1 Laying the Foundation

DON: *mi a go a dakta nou.*[1]
DON: "*dakter shi iz sik.*"
DON: *no . . . "shii" mi fi se.*
[V6-KN1:l.99ff-3;11.12]

This book seeks to paint a picture of the language of three-year-olds in their first year of formal schooling in Jamaica. It is intended to serve as a resource for creolists and acquisitionists, for academics in education, for teachers of literacy and language education, as well as for intermediary and advanced tertiary-level linguistics and education students. Its significance for educators lies in the fact that teachers' familiarity with learners' linguistic resources is considered essential to the task of supporting learning (Zapata and Roach 2011). This becomes particularly important in a Creole context such as that in Jamaica, referred to by Patrick (2004, 202), among others, as a complex linguistic situation characterized by extreme variability.

We explore the complexity and discover how the language of the children can inform our understanding of it. Data used as the bases of analyses, are drawn from a research project fully funded by the University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica, and designed and executed by the author and her team of student assistants. The project was entitled "Child Language Acquisition Research (CLAR): What Do They Speak?" The children who participated in the research are referred to as the CLAR children and, as the title of the project suggests, we will be looking at their speech.

It is often claimed that there are two languages or *codes* in the country:[2] Jamaican Creole (JC), also referred to as Patwa, and Jamaican English (JE).[3]

JC's lexicon (vocabulary) was originally based on that of English. For this reason, English is referred to as the lexifier language. JC is spoken natively by the vast majority of Jamaicans, yet English is the official language. The existence of an official language that is the lexifier of a Creole language, spoken by the vast majority of the population, is common in societies such as Jamaica, with socio-historical (sugar) plantation backgrounds. Problems arise due to the superficial similarities in vocabulary and pronunciation resulting from lexification by English. These similarities conceal differences between the languages at a deeper syntactic level (Craig 1980, 2), and have the further consequence that some speakers believe that they are speaking JE when in fact they are not.[4]

Since the early 1960s, the notion of the *continuum* has been applied by some scholars to the language situation in such Creole communities, with the lexifier language and the Creole at the opposing poles, and intermediate varieties linking them.[5] In the Jamaican situation, JE and JC form the poles; while in Guyana, for instance, Guyanese English and Guyanese Creole, or Creolese, do. The codes at either end of the continuum are seen as idealizations since, given the extreme variability which exists, it is unlikely that any one speaker would use only forms belonging exclusively to one code or the other.

The approach taken in this work is to view an individual's speech forms as being composed of *features*, which may in turn be identified as belonging to either (an idealized) JC or JE. Variation in speech is analysed, then, in terms of the feature-composition of the forms. This is done within a lexically based minimalist framework where words are seen as bundles of features, and features drive structure.[6]

The term *code-weaving*[7] is used in acknowledgement of the nature of the variation in speech communities across the island and in the speech of the children: speakers draw from linguistic repertoires with forms ranging from those most like what has been called the Creole to those most like the English lexifier. Guided by the distinction made explicit by Craig (1980), I differentiate between what I call *superficial weaving*, that is, the mixing of phonological[8] features at the level of the word, and *structural weaving*, the mixing of morphological and syntactic features in constructions.

Patterns of language choice by the children are investigated and the findings are used as a basis for recommendations for the expected benefit of language and literacy classrooms. One may say that linguistic analysis is used as a platform, a basis on which to understand the nature of the language that has been acquired by the children and used by them, leading to an informed picture of a possible way forward in English language education. It is argued that an understanding

of the characteristics of the language that has been acquired by the children, an understanding, in effect, of what it is the children speak, will allow the language and literacy teacher to transform what are frequently considered hindrances into opportunities for learning the English language.

The sections which follow in this chapter lay the foundations for the study. As background, the characteristics of the Creole speech situation are explored in section 1.1 and the research project on which the study is based is outlined in sections 1.2 and 1.3. The chapter closes with an indication of the organization of the book in section 1.4.

1.1 The Language Situation in Jamaica

The particular concern here is with the Jamaican language situation. There is historical evidence from the eighteenth century of "extensive variation (among speakers and within individual usage) in features of basilectal and acrolectal models of Jamaican speech" (Lalla and D'Costa 1990, 98). This has been said to have evolved over the years into what Patrick (2004, 202) refers to as a complex linguistic situation, characterized by the "extreme variability of contemporary Jamaican speech".

I investigate in this section the link between historical phenomena and present-day issues, on the basis that, as pointed out as early as Alleyne (1971, 170), Creoles demonstrate the influence of social context on language change, language structure and language usage. Thus, the section begins with a note on the socio-historical foundation of the language situation in Jamaica, and then continues to review the linguistic consequences of this, leading to the basis of a characterization of an approach to the situation.

Britain imported hundreds of thousands of enslaved Africans to expand and sustain the plantation economy.[9] It is important to note, however, that it was not the case that all the enslaved spoke the same language – they were not a linguistically homogeneous group at all. It was their need to communicate with the Europeans and with each other that led to the emergence of JC. The slave masters, a small group on the plantations, did not themselves speak the same varieties of English – they were a mix of Scots, Welsh and speakers of a number of dialects of English. In addition, relatively few of the large majority of the enslaved population came into direct contact, on an ongoing basis, with the tiny minority who spoke these different varieties of English. Problems in communication would indeed have been great; this was by no means a straightforward

case of migrants to a new country, where speakers of one language may learn one homogeneous target language spoken by all those with whom they come into contact outside of their family circles.

Despite this difficulty in communicating, linguistic communication became possible. This means of communication became known as Creole, derived from the term used originally to refer to the descendants of Europeans born in the colonies.

How Creoles emerged continues to capture the interest of linguists, and has resulted in a rich body of literature on their genesis. Early views held that Creoles emerged from Pidgins, structurally deficient auxiliary languages that expanded as a result of their acquisition by native speakers. As Kouwenberg and Singler (2011, 284) point out, such views have been largely abandoned in the field, on all counts: Pidgins are not structurally deficient auxiliary languages, and there is no evidence that every Creole started as a Pidgin or that linguistic expansion necessarily requires nativization.

The study of Creole genesis in the 1980s and 1990s resulted in hypotheses generally referred to as superstratist, substratist and universalist, differing fundamentally with regard to the mechanisms presumed to have produced these languages (Aboh 2015, 60). In broad terms, superstratists hold that Creole languages are distant varieties of the lexifier language (the superstratum), resulting from imperfect approximations of approximations of the target (see, for example, Chaudenson 2001, 125; his chapter 5). Substratists contend that it is the native language grammars of enslaved Africans which primarily formed the basis of Creole development (see, for example, Lefèbvre 1998). Universalists argue that children, confronted with extremely impoverished and chaotic language *input* on the plantation, created, in essence, a new language guided by their innate language capacity[10] (see, for example, Bickerton 1981).

