ASPECTS OF THE MORPHOLOGY OF ENGLISH-DERIVED WORDS IN SIERRA LEONE KRIO

Frederick C.V. Jones

(Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone,
Freetown, Sierra Leone, West Africa.)

Introduction

Morphology seems to rank low in the scale of interesting phenomena for scholars of creole languages.* Alleyne, for example, complains about the sparseness of available data for a comparative study of the Afro-American varieties (1980, p.106). The gist of the argument has been that word order suffices to establish syntactic relationships (e.g. Johnson, 1976, p.13 n.8 - about Krio); and that these languages lost their inflections during the formation/pidginisation stage - a deliberate simplification strategy (Hall, 1966, p.58).

As Givon points out, however, (1979, p.20), there is no evidence whatsoever that creoles 'are characterised by the lack of inflections' or that the dropping of inflections is one of the processes of 'creolisation'. What seems clear is that, as far as inflectional morphology is concerned, African-related creole languages (at least) reflect the structure of the substratum language rather than that of the lexifier language.

Although inflections are certainly not typical of Krio, and although inflectional and derivational affixes are not as productive, profuse and as overtly functional as they are in English, some do occur. Broadly speaking, inflections and derivational affixes that have come into Krio from English tend to be wholesale transfers that the Krio speaker regards as single, indivisible units without morphemic constituents.

Nevertheless, increasingly, awareness of the nuance, grammatical import or outright denotation of a particular bound morpheme tends to be manifested in its deliberate use to form words analogous in structure to English forms, but often unacceptable in English usage: e.g. from the English pattern in 'basically', Krio has coined mɔtíkálí (mɔt + i + kal + i   mouth + y + cal +ly) = 'orally'. This tendency has very limited productivity but suggests a trend that may develop greater significance in future. One thing that is certain at present, for such forms as well as for some carryovers that are in common currency in non-acrolectal varieties, is the existence of connotatory distinctions from English usage.

This paper looks at ways in which decreolisation has affected inflectional and derivational morphology in English-derived words, as well as aspects of word-compounding in Krio.

Inflectional Morphology

Instances of English-derived inflected verbs and comparative and superlative forms of adjectives have been noted but are not discussed here. Only two categories of inflectional interest are treated - 'plurality' and 'gender' forms.

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*We may note, however, that Mulhausler has done substantial work on the morphology of Tok Pisin.

(a) '<u>Plurality</u>'

Generally speaking and particularly in non-acrolectal varieties, Krio does not inflect for plurality. This practice may be as a result of Niger Congo influence in the substratum (see Greenberg, 1966, pp.9&10; Turner, 1969, p.224; Welmers, 1973, pp.159-248). However, English plural-type -<u>s</u> does occur in Krio as one of the ways in which the language expresses plurality (the others being by the use of a number or quantity word immediately preceding the noun, the use of pre-and/or post-nominal <u>dɛm</u>, or by zero-modification of the noun). This is randomly heard in acrolectal varieties and among school children and teachers - obviously because of the impinging influence of English in such circles - and is one of the results of the growing tendency towards decreolisation; e.g.:

(i) <u>à dè gó mít dì bɔ̂ys</u> = 'I'm going to meet the boys(in my 'esoteric' group/conclave)'.

(ii) <u>à dɔ́n fíks dì chíàz</u> = 'I have fixed the chairs'.

Earlier (non-acrolectal) forms of English-derived words tended to discourage the use of the English plural -s marker. Indeed, this may have caused the dropping or non-realisation of the final /-s/ in the pronunciation of some words which do not even have a final -<u>s</u> in the spelling in the English cognate and, in some cases, certainly do not have a plural denotation; e.g. <u>láysìn</u> (licence), <u>péshɛ̀nt</u> (patient, patience).

However, a growing number of words - I have listed about 200 - have relatively recently come into Krio retaining the English plural marker morphophoneme {-S} - realised as /-s/, /-z/ or /-is/, as in <u>tɔ̂ys</u> (toys), <u>mátàz</u> (matters) and <u>kɔ́mpásìs</u> (compasses), - many of which have both a singular and a plural denotation - particularly older words, e.g. <u>grêps</u> 'grape(s)', <u>pîls</u> 'pill(s)', <u>sɔ̂ks</u> 'sock(s)' -; more recent words tend to have only a plural denotation, e.g. <u>dêz</u> 'days', <u>sɛ́nsìs</u> 'senses', <u>àydíàz</u> 'ideas'.

