC in certain linguistic contexts. The youngest age group was more open to the use of Jamaican Creole in education, media and government information. This points to a change of linguistic attitudes occurring among the younger generation towards Jamaican Creole, possibly because of factors such as the proliferation of Dancehall culture and an increase in a national consciousness and association between Jamaican Creole and a Jamaican identity.

Also, different contexts yielded different responses with education being the least supported context for Jamaican Creole to be used. This points to the complexity of language attitudes among Jamaicans as there seems to be a need to protect children from Jamaican Creole because it could be a hinderance to their English acquisition while it is slightly more embraced in the context of media. It was interesting that there were so many responses to the use of JC in the dissemination of government information that said that it was unnecessary or that asked why it should be used. This points to the lack of awareness on the part of dominant English speakers or balanced bilinguals that there could be dominant Jamaican Creole speakers who find it challenging to understand what is being said when information is conveyed in English only.

Occupation as a potential variable

Occupation was observed to be an interesting variable when manipulated. The occupations related to relevant attitude questions were extracted for the education and translation/interpretation of government information questions. It was found that age was a more significant factor than occupation regarding the attitude towards Jamaican Creole in formal contexts with younger participants holding more positive or neutral attitudes than older participants. This could point to generational changing of language attitudes.

Jamaican Identity in Jamaica and the Diaspora

The question of cultural identity was intentionally explored rather than race because in cultures such as Jamaica, race is not the best indication of language use (Hoffman & Walker, 2010). In this study participants were asked to identify themselves and most participants identified themselves as Jamaican, regardless of their country of residence. This reveals that the issue of language use across the continuum is an issue for speakers not only within Jamaican shores but also in the diaspora. The “hyper-mobility” (Hinrichs, 2011) of Jamaican Creole to places such as Canada and the United States has resulted in a continuation of the use of Jamaican Creole although possibly in a simplified form (Mair, 2003; Malcolm, 2021). It was expected that participants of the diaspora would rate the speech as more basilectal than acrolectal because they arguably hear Jamaican Creole less than Jamaicans residing in Jamaica. However, the opposite occurred as generally, Jamaicans residing in Jamaica agreed that the sentences were more mesolectal than those living in the diaspora. A personal comment by a Jamaican living in the USA included the speculation that because speakers in the diaspora make an effort to separate JC from English in order to not be understood by foreigners by using more basilectal forms, it would make sense that these sentences would be judged by them as English-like. This is supported by the numerous participants in the

diaspora who indicated that the sentences were English or mostly English with a Jamaican accent.

6. Limitations

This study was affected by several limitations that should be improved upon in future studies. Firstly, the intonation of the audio recordings done could have affected the ratings because Jamaican Creole and English have different intonational patterns, the use of an arguably Jamaican Creole intonational pattern in some sentences could have influenced where participants placed sentences. This is affirmed by the fact that some participants made comments about the speech being English with a Jamaican accent.

The study was also limited by the sample size of 110 participants that did not allow for sufficient quantitative statistical analysis.

Finally, the study was limited by possible misunderstandings in the survey questions. For instance, the question asking participants their thoughts on the use of Jamaican Creole as a medium of instruction in schools was often interpreted as JC being the *only* medium of instruction. Therefore, greater care could be taken when creating similar questions in the future.

7. Conclusion

The Jamaican language situation can be described as a continuum, with Jamaican Creole and English existing at two poles and mesolectal or mixed varieties of the two languages in between. These varieties represent the majority of speech for Jamaicans. An experiment was designed to determine how linguistic variables affect the perception of speech along this proposed continuum. It was found that firstly, morphosyntactic variables were greater determiners of speech being perceived as English or Jamaican Creole than phonological

features. Secondly, Jamaicans in Jamaica were more likely to agree on where to place a sentence and were more likely to place sentences in the middle of the continuum rather than as more English like or more Creole-like as Jamaicans in the diaspora did. Finally, in terms of language attitudes, it was found that the younger generation is more accepting of the use of Jamaican Creole in formal linguistic contexts such as education, the media and in the interpretation of government information than older generations. Also, there seems to be a relationship between language attitudes and sentence perception as those with negative attitudes towards JC were more likely to say that the sentences were mostly English than those with positive attitudes. Future work should include a greater sample size and more test sentences and language attitudes questions.

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Appendix 1

1. What is your year of birth?

2. What is your gender identity?
 - Female
 - Male
 - Transgender
 - Non-binary
 - Other (please specify)
 - Prefer not to say

3. Do you identify as Jamaican, Canadian, or Jamaican- Canadian?

4. Are most of your friends Jamaican?

5. Are the people you work with Jamaican?

6. Do you speak Jamaican Creole/ Patois?

7. What does your family speak when you get together?

8. What do you speak with friends?

9. Where were you born?

- Jamaica
- U.S.A.
- Canada
- U.K.
- Other (please specify)

10. Where do you live now?

- Jamaica
- U.S.A.
- Canada
- U.K.
- Other (please specify)

11. How long have you lived in the country selected in 9?

12. How long have you lived in the country selected in 10?

13. What is your occupation?

14. What do you think about classes being taught in Jamaican Creole (Patois) in Jamaican schools?

- Good idea
- Bad idea
- Neutral
- Other (please specify)

15. What do you think about the news being reported in English and Jamaican Creole (Patois) in Jamaica?

- Good idea
- Bad idea
- Neutral
- Other (please specify)

16. What do you think about government press conferences being done in English and translated into Jamaican Creole (Patois)?

- Good idea
- Bad idea
- Neutral
- Other (please specify)

Test sentences

The following are the proposed sentences for questions 17-24. Included are the linguistic features being tested for each sentence.

17. **Wi goin tu di suupamakit** (*We are going to the supermarket*)

18. **We went dere after church** (*We went there after church*)

19. **Wash yu fies before you go to school** (*Wash your face before you go to school*)

20. **Shi jos came home** (*She just came home*)

21. **Take the butta out of the fridge** (*Take the butter out of the refrigerator*)

22. **Dooz people always come early** (*Those people always come early*)

23. **Mi daata got into chobl at school.** (*My daughter got into trouble at school*)

24. **A neva know se im goin tu school** (*I did not know that he goes to school*)