Aboh (2015, 60) suggests that these proposals, though fundamentally different in their points of departure, are all based on the idea that creolization involves unsuccessful or incomplete learning of the target. He makes reference also to a more recent proposal by Plag,[11] the Interlanguage Hypothesis, based on the term coined by Selinker (1972). Interlanguage refers to the systematic knowledge of language which is independent of the second language learner's native language, as well as the target system she is trying to learn. In this view, Creoles are taken to be "conventionalized interlanguages of an early stage" (Plag 2008, 115), a view thought by Aboh (2015, 61) to be a rather extreme interpretation of the concept of Creoles as incomplete or a failed acquisition of a second language.

Building on work by Mufwene (1986, 2001, among other publications), DeGraff (2005, 294–99, for example) and his own earlier works, such as Aboh and Ansaldo (2007), Aboh (2015, 136) develops an account of the emergence of Creole languages in terms of the competition between and subsequent selection of features and patterns of the languages in contact. For Aboh, competition and selection take place at two levels: "the structuring of the input, and the combination of variants selected from the input into a coherent syntactic system" (ibid., 137). Such an approach to genesis, adopting an analysis of languages in contact as resulting in a recombination of formal features, is compatible with the pre-theoretical notion of the weaving of such features in contemporary speech in a Creole environment, as presented and developed here.

Within any contact situation, the nature of linguistic change is that it proceeds at different rates and at different levels of language structure (Trudgill 2011, 2). In contact on the plantations, however, rapid linguistic change would be predicted, given the urgent need for communication to take place. Trudgill continues: "it is widely agreed that syntactic change proceeds more slowly than lexical change" (ibid.). So, we would expect more rapid change in vocabulary than in structure. This would explain the large number of English-based words in JC, and the reason for it being commonly identified as an English-lexified Creole.

The language of the colonizers was associated with power and wealth, and that which the slaves developed was generally perceived to be malformed, since English words could be recognized in their speech but it was not *really* English. The colonizers' thinking was that it fell short because the complexities of the European language were beyond the grasp of the Africans. As Pollard (2002, 2) states, the status of a language is determined by the status of its speakers.

Speaking in this way of the language of the colonizers on the one hand, and the Creole which the enslaved developed on the other, might seem to suggest that there exist discrete languages. This is not the case in the Jamaican situation. Instead, there are several overlapping varieties, often referred to by linguists as codes. These codes are so finely articulated that they cannot even be divided into a finite number of discrete codes (Patrick 2002), but are characterized as a continuous spectrum of speech varieties (DeCamp 1971b, 350), with individuals occupying a span of the spectrum.

In this work, we will explore how the weaving of codes is manifest in the regular speech of Jamaicans, and we will suggest how a minimalist approach might be useful in its analysis.

The discussion turns, in the following section, to the functions of and attitudes towards the codes in contemporary Jamaican society.

1.1.1 The Creole and the "Standard" in Jamaica Today

Over the centuries, English has maintained its unique position, since it remains the only official language of Jamaica, and is expected to be used in the conduct of government business, in the law courts, in schools as the language of instruction, in the mass media, in religious worship and in all other contexts where written language is required. This official language is referred to loosely as "English". It is not the vernacular, the language of the majority, yet it is still, to a large extent, associated with high status in the society. JC is the vernacular language. It is the expected language for use in private and informal interactions involving friends. Though many educated Jamaicans do use JC at home, it continues to be associated largely with the poorer and less educated members of the society, and many parents feel that their children will only get ahead if they speak "English".

For these reasons, the language situation in Jamaica and other Caribbean territories is thought by some linguists[12] to be *diglossic*. This term is used in language situations where there are two often closely related languages, one of which is a so-called H(igh) variety generally used by the government and in formal contexts. It is learned and taught in formal situations by most of the population, and so students will tend to focus on its use in the formal domain only. The other language is of low prestige – the so-called L(ow) variety which is the vernacular used by most people in informal situations. The L variety is not generally used in the formal domain, is not traditionally taught in schools, and may have no accepted orthography associated with it. Importantly, given that the two varieties have these very distinct functions in the community, the prevailing view is that the H variety is the language of social mobility.

Devonish (2003, 158) uses the term *conquest diglossia* to characterize language situations such as those in Jamaica and typically those across the Caribbean. Conquest diglossia is a subtype of diglossia involving an "external" H variety owing its status and functions to imposition by colonial powers. In countries such as Jamaica, the vernacular varieties used by the majority of the population share vocabulary with English, resulting in the lack of a clear distinction between those varieties and English. Devonish (ibid., 159) refers to this lack of distinction as a gradual shading off from the most English varieties towards

those most deviant from English. This is a result of what Ferguson (1959, 332) describes as a kind of linguistic convergence, said to be characteristic of diglossic situations.

Another consequence of the social history of Creole communities is that attitudes towards language are very complex. It is commonly expressed, for example, that JC is what we use when we are passionate about something, when we are being humorous, when we are upset, when we let our guard down or when we react impulsively to pain or fear. We have the notion that it is "more expressive", and that there are jokes that really would never "come off" if they were delivered in the official language. As reported by Rickford (1985) in his study of how Guyanese feel about so-called standard and non-standard language varieties in their speech community, it is the language of friendship, identity and solidarity.

In other words, JC does have value, but it "has its place". Because it is a "lesser" language, for instance, it is considered inappropriate for use as a medium of personal prayer: the Lord must be respected, and so He must be spoken to in English.[13]

It is also, still today, the prevailing view, even among native speakers of JC themselves, that JC is nothing but "bad English" or "broken English", and parents and grandparents are known to chastise the younger generations when they speak it. We may call this a *culture of correction*,[14] indicating the perceived need and resulting insistence that children be able to *taak prapa* 'speak properly'.

Irvine (2005, 45–47) suggests that when language is being assessed in this way in spoken interaction, attention usually focusses on phonology and lexis, causing phonology rather than grammar to inform a listener's judgement of standardness. She cites Beckford-Wassink (1999, 66) as evidence that Jamaicans perceive accent and vocabulary to be the primary difference between JC and JE: only 18 per cent of Beckford-Wassink's fifty-one informants identified any aspect of morphosyntax as distinguishing the two languages, with 82 per cent mentioning either accent ("how they sound their words") or accent and vocabulary as determinants.