I have classified them in five categories and given only a few examples of each.

(a) <u>Items normally in pairs or associated with a pair</u>;

(1) <u>bángùls</u> = bangle(s), (2) <u>sûs</u> = shoe(s), (3) <u>lɔ̂ngs</u> = lung(s), (4) <u>brèsîs</u> = brace(s), (5) <u>sízàs</u> = scissors.

(b) <u>Items normally in quantity - only occuring with -s in Krio with singular and plural denotations</u>:

(1) <u>máchìs</u> = match(es), (2) <u>tît</u> = tooth/teeth, (3) <u>grêps</u> = grape(s), (4) <u>pîls</u> = pill(s), (5) <u>tɔ̂ys</u> = toy(s).

(c) <u>Words normally in plural form in English cognates but which may have singular denotation in Krio</u>:

(1) <u>lɔ́sìs</u> = losses, (2) <u>sâms</u> = psalm(s), (3) <u>jâms</u> = germ(s), (4) <u>klôs</u> = clothes, (5) <u>tîngs</u> = thing(s).

(d) <u>Krio creations and forms only 'pluralised' in Krio</u>:

i (1) <u>kàmàránks</u> ('come around + s') = members of a low-class gang, (2) <u>kríchɔ̀z</u> ('creatures') = chunks of delicious meat and entrails in cooked sauce, (3) <u>ràwndíngs</u> ('rounding + s') = woman's hair style;

ii (1) <u>slângs</u> = slang (2) <u>bédìngs</u> = bedding (3) <u>kyáléstɔ̀ks</u> = careless talk (4) <u>jɔ̀nks</u> = junk (5) <u>fùlíngs</u> ('fulling'

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(archaic)) = woman's dress with full gathered sleeves.

(e) Another plural form with both a singular and a plural denota-
tion is dɔ̂ks = duck(s). This may have been a conscious attempt
to avoid homophony with dɔ̂k = 'dock' (for ships) and 'duck' (to
dip in the water) - both nautical words that must have been some
of the earliest in the Krio lexicon.

(b) 'Gender' forms:

     African-related creoles are known for their use of the sex words man,
uman, preposed to the noun, to distinguish the sexes (Alleyne, ibid, p.106).
Krio is no exception, e.g. mán-dɔ̂ks = 'drake'. However, Krio has many female sex
words that have been carried over from English, most of which are in common enough
currency to be considered non-acrolectal. Examples are:

(1) prîns - prînsɛ́s = prince - princess (these are also personal names);
(2) wétà - wétrɛ̀s = waiter - waitress;
(3) ôst - óstɛ̀s = host - hostess;
(4) ɛ́dmástà - ɛ́dmístrɛ̀s = headmaster - headmistress;
(5)   - símstrɛ̀s = seamstress.

Even the irregular: wídò - wídóà = 'widow - widower' occur.

     To show awareness of the suffix and its meaning as well as its potentiality
for productivity, while the word kát (cat) was extended in meaning in the 1970s to
refer to a male who smokes cannabis or takes drugs, the form kátɛ̀s was coined to
refer to a female counterpart.

Derivational Morphology

     Many of the affixes and derivational endings to be found in Standard
English also occur in Krio, some of them atrophied and others productive in
various degrees.

     One of the largest categories of words modern Krio seems susceptible
to are, in fact, English words with derivational affixes; but, even so, the lan-
guage is selective in its choice of such words - they seem to have to be associa-
ted with 'concrete' rather than abstract ideas and experiences. This is particu-
larly true for carry-overs with suffixes, as will be seen. First, we look at
prefixes:

Prefixes: A few of the commonest prefixes occuring in carry-overs have provided
patterns for some Krio creations. In most cases, a particularly Krio nuance has
also come about. Examples are:

(1) ɛkstra- in most Krio formations has a pejorative nuance, unlike
the English cognate:

(a) ɛ̀kstrà-bízì 'extra-busy' means 'pretending to be busier than
one actually is';
(b) ɛ̀kstrà-fâyn 'extra-fine' means 'vulgarly bright, gaudy';
(c) ɛ̀kstrà-wɔ̀wɔ́ 'extra-ugly', is a case of an English-derived +
an African-derived noun, in this case a Twi word meaning 'ugly' -
instances of such combinations are not uncommon. It means:
'extremely ugly'.

