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Of Identity and Belonging – The Use of Jamaican in Dancehall Music.

A Case Study of the Language Usage of Gambian Dancehall Artists in the Austrian Diaspora.

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a. Abstract

The thesis *“Of Identity and Belonging – The Use of Jamaican in Dancehall Music: A Case Study of the Language Usage of Gambian Dancehall Artists in the Austrian Diaspora“* investigates the role of Jamaican in dancehall music, focusing specifically on the language usage of Gambian dancehall artists in Austria. Through an examination of the artists’ language repertoires, ideologies, and linguistic choices, the study reveals how Jamaican functions as a performative tool for negotiating belonging and cultural identity in the globalised dancehall scene. Drawing on interviews and surveys with Gambian artists, the research highlights how Jamaican, despite not being their first language, is used as a means of aligning with dancehall culture, while balancing their own cultural heritage. The findings emphasise the language’s role not only as a medium of communication but also as an active site for identity construction and cultural positioning. This study contributes to the growing discourse on linguistic globalisation, cultural hybridity, and artistic agency.

Zusammenfassung

Die Masterarbeit *„Of Identity and Belonging – The Use of Jamaican in Dancehall Music: A Case Study of the Language Usage of Gambian Dancehall Artists in the Austrian Diaspora“* untersucht die Rolle von Jamaikanisch in Dancehall-Musik, wobei der Fokus speziell auf der Sprachverwendung von gambischen Dancehall-Künstlern in Österreich liegt. Durch die Analyse der Sprachrepertoiren, Ideologien und sprachlichen Entscheidungen der Künstler zeigt die Studie auf, wie Jamaikanisch als performatives Werkzeug zur Aushandlung von Zugehörigkeit und kultureller Identität in der globalisierten Dancehall-Szene fungiert. Basierend auf Interviews und Umfragen mit gambischen Künstlern hebt die Forschung hervor, wie Jamaikanisch von ihnen, obwohl es nicht ihre erste Sprache ist, als Mittel verwendet wird, um sich mit der Dancehall-Kultur zu identifizieren, während sie gleichzeitig ihr eigenes kulturelles Erbe wahren. Die Ergebnisse betonen die Rolle der Sprache nicht nur als Kommunikationsmittel, sondern auch als aktiven Raum für die Konstruktion von Identität und kulturelle Positionierung. Diese Studie leistet einen Beitrag zur wachsenden Diskussion über sprachliche Globalisierung, kulturelle Hybridität und künstlerische Handlungsfähigkeit.

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c. Abbreviations

L1	first language
L2	second language
OED	Oxford English Dictionary

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Part I. FOUNDATION

I. Introduction

Dancehall as a genre has established itself around the 1970s – according to some sources, it might have been even earlier in the 1940s and 1950s – in downtown Kingston, Jamaica (Farquharson 2017: 11; Hope 2006: 27; Stanbury 2015; Stanley Niaah 2010: 4). Due to its lower-class origin and being viewed as vulgar, violent, and ghetto by the gatekeepers of society, the music genre has only been researched inadequately (Hope 2006: 18). Additionally, most research that has been done is a side product of research into reggae and therefore lacks the distinction between the two genres. If a difference is made, the focus usually lies on recordings, music, and musicians. Wider reaching topics, such as economic benefits, dancehall fashion and style, wider practice or performance, are often ignored. (Stanley Niaah 2010: 3)

Similarly, Jamaican, the lingua franca of the island and a defining feature of dancehall music, has faced linguistic stigmatization, both by its own speakers as well as academia, limiting its academic exploration despite its widespread use and cultural significance (Bryan 2004: 649ff). This thesis seeks to bridge these research gaps by exploring the intersection of language, music, and identity through the lens of language usage in dancehall music, focusing specifically on Gambian dancehall artists in the Austrian diaspora and their use of Jamaican.

By examining the language repertoires, ideologies, and linguistic choices of Gambian artists, this thesis explores how Jamaican functions beyond its national context, particularly in transnational, transcultural spaces. The Gambian music scene has long exhibited a strong affinity for Jamaican dancehall, a connection reinforced by historical, cultural, and linguistic continuities between West Africa and the Caribbean. In Austria, Gambian dancehall artists navigate multiple linguistic and cultural spheres, engaging with Jamaican as both a performative tool and a marker of authenticity within the global dancehall community. Their use of Jamaican raises key questions about identity, belonging, and linguistic agency.

At its core, this research is driven by my personal engagement with the dancehall scene in Vienna, where I observed non-Jamaican artists and DJs integrating Jamaican into their performances and interactions, despite not having acquired it as a first language or through formal education. This phenomenon raises key questions about the role of language in cultural expression, identity negotiation, and transnational artistic communities.

To address these questions, my thesis is structured into three main parts. The first part establishes the theoretical foundation by defining key linguistic and sociocultural concepts. It

provides an overview of Creole languages, the linguistic features of Jamaican, and the historical and ideological factors that have shaped attitudes toward its use. Language ideologies are of special interest since language is a cultural feature that is dialogically connected with the environment it is spoken in. This means language is formed by and simultaneously forms its context. (Bryan 2004: 641) Additionally, it situates dancehall within its socio-historical framework, tracing its development from its origins in Jamaica to its global expansion before exploring the development of language choice across Jamaican music genres and time.

The second part presents the empirical research, which consists of primary data collected through interviews with Gambian dancehall artists and community members in Austria, as well as a complementary online survey. The interviews, conducted between December 2020 and June 2021, provide insight into the artists' linguistic backgrounds, perceptions of dancehall and Jamaican, and the role of language in their artistic practices. Through a grounded theory approach, the transcribed interviews were systematically analysed to identify themes and linguistic patterns. The online survey, though limited in scope, offers additional quantitative and qualitative insights into the linguistic and cultural engagement of Gambian dancehall participants in Austria.

This section of the thesis further discusses the broader implications of these findings, considering how language, music, and identity intersect within dancehall. It examines the motivations behind the adoption of Jamaican by non-native speakers, the social and cultural significance of dancehall for the Gambian community in Austria, and the ways in which language use in music serves as both an artistic choice and a means of cultural positioning. By focusing on this underexplored aspect of dancehall and language, the study contributes to the growing discourse on linguistic globalization and cultural hybridity, shedding light on the ways in which artists negotiate their identities in a globalized world.

The third section then concludes the thesis, discusses limitations, and portrays future research prospects.

Ultimately, this thesis seeks to fill a research gap in the study of dancehall and the linguistic practices therein, particularly regarding non-Jamaican artists. It highlights how language functions as more than just a medium of communication but also as a marker of cultural belonging and artistic authenticity. By examining the motivations, perceptions, and implications of language use in dancehall, this study offers new insights into the dynamic relationship between language and music in globalized cultural spaces.

II. Concepts, Frameworks, and Key Debates

In this chapter, I aim to introduce and discuss the concepts, ideas, and ongoing debates surrounding the three theoretical pillars of my work. As such I have identified a) the research into Creole languages and Jamaican in particular, b) research concerning dancehall which, amongst others, refers to a Jamaican music genre, dance style, and culture, and lastly, the overlap of the first two pillars, c) language in Jamaican music with a focus on Jamaican cultural expressions from plantation songs to contemporary genres.

a. Creole Language Research and Jamaican

Language has long been seen as a defining feature of culture that not only has the ability to shape and transform its context but is also a reflection thereof (Bryan 2004: 641). Hence, I see Jamaican not only as a part of this research but as the overarching, all-encompassing feature of this thesis. It is the recurrent theme that connects not only cultural expressions, different geographic and social spaces, and their actors, I believe, it also reflects unspoken, internalised ideologies of the present and the past.

Therefore, in this subchapter I not only outline the scope of creole languages and their formations but also conduct an in-depth analysis on Jamaican, its history, linguistic features, and surrounding research. I further aim to explore the linguistic connection between Africa and the Caribbean through the continuities of African languages in Jamaican, and the underlying colonial history that shaped the language's formation process. Lastly, this subchapter lays a focus on the language ideologies surrounding Creoles, which I will also examine at the example of Jamaican.

To contextualize Creole research, it is important to keep in mind the framework under which the research field was established. First research into Creole languages was done in the late 19th century as a split off from Romance Linguistics by pioneers such as Hugo Schuchardt and Derk Christiaan Hessling. These early times were informed by racism and White supremacy, which were used to explain the ascribed simplicity of Creole languages. (Meijer/Muysken 1977) Therefore, this mindset should be kept in mind when discussing Pidgin and Creole research.

i. From Pidgin to Creole – Defining Creole Languages

Before diving into the formation and features of a Creole language, I would first like to discuss the etymological meaning of the term ‘Creole’ in order to better understand the origins and ideologies behind Creole research. Amoako (2011: 5) explains that the name was coined in Portugal’s colonies in the 1500s and possibly stems from the word *criar*, which means ‘to nurse/breed/nourish’. It was, however, used as *criolho* describing a “*slave in European employment, particularly around the house, white man or woman originating from the colonies*” (Mühlhäusler 1986: 6). Another, later understanding of ‘Creole’ is the one I will use in this thesis, which is ‘Creole’ being a language used as L1 by its speakers and that is based on several other languages (Amoako 2011: 5). Yet, I would like to extend this definition by the understanding that, while Creoles are based on two or more languages, they have additionally developed their own linguistic features and vocabulary (see also: Mühlhäusler 1986: 7).

Historically, Creole languages have often been defined by drawing on the differences between them and the Pidgin languages from which they stem (Amoako 2011: 3).

The origins of the term ‘Pidgin’ is not clear, but the most common idea is captured in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) (Amoako 2011: 4). The OED defines ‘Pidgin’ as the “*Chinese corruption of English ‘business’*”. While the etymological meaning of the term does not yet reveal the nature of a Pidgin language, it does imply that it might have to do with business.

In accordance, Amoako (2011: 1) argues that one of the social criteria for Pidgins is that they form under the premises of needing a lingua franca¹ to enable the communication between people without a shared linguistic repertoire. These could for example be people of different origins in newly found trade relationships. This already implies another marker of Pidgins: they do not have first speakers, meaning Pidgins are not acquired by children as their first language, as they are solely a contact language. (Amoako 2011: 2) Thereby, the social distance between speakers of the different input languages persists over time. This is assumed because otherwise,

¹ A lingua franca is a language used systematically as a medium of communication between people whose first languages are different. It often emerges in multilingual contexts to facilitate trade, diplomacy, administration, or cultural exchange. Lingua francas can or cannot be an L1 of any of the speakers using them and are chosen primarily for pragmatic rather than ideological reasons. (Lüdi 2011; Mauranen/Ranta 2009) These languages serve specific sociopolitical or economic functions that require a shared means of communication across linguistic communities. Historically, examples of lingua francas include Latin in medieval Europe, Arabic in the Islamic world, Swahili in East Africa, and Malay in Southeast Asia. (Ostler 2005) As Lüdi (2011) notes, the emergence of a lingua franca reflects the sociolinguistic realities of contact zones.

the lexifier language could be acquired. Moreover, the languages involved in the pidginization process are not related closely enough to form a dialect or koine². (Speigner 2013: 16)

However, while Amoako (2011: 1) briefly mentions a possible reason for Pidgin formations (lack of communication means), there are in fact different beliefs on how Pidgins came into existence and why they exhibit similar structures despite having different input languages. The two main approaches include the monogenetic and the polygenetic approach (Amoako 2011; Velupillai 2015: 137).

According to the monogenetic approach, all Pidgins are descendants from a Proto-Pidgin which has its roots in the 15th century Portuguese. The Portuguese variations spoken by sailors and traders spread during this time as a lingua franca since they travelled globally, including to but not only West Africa, South and Southeast Asia as well as the Indian and Pacific Ocean. The original Pidgin, which had spread to all said regions was later on relexified by the Dutch, English, French and Spanish. This is to say that the vocabulary used was replaced by a new dominating language, while grammatical structures stayed the same, explaining the similarities of Pidgins nowadays. (Velupillai 2015: 134)

In contrast, the polygenetic approach says that pidgins emerged independent of time, place and each other. However, the circumstances and the processes involved are similar, hence the structural overlaps. (Velupillai 2015: 133) The following theories can all be seen as part of the polygenetic approach.

Firstly, the *Nautical Jargon Theory* appertains to the polygenetic approach and is based on the language development of sailors on multinational ship crews of the 17th century (Velupillai 2015: 135). J.E. Reinecke (1938: 107) as a pioneer of this theory argues that the multinational setting on vessels was “[o]ne of the most favourable situations for the formation” of contact languages. Based on considerable anecdotal evidence, it is believed that the jargon spoken on the French and English ships is the origin of the Pidgins and since crews were regularly replaced or changed ships, the sailors of different nationalities spread their tongue. (Velupillai 2015: 135).

Secondly, the *Common Core Theory* suggests that in a situation in which people, who speak mutually unintelligible languages, communicate with each other, the overlapping features of those languages remain and become the core structure of a new language. The similarities found in pidgins could therefore come from the similar input languages involved as well as from the shared structures being typologically common features. (Velupillai 2015: 138) However, it does

² = new language variation formed from the combination of two dialects (Speigner 2013: 16)

not account for ‘missing’ features in a Pidgin that exists in all its input languages. Moreover, it is problematic that the Pidgin features are often compared to contemporary standard varieties of the input languages, although it is much more likely that the speakers at the time the Pidgin emerged, were speaking different variations of the input languages. It is further difficult to believe that people without a common language were able to identify the similarities of their respective input languages. However, it might have happened unconsciously. (Velupillai 2015: 139)

Further, according to the *Interlanguage Theory*, a Pidgin is an incomplete version of the model language (see also Meijer/Muysken 1977). This theory in fact involves two groups. One of them is the group of L1 speakers and the other consists of non-L1 speakers, who wish to acquire the model language. However, the process is unfinished, and the language is only insufficiently learned. Yet, this idea does not account for reasons why a non-first speaker stopped perfecting their language skills. (Velupillai 2015: 139f) Moreover,

“[...] the Interlanguage theory implicitly assumes that the target model was the contemporary standard varieties of the European languages, which, as mentioned above, is not only anachronistic, but also regionally unrealistic.”

(Velupillai 2015: 141)

LaCharité (2007: 161) claims that especially in the African and Caribbean context, the *Interlanguage Theory* is questionable due to the strong prevalence of bi- and multilingualism amongst Africans. The view that the colonisers’ language was learnt insufficiently by enslaved people for them to have a common language to communicate amongst themselves, can be debated on two levels. Firstly, this assumption indirectly claims that Africans are not competent learners since they could not learn the colonial language proficiently. However, the fact that many Africans, then and now, are multilinguals and are ready and willing to add to their language repertoire if needed, disputes such claims. Moreover, it would have been more likely that enslaved African people would have learned another African language in order to find a way of communicating with other enslaved people instead of forming a new colonial-language based language. Secondly, the multilingual nature of many African communities made it unlikely that the majority of people within “[...] a given group of captured Africans did not share a common language.” (LaCharité 2007: 161) Hence, pidginization and subsequent creolization is unlikely to have occurred driven by a need for a lingua franca amongst enslaved people in the Afro-Caribbean context despite such claims. (LaCharité 2007: 161) A more realistic idea might be that slaveholders needed a language to communicate with the people they enslaved.

I would further like to add that the idea of European languages as the target and overall end goal of language acquisition is one that is not only deeply rooted in a colonial mind set of White supremacy but is still prevalent today, as can be seen in language ideologies and attitudes towards Pidgin and Creole languages as discussed in the later subchapter *Changing Language Ideologies Towards Jamaican*.

Similarly, the *Foreigner Talk Theory* suggests that speakers of a model language knowingly simplified their speech when communicating with foreigners. In such situations, clear articulation, slow and loud pronunciations as well as long breaks and easy vocabulary are of essence. Nevertheless, it seems doubtful that this form of speech was desirable to be learnt. (Velupillai 2015: 142) Moreover, each speaker simplifies their language in a different way each time, making it not only unsystematic across individuals but also with the same individual. It is hence unlikely that foreign talk would have served as a model for an emerging language. (Velupillai 2015: 143)

Pidgin is not spoken as a first language. Consequently, learners of Pidgins as a second language (L2) already have a first tongue (L1). According to the *Substrate Theory*, they therefore fall back on its linguistic system and features and subsequently transfer them to the L2. This phenomenon can be observed more repeatedly in the beginnings of an L2 acquisition and recedes as the speaker improves. Simply put, the *Substrate Theory* sees the first language as the import basis of linguistic features. Thus, different structures in the L1 may have led to differences in the linguistics of Pidgins. Amongst the different input languages, the ones spoken by groups holding socio-political power are referred to as superstratum languages, the rest as substratum languages (Speigner 2013: 15). However, it is important to note that not all Pidgin languages formed in the context of power imbalances. Russenorsk for instance originated from annual trade meetings between Russian and Norwegian sailors with roughly the same socio-political power. (Speigner 2013: 16) Yet this theory is questionable on the same basis as the *Foreigner Talk Theory* since the transfer of features is unsystematic and highly individual. (Velupillai 2015: 144f) Moreover, this approach on pidginization does not take into account the multilingualism of speakers involved in the formation of many African and Caribbean Pidgins and Creoles respectively. This aspect however is important because language transfer differs for multiple-language learners. For second language learners, L1 features would influence the forming Pidgin. For multilinguals, on the other hand, syntactic, semantic, and phonological features of non-L1 languages spoken by the individual are transferred more often. This is especially true for early learning stages in a new language. (LaCharité 2007: 161) This means

that, for example, I am more likely to transfer linguistic features of Swahili to a new language such as Fulfulde than I am to bring in German features.