A category of phonological variables that appears to be salient for producing JE is identified by Irvine (2005, 307–8). Using a construction analogy, she terms these variables *load-bearing*. This means that the variants are indexical, seeming to function primarily to define the variety the speaker is using: without producing them in significant quantities, a speaker will not be considered in the Jamaican speech community to be speaking English. Nine variables characterizing speech as English were identified (ibid., 307); they are as follows:

- [h] word-initially in words like ‘hand’ (vs *h-dropping*[15] in JC *an*)
- the voiceless TH consonant as in ‘thin’ (vs [t] in JC *tin*)
- initial aspiration [k^{h}a:] in words like ‘calf’ (vs palatalized [kya:f] in JC)
- [ɔ] in words like ‘pot’ (vs [a] in JC *pat*)
- rhoticity following [ɔ] before [+ coronal] consonants such as [t] as in ‘forty’ (vs [a:] in JC *faati*)
- [ɔr] in words such as ‘poor’ (vs [ʊɔ] in JC *puor*)
- [o] in words like ‘goat’ (vs the diphthong [uo] in JC *guot*)
- word final phonological cluster [nt] before a vowel, as in ‘want’ (vs a nasal vowel in JC *waahn*)
- word final morphophonemic cluster such as [kt] resulting from the past-tense inflection, as in ‘looked’ (vs uninflected root in JC *luk*)

What takes place, in effect, is that when switching from an informal to a formal situation, speakers do not switch from some L variety to a H variety, as in a typical diglossic language situation. Instead, they signal a shift by manipulating load-bearing phonological variables (ibid., 311).

Irvine’s (2005) claim that pronunciation differences between the languages trigger language associations in the minds of speakers is important to this work. Recall that Craig (1980, 2) referred to pronunciation and lexical differences between a Creole language and its lexifier as superficial, and those in the morphosyntax as existing at a “deeper level”. This is the motivation behind using the term superficial weaving to refer to the manipulation of options provided by JC and JE, phonologically with regard to the pronunciation of words, or lexically with regard to the words themselves. Superficial weaving is distinguished from structural weaving; the latter involves a mix of JC and JE features in syntactic constructions.[16]

Pollard (2001, 103) provides an interesting perspective on the perception by Creole speakers of what differentiates English from Creole. It is that wherever a JE form is identical to a JC one, it runs the risk of not being considered English by the Creole speaker. She gives an example of a grade 6 student questioning the teacher with ‘I am to *wrote* everything from the board?’ For a form to qualify as English, then, it would seem that it must be different from what one would “normally” say.

Forms considered closer to JE have become associated not only with social advancement and social status, but also with personality traits. Christie (2003, 5) speaks of the use of JC as being perceived in the society as an indication of poor

moral standards and coarse behaviour as well as a lack of intelligence. Such perceptions affect interactions, even in the service industry where favourable treatment would be assumed. For example, Walters (2016) studied the differing treatment by public agency service representatives of JC versus JE-speaking callers. She found that when callers spoke JC they were twice as likely to be ridiculed and to be treated dismissively than when they spoke JE.

Yet, attitudes towards JC are not straightforwardly negative by any means. Kouwenberg (2011, 389) indicates that among first-year university students at Mona, JC speakers invariably score higher on qualities such as "honesty" and "friendliness" than do JE speakers. She speaks about the language of choice at the Mona campus being JC, not only for informal exchanges, but also for more academic discussions. This indicates that there is, perhaps, growing prestige associated with JC among the more educated who are proficient in JE and who are destined for more privileged positions in the society.

In addition, there is growing acceptance of the use of JC in the public arena in domains where, not so long ago, in colonial Jamaica, it would have been frowned upon, that is, domains such as radio talk shows and speeches in parliament.

Zellynne Jennings-Craig (pers. comm.) points out that this growing acceptance of JC and the increase in its use make it more difficult for children to learn English: the models are becoming fewer and fewer, reducing possible sources of input. This is underlined by Devonish and Walters (2015, 231), who indicate that it is with political independence in 1962 that the awakening of Jamaican political and popular cultural expression came. Along with this came a cementing of JC as the symbol of national identity in these domains, and an acceptance of its legitimacy as the main language of private and informal expression across all social groups.

Walters (2016, 236) takes such linguistic trends as support for the existence in Jamaica of what she terms *transitional diglossia*. By this she means "a change in the attitudes towards the functions which the H and L languages formerly performed and a desire to see the L language being used in public formal domains", that is, in the domains formerly reserved for the H language.

Even so, attitudes remain ambivalent: as Christie (2003, 2) points out, for example, it would likely be cause for surprise, if not outrage, if speeches in parliament were delivered entirely in JC. I note that such attitudes tend to be characteristic not only of Jamaicans, but also of the wider West Indian community, who, as Nero (2015, 346) indicates, "also hold deeply entrenched and ambivalent views towards Creole".

Whether the status of JC is favourably or ambivalently regarded, it is still commonly believed that, as a "bastardization" of English, it cannot be considered to be a language. It inevitably solicits a chuckle when mention is made of the rule systems governing JC, or when it is suggested that it is possible for there to be ungrammatical JC utterances. Instead, it is thought that JC does not *have* a grammar, and therefore could not be considered to be a language.

That JC is "bad" is not sanctioned by linguists, who do not place value judgements on language. That it is a language, has long been upheld by linguists. From as early as the 1960s, DeCamp (1968, 31) wrote, "A Creole is inferior to its corresponding standard language only in social status." In 1966, syntactician Beryl Bailey, in her seminal work *Jamaican Creole Syntax: A Transformational Approach*, created a grammatical account of JC by applying the then-groundbreaking work of Chomsky (1957) in the transformational analysis of grammar. She cited the following as one of the three goals of her work: "To explode once and for all the notion which persists among teachers of English in Jamaica, that the 'dialect' is *not* [her emphasis] a language, and further that it has no bearing on the problem of the teaching of English" (p. xiii).

I look now at some of the reasons that would cause linguists to conclude that JC and JE are different languages,[17] and that JC is, therefore, a language in its own right.

1.1.2 Are JC and JE Really Different Languages?

Christie (2003, 25) points out that as a form of communication in regular use for interaction by the community for at least three hundred years, and as a form of communication which uses a consistent set of sounds, words and sentence structures, JC is considered by linguists to be a language.

Devonish (2003, 172–74) answers the question in two parts. First, he establishes that linguistic differences between two languages are not the sole basis on which to make such a determination. He cites, on the one hand, dialects of Chinese which include varieties that may be as different linguistically from one another as English is from German, and on the other, languages such as Spanish and Portuguese which are very similar, but which are considered by their speakers to be different languages.