(2) <u>inta-</u> also has a pejorative connotation in:

    (a) <u>intakolo</u> inter + collo(cation) (:K.E.D*, p.148)
        a person who is a gossip.

But in (b) <u>intapok</u> 'inter + poke' = 'pry into another person's
        affairs', it is <u>pok</u> 'poke' that seems to indicate pejoration.

(3) <u>ova-</u> has a pejorative connotation in:

    (a) <u>òvàplɔ̀s</u> (or its older form <u>òbàplɔ̀s</u>) 'over + plus' = 'more than
        the mark, too much';

    (b) <u>òvàjàyé</u> (English: 'over' + Yoruba '<u>jaye</u>') = 'too much happiness
        or comfort';

    (c) <u>òvàswɛ̂l</u> 'over + swell' (<u>swɛl</u> here is the typically creolised,
        uninflected form from the participial adjective 'overswollen').

For the meaning of <u>ova-</u> in these examples, cf. Marchand (ibid,2.28.6
p.98): 'do beyond the proper limit, to excess'.

In <u>òvàgládì</u> 'over + glad' = 'overglad, overgladness', however, <u>ova-</u>
is complimentary.

(4) <u>ɔn-</u> preserves its negative denotation in Krio and prefixes in
two words with interesting forms:

    (a) <u>ɔ̀nchɔ̂ch</u> 'un + church' = 'very irregular church-goer, one who
        does not go to church'.
        There is no agentive marker like <u>-a</u>, <u>is</u>(t) or, <u>-man</u> in the word
        to indicate its class;

    (b) <u>ɔ̀ntrénìn</u> 'un + training' = 'bad manners'.
        This is a curious use of the prefix, which, in English is used
        primarily to form adjectives or verbs rather than nouns.

<u>Suffixes</u>: There are far more English-derived suffixes (than prefixes) in Krio
(see K.E.D.) , but, of course, not all the possible ones occur. Some are far
common than others (invariably reflecting their frequency in English).

In English, derivational suffixes like '-ment', '-ness', '-tion' can
be used to express abstract concepts, e.g. 'fairness', 'punishment', 'association'.
Although Krio has many carryovers that are the cognates of English words with
these endings, the chief criterion for choosing them seems to have been their
ability to refer to single concrete instances of the action or concept denoted by
the word: e.g. <u>pɔ́nìshmɛ̀nt</u> refers to a single instance of 'punishment' rather than
the concept of 'punishment'. (When an abstract concept is being referred to, Krio
speakers (particularly non-acrolectal ones) typically use the unmarked form of
the word: e.g. <u>kòlât</u> ('cold heart') = 'contentment'; <u>gládì</u> ('glad') = 'happiness';
<u>trû</u> ('true') = 'the truth', 'truth(fulness)'; <u>fâyn</u> ('fine') = 'beauty').

Carry-overs with the following suffixes exemplify the point. They are
the most productive patterns:

(1)   <u>-al</u> (-al): In English, this ending is used for abstract nouns,e.g.
'arrival', as well as for adjectives, e.g. 'cultural'. Some items, e.g. 'musical'

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* A <u>Krio-English Dictionary</u> compiled by C.N. Fyle & E.D. Jones (O.U.P. 1980).

can occur in both the noun and the adjective classes. The great majority of carry-overs in Krio are nouns with a concrete denotation, or are used as such: e.g. kádínàl (brand name for Cardinal floor polish; Cardinal (priest); médíkàl (Medical Department, Ministry of Health); déntàl (dental hospital); kázhúàl (casual clothes/sandals); kémíkàl (chemicals).