Besides the two approaches of the mono- or polygenetic origins of Pidgins, Whinnom (1971) introduced the idea of a ‘tertiary hybridization’ described as a necessary middle step between second language acquisition and the formation of a Pidgin. They (Whinnom 1971) suggest that a contact variety becomes stable enough to form its own norms only once there are solely speakers of mutually unintelligible languages involved and none of them speak the lexifier language. If speaker group A were to speak the lexifier language A as L1, the other group B would be subject to second language learning. Once there are only speakers (e.g. B and C) involved that use the emerging language A as a lingua franca, it can stabilise into a Pidgin. (Velupillai 2015: 149) An example thereof would be the English-lexified Ghanaian Pidgin used by Ga, Twi, and Hausa speakers to communicate with each other. Nonetheless, Velupillai (2015: 150) criticises the idea of a ‘tertiary hybridization’ stage by listing several Pidgins used between speakers of the lexifier and another speech community “[...] *such as Russenorsk ([...] Russians and Norwegians), Chinese Pidgin English ([...] Chinese traders and Europeans), or Yimas-Arafundi Pidgin ([...] Yimas and Arafundi traders).*” (Velupillai 2015: 150)

Regardless of which approach of formation is followed, structurally, Pidgins differentiate themselves from other languages by featuring reduced structures, a simplified syntax, restricted vocabulary with extensive lexical borrowings from local languages, and phonological variations and the increased tolerance thereof. Additionally, Pidgins are said to only suffice for minimal communication in a highly specialised setting as mentioned above. (Amoako 2011: 1f) However, it is important to note that Pidgins, especially in the Afro-Caribbean context, despite historical claims (Velupillai 2015: 133), are not a simplified version of a colonial language, but an unmitigated, separate language. Also, while, for example the Ghanaian Pidgin English’s “[...] *vocabulary is predominantly English-based, [...] the lexical forms have changed their meaning to fit into the value system and world view of the African people.*” (Amoako 2011: 14) These claims are a result of former colonial European languages, such as English, French, or Portuguese, often being the main lexifier of Afro-Caribbean Pidgins and Creoles. This means that a fast amount of vocabulary stems from them.

The importance of the above mentioned former colonial languages becomes evident, when regarding the classification and labelling, of Creoles and Pidgins. If a language, such as Jamaican, uses an English lexifier, it is labelled ‘Anglo-phone’ by linguists, or ‘Franco-phone’ for French-lexified Creoles such as Haitian. (Bryan 2004: 646) The same is true for Pidgins such as Ghanaian or Nigerian Pidgin English (see Amoako 2011).

The similar classification of Creoles and Pidgins is not surprising when considering that the former generally emerges from the latter through the acquisition of L1 speakers (Amoako 2011: 3; Mühlhäusler 1986; Speigner 2013: 17). Sebba (1996: 51) adds that Creoles are the social and linguistic consequence of a sudden upheaval such as slavery in the case of Caribbean Creoles (Sebba 1996: 51) or the rural exodus in Papua New Guinea in the 1960s resulting in the creolization of Tok Pisin (Speigner 2013: 18). Being the result of such events has earned Creole languages the nickname “*crater lakes of linguistics*.” (Sebba 1996: 51)

To elaborate the difference between Pidgins and Creoles, a Pidgin that has been used by the first generation as a lingua franca turns into a Creole when said Pidgin is being used as a first language by the majority of the second generation (Speigner 2013: 17). Brickerton (as quoted in Amoako 2011: 4) further differentiates:

“[T]he essential difference between pidginization and creolization is that pidginization is second-language learning with restricted input, and creolization is first-language learning, also with restricted input.”

(Brickerton, 1981 as quoted in Amoako 2011: 4)

This also implies that the second generation no longer uses the former Pidgin as a means of communication in specific situations but rather uses their innate linguistic knowledge to expand it to be suitable in the wide variety of situations experienced in day-to-day life. The Creole hence experiences a quantitative as well as qualitative shift from its Pidgin and often ends up being unintelligible for speakers of the latter. (Mühlhäusler 1986: 7) Therefore, the formation of a creole is in essence a development that contrasts with pidginization. During creolization, the previous linguistic simplification of languages into a Pidgin now undergoes an expansion in phonology, vocabulary, and grammar. (Speigner 2013: 18) New words are added to the Creole in order to compensate for the limited vocabulary of the preceding Pidgin. One method to do so is by innovatively combining words to form new ones. An example thereof is given in Speigner (2013: 19) who states that the combination of English words “*hand-middle*” is being used in Jamaican to mean “*palm*”.

While in this chapter I have outlined the theories and approaches surrounding the formation of Pidgins and subsequently Creoles, in the next one I will go deeper into the definition, formation, and history of Jamaican, a Creole language spoke in Jamaica.

ii. Defining Jamaican

In this subchapter I will pick up the topic of Creole formation and apply it to the language spoken in Jamaica. Additionally, I will explore Jamaican’s orthography, grammatical

structures, and the current state of research into the matter. Continuities of African Languages in Caribbean Creoles at the example of Jamaican and ideologies surrounding the language will be explored in separate subchapters.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Caribbean Creole languages come into existence through ruptures. They can be either social, economic, or cultural. (Bryan 2004: 642; Sebba 1996: 51) Therefore, Jamaican falls right in line with Sebba's (1996: 51) "*crater lakes*".

Its violent formational environment is mirrored in the "[...] *produced modes of interaction and internal linguistic dynamics that have been characterized as social and linguistic violence.*" (Bryan 2004: 642) Bryan (2004: 642) elaborates that both Jamaican and Jamaica's society are spaces of power-struggles and resistance between different voices and forces with interconnected histories.

One of the symptoms thereof is that the Creole spoken in Jamaica is found in literature under various names with different undertones. Researchers (Bryan 2004; Cooper 2004; Farquharson 2017; Kouwenberg et al. 2011; Sebba 1996) refer to it as Jamaican Creole, (Jamaican)³ Patwa, (Jamaican) Patois, Jamaican, Black English, Nation language, or dialect [sic!]. As some of these terms suggest, a part of the population (20% of Jamaica's population in 2005 according to Farquharson (2017: 7)) does not view Jamaican as an independent language despite it being one. Gonzalez (2020: 18) accredits this misconception of Jamaican as a dialect or version of English to the close relations between Caribbean Creole languages and their lexifiers, standard European languages such as English and French (see also Sebba 1996: 51). The fast amount of shared vocabulary coupled with the power differences in all aspects of life (e.g. literary, political, economic...) between the Creole and the lexifier can lead to blurred boundaries and mislabelling the Creole as a lesser form of the standard. Historically, this had gone as far as the complete disregard of Creole languages. However, nowadays at least the academic sphere has predominantly accepted Caribbean Creoles "[...] *as languages in their own right, governed by unique grammatical structures.*" (Gonzalez 2020: 18) Additionally, while English is still the official language of Jamaica there is an agreement in both academia and the public that the country's lingua franca is Jamaican Creole. This becomes clear when looking at the 80% of respondents to Farquharson's (2017: 7) study who not only viewed Jamaican as a language but also saw themselves as bilingual in English and Jamaican. (Farquharson 2017: 7)

³ The brackets signify that the names are found both with the preceding Jamaican and without.

To clearly position myself with the majority of Jamaica's population and the academic canon in the dialect-language dispute, I choose to use the term Jamaican, throughout this paper. As Bryan (2004: 643) has put it:

“Re-naming the language as Jamaican rather than Jamaican Creole (JC) invests it with new meanings: a language like any other, with a number of varieties, coming out of a complex sociolinguistic history.”

(Bryan 2004: 643)

In regard to the number of Jamaican speakers, Ethnologue (Simons/Fenning n. d.) in 2018 stated that in 2001 a total of around 2 670 000 first speakers of Jamaican could be found on the island, and around 370 000 more speakers outside of it. In 2023, Ethnologue (Simons/Fenning n. d.) no longer gives a specific number of Jamaican speakers but rather puts the amount between one million and one billion speakers – a rather broad spectrum. Taking a closer look at the 2001 numbers, I believe that they are to be seen critically. One reason, therefore, are the contradicting numbers issued by the U.S. Census Bureau regarding speakers not situated in Jamaica (Butler n. d.). The 1990 Census Report already shows a population of Jamaican origin in the US alone of over 430 000, which increased to over 730 000 people by 2000 in the United States alone (Butler n. d.). In fact, the International Organisation for migration estimates that 1.3 million Jamaican-born persons do no longer live in Jamaica (IOM n. d. a) and this number still does not account for second and third generation Jamaicans abroad, who too might grow up speaking Jamaican. While these reported numbers do not speak of Jamaican speakers specifically, I dare to assume that the number of speakers residing outside of Jamaica is higher than 370 000. Speigner (2013: 30) also speaks of 55 000 Jamaican speakers in Costa Rica and over 268 000 in Panama. Nevertheless, the relative number of speakers in Jamaica is almost at a hundred percent. Therefore, if taking into account the number of first speakers (Simons/Fenning n. d.) to be at least the number of Jamaica's population, which The World Bank sets around 2 827 377 in 2022 (Worldbank.org n. d.), the 1.3 million Jamaicans abroad, and the 323 000 speakers in Costa Rica and Panama, at least 4.5 million persons speak Jamaican.

As mentioned, in Jamaica itself, Jamaican serves as the primary language for most of the population and is commonly used in everyday verbal interactions, as noted in Gut (2018: 79). Additionally, it is utilised across various institutions by individuals who are either highly proficient in it or exclusively fluent in this language (Kouwenberg et al. 2011: 388). Nevertheless, Jamaican lacks official recognition and has no legal standing within any of the governmental establishments that engage with and impact the lives of its residents. This includes the legal system (e.g. courts), public healthcare facilities (e.g. hospitals), and the educational system (e.g. schools). (Kouwenberg et al. 2011: 387f).

Historically, Jamaican and its syntactical and phonological features stem from the creolisation and therefore linguistic blending of West African (mostly Niger-Congo) languages spoken by enslaved people and the language of the European colonialists and slaveholders. (Bryan 2004: 643; Gut 2018: 79; Sebba 1996: 51; Speigner 2013: 15) In accordance with the *Substrate Theory* discussed in the previous subchapter, the superstratum languages were the British dialects of English colonialists (Speigner 2013: 15). This is despite the island's former Spanish occupation lasting roughly 150 years (Beckford Wassink 1999: 57) since the subsequent English rule was longer and more formative (Speigner 2013: 15). Ever since England came into power in Jamaica in 1655, English has become a measurement for social status, power, and prestige (Beckford Wassink 1999: 57f). In contrast thereof stands Jamaican, a Creole language with an English lexifier, which was seen as lesser and the language of the uneducated and enslaved people. One reason for this understanding was that due to the strong similarity of some lexical terms to English, it was not seen as anything but insufficiently learnt English by both the public and academia (Beckford Wassink 1999: 58). This view has slowly been changing, and Jamaican has started to be recognised as its own language, which is spoken in Jamaica by both the elites and the working-class (Farquharson 2017: 7; Gonzalez 2020: 18). However, the complex and everchanging ideologies towards Jamaican are discussed in more detail in subchapter II.a.v..

It is to note that academics (Beckford Wassink 1999: 59; Bryan 2004: 649; Sand 2011: 163) describe Jamaican as a lectal continuum of Creole variations rather than a single form. Thereby, linguistic variations are arranged along the continuum based on quantitative findings (Deuber 2018: 133). One end of the spectrum is marked by a variety of basilectal variations of Jamaican, while on the other end the acrolectal Jamaican English, a variety of standard English, can be found. It's only in recent times that research has made distinctions between standard British English and Jamaican English. Therefore, the acrolectal standard has for years been in line with British or international standard English norms. (Sand 2011: 163)

Jamaican English, however, has become more common both in verbal and written interactions as part of the country's national identity. Jamaican English hence is a facet of Jamaica's culture and progressing decolonisation. (Gut 2018: 80) This is further evident in the strong influence of Jamaican on Jamaican standard English (Gut 2018: 80; Sand 2011: 169). Jamaican thereby influences the standard both directly and indirectly. The former refers to unaltered Jamaican rules being transferred to English, while the latter describe the structural influence of Jamaican on English expressions without being able to precisely attribute it to a Jamaican form. (Gut 2018: 80) Examples of Jamaican phonological features that are taken over in Jamaican standard English, though to a lesser extent are “[...] /h/-dropping, palatalization of initial /k, g/ before

/a, a:/ and replacement of the alveopalatal affricate by palatalised stops [...]" (Gut 2018: 81). Other differentiations between Jamaican standard English and the British standards are the preference of Latinate lexical items over Germanic ones (Sand 2011: 165), features of American English imported through tourist interactions, media consumption, and migration (Sand 2011: 170), the pluralisation of mass nouns (e.g. *furnitures*) (Sand 2011: 172), and the trend to combine “*since*” with the present tense (Sand 2011: 177).

In-between the two poles of the continuum – Jamaican standard English and Jamaican – intermediate, mesolectal varieties with minimal structural shifts can be observed (Gut 2018: 79). The following variations of the English sentence “*He is eating his dinner.*” are an example of the continuum.

*“Im a nyam im dinna.
Im a iit im dinna.
Im iiting im dinna.
Him is eating him dinna.
He is eating his dinner.”*

(Bryan 2004: 643)

Research (Deuber 2018: 134), however, has shown that the variations within the continuum are not strict categories each speaker falls into. Rather, speakers are able to shift within the continuum as part of stylistic choices. Though, the social standing of the speaker influences both their range of competence and style (Deuber 2018: 133/142). The higher the status of the speaker, the more of the continuum they seem to command, including basilectal and acrolectal forms (Deuber 2018: 134).

While the continuum approach to Jamaican is common in academics, Hinrichs (2006: 11) notes that it can be more helpful to look at the different variations as linguistic strategies of the speakers since, in the case of Jamaican, speakers tend to view their own language use in a binary. Thereby, the speakers describe themselves as either using Jamaican or Jamaican standard English. (Deuber 2018: 135; Hinrichs 2006: 11)

The chosen speech variation is influenced by a combination of factors. These range from the conversation context including the people involved in the exchange and their relationship, the environment, the subject, and the speakers' individual history and inclinations (Deuber 2018: 146f). Moreover, a difference is to be made between “code switching”, which refers to abrupt shifts, and smaller changes referred to as “style-shifts” (Deuber 2018: 148; Hinrichs 2006). One aspect causing a style-shift towards more basilectal variations is the involvement of emotions by the speakers. The higher the emotional involvement, the more Jamaican features can be found in the participants' language use. This is the case for both written and spoken communication. (Deuber 2018: 148f) Switching between different codes, dialects, and styles is

an important tool for contextualization as well as differentiation. They are a way for speakers to convey the nature of an activity and to guide listeners in their interpretation. Furthermore, these shifts in languages or variations thereof help to emphasizing a particular point in the same way the use of quotations would by serving as a form of differentiation between the content and the rest of the conversation. This strategy is used whether or not the employed variation matches the one used by the quoted speaker. Yet, the direction in which speakers shift, towards or away from the standard, is important as it can be used to represent the speaker's identity through the use of "we-code" versus "them-code". Hence, it is based on the social ideologies connected to languages. (Deuber 2018: 153)

Despite Hinrich's (2006: 11) believing that the Jamaican is better seen as a single language with different styles rather than a continuum, Deuber (2018: 158f) disagrees because the current data and analyses unquestionably align with earlier research regarding the characteristics of stylistic variation within a creole continuum. Patrick (2007: 2) adds that other classifications such as community bilingualism, standard-plus dialect, and diglossia do not pertain to Jamaican. Moreover, there is a clear relationship between casual-to-formal language use and a spectrum from Jamaican to English. Especially educated speakers are equipped to use a wide range of stylistic skills in both the acrolect standard and Jamaican as the national vernacular for speakers of various social backgrounds, serving as both a valuable resource and a focal point for Jamaican identity. (Deuber 2018: 158f)

I argue that Jamaican cannot only be defined in the context of Jamaica but also the Jamaican diaspora. This is important since languages spoken in the diaspora tend to undergo changes. These are not only due to the contact with other local languages but also because of demographic changes across generations. In the United Kingdom, for instance, immigration policies have changed drastically since the Windrush generation⁴. Therefore, most Jamaican speakers in the UK today are third or fourth generation British born and educated people. Therefore, the speech of each generation has fused with that of local, working-class English, as well as other migrant populations. (Bryan 2004: 653)

⁴ The Windrush generation is named after a ship called "Empire Windrush" that brought just over 1000 people, mostly of Caribbean origin, to the UK in 1948. The passengers of this and following vessels until 1971 are referred to as the Windrush generation. The ships brought people, many of which served in the British army during the world wars, from former British colonies. This is because they were given the right to live and work in the UK in 1948 under the British Nationality Act in the hopes of filling post-war labour shortages and boost the economy. Secure jobs in the manual labour sectors as well as as drivers, cleaners, or nurses in the NHS, served as motivation for many Caribbean workers who experienced economic struggles in their home countries. (BBC.com 2013)

Hence, the UK's Jamaican in the 1980s and 90s already showed great variation. Yet, speakers were still profoundly competent in Jamaican and have shown a positive attitude towards it. This was especially the case if strong community ties could be found. Moreover, the newly developed variations, such as Afro-Caribbean London English and London Jamaican, still contained distinct Jamaican features in its syntax, lexicon, and phonology. (Bryan 2004: 654f) One major difference between the Jamaican spoken in Jamaica and the British variations, however, is that the latter is not only spoken by L1-speakers but also by speakers who only acquired the language in their adolescence. This is because especially London Jamaican is a form of expression of identity, and social and cultural stance. Distinctive basilectal features are used by young Black speakers to express their feeling of belonging to a hardened, urban, and canny social group with a tendency to oppose authorities. (Bryan 2004: 655) However, Jamaican in the UK is not only used by Black speakers but is similarly used by South Asian Youth (Bryan 2004: 656) and young, White people (Bryan 2004: 655). The use of the latter group thereby has been met with a polarizing response. While some Black speakers see it as disrespectful appropriation, others approve of its use in an Afrocentric environment but only if spoken by respected individuals of the community. (Bryan 2004: 655)

In the diasporic context, Sebba (1993) further challenges the applicability of the continuum approach to Jamaican. This is mainly due to the more homogeneous speaker group in terms of social class in the UK. Instead, more instances of code-switching and individual, mixed variations can be observed. This approach is supported by Bryan's (2004: 657) findings that often group norms, and expressions of authority are carried by a limited range of linguistic items rather than the language in its entirety. Words are thereby used to express a Black, transgenerational authority with an oppositional stance. (Bryan 2004: 657)

Therefore, Jamaican spoken in Jamaica and that of its diasporas share similar features, which will be discussed in the following subchapter. However, the more homogenous speaker group in the diaspora as well as the integration into their society and surrounding languages impact the use of Jamaican.

iii. Jamaican Linguistic Features and Orthography

This subchapter will give an insight into distinctive linguistic features of Jamaican including syntactical, phonetical, and lexical features. This linguistic introduction though is by no means a complete overview of Jamaican since the language is complex and touching on all its features would go beyond the scope of this thesis. Yet, this chapter serves to point out major differences

between Jamaican as a Creole and standard English. Additionally, the orthography of Caribbean Creole languages and Jamaican in particular are discussed.