Having established this professional disclaimer, Devonish continues to argue that it is quite common for languages which are considered by their speakers to be distinct, to be linked by dialect continua. So, for example, (standard) Dutch

and German lie at polar ends of such a continuum, with dialects in between, ranging from more Dutch to more German. In such language situations, there may be varying degrees of mutual intelligibility between the languages at either pole. Mutual intelligibility is of importance, since it is considered to be a basic test of languagehood: if speakers of two languages are not able to understand and communicate with each other, then the codes they speak may be said to be distinct languages rather than dialects of the same language.[18]

The second part of the answer is to establish whether the linguistic distance between languages considered to be distinct can be said to be similar to that between JE and JC. To address this, Devonish (2003, 174) outlines distance measurements between Creoles and their lexifiers:

1. for the lexicon or vocabulary, about the distance between the lexicon of Spanish and Portuguese;
2. for phonology or pronunciation patterns, at least the same distance as that between the phonology of French and Spanish;
3. for morphology or word construction patterns, about the same distance as between the morphology of English and German; and
4. for syntax or grammatical structure, depending on the Creole in question, ranging from about the distance between the syntax of French and Spanish to the distance between the syntax of English and German.

It is on the basis of these estimates of linguistic distance that Devonish offers his personal opinion that Caribbean English-lexicon Creoles are languages other than English. This is supported by social trends which appear to be taking place in these societies. In Jamaica, for example, we have seen that the functions of JC are gaining ground and "invading" the traditional domains of English.

That JC is a language in its own right, a language with sounds, lexical items, word formations and grammatical structures distinct from JE is the position adopted in this work.

The fact is that, nonetheless, there are similarities between the two languages. The vocabulary of JC is largely derived from English, and JC words can readily be seen to be related to their JE counterparts – JC *bwai* JE 'boy'; JC *gyaadn* JE 'garden', for instance. Noting the many similarities in vocabulary, speakers believe that the languages are similar in other respects as well, resulting in a lack of awareness of the differences between them and, often, in surprise that it is not understood by non-JE speakers.

Yet another consequence of the superficial similarity between JC and JE is that speakers often believe that they are using JE when they are not. Vintenko (2016, 10, 51) reports, for instance, that in a school setting outside a primary school classroom, when asking a nine-year-old child to repeat what she had said in English because it had not been understood, the child replied *bot mi a spiik Ingglish* 'but I am speaking English'. Mair and Lacoste (2012, 89) ascribe this to the general population in the following way: "most speakers on the island do not draw a rigid line of division between S[tandard]JE and JC. Even speakers who show strong and obvious influences from JC still consider themselves as speakers of English, if of a more or less highly stigmatised variety."

Perceptions of what it means to speak English become an important consideration, then. Clues to perceptions may be discerned through hypercorrected forms. Hypercorrection takes place when there is an awareness of a difference between the native and the non-native language, causing the non-native form to be over-applied, that is, used in contexts where it is not used in that language. An example is the (hypercorrected) pronunciation of JC *bait* 'bite' as /bɔit/. This can be explained in the following way: the JE diphthong /ɔi/ as in 'boy' does not form part of the inventory of sounds in JC. The JC segment which corresponds to the JE sound is /ai/ as in *bwai*. The hypercorrected version /bɔit/ arises from a recognition that in JC /ai/ is pronounced where JE would pronounce /ɔi/, alongside an over-application of that knowledge.

Often, what arises is that English is associated with the so-called high society, as we have seen, but also with foreignness. As a result, when an attempt is made to speak English, there may be a perceived need to *sound* either American or British, often involving hypercorrection.

The reality is that although English is referred to as the official language of the country, what is actually spoken is a Jamaican variety of English, much in the same way that other English-speaking Caribbean people, Americans and the British themselves speak their own Englishes. American and British Englishes are foreign to Jamaica; we have our own Jamaican English. It is internationally recognized as a distinct variety: for example, it is one of the fourteen currently available Englishes of the world forming part of the International Corpus of English (ICE), with a body of one million spoken and written words.[19] Strictly speaking, then, JE is a variety of English.

JE is commonly referred to as Standard Jamaican English by linguists and others. The label "Standard" is, in fact, a misrepresentation, since no formal determination of what pronunciations, lexical items and grammatical structures

would actually constitute a Standard in Jamaica has been made. Instead, the informal presumption seems to be that at any linguistic level, the form which would be chosen would be that which is closest to some internationally accepted norm.

The situation may not be as simple as this. Shields (1989) was perhaps the first to classify speakers of English in Jamaica, in terms of whether they acquired the language natively, that is, as a first language (her Group 1 speakers), or whether they learned it as a second language in school, say (Group 2 speakers). A syntactic example is the preposition 'from' and what may follow it. For Group 1 speakers, 'From a child I learned the skill of tatting' can only mean "A child taught me", that is, "with child as a source". In contrast, for Group 2 speakers 'From a child' may also signal a beginning time, expressed in the Group 1 model as 'from childhood', using an abstract noun (ibid., 48–49). I note that Group 2, but not Group 1, speakers also allow a clause to follow the preposition, as in 'from I was a child'. The question becomes, *Which forms would we consider to be Standard?* Research would need to be conducted to determine the answer to such a question.

As a result, I avoid the designation Standard Jamaican English, and refer instead to the variety, abstract and idealized though that may be, as JE, Jamaican English.

Discussions of how JC and JE differ syntactically will be a focus of this work. In the chapters on the nominal and verbal domains, before analysing the children's acquisition of their native language JC, and how JE features are incorporated into their speech, details of the differences between the two languages will be presented. We shall see throughout this study that similarities that exist in words exist only at the surface, and that the ways these words are used to form structures are often fundamentally different. To characterize the mixing of structures from the two languages, I use the term structural weaving. An example is the question *Wat yuu aar duin?* 'What are you doing?' This structural weave consists of the JE progressive construction *are duin* within a JC interrogative structure, that is, no inversion of the subject 'you' and auxiliary 'are'.

We shall see also that the weaving of JC and JE features is not random, but that patterns exist, allowing us to predict the kinds of mixing likely to occur, and those tending to occur less frequently.

What now follows is a discussion of the approach taken in this work to the continuum, with JC and JE at the poles, and the "space" between them where features are woven.

1.1.3 The Creole Continuum

The existence of a "continuous spectrum of speech varieties" (DeCamp 1971b, 350) in language situations in Creole-speaking communities inspired the term Creole continuum.[20] Patrick (2002) indicates that the term was developed specifically by DeCamp (1961, 1971a, 1971b) to account for Jamaica. The continuum is a theoretical construct which "locates all variation, including socially conditioned variation on a unidimensional scale that extends from the most English-like to the most Creole-like" (Kouwenberg and Singler 2011, 293). The notion is foundational to this work, since the presumption is that the input which children hear as they acquire language is characterized by this variation.

In Continuum Theory, the language considered to be the official language is termed the *acrolect*. The language at the other end, comprising the most Creole forms of the Creole, is known as the *basilect*. These are the forms which are considered to be "very" Creole, often referred to as broad Creole, and here, as JC. Given their history, these are also the forms which carry more negative social significance than others. As examples, in the sound system the use of the palatalized velars (as in *kyaad* 'card') would be considered to be basilectal, and in the syntax, so would the formation of the possessive using *fi* as in *fi di bwai* 'the boy's' (lit. possessive preposition + the boy).