Admittedly, some of these words, e.g. klérikàl, klásíkàl as well as others like náshònàl, lókàl, nómàl, jénáràl are used as adjectives as well, but the incidence of such use is relatively low.

(2)　　　-mɛnt (-ment): àpɔyntmɛnt (a date with a friend or lover); èngéjmɛnt (an engagement ceremony); ɛnjɔymɛnt (this is semantically fertile: although the general meaning of 'pleasure' is present, the word is commonly used to refer to a single instance/an enjoyable occasion, a party; also, its use to refer to the tasty chunks of meat, especially in sauce cooked in palm oil, has been noted.)

(3)　　　-nɛs (-ness): fúlíshnɛs (a foolish act; brazen sexual advance); rúdnɛs (a single display of rudeness; sexual intercourse between children); síknɛs (a disease); wíkédnɛs (an act of wickedness); kyálésnɛs (an act of carelessness).

(4)　　　-shɔn/ -zhɔn (-sion/ -tion): òkézhɔn ('occasion' - an occasion for celebration); dístínkshɔn (a distinction pass); kɔlɛkshɔn (church collection), kɔmbínéshɔn (good passing in soccer); kɔmpòzishɔn (an essay).

Many of the suffixes have provided patterns for some creations which invariably have peculiarly Krio nuances, among other noteworthy features:

(1)　　　-a (-er)
　　　(a) Krio-created words with 'the agentive personal' suffix -a tend to be pejorative, e.g.

　　　(i) béla (Temne: bɛl + English-type '-er') = hypocrite, person who destroys others by evil gossip;

　　　(ii) cháka (Fula & Arabic source word chak + '-er') = drunkard;

　　　(iii) báda (Eng.: 'bad' + '-er' - another case of the use of an adjective, bad, as stem) = a very evil person;

Some of the words can take the suffix -man instead of -a, as in bɛlmán, chàkmán, bàdmán. When they do, the pejorative connotation tends to be lost; in fact, some suggestion of melioration if not superlativeness is even gained: bɛlmán = 'one good at flattery; a reliable gossip'; chàkmán = a seasoned drinker who sometimes gets drunk (as opposed to a helpless, hopeless drunkard); bàdmán = a likeable, venturesome fellow.

(2)　　　-al: two items with this suffix (which, in the case of　　　Krio creations, is really -ikal) have been noted:

　　　(i) mɔtíkàl (mɔt + ikal 'mouth' + '-ical') humorously used to refer to singing in church without instrumental accompaniment; or 'oral' as opposed to written.

　　　(ii) màtátíkàl - the origin of this word is unclear except that it seems to have the -ikal < 'ical' ending and is used as an adjective. It always collocates with íyàz (years) and is used, particularly by older speakers, to mean something like 'donkey's years'.

(3)   -ayt: This suffix functions similarly to -a and -man, i.e., as an agentive type noun. It is always very derogatory, emotive and most of the items suggest habitualness:

    (i) chákábâyt (Krio: chak + a + b + Eng.: '-ite') = hopeless, habitual drunkard;

    (ii) fɔ́kábâyt (Eng.: 'fucker' + b + '-ite') = habitually very promiscuous male or female;

    (iii) krábónâyt (Krio: krab(it) + on + 'ite') = a very miserly, or very decrepit person;

    (iv) márábâyt (Krio: marab(u) + 'ite') = contemptuous word for a muslim (màràbú = muslim).

Even the carryover item móábâyt (Moabite) is an abusive term, meaning 'rustic, heathenish person' and may well have influenced the formation of this type.

(4)   -ayz: the single item pikchɔ́rayz ('picture' + 'ise') = to notice or countenance, has been noted. It is usually used in negative constructions, e.g. I nɔ pikchɔ́rayz mí sêf 'He didn't even notice me'.

(5)   -bul: Krio creations have the -ebul ending and suggest superlativeness:

    (i). àjáyébùl (Yoruba source: ajay + '-able') = grossly exaggerated, fantastic, out of the ordinary;

    (ii) éjébùl (Eng.: 'age' + '-able') = of a person 'aged, advanced in years'. Krio speakers may have confused the word 'aged' for this form.

    (iii) màsmásébùl Krio: màsmâs (reduplicated from English 'mash') = 'bribe' + '-able' = fertile for shady deals.