In regard to Jamaican's grammar, the language has distinctive features stemming from both West African and European languages (Speigner 2013: 24), whereby basilectal forms show more African continuities than mesolectal variations, and the acrolect is not a Creole at all (Patrick 2007: 2). Bryan (2004: 643) identifies the linguistic features listed in the following table that Jamaican exhibits as significant.

Feature	Jamaican example	Translation
The unmarked verb	<i>Him park him car and we siddung.*</i>	He parked his car and we sat down.
Absence of subject-verb concord	<i>Pat sing.</i>	Pat sings.
Zero copula	<i>Mi sick.</i>	I am sick.
Serial verbs	<i>Wi go Ambasada Tiyata go watch koubwai.*</i>	We would go to the Ambassador Theatre to watch cowboy [movies].
	<i>Im wan mi fi go kya im kom.*</i>	He wants me for go carry him come (lit.); He wants me to bring him.
Same forms for adjectives and verbs	<i>Dem mad mi.</i> <i>Big-op.</i> <i>Small-op.</i>	They made me mad. Enlarge (lit.); cheer; Make small (lit.); compress;
Pluralization using the particle 'dem'	<i>Di man dem</i>	The men
Conflation of active and passive voice	<i>Di fuud sel aaf.</i>	The food that was being sold is finished.
Front focusing	<i>A taak wi a taak bout Jan.</i>	It's John we are talking about.

Table 1: Jamaican grammatical features (author based on Bryan 2004: 643 and *Patrick 2007)

Regarding the unmarked verb, Jamaican verbs in the past tense typically do not receive the suffix *-ed*. However, when it is used, experts in creole languages view it as an influence from standard English. This perspective is based on the untrue assumption that English grammar is not known to Jamaican speakers, when in fact, it has been observed since the 19th century that many Jamaican speakers have utilised both unmarked verbs and verbs with the *-ed* ending when referring to past events. In contrast, the idea of a pure, uniform basilect is a contemporary abstraction overlooking linguistic variation. (Patrick 2007: 2)

Zero copula, on the other hand, refers to the observation that adjectives can serve as the main element of a predicative phrase without the need for a copula as seen in the zero copula example in Table 1. In Jamaican basilectal variations the absence of a copula is almost always the case. The similar use of verbs and adjectives can be seen in their negation using *no*, and their function as a complement of a modal. However, adjectives do differ from verbs based on the following

four criteria: (a) their attributive functions, (b) their capacity to take intensifiers, (c) their capacity to function as the complement for the action verb "get", and (d) the capability to accommodate comparative (-a) and superlative (-is) suffixes. In certain instances, adjectives that fit in semantically can also, although less frequently, serve a causative function. (Patrick 2007: 14f)

Patrick (2007: 17) further defines serial verbs as “*non-modal verbs occurring in strings without any overt marker of subordination or coordination, with a single TMA and/or negation marker and interpretation (if any), and a single expressed subject.*” It is worth noting that such constructions are not found in the earliest texts (see texts 1-4 in Lalla/D’Costa 1990: 129-133) but started to appear in the 19th century. The structure has several functions including directional, dative, comparative, instrumental, comitative, and benefactive. (Patrick 2007: 17) Two or three verbs are used in a row as seen in the examples above. Sometimes, however, a three-verb series is interrupted by an argument or is not sharing a single subject. Theoretically four verbs could be used as serial verbs, but none had been found in literature at the time. (Patrick 2007: 19)

Another distinctive feature of Jamaican mentioned in the table above is the plural marker *-dem* used in the basilectal form. This suffix likely originates from the third-person plural pronoun *dem* stemming from “they, them, their”. Interestingly, the same form is also used as the plural demonstrative marker. However, it is important to note that the plural marker *-dem* differs from other uses by being placed after the noun it modifies. (Patrick 2007: 20) The *-dem* marker, though, is not the only way to express plurals in Jamaica. According to older texts, before *-dem*, the English -s suffix has also been used alternately with a zero marker. Such bare nouns are the most common form of pluralisation, especially because *-dem* is more commonly, but not exclusively, used with human and animate subjects. Therefore, “man” is pluralised *man dem* but “hole” is pluralised “hole-Ø”. (Patrick 2007: 21)

Another distinguishing feature of Jamaican in connection to front focusing as mentioned by Bryan (2004: 643) are according to Gut (2018: 86) relative clauses. In spoken Jamaican relative clauses often occur in connection with focussing strategies, particularly *wh*-fronting and left dislocations. Thereby, a main clause precedes a noun phrase, which refers to an anaphoric pronoun or expression in that main clause. Examples thereof are:

Di liedi we ben gi mi di tuu die shi sel di plies.

The lady who had given me the two days’ (work), she sold the place.

(Christie 1996: 50 as quoted in Gut 2018: 86)

In terms of relative markers, Jamaican is equipped with several possibilities to express relative clauses. The repertoire consists of *a* (“that”), *we(h)* (“where” or Northwest England’s “*wha*”),

wa(t) (“what”), *huufa* (“who for”), *dat* (“that”), *huu* (“who”), and zero. Out of these markers, the acrolectal *huu* and the basilectal invention *huufa* representing relativised possessive nouns are solely used in connection with human antecedents. *Wa(t)* and *we(h)* on the other hand can be used interchangeably unless a noun phrase has a locative meaning. Then only *we(h)* can be used. In the case of *dat*, the literature is limited since it is most likely only used in formal contexts. (Gut 2018: 86) The following are examples of relative clauses:

Mi rispek ar tu di dort we shi waak pan __, Mada.

I respect her to the ground that she walks on __, Mother.

(Patrick 2004: 426 as quoted in Gut 2018: 87)

Dier woz a liedi liv wid tuu children.

There was a lady (who) lived with two children.

(Christie 1996: 55 as quoted in Gut 2018: 87)

Di uman we dem tiif ar biebi gaan a stieshan.

The woman that they stole her baby has gone to the station.

(Christie 1996: 58 as quoted in Gut 2018: 87)

The construction of relative clauses in Jamaican differs from standard English in three major ways. Firstly, Jamaican has the additional markers *a*, *we(h)*, *wa(t)*, and *huufa*. Secondly, standard English unlike Jamaican uses pied-piped constrictions, where “*the preposition of a prepositional verb precedes the relative marker in the relative clause*” (Gut 2018: 88). Lastly, Jamaican exhibits the use of resumptive pronouns that are not found in standard English. (Gut 2018: 88)

Deuber (2018: 136) adds that Jamaican further differs from standard English in the way questions are phrased. As a distinctive feature of Creole languages, Jamaican too uses *Wh*-questions without the support of *do*. (Deuber 2018: 136)

Jamaican, however, not only has Creole-typical syntactic features but also characteristic sounds. One of them, is the sound shift from /v/ to /b/ as for instance in *beks* (“vex”) and *hebi* (“heavy”) (Bryan 2004: 643). Moreover, Jamaican speakers tend to drop their /h/, palatalise initial /k/ and /g/ before /a/ and /a:/, and use palatalised stops instead of alveopalatal affricates. (Gut 2018: 81) In terms of Jamaican lexicon, over 80% of the language’s vocabulary is derived from English (Speigner 2013: 24). However, speakers continuously find creative ways to use the English lexicon and create new meaning. Some instances thereof are the following:

box
slap

favour
resemble

mancow
bull

eyewater
tears

(Bryan 2004: 643)

While this description of Jamaican is far from a complete picture (see Patrick 2007 for a more detailed account or Lalla/D’Costa 2009 on early Jamaican) the examples above demonstrate, Jamaican is a language with concrete and complex rules. Hence, it can be both taught and

learned by L1 and L2 learners, which has been fostered by websites like Jamaicanpatwah.com (n. d.).

Another factor besides grammar and phonology regarding languages is their orthography. While not all languages are written, Jamaican, as well as other Caribbean Creoles such as the ones spoken in Trinidad and Belize, are used in writing such as different forms of literature. This is the case both on the islands themselves as well as in the diaspora. These literary forms are most commonly poetry, dialogue in books, plays, and stories, and Dub poetry⁵. (Sebba 1996: 53) Often Jamaican and other Caribbean Creoles are used in multilingual literature that are a result of the intense language contact between Creole and colonial language speakers. However, the multilingualism of the region is often obscured by the strong focus on colonial languages such as English, Spanish, and Dutch. One step towards challenging this status-quo is potentially the practice of writing in multiple languages. (Gonzalez 2020: 11) An example of a concept concerned with such practices is “bilanguaging” described by Walter Mignolo. It is defined as “[...] *the active process of experimenting with the space between languages.*” (Gonzalez 2020: 13) It is important to note though that bilanguaging is not a synonym to being bilingual. This is because it “[...] *is not a grammatical but a political concern as far as the focus of bilanguaging itself is redressing the asymmetry of languages and denouncing the colonality of power and knowledge.*” (Gonzalez 2020: 13) These power imbalances not only affect if but also how a language is written. In the case of Jamaican orthography, it is strongly influenced by the experience its speakers – and writers – have had in the English dominated school system. Their education has given them at least basic knowledge in the spelling and writing of standard English, whereas Jamaican in its written form is often a result of secondary literacy. Therefore, the L1 (Jamaican) differs from the language they first learn to write (standard English) in. The latter language strongly influences how Jamaican is spelled because writers use, although altered, standard English conventions. Yet, Creole texts written in the 1990s by Black British writers have shown great variation in the spelling of individual words. (Sebba 1996: 54) This shows that the question on how to spell words in Jamaican is mostly up to the writer themselves (Sebba 1996: 56) and the decisions made are often ideological (Sebba 1996: 57).

While Jamaican writers generally tend to make an effort to show differences in sound through their spelling (see *yu*, *y’u*, and *yuh*), in standard English the discrepancy between spelling and pronunciation is normalised. However, in some cases the spelling in Jamaican goes beyond representing sounds and can be seen as intentional, unconventional spelling of words in order

⁵ Dub poetry is a form of spoken word art in which poetry is recited while background music is playing (Sebba 1996: 53).

to highlight the difference between Jamaican and standard English. Unconventional thereby is understood as going against standard English conventions even though the Jamaican and English word are pronounced the same. An instance thereof is the word “tough”, which can be found in Jamaican literature as *tuff* despite the same pronunciation of the English *gh* and Jamaican *f*. Hence, the Jamaican variation must serve a purpose other than the representation of sound. One such purpose can be the representation of national identity as is the case with *-ise /-ize* for American and British English. (Sebba 1996: 57)

In regard to Caribbean Creoles, the question on how to spell words though goes beyond the question of national identity. Due to the islands’ colonial history, spelling is more a question of representing the colonisers’ languages or inventing a new orthographic system all together. In Haiti for instance, both a French-based orthographic system as well as a new system invented by American linguists based on the sounds of Haitian are in use. While the former is mostly used by the elites and highlights the countries connection to France, the latter supports the promotion of literacy amongst Haitian speakers. (Sebba 1996: 57)

In the case of Jamaican, most writing systems are exclusively English based. Though, they show adaptations to better fit Jamaican sounds. Nevertheless, relying this strongly on standard English conventions inherently favours those learners who already master some written English. With the help of this knowledge and the common English orthography base, they manage to make sense of various written representations of Jamaican sounds, which “[...] *makes the idiosyncratic systems mutually intelligible.*” (Cooper 1995: 12)

Besides the most commonly used, English based orthography, Frederic Cassidy and Robert LePage invented a new writing system for Jamaican and wrote the “Dictionary of Jamaican English” (Cooper 1995: 12; Sebba 1996: 58). It was published in 1967 and revised in 1980 (Sebba 1996: 58). The Cassidy system – despite still largely being based on English orthography – differs from English due to its internal consistency. While English sounds are often represented by various symbols or pairs thereof and symbols can be pronounced differently depending on the word, in the Cassidy system each (pair of) symbol(s) stands for the same sound every time it is used. This simplifies and structures writing in Jamaican. However, this deviation from standard English conventions can make it more difficult for English literates since familiar words suddenly “look strange” and “sound wrong” if sounded out using English pronunciations. (Cooper 1995: 12) This is because the Cassidy system does not assume that readers know any English conventions and hence has different vowel and consonant representation (Sebba 1996: 58). The difference between English based Jamaican spelling and the Cassidy system can be seen in the following example:

So afta mi daddy lef im, Mama leave an gaan hustle ohtside noh, for shi like see di money come een, you know, shi no like fi know say, well den, di man a live offa im own.

So afta mi dadi lef im, Mama liiv an gaan husl otsaid noh, far shi laik si i muni kum iin, yu no, shi no laik fi nuo se wel den di man a liv afa im uon.

(Adams 1991: 76-7 as quoted in Sebba 1996: 59)

While the writing system was immediately embraced by linguists and used in academia, writers of both novels and poetry were more hesitant to use the Cassidy system (Sebba 1996: 58). One argument used against it, is that especially Creole writers in the diaspora do not only target a Creole speaking audience but rather write for a multi-ethnic and multilingual group of readers. Hence, using English based writing conventions fosters understanding for those who are not first language speakers in the respective Creole. (Sebba 1996: 60) Moreover, learning a new spelling system involves a lot of effort, especially since the Dictionary of Jamaican English is not accessible for many due to its costs. One way the effort could be decreased, would be if the Cassidy system was used as the standard within the Jamaican education system. (Sebba 1996: 60) The adaption of the system would be especially beneficial for Jamaicans who are not educated in English due to its inner consistency. Without the many exceptions English has, literacy is facilitated through the Cassidy system. On the other hand, this system forces English literates to surrender their privilege, which helps to close the social distance between literate and illiterate people. (Cooper 1995: 13)

However, there remains an emotion-based concern that the Cassidy system would cause an increase in negative views of Jamaican as unnatural (Cooper 1995: 13). Yet, officially focusing on an English based system would further reinforce the negative stereotypes of Creole languages as inferior to standard English. This can ultimately lead to a fading perception of Creole-English boundaries and ultimately decreolisation. (Sebba 1996: 59)

Therefore, the Cassidy system has the potential to give Creole speakers a sense of integrity and a way to make a political standpoint. This orthographic system also represents the African heritage of Jamaican. (Cooper 1995: 13) The continuities of African languages in Caribbean Creoles, and Jamaican in particular, will be described in the next chapter.

iv. Continuities of African Languages in Caribbean Creoles – an Example of Jamaican

Jamaican has a variety of linguistic features that can be traced back to African languages. The phenomenon can best be understood through the island's colonial history which led to the European colonialist expansionism that created Jamaican as a product of language contact

between European and West African languages (Bryan 2004: 642). Besides new, heterogeneous diaspora languages (Bryan 2004: 642), the transatlantic slave trade also resulted in 90% of Jamaica's population being of African descent (Patrick 2007: 2). The West African languages their enslaved ancestors had brought with them to the Caribbean were mixed with different British dialects and sociolects under the pressures and socio-economic circumstances of the plantation life in the 17th and 18th century. The resulting contact language, while distinct, has similarities with its input languages as well as other Creole languages that evolved in similar circumstances. (Bryan 2004: 642) While over 80% of the vocabulary of English-influenced Creole languages stems from English dialects, Jamaican also reproduces features of African languages. (Speigner 2013: 24) These features are here referred to as continuities of African languages.

One researcher mentioned by Bryan (2004: 644) in connection with research into African continuities in Jamaican is Alleyne, who draws a direct line between Jamaican and Twi. The latter was only one of several West African languages brought to the Caribbean. However, while others decayed or died completely on the islands, Twi seems to have stayed alive through its continuities in Jamaican. They are not only found in its syntax but also its phonology and morphology (see also Lalla/D'Costa 2009: 41). Two of the syntactic features mentioned in the previous subchapter, serial verb constructions and pluralisation using *dem*, are especially common in Twi. (Bryan 2004: 644) The following two examples show the similar pluralization forms:

Twi:	<i>oyere</i> “wife”	<i>oyere nom</i> “wives”	(Bryan 2004: 644)
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Jamaican:	<i>man</i> “man”	<i>man dem</i> “men”	(Bryan 2004: 643)
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Furthermore, three different phonological continuities of Twi can be found in Jamaican (Bryan 2004: 644; Lalla/D'Costa 2009: 41).

Firstly, Twi's sound patterns are mirrored in words such as *nyam* (“eat”), and *backra* (from *mbakara* “master”) (Bryan 2004: 644; Lalla/D'Costa 2009: 53).