It has traditionally been assumed that communities in rural areas would be more likely to have speakers of more basilectal forms.[21] This is thought to be the case since such areas are isolated in both geographic and socio-economic terms. As a result, they exhibit networks that are generally confined to the community in question, and therefore remain relatively immune to more mainstream developments,[22] including, it is assumed, linguistic behaviour.

From the early 1970s, however, DeCamp identified Jamaica as what he called a *post-creole* community, undergoing decreolization. The status of post-creole is possible only when the dominant official language is the same as the Creole vocabulary base, and when the social system provides for sufficient social mobility and sufficient corrective pressures from above in order for the standard language to exert real influence on Creole speakers (1971a, 29). Factors such as radio, television, internal migration and education contribute to the pressures. DeCamp notes that these pressures do not operate uniformly, but act on individual speakers pulling them in differing degrees towards the standard end of the continuum (ibid.).

DeCamp was speaking about a Jamaica of over forty years ago. It is assumed that the post-creole status of which he spoke would have progressed over the

years, with boundaries between the two language systems becoming more blurred, as speakers continue to acquire so-called standard forms to varying degrees.

As a result, speakers do not fit so neatly into labels or categories. As Nero (2014, 225) puts it, "[i]n everyday language use in Jamaica, 'pure' forms of JC or S[tandard]JE are rare. Rather, there is a seamless mixing of both forms." Thus, instead of consistently using only forms which are considered to be either basilectal or acrolectal, forms reflecting more or less "Creole-ness" are regularly used as well. People using such "midway" forms have been termed mesolectal speakers. Winford (1997, 236) indicates that for Jamaica, the *mesolect* is used to refer to an area of interaction between a relatively basilectal Creole and the local standard, and appears to have no distinct status as a system. The term "area of interaction" was perhaps originated by Craig (1971, 372), who refers to it as such because "its existence has been, and continues to be, dependent on the cross influences from the two extremes".

An example of mesolectal speech would be the use of neither the basilectal JC past-tense marker (*b*)*ehn* nor of the JE past-tense inflected verb form ('walk<u>ed</u>'), but of a form such as 'did' as in 'He <u>did</u> walk.' In such a sentence, 'did' has been borrowed from JE, but functions in much the same way as the JC past marker *behn*, and not as an emphatic form as it would in JE. Similarly, mesolectal speakers might use a sequence such as *Jan singin*. Here, the form of the verb 'singin' corresponds to that following the auxiliary 'be' in the expression of the progressive aspect in JE ('John is <u>singing</u>'). Differences include, however, the use of the final alveolar nasal /n/,[23] where JE uses its velar counterpart /ŋ/, as well as the absence of the auxiliary, that is, neither the JC pre-verbal progressive marker *a* (*Jan <u>a</u> sing* 'John is singing') nor the JE 'is'.

In this work, the mesolect will be viewed from a feature-based minimalist perspective. I will speak in terms of features which are associated with JC, and would be viewed as being basilectal using continuum terminology, as well as features which are associated with JE, viewed as being acrolectal. There is no intention in so doing, to imagine that any one speaker would have in her linguistic repertoire only those features which we might ascribe as being JC or as JE, necessarily. Following early accounts such as DeCamp (1971b), neither is there a possibility of deciding the point on the continuum at which any speaker might be placed. Instead, in theory, a speaker will have at her disposal all the features in the input.

Variation, then, is characteristic of speech in Jamaica, and not reserved only for speakers who may be identified as mesolectal. Instead, it is a part of the

input to which children are exposed, even in the most rural communities. Even so, despite extreme variation in the input, it is possible to ascribe features as "belonging to" JC or JE. What will concern us are the ways in which these JC (basilectal) and JE (acrolectal) features are merged and the detection of patterns in which they combine, or are woven, in the speech of the speaker.

It is against this background that the CLAR research was conducted. The project is presented in the next section.

1.2 Methodology

The CLAR "What do they speak" project had as its primary aim, the determination of the language structures used by Jamaican three-year-olds from communities across the island in the school environment.

The interest was in the language spoken by children as they enter the public school system, and as a result, only children in their first year of basic school were chosen. Elicitation sessions took place in such schools in western, central and eastern parishes. The school was chosen as a setting, and sessions were conducted during the school day, so as to associate them in the children's minds with their education, and in an effort, therefore, to capture the language spoken at school.

The assumption of the Ministry of Education is that the communities feeding such schools are mainly JC-speaking, and that the children are monolingual speakers of JC. The 2001 *Language Education Policy*, for instance, states explicitly that JC is the language most widely used in Jamaica (p. 23). In addition, the *Literacy 1-2-3 Manual* (p. 4) accompanying the language education curriculum for grades 1 through 3 contrasts JC as the language used in the home and on the street, with JE as the language of school and written texts, thereby indicating not only the same assumption concerning students' native language, but articulating also that they are in the process of acquiring JE as a second language in schools. The implication is that children enter the school system speaking only JC.

The language situation as outlined in the preceding sections would suggest far more complexity than this, however. Indeed, Devonish and Carpenter (2007, 26) refer to "another language of the school", the language variety used among the children themselves, described as being largely similar to the *home language*, but subject to the levelling process of peer group pressure at school. It is the question which arises – "What is it that our children really speak?" – that the project seeks to answer.

In what follows, details are provided of the participants (section 1.2.1), of how the interviews were structured (section 1.2.2), and of the transcription and coding conventions (section 1.2.3).

1.2.1 The Participants

The study aimed to arrive at a linguistic profile of three-year-olds. A virtual year of data was collected over a six-month period. This was achieved modelling Meade (2001) in the following way: the age of half of the children at the start of data collection was 3;0[24] ± 2 months; and the other half, 3;6 ± 2 months. In effect, the percentages of children belonging to these groups were 45.3 and 54.7 respectively. The resulting age range of all children interviewed was 2;9 to 4;2.

There were a total of eighty children interviewed in a maximum of six sessions each. Of these, twenty-eight (or 35 per cent) attended all six sessions, fifty-three (or 66 per cent) attended at least four, and sixteen (or 20 per cent) attended only one session. The sixteen children who were interviewed only once

Table 1.1. Children interviewed by region, area, community type and sex

Region	Area	School Code	Community Type	# girls	# boys
West	St Elizabeth	SER	Rural	4	5
	St James	MOB	City	3	4
Central	Clarendon	CLA	Town	6	7
	St Ann	AN1	Rural	1	1
		AN2	Rural	2	2
East	St Andrew	ADR	Rural	2	2
		ADT	Town	1	4
	Kingston	KN1	City	2	2
		KN2	City	2	3
	St Mary	SMR	Rural	3	3
		SMT	Town	5	4
	St Thomas	STR	Rural	2	3
		STT	Town	4	3
			Total:	37	43

Table 1.2. Children interviewed by community type and sex

Community Type	# Girls	# Boys	Total
Rural	14	16	30
City	7	9	16
Town	16	18	34
Total:	37	43	80

included those whose starting age was too high; others had subsequently moved away from the district. Data from these interviews are included nonetheless in analyses. The total number of interviews was 214, with 51,650 utterances by the children. It is on these utterances that the analyses in this work are based.