(6)   -li: the acquisition of this adverbial suffix seems recent. Usually, Krio uses the post-modifier wân (one), or less commonly fáshìn (fashion) or wê (way), where the English suffix '-ly' would be used, as in: à ít àm slɔ́ wân = I ate it slowly'. However, carry-overs with -li do occur, sometimes with wan as well, as in non-native sóbálì wân = 'soberly', tɔ́rɔ́lì wân = 'thoroughly'.

The creations noted are used in humorous speech:

    (i) bónìkálì (Eng.: 'bone' + 'ically') + with much zest or gusto;

    (ii) mɔ́tíkálì (Eng.: 'mouth' + 'ically') = without instrumental accompaniment.

(7)   -man: this is the most common suffix in creolised forms. It is also used in many other English-related creoles (Alleyne, ibid, p.106). Cassidy (1961, p.397) suggests that the creole uses of -man in Jamaican parallel those of -fo in Twi, though he does not deny the obvious link of the suffix with English sources. In Krio, as in other Creoles, -man is superfluously added to a base which already has the agentive suffix -a, as in bùchámán (butcher). This is from the pattern 'fisherman' (cf Krio fishaman) which is not common in English. Where Krio has both forms, i.e., e.g., ɔntínmán /ɔ́ntà (hunter);

singmán/ singà, the item with the suffix -man tends to express superlative
quality e.g.

singmán = very good singer: singà = singer;

drìfmán = very good at gallivanting/: dríftà = one who drifts,
tackling in soccer;

wàngùlmán = excellent schemer: wángià = schemer.

The English model for this superlative nuance in Krio seems to be the sub-
category described in Marchand (1969: 2.5.3.4, p.67): 'persons connected with
occupations in which skill or craftsmanship is involved, as..."craftsman",...
"statesman", ... "sportsman"....'. Creolised forms have been mostly of this
type. We must note, however, that because of decreolising influences, from
the point of view of morphological form, a, (-er) is becoming as forceful as
-man.

As Hancock notes, in most uses of 'man', English means (+male),
(+ human), (+ adult), whereas, in Krio, none of these is obligatory; cf làymán
(liar), mán-dɔ̂ks (drake), mán-pìkín (a boy). This is a case of 'gain (expansion),
since its semantic function is broader than that of the English word "man" and
at the same time loss (reduction), since the one item does the work of several
in English' (1980, p.66).

However, in some creolised items, -man is not an epicene word; also,
in some categories, superlativeness is not implied. The categories noted are:

(a)   profession/occupation (non-superlative; non-epicene);

(i) kàwmán (cowherd), (ii) kòlmán (man who sells coal) -
(kɔ̀lúmàn also possible);
(iii) kàngàmán Krio: kàngà (magic) + '-man' magician;

(b)   Person in a particular state/condition;

(i) dɔ̀nmán (Eng.: 'done' + -man) a down and out man;

(ii) krèsmán/krèsúmàn (Eng.: 'crazy' + '-man/-uman') = mad man/woman;

(iii) yɔ̀ngmán/yɔ̀ngúmàn (Eng.: 'young' + '-man'/ '-uman) = young man/woman;

(c)   associated with:

(i) klɔ̀bmán (Eng.: 'club' + '-man') male member of a club;

(ii) kɔ̀nàmán (Eng.: 'corner' + '-man') male favourite companion;

(iii) kwàyàmán (Eng.: 'choir' + '-man') chorister;

(d)   Superlative type:

(i) kìkmán (Eng.: 'kick' + '-man') - verb/noun + -man = noun =
powerful kicker (soccer);

(ii) ràrèmán (Eng.: 'raree-(show)' + -man - adj. + man = noun) =
man very popular with women;

(iii) watàmán (Eng.: 'water' + '-man' - verb + man = noun) = seasoned drinker;

The suffix -man is also extensively used in what will be called 'ethnic constructs' - words giving the nationality, place of abode or tribe of a person. In English, there are a few instances of such words, e.g. 'Welshman', 'Scotsman', but epicene forms like '-(i)an', '-ish', '-ese' are far more common. In Krio, -man in this sense is always masculine, with -uman being the feminine form. Examples are:

(i) Gànàmán (Ghanaian); (ii) Jùmán (Jew); (iii) Wàtàlómân (man from Waterloo (in Sierra Leone));

(iv) Viléjmân (Villager).