Secondly, just like Twi, Jamaican tends to insert vowels into consonant clusters with the nasal consonants *sn* or *sm*. Hence, changes in phonology like *sinake* (“snake”) or *sumall* (“small”) occur. (Bryan 2004: 644)

Thirdly, Jamaican shows remnants of tone. In *it kyaang iit*, for instance, tone distinguishes between the two meanings “it can be eaten” and “it cannot be eaten”. (Bryan 2004: 644)

Besides grammatical and phonological continuities, vocabulary stemming from African languages can be found in Jamaican. Examples thereof are:

afu
“a type of yam”

sénsé
“a type of fowl with ruffled feathers”

jooka
“to pierce”

(Bryan 2004: 644)

Though, as a result of socio-economic pressures during the emergence of Creoles, many of these terms, such as *nyam* (‘to eat’), have been assigned a more negative connotation than their English counterparts. This occurrence is called pejoration and is especially common in the presence of a majority of acrolect-speakers. In the case of *nyam* this means that the term in many instances is used to refer to animals, or to the unmannerly devouring of a meal by a person. (Beckford Wassink 1999: 58)

While African continuities in vocabulary often experience devaluation, quite the opposite can be the case for the use of African languages themselves. Although Jamaican has been used as a lingua franca, African languages had widely stayed alive through religious music. This practice, though in decreased capacity, prevailed despite of efforts made by colonisers to force enslaved people into Christianity, which was instructed and practiced in English. Groups of Jamaican worshipers, especially the Kumina and Etu/Nago people, have sustained the importance of African languages by speaking and singing in them during worship. African languages are mostly important because they are deemed to be “[...] *the deities of their ancestral spirits* [...]” (Farquharson 2017: 15) and hence are used to appease, entertain, and communicate with them. (Farquharson 2017: 14)

Besides worship, African language practices are reflected in Jamaica’s strong traditions of oral literature and performance. In particular, the inherited oral practices are manifested by using songs, storytelling, and proverbs to express themselves. Much like spiritual worship, these practices are a collective expression of the continued interconnection with their ancestors. (Bryan 2004: 645f)

Overall, Jamaican’s development has been strongly influenced by two unequal sources in regard to their power, one being various dialects of English, the other West African languages, and Twi in particular. While English is mostly the lexifier, West African language structures can be found in Jamaican’s syntax, phonology, morphology, and to a certain extend in its lexicon. Besides these structural continuities, African ancestors have influenced Jamaican’s speech practices by installing strong oral traditions. Moreover, African languages are still used during spiritual worship by certain groups of Jamaica’s population.

v. Changing Language Ideologies Towards Jamaican

As briefly touched on in the previous chapter, Jamaican, and languages in general, are subject to attitudes towards them by both their speakers as well as the public and academia. These attitudes are often referred to as “language ideologies” in linguistics. The term broadly refers to implicit cultural assumptions, political stand points, and the value attributed to a language, and often as an extension thereof to its speakers, which are passed down through language socialization (Riley 2012: 493).

Bryan (2004: 641) describes a language as a defining feature of culture that stands in a dialogic relationship with its surroundings and therefore, perpetually forms and is formed by its context. This includes its speakers’ perceptions and ideologies as well as identity (Bryan 2004: 641). Riley (2012: 493) extends this notion to language ideologies, which too shape their sociocultural context. This mostly happens through their influence on socialization practices and language acquisition (Riley 2012: 493). The latter is insofar important that language acquisition by young children is the breeding ground of language shift. This is in part due to the dis- or encouragement of parents towards their children to use a certain language. An instance thereof is the preference of Dominican caregivers for their little ones to speak standard English rather than the local Afro-French Creole. This is due to the perception of English being more respectful whereas the local Creole is seen as vulgar⁶. Such interferences in language acquisition and socialization practices are one of the most significant drivers of language shift. (Ochse/Schieffelin 2012: 15) Creole languages thereby are the most vulnerable to language shift as a result of socio-linguistic pressures due to their perception as being least prestigious among languages (Bryan 2004: 648).

Regarding language ideologies, one of the most influential factors surrounding Creole languages, such as Jamaican, is their evolution. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind the historically unequal situation of power between the languages involved in its formation. This still influences today’s attitudes towards Jamaican, which research has proven to be strongly polarised. (Beckford Wassink 1999: 58) One instance for this historical effect on the speakers’ attitude in cases showing a lexical relationship between the Creole and standard English is the speakers’ tendency to perceive standard varieties as better than the non-standard ones (Beckford

⁶ Vulgar, as defined by the OED, refers to ‘[h]aving a common and offensively mean character; coarsely commonplace; lacking in refinement or good taste. Now the only sense in ordinary colloq. use.’ (Cooper 1995: 8)

Wassink 1999: 58). This is not only the case for Jamaican but also for other English-lexified Creoles like those spoken in Grenada, Guyana, and Trinidad. As mentioned in the chapter above, one symptom of this notion was the years-long misunderstanding that Jamaican and other Creole languages are merely a worse version of English due to their lexical similarity. (Sebba 1996: 51) This example reflects the general notion found in postcolonial societies “[...] *in which cultural values and practices, systems of commerce and government, and the language of the dominant culture have all been regarded as more sophisticated than those of the dominated.*” (Beckford Wassink 1999: 58f) Standard English in particular is held in high prestige globally thanks to political and economic factors unconnected to its linguistic value. Nevertheless, speaking English is important to many people around the world fuelling the perception of English-lexified Creoles as socially as well as linguistically worth less than standard English. (Sebba 1996: 52) This is also due to the access English provides its L2 speakers and the flexibility it gives them. In other words, English speakers can gain access to, for instance, knowledge, education, or markets, while the identity it gives to its speakers can be left behind in other situations by speaking their L1. (Bryan 2004: 652) Often the mere suggestion to choose Jamaican over English and consider it an equally worthy language is met with accusations of gatekeeping. The fear that choosing the former language could mean that the island is isolated within the interconnected globe and that children would no longer learn English adds to the allegation that the privilege English brings is held by a few. These assumptions by both the public and professionals (e.g. teachers) are fuelled by the idea of monolingualism and that Jamaican can only be learned at the expense of standard English. (Kouwenberg et al. 2011: 395)

Yet, Beckford Wassink (1999: 59) argues that the view of the standard as better is one-sided, and research used to come to the conclusion above seems to be the result of solely working with middle- or upper-class speakers. Furthermore, if all speakers would feel that a standard is better than the Creole, in Jamaica’s case standard English is better than Jamaican, over time, the non-standard variety should be spoken progressively less often until its elimination. However, this is evidently not the case and therefore points to a more complex attitude situation. (Beckford Wassink 1999: 59)

Nevertheless, the historical context of domination has not just let to past believes that Jamaican is inadequate and inefficient, lacking a sufficient range of vocabulary (Farquharson 2017: 4), and the language of poor and marginalised groups, it has also made its way into the academic world (Bryan 2004: 646). Not only is the importance of former colonial languages evident in the classification of Creoles as described in the previous chapter (Bryan 2004: 646), but also in

the language choices within the academic discourse (Cooper 1995:11f). For instance, while analysing oral texts Cooper (1995: 11) found that while the texts themselves were often in Jamaican as typical for popular culture, the analysis thereof showed an intense shift to standard English. One participant in Beckford Wassink's (1999: 70) research further acknowledged the change in ideology caused by college education. They stated that being more educated makes Jamaican sound sloppy. This statement is in line with the finding that students' preferences for lexical and phonological variations only gave way to preferring more mesolectal forms in the years after studying (Beckford Wassink 1999: 70). Moreover, Kingston Mann (2015: 480) claims that both students and professors at the University of the West Indies limit their use of Jamaican in public settings. This statement, however, is disputed by Kouwenberg et al. (2011: 389) who states that students not only exchange greetings and personal stories in Jamaican but also use the language in academic discourse. Thereby, students noticed a stark difference between the acceptance of Jamaican in school and at university. As one student and co-author (see Kouwenberg et al. 2011: 392) explains:

“I found it quite amazing that after over 10 years in the formal education system, being taught that Jamaican Patwa was ‘bad’ English and its use was not encouraged, at the University (the pinnacle of learning and education that I believed should be using the ‘Queen’s English’) those views were opposite.”

(Tamirand de Lisser in Kouwenberg et al. 2011: 392)

Kouwenberg et al. (2011: 392) name two reasons for the evolving perception of Jamaican within the formal school system. Firstly, university students come to the realisation that solely speaking standard English without the use of Jamaican within society is not beneficial to them. Secondly, by increasing their own level of education it becomes obvious to them that being a highly educated Jamaican is not synonymous to being L1 standard English speakers. This mainly becomes clear because they themselves are L1 Jamaican speakers. (Kouwenberg et al. 2011: 392)

Despite talking about university matters in Jamaican regularly and the above-mentioned realisations, many students as well as the general population still dispute Jamaican's status as a language. (Kouwenberg et al. 2011: 389)

The situation is also reflected by high-ranking government officials, who, if they recognise Jamaican at all, only tend to use Jamaican symbolically in order to identify with lower class Jamaican speakers (Devonish 1986; Kingston Mann 2015: 480). Hence, it can be argued that Jamaican is a symbol of “[...] *poor, Black bodies and experiences, not elite institutions or personages.*” (Kingston Mann 2015: 480)

Supporting the notion, Sebba (1996: 51) states that Creole languages have historically been seen as an identifying factor for speakers' social and intellectual inferiority. This perception has

been hugely based on the lower socio-economic position of Jamaican speakers. Whereas standard English speakers were often in the position of power and influence within Jamaican society. (Sebba 1996: 51)

This attitude reaches back to centuries with sources from the eighteenth and nineteenth century picturing Jamaican as ‘talkee’ vernacular similar to a jargon⁷ (Bryan 2004: 646). Another source describes Jamaican as “[...] *inadequate and inefficient, ‘just plain laziness’, and as being ‘so limited in vocabulary that it can only be described as primitive jabbering’.*” (Farquharson 2017: 7) These views like others indicate Jamaican’s conception of a “non-language”. Instead, it is often categorised as broken English that is unusable in writing or serious discussions. Hence, monolingual Jamaican speakers are seen incapable of fluent, well-reasoned conversations. (Kouwenberg et al. 2011: 388)

The Inspectors of Schools portrays a similar picture in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as they describe Jamaican as broken English or a degenerated form of English that has to be stopped from being spoken (Bryan 2004: 646). Moreover, according to findings by Beckford Wassink (1999: 68ff) in her research with Jamaican speakers of all genders, aged six to over 46, in a semi-rural community in Jamaica, it became clear that especially older speakers described Jamaican as ‘broken English’ (Beckford Wassink 1999: 68). Younger participants on the other hand seemed to see Jamaican as mixed with English (Beckford Wassink 1999: 68). Moreover, most of the respondents in the 20-45 age group distinguished between ‘Slang’, or language particularly often used by the youth, and Jamaican and tended to see Jamaican as its own entity away from English (Beckford Wassink 1999: 69). This shows how both age and gender influence the speakers’ attitude towards Jamaican (Beckford Wassink 1999: 68).

In opposition, English was considered to be an important agent of civilisation for the colonised population. (Bryan 2004: 646)

Only in 1968, when the Creole conference was held at the University of the West Indies in Mona, Jamaica, some change in perception could be seen. While Jamaican was still seen directly connected to poverty, lack of morals, and ignorance, the necessity was voiced to see the wider significance of the social aspects of Jamaican described by local Creole researchers like Bailey, Alleyne, and DeCamp. (Bryan 2004: 647)

⁷ Jargons are also referred to as pre-Pidgins or “*unstable/early/primitive/incipient/rudimentary pidgin[s]*” (Velupillai 2015: 18). They therefore are contact varieties. However, unlike Pidgins, they are highly variable and do not yet have strict rules. Therefore, it cannot be learned like a structured language, nor can it be used incorrectly. Hence, it is judged solely by its usefulness for its speakers to be understood in a specific context. Therefore, “*jargons are ‘individual solutions to the problem of cross-linguistic communication and hence subject to individual strategies’.*” (Velupillai 2015: 18)

In the 1970s political changes and the development of Dread Talk (see also Pollard 2006) put a stop to the process of decreolization. Dread Talk is understood as the language of the Rastafari movement. In the beginning it was the language of oppressed and economically challenged people. It consisted of the Jamaican lexicon creatively used through verbal camouflage, subsumption of meaning, and word play. It is used in poetry, music, and social commentary. (Bryan 2004: 649) As Dread Talk evolved, it slowly started to be absorbed into middle and working-class speech. It started to be widely accepted since the vocabulary found its way into the mesolectal form of Jamaican. It soon became a strong cultural determinant carrying a message of self-pride. Moreover, it is used increasingly often in cultural performances such as dub poetry, dancehall, and roots play, which is a theatre genre. These arts using Jamaican target working-class audiences and are commercially viable in all areas of Jamaica. (Bryan 2004: 649f) Especially artists connected to the Rastafarian culture, such as Capleton, Tony Rebel, Luciano, Junior Reid, and Burning Spear, have seen a rekindling of their artistry. While they vary in their musical style, they are all known for their Afrocentrism and use of Jamaican in their music (Bryan 2004: 650). While previously this would have been seen as rude, in the 1990s using Jamaican by the DJs was considered to be a form of verbal maroonage (Cooper 1995: 136).

This has led to Jamaican being seen as inseparably connected to orality and being the embodiment of Jamaican folk culture (Cooper 1995: 2; Kingston Mann 2015: 480) However, even within the oral realm, socio-economic and racial biases are present. This can be seen in both the stigmatisation of Afrocentricity (Cooper 1995: 2) as well as the language choice in cultural and media settings in Jamaica (Kingston Mann 2015: 480). One instance thereof is that Jamaican, while commonly spoken at events in poorer neighbourhoods, is not used as often at festivals targeting middle- and upper-class Jamaicans or foreigners, nor is it the preferred language of Jamaican news anchors (Kingston Mann 2015: 480).

While Jamaican as stated has become mostly accepted in connection with cultural aspects of society, attempts to institutionalise it as medium of educational instruction have failed so far (Bryan 2004: 650). However, the topic of changing Jamaica's language of instruction keeps on being debated in local newspaper. These articles also show a change in attitude towards Jamaican. While in 1987 the newspaper "The Cleaner" wrote that Jamaican should be left where it was at, in 1991 the same correspondent claimed that standard English and Jamaican are not necessarily antagonistic but rather complement each other. Plus, even the most sophisticated Jamaican who generally uses standard English only, finds himself in situations in which he can only truly express himself in Jamaican. However, in 1997 another statement was written in

which English was portrayed as a crucial step of socialisation and Jamaican as hindering the latter. This shows that the negative perception prevailed. (Bryan 2004: 650)

Similarly, Beckford Wassink (1999: 57) suggests a change in attitude towards Jamaican by its speakers brought on by the rise of dancehall music and culture. However, the ideological shift did not only take place at the level of popular culture. In 1989, The National Association of Teachers of English (NATE) in Jamaica called on schools to accept Jamaican to be spoken in schools and stated that "[...] *'in linguistic terms [Jamaican] is a perfectly autonomous and wholly viable language system', calling [...] for adopting the position that Jamaicans are bilingual.*" (Beckford Wassink 1999: 60) This development mirrors the cultural validation of Jamaican on an institutional level. This process is of significance due to the former resistance of institutions towards the language of its people. (Beckford Wassink 1999: 57)

Nevertheless, in 2004 Bryan (2004: 650) wrote that while politically Jamaican had gained more power, on an educational level the language's status is at best met with ambivalence. The negative stigma of Jamaica as a language of instruction can also be seen in the following letter to the editor of the Jamaican Gleaner from August 29th, 2008:

"Let us keep patois out of our schools. It should remain what it is, a street language. Patois is a word of French origin which means to handle clumsily. It is often applied to any language that is spoken badly. So patois as a second language? Who needs one? Let us try to master the one we now speak, and make it mandatory that our children learn the language of our trading partners so that they can communicate on an international basis. Leave the English language as it is. We have mutilated it enough."

(cited in Kouwenberg et al. 2011: 390)

This is even though, in connection to language of education, a study mentioned by Beckford Wassink (1999: 60) established a positive correlation between the mean success rate in standard English in two different entrance exams (Common Entrance British and CXC Caribbean common entrance) to ten secondary schools and their principals' attitude towards the use of Jamaican in class. Generally, students of principals with more positive attitudes allowing the usage of Jamaican as medium of instruction tended to achieve higher rankings among test-takers. (Beckford Wassink 1999: 60) These results as well as Bryan's (2004: 648f) article suggests that an increase of L1 Jamaican speaking teachers would have a positive effect on students' learning ability. Bryan (2004: 649) further found that Jamaican is already commonly spoken in primary school classes. This is especially the case in teaching situations that do not follow a bilingual approach.

However, a lot of predominantly Jamaican speaking children are still looked at as insufficient standard English speakers rather than proficient Jamaican speakers (Kouwenberg et al. 2011: 399) The problem with this perception is that it puts the blame on the children rather than the

educational system and its failing approach of teaching English to L2 learners (Kouwenberg et al. 2011: 397). However, the low test scores of Jamaican students are concerning. In 2003 almost a third of primary school graduate could not read and in secondary schools, only a fifth gained qualifications for post-secondary education or meaningful employment. In grade six public school students score at an average of 48%, while private school pupils manage to score 72%. In secondary schools, officials even try to limit failing grades by preventing up to half of Jamaica's students to even sit for the exam. Still, only 11% of the sitting students pass. (Kouwenberg et al. 2011: 397) Therefore, new approaches to English teaching and Jamaican based education are needed.