Consideration of possible gender effects on the speech of children was not an aim of the study; however, an attempt was made to have equal representations of boys and girls from each school.

Eight areas across the island were chosen as follows: two from western, two from central and four from eastern Jamaica. This was intended to replicate in a general way, the distribution of the population across major divisions.

The distribution of participants by region, community type and sex is presented in table 1.1, and by community type and sex in table 1.2.

Care was taken to have representation from schools in rural areas, in the two major cities, Kingston and Montego Bay, and in towns, with no attempt to include a range of social classes, despite the suggestion in previous sections that social class is an important determinant of language use. I note, however, that the basic school system was created to cater mainly to the lower socioeconomic groups (Miller 2015). In 2012, 74.2 per cent of children aged three to five years attending early childhood education institutions in the country were enrolled in basic schools (SABER Country Report 2013, 15, table 12).

1.2.2 The Interviews

Interviews were conducted between September 2009 and April 2010, with the permission of school principals and parents. Each interview lasted for half an hour. Children were interviewed once a month over a six-month period by JC native-speaking graduate students at the University of the West Indies, Mona, who had received at least a B+ grade in our undergraduate language acquisition course.

There were two teams of investigators, each comprising two members and responsible for interviews at its own set of schools, as shown in table 1.3.

Each set of monthly interviews was named a *visit*; there were six visits. In areas where only one school was visited, a larger number of children was interviewed than in other schools.

All interviews were video-recorded using a Sony camcorder with a hard drive, and audio-recorded backups were done using a Sony handheld recorder. Team members alternated roles as investigator or camera operator in the course of the day.

The decision to video-record was based primarily on the importance of observing contextual clues for the understanding of interactions with children. As Eisenbeiβ (2010, 16) indicates, video-recordings provide information regarding object, deictic and temporal references, and links among speech, gestures and actions.

In approximately half of the sessions (108/214), only one child was interviewed. For the remainder, interviews were of two children. The rationale for choosing to interview two children at a time was to allow for the possibility of analyses of children as they interacted with each other. In addition, there were non-linguistic reasons such as attitudes, fair-play and dominance. In some cases, particular children who appeared to be shy were paired to encourage conversation.

The store of materials used for elicitation included laminated picture flash cards, storybooks, toys, colouring books with crayons, and scrapbooks with markers. To allow for role-playing, there was a range of cooking utensils, including a wooden stove, pots and food items, as well as telephones. As expected, individual children quickly revealed their own preferences, and requested their preferred toys in subsequent sessions.

The flash cards centred around the elicitation of tense and aspect, adjectival and prepositional predication, argument structure and derivational morphology. Books were used for the naming of animals, foods and fruit, and for general picture description or storytelling. New word formation was elicited

Table 1.3. Areas visited each month for six months

Week	Team 1	Team 2
1	St Mary – 2 schools	St Ann – 2 schools
2	Kingston – 2 schools	St Thomas – 2 schools
3	Clarendon – 1 school	St James – Montego Bay 1 school
4	St Andrew – 2 schools	St Elizabeth – 1 school

using objects such as a nut cracker and a tea-infuser with a ball inside, chosen on the presumption that the children would not be familiar with them. Guided conversation was used throughout the interview to elicit other structures such as possession, plural formation, including the use of numerals, pronominal reference and negation, as well as tense and aspect (*Wa yu jos du?* 'What did you just do?' *A wa yu a du?* 'What are you doing?').

The aim was for the children to interact naturally, and data were elicited primarily via conversation during play. Sessions were loosely structured as follows:

- An initial ten-minute segment intended to put the child at ease and to set the scene for the session. This typically included a discussion of events and activities relating to the child's own home-life and experiences. In cases where the child was less talkative, discussion was encouraged through books or pictures.
- Ten minutes using laminated flash cards or objects chosen especially for the elicitation of specific structures. Discussion around these materials was encouraged.
- Ten minutes involved in various activities such as free play, role-playing or colouring to encourage discussion and interaction.

After the first interviews, when the children had become more familiar with the format and the investigators, time devoted to free play and role-playing activities was extended on the children's urging, allowing for conversation through play to be captured.

Interviews were conducted primarily in JC.[25] The intended effect which this would have on the speech of the children relates to what is known as the language mode. In this, I draw on work which has been done in the field of bilingualism. Grosjean (1989, 2008 and elsewhere) defines this as the state of activation of a bilingual's languages and language processing mechanisms at any given point in time. *Activation* is a neural modelling term for calling upon a language when it is determined by the speaker, normally quite unconsciously, that it is needed, given numerous psychosocial and linguistic factors (Grosjean 2008, 38). Importantly, activation levels of the languages available to bilinguals may differ, but a language is never totally deactivated, even in monolingual speech mode. In bilingual mode, the bilingual speaker chooses a base or main language. This is defined by Grosjean in psycholinguistic terms as the more activated language,

taken to be the language of the conversation, and considered to be fully active, since it is the language which governs language processing (2001, 4). The speaker activates the other language and calls on it from time to time by way of code-switches and borrowings.

We might expect, then, that since the children were interviewed primarily in JC, that would be their base language of choice, and they would therefore make less use of JE. Given the status of the languages in the society, and attitudes such as those discussed previously, however, it is reasonable to assume that there would have been conflicting sociolinguistic considerations. In particular, it was expected that the children would believe that the language appropriate for interactions with strangers introduced to them by their teachers would have been JE, and that they would have made efforts to use JE, most particularly in Visit 1 when they had just met. We see in chapters 3, 4 and 5 that mixing prevailed throughout, although as discussed in section 6.2, the *dominant* language used by the children was indeed JC.

In Visit 6, the final visit, JC was the language of the investigators to start with, as had been the practice in the first five visits and, therefore, as the children would have expected. After the first fifteen minutes, however, investigators seamlessly began speaking JE, so as to determine what influence, if any, there might have been on the children's speech. Conducting interviews in a language other than the preferred language of interviewees is expected to lead to a situation where both languages are highly activated for all those involved in the conversation (Gawlitzek-Maiwald and Tracy 1996, 911). The dominant language of the children in those sessions tended, nonetheless, to be JC.