Compounding

The most productive types of creolised compounds in Krio are bi-morphemic. Some are calques while others are incoinings. In fact, a few items considered incoinings may be calques that have not been traced to their sources. We will however be concerned here with the grammatical relationships between the elements of the compounds. Some superficially similar compounds reveal different grammatical meanings in their 'deep structures' - e.g. compare.

(1)   kolrɛs LF [kol (cold) + rɛs (rice)] adjective + noun > noun = 'rice that has been left overnight but is not necessarily cold when eaten'

with

(2)   kolkyap LF [kol (cold) + kyap (cap)] noun + noun > noun = 'cap for keeping away the cold'.

(These examples show how compounds can serve as a means for 'telegraphic speech', (cf Downing, 1977, p.815).

Compare also:

(3)   kɔbablay LLF [kɔba (cover) + blay (Port*: basket)] noun + noun > noun = 'basket with a cover'

with

(4)   kɔbaklos LLF [kɔba (cover) + klos (clothes)] noun + noun > noun = (cloth for covering oneself) coverlet.

One reason for this superficial resemblance between many heterogeneous formations is the fact that Krio uses derivational suffixation much less than English, for example. We must note, however, that, even in English, there are many superficially similar compounds which are not homogeneous - e.g.: 'chewing-gum' (a gum for chewing) versus 'washing machine' (a machine that washes). Also, English does not always use the resources of derivational suffixation either - e.g. 'crybaby' (rather than 'crying-baby').

Here are a few more examples of some of the most productive types of

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* Portuguese.

bi-morphemic compounds:

(1)   Noun 1 + noun 2 ˯ noun 2 of noun 1

    (a) kɔpandul HHL kɔp + andul ˯ (n) handle of a cup = the handle of a cup, one related only by marriage and not by blood;

    (b) bɛlɛat LLF bɛlɛ + at ˯hurt(ing) of the belly = (n) stomach ache;

    (c) gridibɔmp LLF gridi + bɔmp ˯bump of greed = sty on the eye, supposedly caused by meanness.

(2)   Noun 1 + noun 2 ˯ noun 2 is for noun 1

    (a) galɔnpan LLF galɔn + pan ˯pan for a gallon = (n) tin which holds a gallon (of oil, petrol, kerosene), a man who chases a woman/women unsuccessfully;

    (b) kaytpepa LHL kayt + pepa ˯ paper for making kite = (n) crepe paper used for making kites;

    (c) atkes LF at + kes ˯ case for the heart = (n) seat of the heart (picturesquely analogised from 'hat case' (also atkes LF).

(3)   Adjective + noun ˯ adjective corresponding to the English ' -ed' (deverbal) type + noun

    (a) kaktit LF kak + tit ˯ cocked tooth/teeth = (n) protruding teeth;

    (b) maredwɛf LLF mared + wɛf ˯ married wife = (n) legally married, as opposed to common law, wife or paramour;

    (c) kɔtnɛk LF kɔt + nɛk ˯ cut neck = (n/adj) skin creases around the neck - a sign of beauty, of person with such feature.

(4)   Verb + noun

    (a) abop HF ab + op ˯ have hope = (verb/noun) wait expectantly, thing depended upon (hence euphemism for a man's private parts);

    (b) tɔnyay LF tɔn + yay ˯ turn eyes = (n) giddiness, dizziness;

    (c) lɛkman LF lɛk + man ˯ likes men = (adj) (of woman) having many lovers.

Conclusion

As has been shown throughout this paper, morphology is far from insignificant in Krio. Indeed, because of the restrictions of time and space, it has not been possible to do justice to any of the aspects mentioned. The functions of a versatile phenomenon like reduplications have not even been considered here, mainly because it is perhaps better not to mention them at all than to treat them cursorily. It is however hoped that the potentially exciting nature of the morphology of English-derived words in Krio has been at least hinted at.

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