Jamaican, however, is not completely excluded from schools. It is included in the curriculum through literature, proverb, dialect poetry, and drama (Bryan 2004: 652). Bryan (2004: 653) moreover stresses the engaging effects the inclusion of popular culture and music in particular has on students. Discussing commentary and lyrics of dancehall artists, translating them, or linguistically comparing the Jamaican lyrics to English translations catches the students' interest. It not only strengthens the identity of the pupils but also increases the status of both Jamaican and Jamaican popular music. (Bryan 2004: 653)

Nevertheless, the educational sector is not the only one with an increasing use of Jamaican. Written statements by journalists of "The Gleaner" collected by Beckford Wassink (1999: 60) furthermore showed that Jamaican is used increasingly in media, both in electronic and print format. It is especially predominant in the dancehall music sector. However, she also mentions that the negative perception of the language still prevails on all levels of society. Though, less-educated Jamaicans seem to be more ambivalent towards it (Beckford Wassink 1999: 60), well-educated Jamaicans are more likely to speak standard English (Kouwenberg et al. 2011: 389). Interestingly enough, while 82% of the participants acknowledge the spread in its use and influence on Jamaica's media (Beckford Wassink 1999: 69), it still seems that both conversation partner and topic lead to a restriction in speaker's choice of register (Beckford Wassink 1999: 72). Even though speakers believe, Jamaican is fully capable to carry a full communicative load and to express anything that they would say in English, all professional domains that were brought up in the questionnaire (often the conversation partner is unfamiliar or subordinate) were seen as inappropriate to use Jamaican. However, casual domains were deemed appropriate. (Beckford Wassink 1999: 72) Kouwenberg et al. (2011: 389) even went as far as to say that standard English is generally not used with family or friends. Moreover, Jamaican speakers are perceived to be more friendly than English speakers. (Kouwenberg et al. 2011: 389) Though, in general speakers showed a tendency to prefer being addressed in Jamaican

rather than to actively use it. This was determined by respondents' usage patterns. Friendships for instance, it was seen as most appropriate to use Jamaican in. Thereby, while 76% would be willing to be addressed in Jamaican by a friend, only 62% reported to do so themselves. Surprisingly enough, in the case of written use of Jamaican, the study showed a preference for Jamaican being used in public writing over personal writing. (Beckford Wassink 1999: 72) Furthermore, Jamaican was named more expressive for some topics but less for others (Beckford Wassink 1999: 73). Overall, the study showed that the speakers were very conscious of how their use of Jamaican reflects on them. Thereby, young males showed the most positive attitude towards the vernacular (Beckford Wassink 1999: 82). Even the general attitude was starkly more positive than the historic one, which disregarded Jamaican as a language and deemed it inefficient. Instead, respondents mentioned its social value and voiced pride in their folk literature written in Jamaican. (Beckford Wassink 1999: 85)

Bryan (2004: 652) five years later writes about a rejection of the "old" perception through social and cultural practices of the people, turning Jamaican into an expression of self-confidence, national identity, and voice of their ancestors. These statements are mirrored in the outcome of a survey conducted by the Jamaican Language Unit, which stated that approximately 80% of the respondents saw Jamaican as a language and almost the same amount of them declared themselves bilingual in English and Jamaican (Farquharson 2017: 7). Moreover, L1 standard English speakers have experienced a decrease in numbers due to the increasing acceptance and widening range of use for Jamaican both in daily life as well as media channels (Bryan 2004: 648). Kouwenberg et al. (2011: 394) add that especially graduates of linguistic courses of Jamaica's university are agents of change because they strongly advocate for Jamaicans being bilinguals and the importance of Jamaican. Havenol Douglas, one of the co-authors proclaims:

"I have come full circle to now embrace Jamaican (Patwa) as a viable language and a unique aspect of the Jamaican culture. It is a necessary part of the package which spells 'JAMAICA'. This journey has allowed me to recognise that Jamaican (Patwa) is not just a rudimentary communicative code for the uneducated, the underprivileged and uncultured, which is still a very adhesive stigma on Patwa; it is instead Jamaica's Indigenous language, a very energetic and rich aspect of the Jamaican culture. Why then should Jamaicans not embrace it without discomfiture? My view is that every Jamaican should."

(Kouwenberg et al. 2011: 400)

This acknowledgement of Jamaican's status as an important language in its own rights gives power to its speakers by strengthening their identity and heritage – both historical and cultural. Nevertheless, the ambiguous ideologies towards Jamaican by the general public makes for an emotional working environment for linguists interested in the language. (Kouwenberg et al. 2011: 402)

b. Dancehall - From the Ghetto to the World

"[W]hile music structures ways of thinking and being, participants' embodied personal and collective histories also contribute to music's meaning."

(Kingston Mann 2015: 479)

In this chapter, my objective is to describe dancehall within its socio-historic context, illustrate its impact on Jamaican society and economics, and discuss the globalization of Jamaican popular music. A socio-historic approach to contemporary dancehall is important to me because it still reflects the historical environment from which it emerged. Therefore, in order to be able to engage in discussions about the present state of dancehall and its community, it is crucial to comprehend the genre's evolution and the circumstances in which it developed.

Dancehall, and other musical genres such as blues, jazz, reggae and kwaito, have been classified as 'world music'. The term first coined in the 1980s is usually seen to encompass all types of music of non-Western origin and stands in opposition to mainstream popular music, commercially more viable genres, and classical music. As the term 'world music' implies, its songs are listened to worldwide and thereby produce cultures that cross national borders. (Stanley Niaah 2010: 177) Yet, while the term 'world music' seems to lump together different genres, both reggae and dancehall managed to gain their spots on popular music charts as distinctive genres not homogenised and thrown into another broad and all-embracing categories. (Stanley Niaah 2010: 178)

The definition of dancehall as a genre, however, has been subject to various interpretations, and what one person might classify as dancehall, another might categorise differently (Stanbury 2015; Stanley Niaah 2010). Stanley Niaah's (2010: 3) definition of dancehall, which I would like to reference here, goes beyond considering dancehall solely as a musical genre. According to her, dancehall encompasses a wide range of elements as it is a "[...] *space, culture, attitude, fashion, dance, life/style, economic tool, institution, stage, social mirror, language, ritual, social movement, profile, profession, brand name, community and tool of articulation [...]*" (Stanley Niaah 2010: 3). As evident from her descriptions, dancehall exhibits multiple facets. The original meaning of dancehall however was, at first, very much a literal one and described a place where dances and shows took place. This definition was completely disconnected from the music genre. Only over time did it morph into what we know as dancehall today – a new music genre. (Hope 2006: 26; Stanbury 2015) The development of said new expression of Jamaican popular music, and culture, began to show in the early 1980s and is often seen as a

continuum of Jamaica's musical traditions and in particular reggae (Farquharson 2017: 11; Hope 2006: 27; Stanbury 2015; Stanley Niaah 2010: 4). While most agree on a development from the 1970s/80s onwards (Hope 2006: 27; Stanbury 2015), some historians date its beginnings in the 1930s to the 1950s in poorer neighbourhoods in Jamaica (Farquharson 2017: 11; Stanley Niaah 2010: 1). However, I will focus on the seemingly more popular time frame of the 1980s. These times, as Hope (2006: 15) states, were greatly impacted by changes in Jamaica's economy, politics, and society. The two leading parties, the left-winged People's National Party (PNP) which served two terms in the 1970s and the right-winged Jamaican Labour Party (JLP) which took over office in the early 1980s, caused an economic crisis which struck the island especially harsh. The rise of free market capitalism and budget relocations, subsequently, led to increased political violence, urbanization, poverty, and higher numbers in transactions within an exploding informal import economy. Furthermore, Jamaica's social hierarchy shifted and changes in Jamaican popular culture such as the emergence of dancehall were possible. (Hope 2006: 2ff) However, the existing social hierarchy found on the island is still very much influenced by decades of violence, oppression, marginalization, enslavement, and colonization (Hope 2006: 9; Kingston Mann 2015: 480). In fact, White, European "high-culture" is still considered "superior" to Black, Jamaican or African "low-culture", to which dancehall is assigned. Dancehall is seen as more Africanised than reggae due to the rhythms it uses because a wide range of the most important dancehall rhythms are based on indigenous drumming (Dawes 2018: 38). Dancehall and the DJs being seen as a neo-African expression therefore also confirms their standing in the high-low culture divide in Jamaica (Cooper 1995: 11). On the other hand, Whiteness or light-skinnedness are an expression of high-culture and allows members of the privileged group to access government positions and media platforms easier than Black people. Though White Jamaicans cannot claim to represent Jamaicans as a whole and risk a loss of privilege if they associate themselves too much with Black, poor Jamaicans. (Kingston Mann 2016: 268)

On top of racial and class tensions, political and economic ones, have turned into the symbols created and re-created in dancehall's struggle for identity (Hope 2006: 9).

Rooted in traditions of resistance music, such as mento, ska, dub, rocksteady, and roots rock reggae, dancehall soon became a voice for the youth of poor, inner-city neighbourhoods in Kingston and St. Andrew (Dawes 2018: 38; Hope 2006: 10). Further powers of representation were given to them by using a Jamaican based inner-city slang which, additionally, contributed to building a community (Hope 2006: 13). Unlike reggae, which was sung in Jamaican English, dancehall artists have widely stuck to solely using Jamaican in their music. This has meant that

their music's main target audience is the Jamaican-speaking community. Hence, "[...] *the world has had to learn [P]atwa in order to understand much of dancehall.*" (Dawes 2018: 38)

These developments are not unlike the ones of the Rastafari-influenced reggae music and the sound systems in the 1950s and 1960s (Hope 2006: 13). Yet, new performing styles, new dance moves and mostly different lyrical contents distinguished dancehall from reggae (Hope 2006: 13; Stanley Niaah 2010: 4). Thereby, reggae lyrics are often a tale of love, Black pride, social revolution (Hope 2006: 13), and a symbol for class consciousness (Dawes 2018: 37). Dancehall, on the other hand, portrays a more vulgar style and talks about under-addressed topics such as political, police and gun violence, poverty, and taboos such as sex and sexuality (Hope 2006: 13). Moreover, dancehall adopts the ideas of hustling, partying, and materialism, which can be seen in their lyrics. Those are not always rooted in political opposition but strongly dependent on the wants of the listeners, which besides bling and gun culture, less often now than in the past include misogyny and homophobia. (Dawes 2018: 38) Roots reggae artists on the other hand are more focused on social criticism and spiritual prophecy (Dawes 2018: 39).

However, over the years a subgenre of dancehall known as roots revival has emerged. As part of the roots revival movement, artists such as Chronixx, combined traditional roots reggae, one-drop beats with dancehall. Roots artist, moreover, often do not come from the dancehall-typical lower classes but instead are part of middle-class, musical families. For example, Damian Jr. Gong Marley as a son of Bob Marley was born into the music industry and has not faced the same level of poverty as some dancehall artists. (Dawes 2018: 36) Additionally, it is to mention that the reggae-dancehall divide according to Dawes (2018: 39) is more of a theoretical and perhaps international debate than it is a Jamaican issue. Most Jamaicans seem to support artists no matter which genre they embrace as can be seen in many line-ups that feature a variety of artists.

The crossover between roots reggae and dancehall included a shift in themes towards more offending wordplay influenced by sex and sexuality (Gilroy 1987: 188). Regardless, the increase in gun violence and military culture in poorer neighbourhoods were more and more often picked as central themes across roots, revival, and dancehall music (Gilroy 1987: 188).

However, especially dancehall has reflected the high crime and violence rates of Jamaica through their mixture of rebellious and nihilistic lyrics (Dawes 2018: 38). References to guns and "badman" are commonplace in dancehall lyrics since the 1960s. In them, the "badman" and youth are portrait in gangster-themed scenes as marginalised yet not powerless actors. Through songs and the migration of lower-class Jamaicans in the 1990s this image of the Jamaican "badman" was spread around the world. While the imagery of violence and crime often mirrors

the lived reality of dancehall artists and their communities, it is important to know that they are not responsible for the situation. In contrast, the issue is complex and initially rooted in political conflict. In the 1970s political parties fought for political power by arming their supporters in the hopes that they would control neighbourhoods of opposing parties. When the political power over the armed “dons” and their men swindled after the financial crises in the 70s, the violence stayed behind. The “dons” became figures of autonomy from the state’s institutions and colonial structures. They, while committing crimes, also improved their communities by distributing school fees, medical supplies, food, and water amongst their members. (Kingston Mann 2015: 481) This happened in contrast to the state who was unable to provide necessities such as water, electricity or sufficient infrastructure to its citizens. The official’s inability to control crime further made space for armed, social outsiders to provide community resources. Through their illegal sources of income (e.g. drug trade) and access to arms the “dons” became partly autonomous figures of power since they did not fully depend on state resources and the formal legal system. (Kingston Mann 2016: 268) Therefore, even with an increase in roots revival, dancehall with its continuous concern with violence is still the main mouthpiece of the underprivileged. (Dawes 2018: 38)

Besides the content related distinctions, the two genres also vary in techniques used in production. Dancehall unlike reggae relies strongly on digital beat. In dancehall’s early years, artists, often referred to as deejays (DJs), would toast⁸ or talk over a rhythm and interact with the crowd at live performances, touching on community-relevant topics, much like a griot in an extended African sense. (Dawes 2018: 38; Hope 2006: 10ff; Stanley Niaah 2010: 4) The DJ becomes a praise poet in the setting of dancehalls, in which they recreate the neo-African fusion of oral traditions, movement, and music through their lyrics (Cooper 1995: 138). Moreover, DJs are the bridge between audio recordings and the listeners, fostering a relationship between the two (Kingston Mann 2015: 478).

With fast advancing technology, this style so typical for dancehall music manifested itself as beats and rhythms became more and more digitalised. This development made it possible to use the same beat to create several songs. One famous example thereof is the pioneering Sleng Teng rhythm in 1985. (Hope 2006: 10ff; Stanley Niaah 2010: 4) One issue with this practice is that

⁸ “Toasting is defined as a style of lyrical chanting which — in Dancehall music and reggae — involves a deejay talking over a riddim (“rhythm”). Though the art of chanting over a beat is quite ancient and found in many African-based musical traditions, toasting became quite popular in Jamaica in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and “sound systems” — traveling deejays and producers with large speakers and a library of beats and riddims — would feature toasting as part of their musical entertainment.” (Romer 2017)

producers and DJs usually do not ask permission but reuse entire instrumentals of songs for new ones. Therefore, they do not regard the copyrights of the original creators. (Kingston Mann 2016: 274f)

Naturally, the advances in technology caused a shift in places, from sound systems and discos to studios and radio stations (Hope 2006: 10ff; Stanley Niaah 2010: 4). The latter played a significant role in the spread of dancehall locally, regionally, and nationally. Jamaica's fifteen (15) different radio stations, which existed when Hope (2006: 16) wrote her book in 2006, not only broadcasted Jamaican dancehall music but also used its slang and lyrics in advertisements. This ensured that people from all socioeconomic backgrounds, willingly or not, consumed it, even if Jamaican's upper-class might disregard it and find it distasteful (Hope 2006: 18). Nevertheless, the creativity and adaptability of dancehall nourishes the continuous production of new music and has led to the spread and recognition of the genre, not only locally but also globally. A direct impact of the increasing demand for dancehall music brought wealth to plenty of actors in the music business. (Hope 2006: 23) The reason why economics play such a big role in dancehall and Jamaica in general is the stark overlap between race and economic standing in Jamaica. Most creators as well as consumers of popular culture in Jamaica are both Black as well as from low-income families. Hence dancehall is strongly associated with poverty and Blackness⁹. (Kingston Mann 2016: 270)

Nevertheless, Jamaica's music industry has been a driving force for economic growth. While the main target market for music is the domestic one, the export of cultural goods and music at its forefront has been defining Jamaica's international image since the 1960s. The successful export of Jamaican music however has ruffled the existing class dynamics. While the industry was disapproved of by the upper-class Jamaicans due to its connection to the Black, lower class, it was clear that Jamaican music has had great economic potential. (Dawes 2018: 36)

In fact, dancehall has been the most commercially successful music genre in Jamaica since Bob Marley. Dancehall artists have broken into the Japanese, European, and North American markets creating an income between 60 to 100 million USD by 2006. This is more than the income made by sugar exports (Hope 2006: 22) and the sales of music goods and services in Jamaica alone is estimated at 31 – 35 million USD, which equals around ten percent of the country's GDP in 2010 (Stanley Niaah 2010: 1). Today, Jamaica's GDP in US Dollars is estimated at 17.1 billion and in terms of GDP per capita is considered low in international

⁹ I would like to point out that Blackness in itself is not negative. However, in the post-colonial context of Jamaica, Black people have historically been and still are subjected to systematic racism and their culture is still seen as lesser than White or British culture.

comparison. Compared to Monaco, which ranks first in the GDP per capita in 2022 with roughly 241 000 US Dollars, Jamaicans only have 6047 US Dollars¹⁰. The Austrian GDP per capita for comparison is almost 52 100 USD and is ranked the 26th highest. (worldbank.org. n. d.) However, while the GDP per capita can give a rough estimate of the population's wealth. The number is an average and does not consider the unequal distribution of income within a country. Moreover, while upper-class income is more commonly formal and regulated, lower-income communities depend on unregulated, undocumented income (not accounted for in the GDP) to keep money in the neighbourhoods (Kingston Mann 2016: 274).

Despite the financial burdens and negative connotation dancehall artists and DJs were ascribed, they have managed to turn themselves into economically successful personae (Cooper 1995:139), which slowly starts to change Jamaica's mostly income-based class system and turns them from poor, black, down-town youth into holders of a position as an aspirational role model for others (Hope 2006: 23f).