1.2.3 Transcription and Coding

Interviews were transcribed from the videos for manipulation in CHILDES, a child language data exchange system which provides online tools for transcription and data analysis (MacWhinney 2000a, 2000b).[26] More than four of the six visits, or approximately 70 per cent of interviews, were transcribed during the academic year by teams of six undergraduate linguistics students meeting as a group in the linguistics computer lab at the University of the West Indies, Mona. Video files were stored on the university's intranet, with password protection. The sessions were supervised by a graduate student research assistant who served also as one of the investigators. The remainder of the interviews

were transcribed by individual students during the summer, and checked by the supervisor or the author, or both.

All the variables discussed previously (age, sex and provenance) appeared in an identification header line assigned by CHILDES in the order: languages|project name|name of participant|age| sex||area|role of participant||, as shown in (1) below. This allowed for queries on any of these variables.

(1) @ID: jam, eng|clar0910|BIA|3;1.|female||town|Child||

Transcriptions were orthographic, using the Cassidy-JLU (Jamaica Language Unit) writing system[27] for all utterances, including those in JE. Since the children used vowels existing in JE but not in JC,[28] the inclusion of additional representations was required (see table 1.4).

Another difference between the Cassidy-JLU orthography and the representation of data here is the use of 'z' to represent plurality regardless of actual pronunciation: *kyatz* 'cats' and *dogz* 'dogs' versus Cassidy-JLU transcriptions *kyats* but *dogz*.

All transcriptions were checked for CHILDES-system codes and were verified by at least two different JC speakers against the videos as being true representations of actual speech. Checks included accuracy in orthography.

Formats of videos were changed from .mpg to .mp4 to accommodate the linking of all transcriptions to videos, allowing for full interaction between the two. This greatly facilitated the checking process.

All transcriptions were tagged using the MOR and POST facilities provided by CHILDES. Lexicon files were created (4,282 entries in thirty-nine files)[29] for this purpose, following, for the most part, word categories in use by CHILDES.[30] The report *mor +xl *.cha* provided by CHILDES was run to ensure that all words in transcribed files were included in the lexicon.

Coding for tagging was adapted to suit the purposes of the analysis. For example, all entries in the lexicon files, except communicators such as *ye* 'yes',

Table 1.4. Orthographic representations of JE vowels

Segment	English Example	Orthography
/eː/	play	ee
/oː/	goat	oo
/ɔː/	paw	aw

Table 1.5. Language codes for tagging

Code	Meaning	Explanation	Example
&**JC**	Jamaican Creole	Regularly used by JC speakers; considered to be JC by native speakers.	*bwai* 'boy'
&**JC**only	Jamaican Creole only	These words are not used in JE. The JE counterpart has a very different form.	*nyam* 'eat'
&**JES**	Jamaican English segment	Once a JE segment not associated with the JC inventory of sounds appears in a word, it is considered to be a JES form. Some JES words may in fact be the JE form, but JES variants do not necessarily have all JE segments; they may also mix JE and JC segments.	The JES variants *boi* (the JE form) and *bwoi* (a mixed form) are used regularly by JC speakers alongside the JC form *bwai*. Other words may have multiple variants, mixing JE and JC segments, e.g., JC *aas* 'horse', with JES variants *haas*, *aars*, *ars*, *aws*, *hars*, *ors*, *hors*. Of these, only *hors* is a JE form.
&**JE**&LO	JE loan	A word borrowed from JE, not forming part of regular use in JC.	*wind* (JC *briiz*)
&**JE**&CLO	Creolized JE loan	A JE loan incorporating a JC vowel or consonant segment, but not forming part of regular use in JC.	*win* (JC *briiz*; incorporated into JC phonology using word-final cluster reduction)
&**SH**	Shared form (cognate) − referred to as SHared	A form shared by both JE and JC in form as well as meaning.	*wiik* 'week'
&**SH**&SE	SHared with semantic differences	A shared form which has taken on a different meaning in JC.	*tii* 'tea'. Refers in JC to various drinks; often modified to signal which drink, e.g., *mailo tii* 'Milo'.

Notes: See section 3.1, and especially table 3.1 for a listing of JC and JE segments. Details of the superficial weave in JC and JES variants of 'horse' are discussed in section 3.1.1.

and fillers such as *aahm* were coded for language, using the three major categories JC, JE and SH. Language codes are presented in table 1.5.

With regard to SHared words, it is acknowledged, as Kroll et al. (2012, 234) note, that pronunciations are almost never precisely the same in any two

languages. To determine classification as a SHared form, I follow Gooskens and van Bezooijen (2006, 554): there are to be no sounds which would need to be inserted, deleted or substituted in order to transform them into the corresponding words in the other language.

All words were assigned a language code in the lexicon initially by the author.[31] Three native speaker consultants verified these assignments. The judgements of the first consultant, made by line item for all nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs, were used as the working document. The second consultant also judged language codes in the lexicon files by line item, and the third was used as arbiter for those words where there was disagreement between the first two. There was overall agreement of 96 per cent, indicating near uncontroversial decisions with regard to language-membership. This included judgements on which forms "belonged" to JC, on which would be considered to be variants closer to JE, though used regularly, and those which would be considered loans, not in regular use in JC. These language codes formed the basis of the analyses of the mixing of JC and JE. Other codes used for tagging are summarized in appendix 3.

The entry for *brook* 'broke' in the lexicon serves as an example of how tagging works. It is coded in the v.cut lexicon file as a verb ([scat v]), a JE Loan (&JE&LO),[32] past (&PAST), irregular (&IRR), with the translation enclosed within "=" signs.

(2) brook {[scat v]} "brook&JE&LO&PAST&IRR" =broke=

When run, the CHILDES *mor* command uses the lexicon files as a look-up, resulting in the creation of a new data file with the addition for each utterance of a tagged line labelled *%mor:*, a morphological tier. An example of the information drawn from the lexicon is shown in (3) below.

(3) *ANT: *mi brook di plien.*
%mor: pro|mi&JC&1S&PERS=I_me v|brook&JE&LO&PAST&IRR=broke
det|di&JC&DEF=the n|plien&JC&BA=plane. [V5-CLA:l 894-3;3.27]

Automated tagging allows for one-time changes in the lexicon to be reflected in all data files, and facilitates more fine-grained analyses should the desirability of further manipulation become apparent.

The coding conventions used for the CLAR data, as briefly outlined in this chapter, allowed for extremely flexible interrogation of the data by any code, or

combination of codes. In addition, CHILDES output was exported to Microsoft Excel for further manipulation, as needed.

1.3 Limitations of the Study

There were limitations in data collection and in the system developed for transcription which are worthy of mention and discussion. The idea behind conducting the data collection sessions at the schools was primarily that there was an interest in seeing how the children spoke not in a class with the teacher, but in a school setting nonetheless. As a result, children were taken out of their classrooms and interviewed elsewhere on the compound. The schools accommodated us as best they could: in one school, we were given the sick bay, and in another, a section of the assembly hall, for instance. In some of the schools, however, there was no one area within the building where ambient noise was at an acceptable level. It was decided that outdoors in the playing field would not be suitable in those schools, since it would be more difficult to keep the children from wanting to run freely. Though the study was a syntactic one, and not dependent on laboratory-quality audio, background noise levels did interfere at times with unambiguous interpretations of the children's speech. Such speech was transcribed as 'xxx', as recommended by CHILDES. The effects of this could have been minimized, perhaps, with the use of lapel microphones.

That interviews took place in a school setting had the consequence, of course, that speech was only gathered in that one setting. That was the aim of the research. Perhaps future research can supplement the findings of this study, by gathering data in other settings.

Interviews were transcribed initially by a team of six final-year undergraduate linguistics students who were native speakers of JC. Transcription sessions were held in the linguistics computer lab at the University of the West Indies, Mona, and led by a graduate student supervisor who was also one of the investigators. They met for two three-hour sessions a week. It was determined that final-year students would have the most experience with the writing system, and would bring more linguistic maturity and expertise to the task. The system worked very well for the first semester and a half, after which the students felt they needed to devote the time to preparing for final examinations. Only two were able to continue during the summer, since others had secured jobs. Thus, the plan to have transcriptions completed by the end of the academic year did

not materialize, and after the first year, new transcribers had to be chosen and trained. This also meant that these transcriptions were not done immediately or even shortly after the interviews; that they were done from video recordings reduced possible negative consequences of this delay.

The multifunctionality of JC words made the margins of error very high in assignments of word categories by the automatic tagging provided by CHILDES. To resolve this, the decision was made to distinguish, at the level of the transcription, between words having a single form but multiple functions. An example is *a,* where in JC this same form is used for the focus marker (coded as *afc*), the progressive marker (*ag*), the habitual marker (*ab*), the iterative marker (*ai*), the preposition (*app* translated into JE as 'of', 'at', 'in', 'on', or 'to'), the JE indefinite article (*ad*), a variant of the first-person singular subject pronoun (*ap*), the copula (*ac*) and the lexical verb (*av*) (see section 3.2 for a discussion of multifunctionality in Creoles). This could be seen to compromise, at least to some extent, the readability of the transcribed files.

An alternative might have been to manually tag the corpus, as was done by De Lisser (2015, 43). However, as explained in section 1.2.3, tagging involves creating a %mor: line for each utterance. Given this, and taking into consideration the size of the corpus (51,650 utterances by the children alone),[33] it was determined that automatic assignment of codes entered (once) and stored in the lexicon master files would be preferable to manually typing such a line for every utterance (see [3] above for an example of a %mor: line).

Yet another alternative, adopted by Yip and Matthews (2007, 71) for their Cantonese data, would have been to run the CHILDES automated tagging, and then to manually disambiguate, checking for incorrectly assigned word classes in all %mor: lines. A disadvantage of this solution was thought to be that if there were need to rerun the automated tagging,[34] the corrections previously made would be overwritten, and would therefore need to be re-done.[35]

The transcription process itself could have been helped significantly if the facility provided by the CHILDES "F5 insertion mode" had been used. This allows for the insertion of links to the video files at the point of transcription, and the ability to replay a segment of text quickly and accurately for checking while transcribing. Links were created, but only after the transcriptions had already been completed. At that point, linking of videos with transcriptions is a tedious, time-consuming process of replaying videos and linking line by line. It did however, provide an opportunity to conduct yet another verification of data files against recordings, and was considered well worth the effort, given the facility to instantly locate the exact position on a video, of any line of text. This is

achieved simply by double-clicking on the relevant line either in the transcription file or in a generated report.

1.4 Aims of the Research and the Structure of the Book

As has already been stated, the primary aim of the research was to provide a linguistic profile of aspects of the grammar used by children across the island in their first year of entry into the public school system, the basic school. It was guided by the following research questions:

1. How can the language structures used in certain syntactic constructions by three-year-olds from JC-speaking communities across Jamaica be described?
2. How do the two linguistic systems JC and JE interact in the speech of these children in these constructions?
3. How can the mixing of JC and JE in the children's speech be accounted for theoretically?
4. How can this be instructive to the teacher of language and literacy in Jamaica and in the diaspora?

Select language structures were targeted, but conversation through play allowed for the collection of rich data. Not all of the language structures targeted are reported in this work. The lexicon is the focus of chapter 3. It includes a look at the inventory of sounds making up words, an overview of type–token counts,[36] the categorial composition of the children's vocabulary, adjectival modification and word-formation strategies. Aspects of the nominal domain are addressed in chapter 4, specifically the count–mass distinction, the expression of plurality, (in)definiteness and possession. Chapter 5 investigates aspects of the verbal domain, specifically tense and aspect, and their interaction.

For each linguistic phenomenon investigated, the linguistic differences between the two language systems are outlined, and the mixing is addressed in terms of the presence of features which may be said to belong to JC and to JE, allowing for research question 2 to be addressed.

Because the basis of analyses is just over one hundred hours (107) of data collected, and because interviews have been transcribed and tagged using the (computerized) CHILDES data manipulation system, analyses enjoy the benefits of corpus linguistics. As will become apparent, frequency of occurrence and the range and frequency of possible combinations of JE and JC forms play

an important role in the interpretation of the data. This allows for trends to be detected, and for patterns which may not be immediately obvious to be easily confirmed by looking at the speech of children of both genders, of different age groups, in different major regions (western, central, eastern), in different parishes, and in communities of different rural/urban status.

The framework used for addressing research question 3 is a feature-based minimalist approach, which is outlined briefly in section 2.5. Discussions on the mixing of the two languages is in terms of features, and an analysis of the interaction of *interpretable* and *uninterpretable* features is applied to findings in section 6.3.2.

The idea behind the fourth and final research question is to make the linguistic insights gained available to language and literacy teachers. The value of the insights is addressed in some detail in chapter 6, where, given the nature of the linguistic profile of the children emerging in chapters 3, 4 and 5, it is argued that there is a compelling case for the promotion of language awareness as a tool for increasing the proficiency in JE of children from Creole-speaking communities. The intention is to provide the linguistic base on which to make pedagogic decisions.

The work presumes a background understanding of how language works, such as that gained in introductory tertiary-level linguistics courses. It is grounded in linguistic theory, but does not require advanced linguistic knowledge. The most theoretical discussion appears in section 2.5 by way of an introduction to aspects of how features regulate syntax. The reader already familiar with these linguistic concepts may find it useful, nonetheless, for the application of the concepts to JC. This discussion in 2.5 leads the way to an understanding of the analysis of language choice in sections of chapters 4 and 5 and in section 6.3.2. Outside of these sections, terminology is explained as it is presented or, where it is deemed that lengthier explanations might be useful, supplemental material is provided in appendices.