Besides the financial success, dancehall too gained recognition in the global music industry in the 1990s when dancehall artist Shabba Ranks won the "Best Reggae Album" at the Grammys in 1992. While locals celebrated the success and centring of marginalised, Black voices, the Jamaican mainstream media still disowned music seen as an extension of poor, inner-city neighbourhoods. (Kingston Mann 2015: 480)

The negative perception of dancehall by the gatekeepers of Jamaican culture is all the more surprising considering its commercial position. Ever since the beginnings of dancehall in the 1980s, prominent members of Jamaica's society have homogenised and labelled dancehall 'disgusting', 'violent', 'vulgar', 'ghetto culture', and 'primitive' to name a few. Dancehall's social, sociological as well as ideological powers to influence Jamaica's culture and society have been seen as mostly of negative effect. It even has been said that the music genre along with its culture and fashion are responsible for high crime levels and bad grades obtained by high schoolers, especially boys. This attitude by representatives of the "high culture" led to a lack in dialogue and research concerning this product of popular culture. (Hope 2006: 18)

One way members of the upper class have voiced their disagreement with dancehall, was for instance, through letters to the editor of local newspapers such as The Daily Gleaner. In the beginning of 1989 for instance, people wrote in under the headlines such as "[...] *"Respect due" to reggae music*"; *"Unprofessionalism in local music*"; *"Stop, stop, now!"*; *No!, no! to slackness*"; *"To spurn indecency*"; *"Stance against slackness"* (Cooper 1995: 144) after the

¹⁰ In 2021 the GDP per Capita in USD was 10 025. (IOM n. d. b)

Sting 1988 stage show drew in an audience of more than 25 000 dancehall fans. Much like the pejoration of African language-based vocabulary in Jamaican, dancehall artists and their craft too have been devalued based on racist ideologies. Their “*rubbish heap image*” has been expressed through racial slurs. (Cooper 1995: 144) However, despite these insults, dancehall artists such as Mavado, the “gully god”, have reclaimed some of the negative terms. “Gully” for example may be seen as a dangerous and dirty feature of cityscape, far from the dominant social groups but close to the poor. Dancehall artists however have claimed the term “gully” for themselves, asserting their part in the community and referring to the lifestyle in poor, inner-city neighbourhoods. (Kingston Mann 2016: 273)

this affiliation is also one way to explain the continuous negative connotation since despite the international and commercial success of dancehall and reggae artists, the music’s origin in poorer neighbourhoods and its expression of ambitions of dreams of lower-class citizens upholds these perceptions. (Dawes 2018: 37)

Based on such strong positions held by the upper class, some scholars argue that dancehall artists represent the downtown youth in a metaphorical revolt against persisting social norms (Hope 2006: 19). Therefore, while dancehall came from and represents Jamaica’s downtown youth, it has challenged Jamaica’s social norms with its lyrics, use of Jamaican, and commercial success. It also influences Jamaicans on a sociological and ideological level, though not enough research has been conducted due to the negative perception by the upper class.

However, dancehall has not only influenced Jamaica. As part of being understood as ‘world music’ its worldwide consumption has produced cultures that cross national borders. (Stanley Niaah 2010: 177) I additionally believe, linguistic borders too are crossed by ‘world music’ as is in the case of Jamaican dancehall spreading Jamaica’s vernacular Jamaican to its transnational community. This is not to be neglected. One take for example the dancehall hotspot Japan (Stanley Niaah 2010: 151) where many dancehall fans through the medium of reggae and dancehall music acquire Jamaican before or sometimes instead of standard English (Stanley Niaah 2010: 191). This is especially intriguing regarding Jamaica’s perception and on-going fight for acceptance as outlined in chapter II.a.v..

Despite its transnational presence, Stanley Niaah (2010: 153) emphasises the central role of Jamaica’s capital Kingston as dancehall’s centre and origin. From there, dancehall’s globalization into the global popular music scene has taken place through different routes. These can be roughly divided into media distribution and migration of Jamaicans.

The latter created spaces of physical access to Jamaican culture and music outside of Jamaica. Particularly, in places with strong racial and class segregation such as England, lower-class

Jamaican neighbourhoods were sites of gathering and interaction with music for Black people. The class segregation, however, often meant that these spaces were not usually accessed by, especially middle- and upper-class, White participants. (Kingston Mann 2016: 271)

Another way dancehall has been brought abroad is the migration related concept of travelling. Thereby, dancehall reaches new spaces through dancehall artists themselves who tour different parts of the world and perform their art for their fans. Those artists cross local and national borders and help to maintain the practise of the Jamaican music genre on and off the island. While in community events in clubs, bars, and pubs, the selector, their collection of records, and the sound system are the focus of the event, during these tours the focus shifts back to the life performance and therefore the artist themselves. This shift in attention reminds of the roots of dancehall, when performing life was the norm. (Stanley Niaah 2010: 154)

Closely connected to the path into the global music scene through life performances, is the one through dance. Dancehall as a music genre is tightly connected to its dance style. Dance moreover is one of dancehall's few manifestations that truly holds space for women. While DJs, singers, sound technicians, and even videographers are mostly male¹¹, women are present on the dancefloor – in Jamaica and internationally. (Kingston Mann 2015: 481) Through dance, women assert their power by putting their own pleasure and expertise at the forefront of their movement. In the light of colonialism, the gendered and racialised movement of Black bodies becomes political by reclaiming their freedom, pride, and social worth. In addition, the focus on the lower body in Caribbean and African traditional dances and the pleasure and power within these movements, historically were a cite of colonial oppression and to this day are sometimes seen as sexist commodification. (Kingston Mann 2015: 482) Men, on the other hand, benefit from dance as a safer place to express and explore the boundaries of gender. This is especially important since Jamaica's culture is not particularly open to men pushing boundaries of gender identity outside the space dance holds. (Kingston Mann 2016: 276)

Besides the local importance of dancehall dancing, it also brings international attention as well as participation of both genders to Jamaica. In 1996, Big Head Promotions held the first International Dancehall Queen Contest in Montego Bay, Jamaica. The annual event only has increased its popularity and widened its reach since. This became clear with the winner in 2002 was from Japan, showing that Jamaica's monopoly on their style had disappeared just like national borders have. Soon after corporate sponsorship helped to keep the event afloat in 2004, contestants from the US, Canada, Europe, Japan, and other countries came to Jamaica to

¹¹ a rise in female dancehall singers can be observed after the publication of Kingston Mann (2015), though the majority of dancehall singers remains male.

compete in the 2006 competition. (Stanley Niaah 2010: 163) Only a year later, Austria, Estonia and Germany were added to the list of nationalities participating. It is important to note that this contest is not only held in Jamaica but has inspired other contests in the contestants' home countries. These include the US with six different locations, Italy, Germany, Belgium, and Poland in Europe, and Australia and Japan. (Stanley Niaah 2010: 164) However, these numbers are from Stanley Niaah's book published in 2010 and other locations can be added today such as Austria¹² and France. Besides hosting events as described above, these events create visibility for dancehall through their immense online presence on sites like historically in 2010 mySpace (Stanley Niaah 2010: 164), and currently Facebook, YouTube, X, and Instagram as well as instant messengers such as WhatsApp are more important (see Stanley Niaah 2010: 168).

The spread of dancehall through media distribution on the other hand can be divided into a pre- and post-digitalization era. Digitalization was such an important step because these changes in connection with a rise in market demand allowed Jamaica's dancehall artist too to easily spread their ideas and narratives beyond Kingston into international spaces, including the Jamaican and African diaspora (Hope 2006: 21). Evidence thereof is the fast spread of other music – from Ghanaian Azonto to local pop songs such as *Ai Se Eu Te Pego* by Michael Telo from Brazil in 2011 and *Gangnam Style* by the South Korean singer PSY in 2012 – that became global sensations aided by digitalization and the possibility of online circulation (Shipley 2013: 363). Most likely, neither song would have come to recognition in such a manner without the technological developments of the past years.

Important thereby is that both pre- and post-digitalization, international visibility and success of lower-class Jamaican artists was not controlled or defined by Jamaica's cultural gate keepers. While they controlled the official global media networks, they could not contain the avenues used by artists to bypass the system.

Before digitalization, Jamaicans forwent licensed venues by smuggling illegally copied music, hosting unlicensed dancehall parties, and broadcast music through pirate radio stations. Through these methods, Jamaicans not only avoided costs involved with trade and copyright licenses but also the acts of exclusions and gate keeping by sales venues abroad, who in line with their colonial legacy were opposed to poor, Black voices and cultures. (Kingston Mann 2016: 271)

¹² I personally observed the 2017 Vienna Dancehall Queen Contest whose winner was then qualified to take part in the Paris Dancehall Queen Competition which was the battle for a spot for the contest in Jamaica.

Another important facet of pre-digitalization circulation of Jamaican music was its cultural congruence. Both dancehall and roots reggae have managed to create a self-referential vocabulary through the repetitive and consistent use of language, musical elements, and topics. Hence, the songs speak to people who have the same cultural understanding rooted in marginalization and oppression. (Kingston Mann 2016: 271)

Especially in the 1970s reggae consumption and production became an avenue for political resistance for Indigenous people and marginalised communities in the Global South (Alvarez 2008: 576; Kingston Mann 2016: 271). After its spread from Jamaica to South and North America, Europe, Africa, Australia, and Asia, Indigenous people and migrants all over the world adopted reggae as an oppositional expression (Alvarez 2008: 578). Themes concerned with oppression, exploitation, and protest appeal to Indigenous people who often experience similar hardships as lower-class Jamaicans. In these communities and spaces (e.g. Tanzania, Puerto Rico, ...), reggae has experienced hybridization and was equipped with new meanings through the embedding of community-specific experiences with colonialization, political and economic powers, racism, and resistance movements. This crossover between local and global dynamics has resulted in the (re-)production of Jamaican music worldwide. (Alvarez 2008: 579) With the increase of digitalization and the of new media the circulation of music around the world was drastically sped up and changed (Hope 2006: 21; Shipley 2013: 363; Stanley Niaah 2010: 178).

One of these changes that digitalization fostered was the increased use of photo- and videography in the dancehall scene. Alongside the music itself, images of dancehall performances could now be spread across geographic borders with ease. Artists, fans, and photographers alike now use social media and digital networks to spread images. While this has increased the visibility for dancehall and its practitioners, it has also reinforced colonial privilege, such as a preference for light skinned. For some artists like Kartel this resulted in an increasingly lightened skin tone through bleaching. (Kingston Mann 2016: 267)

More formal platforms too have started to spread the new dancehall images. Examples thereof are the television stations in- and outside of Jamaica that featured dancehall videos, music, and events.

In North America, BET and MTV were two main TV stations who, through their focus on entertainment, helped dancehall to be circulated in the United States (Hope 2006: 16).

Re TV (Reggae Entertainment Television) in Jamaica, on the other hand, featured the event celebrating the fifteenth anniversary of Japan's most important sound system Mighty Crown in 2006. They showed both Jamaican and Japanese DJs hand in hand celebrating Jamaican culture,

portraying Japanese's growing involvement in the globalizing dancehall culture. (Stanley Niaah 2010: 191) In connection to Jamaican media platforms, it is important to mention though that state-sponsored media under official and unofficial pressures of both the government and society historically featured "high culture". Contrarily, dancehall as "low culture" formed the lower end of the hierarchy and for instance under the state monopoly of Jamaican radio was not played until the monopoly's fall in the 1980s. This is despite dancehall already being popular amongst the lower-class majority of Jamaica. (Kingston Mann 2016: 270f)

Another instance besides TV stations for the circulation of dancehall images used to be DVDs. They were produced by sound systems, duplicated, and then sold online as well as in stores worldwide. (Kingston Mann 2016: 276) At the time of the release of Stanley Niaah's book (2010: 168) dancehall videotapes and DVDs were sold more and more often costing between five and twenty US dollars. The profits were then split between sound systems, duplicators, and stores (Kingston Mann 2016: 276). Especially in countries with an established dancehall culture like Germany, South Africa, Canada, Brazil, Kenya, and Japan these DVDs were loved by consumers (Stanley Niaah 2010: 168). One such DVD for example was the documentary "*It's All About Dancing: A Jamaican Dance-U-Mentary*" by Williams, which was released in 2006. It portrays several known dancehall artists and promotes its culture (Stanley Niaah 2010: 191). While those examples are of formal circulation, many images of Jamaica's dancehall culture such as its dancers, DJs, and events are distributed informally through (social) media platforms. As it was already increasingly the case then, today most footage is circulated online through websites such as YouTube through channels such as "Dancehalltv.com". Through those, dancehall finds its way to and influence popular culture in places such as South Africa, North America, the UK, Puerto Rico, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Nigeria amongst others (Stanley Niaah 2010: 152). Especially, amateur producers and fans that capture images with their smartphones or small cameras tend to upload their pictures and videos online. For some, this becomes an avenue of financial income, others benefit indirectly through the heightened visibility of them and their work. (Kingston Mann 2016: 276) Being seen, especially internationally, has been of grave importance in order to make financial progress. This has long been recognised by actors of the Jamaican music industry and digitalization has been used as a wider stage of self-portraying. Thereby, the audience is not only remote but also Whiter, which poses the challenge to at least partially fulfil their cultural demands in order to monetise the increased reach. (Kingston Mann 2016: 277) This shows that while online networks can function as bridges, strengthen cultural authority, and reduce class- and race-based entry barriers, it can also reproduce dependency structures (Kingston Mann 2016: 269).

The last way of dancehall to infiltrate the world that I would like to mention because it reaches an audience disconnected from the global popular music scene and has a perception transforming character. Namely, it is through a prominent face: Usain Bolt. The Jamaican world record holding sprinter is known for his dance moves after his victories. He thereby makes an important statement about his Jamaican identity (Stanley Niaah 2010: 166). By performing moves like *no linga* and *gully creepa* in front of millions of spectators, he transformed a lower-class phenomenon into one of winners, showing the world Jamaica's dance repertoire and performance aesthetics (Stanley Niaah 2010: 167). Or as Stanley Niaah (2010: 168) puts it: "*Bolt listened and responded with his feet to maintain dancehall dominance through dance.*" This was also seen and taken up by Puma's marketing campaign, which uses images of Usain Bolt dance workout routine. (Stanley Niaah 2010: 168)

All in all, dancehall has found its way into the global music scene through different ways. Most of them are dominated by technological advances and digitalization, which allow content to be circulated easier, faster, and farther. However, Jamaican migrants, dancehall artist, and dancers too play a huge role. Might this be through their live acts and performances or through their online presence. Moreover, this does not only count for the music itself but also for the language used in it. In dancehall's and therefore Jamaican's case, for example, a language with only a few million speakers is spread to all those countries who consume dancehall music and its lifestyle and therefore exist people who understand and speak Jamaican who have never even been to Jamaica nor are they of Jamaican origin.

c. Jamaican in Jamaican Music – From the 1600s to Today

Jamaican music and the language used in it are part of the rich oral culture of Jamaicans. Music is an important creative outlet impacting local and international communities alike. (Patrick 2007: 2)

Oral culture is insofar vital for this thesis as dancehall as an oral art form can be situated within it. However, dancehall also differentiates itself from the works of writers such as Vic Reid, Louise Bennett, and Erna Brodber, who, besides performing poetry orally, were also strongly rooted in scribal literature practices due to their uptown upbringing. Dancehall artists on the other hand are solely based in oral popular performance. (Cooper 1995: 136)

Generally, Jamaican oral traditions span across various cultural practices, verbal techniques, and host a range of topics. Two major themes, amongst other oral cultural expressions, are the spiritual sphere (e.g. kumina, revival, spirit-possession), and the entertainment and social

sector that includes acts of storytelling, dance, children's games, and social gatherings. These practices are rich in linguistic tools such as proverbial expression, riddles, and antiphonal tale telling in performance poetry, folk tales, songs, and legends. (Cooper 1995: 2)

Additionally, music as an oral tradition, though often overlooked, can serve as a driving force across cultures in promoting social cohesion. Inter-culturally and -linguistically, it serves as a bridge, an opportunity for synthesis and exchange, and as a medium for collaboration. Yet, it is not able to completely abolish strong race- or ethnicity-based divides – especially if they are a result of hierarchical oppression. (Stevenson 2018: 2)

Most expressions of orality are seen as Afrocentric (Cooper 1995: 2) and particularly those in popular culture are primarily in Jamaican, despite the language's ascribed inferiority (Cooper 1995:11f). Thus, they are a target of stigmatisation and rejection by the elites (Cooper 1995: 2). However, while these days many Jamaican artists choose to predominantly use Jamaican in their art (Kingston Mann 2016: 274), this has not always been the case. Jamaica's complex colonial history created a society that was multifaceted – both ethnically and linguistically. This is mirrored in the country's music. (Farquharson 2017: 16) When the English first began their colonisation of Jamaica between 1655 and 1665, the island's inhabitants consisted of a British English, White majority. They predominantly spoke different dialects and sociolects of British English. Yet, due to the coloniser's participation in the transatlantic slave trade, by the end of the 17th century, the numbers of enslaved Africans living in Jamaica overtook those of British descent. While those of African origin were a heterogeneous group, most of them spoke Niger-Congo languages. During this period, first references to an Early Jamaican Creole used as a contact language between the two speech communities can be found. (Farquharson 2017: 8)

During this first period of colonization, the music made by the enslaved population of Jamaica featured both songs in African languages from different areas of the continent as well as in English (Farquharson 2017: 16). In fact, the very first Jamaican music on record was sung in African vernaculars. One prominent example for such music is a Kromanti song, which was identified as an old, Akan play song for children by Vincent Odamtten in the 1970s. Other songs played by enslaved Africans were also traced back to Angola, Papa, and Kromanti origins by researcher Sir Hans Sloane in the late 17th century. These songs have helped to understand the influence of the lived conditions under slavery on the (re-)construction of ethnic identities by enslaved Africans. (Farquharson 2017: 8) The findings of both songs in African languages as well as in English moreover can be interpreted as evidence that during this time, language use in music was not controlled by authorities (Farquharson 2017: 16). Contrarily, in the early and mid-colonial period in Jamaica, it was of no importance to the dominant English population to

teach Black people English. There was only little social interaction between the two speech communities in general and entertainment was enjoyed under racial segregation. (Farquharson 2017: 8)

Nevertheless, the linguistic landscape of Jamaica kept changing. By the mid-18th century, Jamaican had established itself as a lingua franca on the island. The English-lexified Creole was used amongst Black and White youth and with each successive generation, African vernaculars lost more of their importance. This was not only a natural development experienced by diasporic languages but was facilitated by the pejoration and slander of all things African. (Farquharson 2017: 9) Additionally, the number of Jamaican born Black as well as White people steadily increased. These children no longer grew up speaking English or an African language at home. Rather, they were raised with Jamaican as their first language. At this point the creolisation of the lingua franca started to take place and became a competition for the dominant English language. (Farquharson 2017: 14)

By the end of the century, Jamaican eventually took over the role as the main language used in folk music. Especially in plantation songs, African languages vanished completely. Only in the spiritual sphere they remained steadfast and can still be found in rituals of the Maroons (who gained their freedom from the crown in the first half of the 18th century), and post-Emancipation (from 1838 onwards) immigrant groups such as the Kumina from Kongo and the Etu and Nago who come from Yoruba speaking communities. (Farquharson 2017: 9) As briefly discussed in chapter II.a.iv, African languages play a vital role in sacred rituals in which a connection with the spirits is sought out. This is because the ancestral spirits are believed to only command the language of their ancestral lands. Hence, the Kumina people for instance fall back on Kikongo based praise. (Farquharson 2017: 14f)

Yet, in the religious music of other believes, African languages also persisted for a while. This changed when missionaries began their efforts to convert people of African descent, pre and post Emancipation, to Christianity. From then on, the language of the English missionaries became the medium used during worship and religious teachings. (Farquharson 2017: 14) Even then, the Black communities used linguistic strategies to make English hymns their own. By inserting single lines or morphemes in Jamaican or shifting to Jamaican phonological codes while adhering to English syntax, English church songs were localised. This substitution of English by Jamaican happened especially in celebration and chorus parts of praise songs. Only in the 1990s did the language usage in gospel music slowly change to predominantly Jamaican. (Farquharson 2017: 15)

Coming back to the late nineteenth century mento music started to emerge in and restricted to lower-class communities as the island's first Indigenous folk music. From the beginning it was performed in Jamaican, the dominant language of the community it was practised in. Only when mento was commercialised from the 1940s onward, English began to find its way into the music genre. As a result, some mento songs were entirely written in English while others in the 1950s and 60s were in acrolect Jamaican with pronunciations and morphosyntactic features strongly reflecting standard English. (Farquharson 2017: 9)

This influx of English into Jamaican music in early to mid-20th century was subtle and can be attributed to two different reasons. Firstly, language ideologies as discussed in chapter II.a.v favoured a replacement of Jamaican by standard English. This ideology was passed down from the top to the society through the education system and state-run institutions. Secondly, the entertainment sector, global culture, and international geopolitics have experienced the increasingly stark influence of the United States of America. The latter benefited mento music as American rhythm and blues paved the way for the establishment of sound systems in lower income neighbourhoods. This allowed mento music to extend to a broader audience. The lexicon of Jamaican artists was also affected and experienced a shift in the 1960s with the emergence of rocksteady and reggae. Both genres frequently feature American English expressions such as “gonna”, “wanna”, and “gotta” up until the early 1980s. (Farquharson 2017: 10)

Rocksteady, reggae as well as ska were genres that truly established themselves in the 1960s. From the beginning the songs of these genres laid a focus on covering local themes. Additionally, their titles reflected the domestic focus by appearing to be in Jamaican. Yet, the lyrics themselves were mostly in English. (Farquharson 2017: 10)

This, however, began to change in the reggae music produced in the 1970s. Then more and more artists began to sing their refrains and bridges in Jamaican, while the rest of the song either stayed in English or the artist reverted to codeswitching in order to integrate Jamaican into the English verses. The common language use patterns in reggae songs can be seen as a result of the anti-establishment stance reggae music took in general. The oppositional identity of the artists could not only be seen in their linguistic choices but was also incorporated in their lyrics, beats, and performances. Oddly enough, many non-Jamaican reggae artists such as Gentleman (from Germany) or Friendlyness (a Canadian reggae artist) tend to incorporate more Jamaican into their lyrics than Jamaican reggae artists like Tarrus Riley or Bob Marley. Moreover, due to the entanglement of reggae and the Rastafari movement, Dread Talk can frequently be found in roots reggae. (Farquharson 2017: 11)

Additionally, the Rastafari movement alongside Black Power initiative served as a breeding ground for ideological changes in the late 1960s to end of the 1970s, which influenced the political environment as well. This shift allowed the formation of dancehall music and culture through which Black lower-class Jamaicans have been able to express and explore their voice and identity publicly. To do so, the DJs have used Jamaican to underscore their linguistic identity ever since dancehall has emerged. Their language choice is a product of the anti-colonial stance of dancehall. Using the language of the Black majority in Jamaica they reject the idea that the language of the former colonisers is the only language to frame narratives. (Farquharson 2017: 11) This is important because Jamaican as a creolised mix of African continuities and English has historically been the language of the masses (Hope 2006: 121) but never enjoyed the dominance English has had. Nowadays, Jamaican artists purposefully choose the language linked to lower-class Jamaicans to oppose the neo-colonial values of the world. Choosing Jamaican, they force international spectators to learn the language if they wish to participate in and intimately understand dancehall and Jamaican culture. (Kingston Mann 2016: 274) By flipping the existing power structures, Jamaicans become the experts, while outsiders must work to achieve familiarity with the music genre and its language (Kingston Mann 2015: 479). Despite dancehall often being marginalised by dancehalls as its performance context, the artist are keepers of the orality of an urbanised folk ethos. As such their work can be analysed on a literary as well as (socio-)linguistic basis. (Cooper 1995: 136)

This possibility for academic work and the importance of dancehall within Jamaican society has already been confirmed by research on Jamaicans' language ideologies that suggests an influence of dancehall on the changing perception of Jamaican. The research assumes that with a rise in dancehall culture and its increasing popularity, positively affected the perception of dancehall. As a result, calls for the legitimization of Jamaican in schools were made. This implicates a shift from the sphere of popular culture to an institutional level with a potential for policy changes. (Beckford Wassink 1999: 57)

Dancehall additionally was found to be the reason that Jamaican found its way into church music in the 1990s as discussed above. The reason therefore were former dancehall artists like (Lt.) Stitchie and Papa San who switched from successfully producing dancehall music to making commercial gospel songs. (Farquharson 2017: 15) In his album *Victory* (released in 1999) Papa San for instance produced his songs mostly in Jamaican with a few spoken word phrases in English such as intros and outros. He also made use of standard English when directly quoting bible verses. This language use model was then adopted by other gospel artists (e.g.

Ryan Mark, Prodigal Son, Goddy, ...) and continued into the 21st century with albums like *God & I* (2003; Papa San), *Life Story* (2007; Stitchie), and *Serious Message* (2010; Stitchie).

In conclusion, Jamaica's music history is a site and mirror of linguistic and social change. While songs were previously dominated by African languages, the establishment of a Jamaican identity amongst island-born Black and White people introduced Jamaican as a new linguistic tool for folk music. However, after establishing Jamaican as the dominant language in the entertainment sector, colonial values and the growing influence of the USA pushed Jamaican out at the benefit of English. Only in the 1960s and 70s with the emergence of dancehall, Jamaican was brought back into the spotlight. From there it spread to other popular music genres such as rocksteady, reggae, and ska as well as more slowly and later gospel music. Nevertheless, it is notable that while other genres of Jamaican music (e.g. mento, reggae...) had undergone linguistic changes from Jamaican to English and the other way around, dancehall from the very beginning challenged existing language power structures by strongly relying on the use of Jamaican both locally and internationally.

III. Methodology

In this chapter I will detail the methodological approaches I have taken in my research as well as explore my research question. To do so, I have sectioned the chapter into five subchapters. In the first one, I will set the methodological framework by introducing phenomenon-based, qualitative research and grounded theory as my method of choice. The second subchapter deals with my research design, including my interest and approach to the topic as, my research question and objectives, and a brief overview over the structure and content of the thesis. The next subchapter then goes into detail regarding the collection of my data. This includes but is not limited to the data gathered through interviews. The following and fourth subchapter then outlines the process of analysis of the gathered data and connecting this step back to the previously introduced grounded theory. Lastly, the subchapter five III.e. Reflections was added to give myself space to reflect on my own thought process as well as my own position and identity within and outside of this research.

a. Methodological Framework

A lot of research in disciplines such as sociology or history is phenomenon-based (Dannecker/Englert 2014: 9). This type of research primarily concentrates on the providing accurate and insightful information about a real-world phenomenon (Doh 2017: 14).

Thereby, a phenomenon is understood as *“a particular (kind of) fact, occurrence, or change as perceived through the senses or known intellectually; especially, a fact or occurrence the cause or explanation of which is in question.”* (Compact Oxford English Dictionary of Current English cited in Krogh et al. 2012: 280) Even broader in scope, according to Auguste Comte (1855), the term phenomenon encompasses all potential subjects of observation and facts as long as science should be able to elucidate.

Furthermore, the level of generality and complexity of observed phenomena varies based on the specific discipline. This encompasses a spectrum of complexity. It can range from straightforward physical observations with well-founded mathematical explanations (e.g. the impact of gravity on falling objects) to intricate, dynamic social mechanisms that are not universally applicable. The complexity of social mechanisms stems from their dependency on individual as well as organisational behaviour. This means, social phenomena are influenced not only by natural causes but also institutional settings, culture, personal intentions and believes, society, and the interactions and interdependencies within them. Due to these

influences of individual factors on each other and on the phenomenon, it is crucial to avoid adopting a reductionist perspective when examining it. (Krogh et al. 2012: 280) Another thing to avoid in phenomenon-based research is to heavily rely on existing theory. When doing so it is probable that the research will contribute more to the refinement of the established theory rather than advancing the comprehension of the phenomenon in question. (Krogh et al. 2012: 281)

Yet, even if adhering to this advice, phenomena bear the potential to be interpreted with various conflicting outcomes because in addition to being novel they are often controversial occurrences within their associated fields. (Krogh et al. 2012: 280) Nevertheless, phenomenon-based research is not new but rather is seen as an important pillar of qualitative research in academic disciplines like history, sociology, and ethnology (Dannecker/Englert 2014: 9) because social sciences are a field rich in newly arising phenomena (Krogh et al. 2012: 279). Defining qualitative research proves challenging, given its extensive use across various disciplines, and the diverse range of concepts, methods, perspectives, and ideas it encompasses. Participant observation, grounded theory, or qualitative content analysis are instances of such qualitative approaches. (Dannecker/Englert 2014: 7) These approaches in many ways are the contradiction of quantitative research, which often focuses on proving and testing existing hypotheses and theories (Dannecker/Englert 2014: 10; Krogh et al. 2012: 279). This can be problematic because phenomena that are not yet within the frame of an existing theory as well as important details can easily be overlooked. (Krogh et al. 2012: 278)

On the other hand, qualitative approaches are used to reach the primary objective of qualitative research, which is to comprehend, rather than establish the cause-and-effect relationships within social, political, societal, or gender phenomena or context-dependent structures (Dannecker/Englert 2014: 9). This involves an effort "[...] to capture, describe, and document [...] a phenomenon so that appropriate theorising and the development of research designs can proceed." (Krogh et al. 2012: 278) Hence, at the core of qualitative research are the interpretation of phenomena and the subsequent formation of appropriate hypotheses (Dannecker/Englert 2014: 10). Thereby, finishing with an official and novel theory is often not the outcome of phenomenon-based research. Rather, it is the groundwork to gather information to establish them in future research (Krogh et al. 2012: 281).

Doing qualitative work, researchers engage in an ongoing dialogue with their data, adapting the trajectory of their research based on the findings to develop new theories and enhance understanding. Consequently, a degree of flexibility in planning, topic selection, and timeframe is crucial. This flexibility does not imply a lack of direction but rather a willingness to adjust

research plans in response to emerging insights. (Dannecker/Englert 2014: 10) Krogh et al. (2012: 278) further emphasise that particularly in phenomenon-based research, broad and open-ended research questions are vital due to the absence of existing theories.

When deciding on an appropriate research method, Doh (cited in Buckley et al. 2017: 1053) calls for a “phenomenon first” approach. This means the focus is first and foremost on the phenomenon. The method is then chosen to best fit the phenomenon. This is consistent with Dannecker and Englert’s (2014: 11) position on method choice in qualitative research. They believe that a method should be chosen based on the researcher’s interest as well as the phenomenon they investigate. Often, however, a phenomenon consists of various facets and hence a singular, superior method for it does not exist (Krogh et al. 2012: 279). Rather, a multiple-method approach may be indicated in some cases (Dannecker/Englert 2014: 11) and some may even benefit from a transdisciplinary, multi-theory and -perspective approach (Buckley et al. (2017: 1052). In this spirit, although quantitative work has its pitfalls as discussed above, it can be beneficial as part of a systematic approach to a phenomenon (Krogh et al. 2012: 278).

The main method I have chosen for this thesis is grounded theory which was developed in the 1960s by Glaser and Strauss, two sociologists (O’Reilly et al. 2012: 248). Since then, the method has consistently garnered recognition within academics and especially the field of social studies (see Schultz 2014). In its beginnings Glaser and Strauss sought to challenge the growing trend of relying on extensive theoretical frameworks in sociology. Instead, they advocated for researchers to engage directly with the field, focusing on work that is relevant to real individuals and everyday situations (O’Reilly et al. 2012: 248).

Much like qualitative research, understanding and defining grounded theory is not an easy task. Mainly because its methodological execution and the understanding of the concept have differed greatly depending on the researcher. (O’Reilly et al. 2012: 249) Schultz (2014: 76) for instance views grounded theory as an umbrella term that allows researchers to adapt various variations, focal points, and directions from which they look at and think about data.

Expanding on this comprehensive definition, Schultz (2014: 76) explains that a phenomenon¹³ is usually the directing factor of grounded theory and the associated research questions. Hence, grounded theory is well suited for phenomenon-based, qualitative research, especially because it is context-, process-, and intention-oriented (O’Reilly et al. 2012: 249).

¹³ Phenomena sought out by researchers, especially within a culturally foreign setting, are often a result of the fascination with the unknown or unfamiliar (Schultz 2014: 76).

Through these orientations, a phenomenon is described in detail (O'Reilly et al. 2012: 248). The idea of emphasizing the process is also encapsulated in the concept that only the ongoing research process can lead to a comprehensive combination of theories, research questions, and discussions (Schultz 2014: 77).

As part of qualitative research, grounded theory too has the objective to use data to develop social theories (O'Reilly et al. 2012: 248). To do so, new data is gathered and then analysed until the field's theory is saturated. This means that additional data input does no longer lead to significant, new findings but rather affirms the theories constructed previously. (Krogh et al. 2012: 287)

The main advantage of grounded theory is the adaptability and non-linearity of its instruments for theory construction. The following five principles demonstrated this: “(a) *the constant comparative method*, (b) *theoretical coding*, (c) *theoretical sampling*, (d) *theoretical saturation*, and (e) *theoretical sensitivity*” (O'Reilly et al. 2012: 249). Important for my thesis are especially (a) and (b). Thus, they are explained in more detail. The comparative method consists of the simultaneous coding and analysis of data under constant comparison of new and earlier data. Thereby, theoretical categories are constantly adjusted to bring out theoretical corroboration. (O'Reilly et al. 2012: 249) Theoretical coding on the other hand helps to develop a systematic understanding of the data by splitting up and categorizing similar examples from the data into as many subcategories as possible until their consistencies can be identified (O'Reilly et al. 2012: 251).

On the flipside, grounded theory is extremely data focused. Therefore, the findings of conducted research are limited to issues explicitly mentioned in the analysed data. Hence, if grounded theory is strictly applied, underlying but not addressed issues are ignored. Often these matters are sources of inequality such as (dis)ability, class, gender, or race. (Offenberger 2019: 5) This tendency for exclusion was acknowledged by Clarke who then expanded the method into what is referred to as "situation analysis." This approach is centred on investigating social (in)equality and is more adept at examining and detecting power disparities. By simply adding an additional category or code referred to as “positions not taken in the data” to the analysis done based on grounded theory, this extension holds space for implicit actors and unmentioned topics such as taboos. Not presuming the absence of inequalities unless explicitly stated, helps to overcome power imbalances, which is significant because the authority to share one's narrative and have their voice be heard is unevenly distributed in society. This should not be overlooked by researchers engaging in the analysis process. (Offenberger 2019: 8ff)

In my own research data issues of race, class, and economic marginalization too might not be mentioned by interview partners. However, they should be assumed based on the topics discussed. As I have repeatedly explored in the chapters II.a. and II.b., the ideologies surrounding languages and popular culture are both a result of and influenced by social (in)equalities. Hence, I will work with the extended grounded theory approach as suggested by Clarke (see Offenberger 2019).

b. Research Approach and Question

After establishing the framework my research falls under in the previous subchapter, I will now explore my own approach and interest in the topic. Moreover, I will discuss the guiding research question as well as supporting questions.

Since my research is largely phenomenon-based, my initial approach to the topic of language usage in dancehall by non-Jamaican artists too stems from a personal observation of the phenomenon. Being an avid listener of dancehall music since my early teens, I had submerged myself into the Viennese dancehall scene once I moved to Vienna for university. From dancehall dance classes and contests, to clubbing events and live performances of artists, I attended what I could. Soon I realised that Jamaican was a common language not only on the dancehall tracks the DJs played in clubs but also for live verbal introductions and toasts of both White and Black DJs working in the clubs. Some of the attending dancehall fans too included Jamaican in their interactions with each other, and Gambian artists performing live both spoke and sang to the audience in a mixture of languages – including Jamaican. Over time – and having done some research into Creole languages, language ideologies towards Jamaican, and the history of dancehall during my bachelor's degree – I found their language usage increasingly interesting. Especially, that non-Jamaican participants use a language within the Viennese dancehall scene which they neither grow up speaking as an L1 nor are they instructed in Jamaican in institutions of formal education. Moreover, Jamaican is not widely spoken in both Austria and the Gambia. Yet, Jamaican seemed to be of importance for the dancehall community and Gambian dancehall artists in particular.

Hence, I decided to use my thesis to find out more about the following research question:

- How and why is Jamaican used by Gambian dancehall artists in Austria?

Besides this main question I further wondered about the following supporting questions whose answers I believe could help in understanding the main issue:

- What does the artists' linguistic background (e.g. spoken languages, linguistic upbringing, language ideologies, ...) look like?
- How is the connection of Jamaican and dancehall perceived, if at all, by non-Jamaican artists?
- What role does dancehall play in both Gambia as well as Austria?

My research to answer these questions can be roughly split into two parts.

The first one is exclusively based on existing literature. I began my research by exploring the role and ideology behind Jamaican within its original setting, Jamaica. I took the same approach towards dancehall and established its socio-historical context from its beginnings to its globalization. Lastly, I connected language usage and music by exploring the historical development of language usage in Jamaican music from the beginning of the island's British colonization in the 1650s to the 21st century. I believe this first part is crucial because of the marginalization both Jamaican (speakers) as well as dancehall along with its participants have faced. Regardless thereof, both have spread globally and can be observed in dancehall communities around the world (see Hope 2006; Stanley Niaah 2010).

In the second part of my thesis, I on one hand relied on existing data and literature when exploring dancehall within the Gambian context and for an introduction to the Gambian diaspora in Austria. On the other hand, I gathered my own primary data to not only support the topics of part II that I have just mentioned but also to answer my research question in chapter VII. Language Usage of Gambian Dancehall.

The exact course of action I have taken in collecting and analysing the data will be explained in the following two subchapters.

c. Data Collection

The data collection process for my primary data happened between December 2020 and July 2021, with the exception of an expert interview with Mag. Dr. Gabriele Slezak on methodology and language repertoires done in preparation for this research project¹⁴.

During this time, two different data sets were recorded. The first one comprises of a set of four interviews lasting between 30 and 45 minutes each. Two of them were in person interviews, while the other two were done online due to geographic distance in one case and Covid19

¹⁴ The interview was conducted on December 16, 2019, as part of a methodology seminar at the Institute for African Studies at the university. It was an in person, guided interview and lasted approximately 23 minutes. The interviewee was informed about the use of the collected interview material and their rights regarding it before given their written consent. The interview will be referenced as (Slezak 2019).

restrictions in the other. An overview over my interview partners and their details can be found in the table below.

I#	Interviewee	Role	Mode	Date
I1	TopGun aka Anker	Artist	Offline; my home	05/06/2021
I2	T-Smallz	Artist	Offline; his home	17/12/2020
I3	Darka	Artist	Online via Skype	05/02/2021
I4	DJ Taff	DJ, club owner, community spokesperson	Online via Zoom	18/04/2021

Table 2: List of interview partners (author)

All four interview partners were contacted through informal messages on social media or through private messages since I had known them or their family personally prior to starting my research. After agreeing to the interview, they were given a declaration of consent (see Appendix 1) to sign, either in person or through online means depending on the interview. Through the declaration, the interview partners agreed to be recorded for the purpose and length of the interviews, the transcription of the recordings, and the use of the gathered data for academic purposes. The declaration further allowed the interview partners to decide whether their data should be published anonymously or alternatively under a chosen name. All four consent forms were signed and returned, and the anonymization was declined with the wish to use their artist names. The artist names will therefore be used to reference the respective interviews in the short citations of this text.

At the beginning of each interview process, I reexplained the purpose of the interview and the way the data would be handled. Permission for the recording of the conversation was obtained again before starting the process.

The interviews were then recorded either using voice recording on my cell phone during in person interviews or via recording tools integrated into the respective online tools used for the online interviews.

The conversations themselves were semi-guided interviews. Such interviews rely on conversational resources but are based on guiding topics and a structured protocol (Mizock et al. 2011: 3). Hence, I used interview guidelines during the interview process but maintained an openness to change both the structure and wording of the questions depending on the interview process. This is possible because the meaning of the question is more important than its expression. Semi-structured interviews further allow to ask additional questions to foster understanding. I chose to do semi-structured interviews because they are a methodology that is

a good fit for research that involves race-related issues or oppression, and it is more interactive and engaging than strict, structured interviews. This engagement, the opportunity to add more questions, and to deviate from the protocol creates room for trust and a relationship to build between the researcher and the interview partner. (Mizock et al. 2011: 3)

The four interviews were guided by two different pre-established interview guidelines. One was designed for the three artists with a focus on their own music and language choices, while the other was for DJ Taff and more community-oriented and focused on the importance of dancehall for the Gambian community in Austria and the Gambia itself.

After the interviews were completed, I transcribed them with the help of a transcription software called *Transkriptor* (see transkriptor.com n. d.). However, due to the interview partners' and my own accent, as well as the dancehall specific register, the software was relatively error prone. Hence, after a first automated transcription I proceeded to go through the transcripts manually to correct transcription mistakes and correct them. The transcription was done with a content rather than a discourse focus. Thus, pauses were only noted if extensively long and I abstained from transcribing fillers such as "ahm".

The second set of data consists of 14 surveys. They were done online in July 2021 using the university's tool *SoSci Survey*. The survey covered ten questions about the persons dancehall consumption, nine demographic questions, and four on their language repertoire. The link to the survey was sent out to members of the target audience, mainly known members of the Gambian community that were active in the dancehall scene, who were asked to pass them on to others. The link remained open for three months and despite an influx of initial clicks, only 14 surveys were filled out completely and hence can be used for my analysis. However, during data analysis I found that one of these 14 surveys was incomplete, and another indicated that they did not listen to dancehall. Therefore, I excluded these two data sets and ended up with twelve useable surveys.

The questions in the survey are a mixture of open questions, closed questions, and scaling questions. For all but one mandatory question (Do you listen to dancehall?) participants had the choice not to answer and continue with the next one. Moreover, all data from the survey is anonymous and due to the small number in respondents will be used as supporting data since a statistically significant participation was not reached.

The details of the analysis of the collected data will be discussed in the following subchapter and the results will be integrated in chapter VI.b..

d. Data Analysis

My focus during the analysis of the data has been on the first data set, the transcripts of the four interviews. After the transcription of the audio data, I used grounded theory, as introduced in the beginning of this chapter, to identify issues meaningful for my thesis and group them into codes.

To accomplish this, I applied a line-by-line approach to meticulously review the transcripts, pinpointing noteworthy topics. Subsequently, I employed a color-coded system to easily identify and categorise similar themes across the four interviews. Whenever a new theme emerged, I introduced a new colour and category. The next step involved compiling the coded content from different interviews into a single document. Additional subcategories were set up during the comparison of interviews. Moreover, consistencies in the data came to light. To refine and organise the subcategories into the final codes, I repeatedly cycled through the established subcategories. The quotes that aligned with more than one category were included under all relevant categories. The addition of the code “Positions not taken in the data” as suggested by Clarke (see Offenberger 2019), left room to include issues existing in the context of dancehall and Jamaican that were not mentioned by the interview partners.

These codes were then used to structure my findings chapter on the language usage of Gambian dancehall artists as well as to detect interview parts in support of existing literature. Contrarily, the codes were also used to search for additional literature to discuss my findings with.

The data gained from the online survey was downloaded into an excel file and then manually combed through to extract relevant data. After excluding non-relevant datasets (such as unfinished questionnaires and those who indicated that they do not listen to dancehall), some variables were restructured (e.g. binary variables were put into 0/1 formats, ordinal variables were put into one column). In the end, the dataset consisted of 12 samples with the following variables: ID, date of questionnaire, demographic variables (sex, age, country of origin, current residence, duration of stay in Austria, level of education, languages spoken), and dancehall-specific variables (age of introduction to the genre, mode of introduction, importance of dancehall, personal significance, the frequency of dancehall being consumed in different settings, where it is listened to, and with whom, which Gambian dancehall artists they are familiar with and listen to, and an open question to add any other dancehall specific notes for me).

The data set was then imported into the statistical software Bluesky in order to be analysed and described. The analysis then showed that out of the 12 participants only one was female. In

regard to age, the minimum age was 25 while the maximum age was 40 leading to the following distribution.

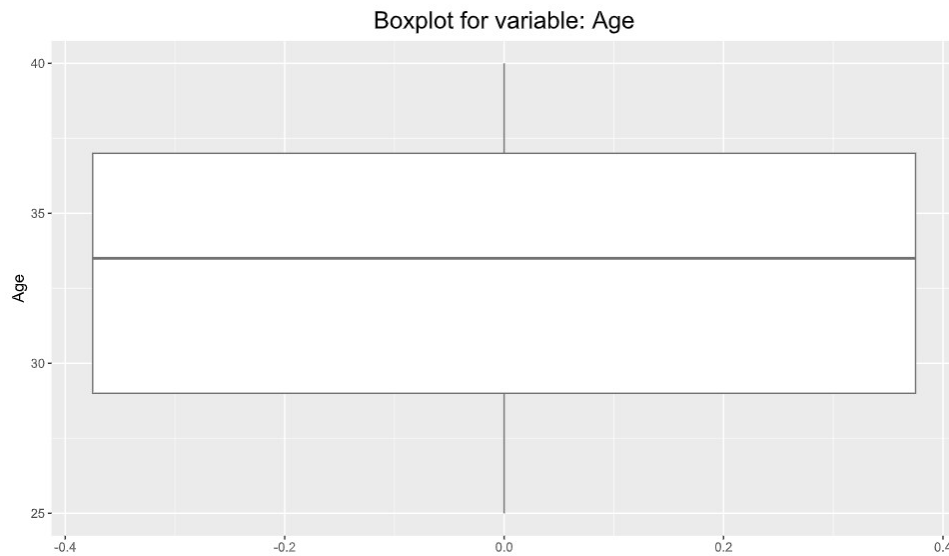


Fig. 1: Age Distribution (author)

Ten participants were Gambian, one did not indicate a country of origin, and one participant was from Malawi. The majority of them (seven out of twelve) now reside in Vienna, whereas the others have their home in Salzburg, Linz and Lenzing, and two did not indicate their current hometown. In regard to the participants' duration of stay in Austria the analysis showed the following distribution:

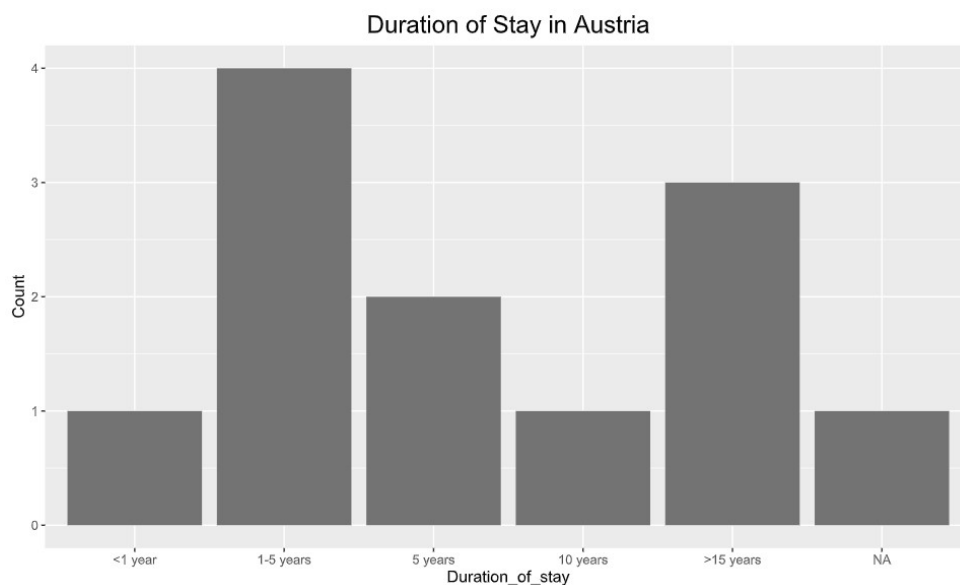


Fig. 2: Duration of Stay Distribution (author)

The participants were very diverse in their educational and employment background. Their linguistic background too varied with the number of spoken languages varying between one and seven, with a mean of four languages spoken per person. Levels of proficiency thereby

ranged from hardly speaking it over decent and good to fluently. The table (Table 3) below shows the spoken languages.

	German	English	Mandinka	Wolof	Soninke	Jola	Fulfulde	Aku	Serer	Other	French
No	3	2	2	4	11	11	7	10	12	9	10
Yes	9	10	0	8	1	1	5	2		3	2

Table 3: Spoken Languages (author)

Lastly, social media and websites were used to fill in data gaps regarding the artists and their work. The artists' YouTube pages were especially important to get an understanding of their previously released albums and singles.

While this section has focused on the methodological approach employed in my research, the following subchapter will provide an additional perspective on my own thought and work process, difficulties, and questions that arose as well as my own position and identity within and outside of this research.

e. Reflections

Academic research is often restricting and rigid regarding the structure and the content that is expected within academic pieces. Some information, especially regarding the author, their thoughts and struggles, and the research process itself do not seem to fit the inherent structure of a thesis. Hence, I added this subchapter to my methodology chapter in order to create space to discuss who I am in the context of this thesis, the decisions I made, and the difficulties I have encountered. These difficulties influenced the direction of my research and included issues such as reaching the right target audience of my online survey, working under Covid restrictions, dealing with gender imbalances, and finding the accurate terminology.

Discussing those matters and reflecting on myself allows me and my work to be more transparent and traceable. In fact, qualitative research draws its strength from empirical reflection as an integral part of research because it includes the researcher in the research process and therefore makes them visible by situating them within their field, context, and methodological approach (Burawoy 2009; Dannecker/Englert 2014: 12; Offenberger 2019: 1). It moreover brings understanding on how the complex role of the researcher and their identity markers (e.g. race, ethnicity...) and how those variables interact with those of the research participants and collected data. (Mizock et al. 2011: 3). I believe who I am – both within and

outside of the academic field I work in – has influenced how I interpret and choose my sources, whether I include or exclude them. Hence, truly impartial research is unattainable. (see Dannecker/Englert 2014; Lokot 2022; Offenberger 2019) Contrarily, being subjective has the potential to raise the quality of research and enhance the understanding of complex underlying issues (Lokot 2022: 4).

To begin my reflection, I would like to dive into the matter of race, gender, and identity. Race, for example, is an important and powerful factor in multicultural research (Mizock et al. 2011: 13). Thereby, multicultural or transcultural research refers to fields that cross political, cultural, gender, or racial boundaries. I find it important to recognise the social, ethnic, and academic challenges researchers experience in these, often unfamiliar, contexts. These contexts can also be referred to as “fremdkulturell”¹⁵ (Dannecker/Englert 2014: 9). This entails that the researcher sees them as “foreign” because the context lies outside of the researcher’s relevance system. Thus, understanding the unknown involves additional effort. (Dannecker/Englert 2014: 9) Though, the idea of studying “the foreign” must be seen as critical. In qualitative research, this is often criticised because it can be a (re-)production of colonial power and knowledge structures based on the exotisation of “the Other”. Operating with care in transcultural research is particularly important because academia has been affected by a century long history of gate keeping and monopolizing knowledge production in the West¹⁶. (Dannecker/Englert 2014: 12) Moreover, academia has been a context of hierarchies rooted in racial, gender, and colonial power imbalances. Regarding race, this means that race and ethnicity all too often are and have been analysed under the “White gaze”. Moreover, the privileges of White researchers obtained through their Whiteness are often disregarded. (Lokot 2022: 3)

Hence, I have tried to be conscious of my own Whiteness and subjectivity in my own research. Additionally, it is important to me to know who’s voices I reproduce and to use respectful terms when I refer to people and phenomena unfamiliar to myself.

Race, however, is not the only issue affecting and creating power structures and hierarchies. Researchers with a feminist standpoint have long been pushing academia to pay more attention to the positionalities of researchers. “Positionality” thereby not only includes existing power structures but also the identity, affiliations, and positions of researchers within them. Positions are constructed and can cross various intersecting and opposing discourses and practices.

¹⁵ = culturally foreign

¹⁶ The West refers to countries in Western Europe and North America, which are economically and historically dominant and therefore on the stronger end of the (neo-)colonial power imbalance.

Moreover, they are not only chosen and worked out by the researcher themselves but can also be ascribed to them by others or be enforced. (Lokot 2022: 2)

Nevertheless, the multiple identities taken up by or given to researchers influence their research. Not only does identity change how data is analysed by the researcher themselves, but research participants are also affected because identities often have visible traits that can be interpreted by them. Race for instance is often determined by skin colour and is linked to economic and social assumptions of the person. As a result, perceived identities can lead participants to either share or hide information from the researcher. (Lokot 2022: 2) This choice by the participant partially reallocates the power from the researcher to them and thus makes the power structure within fieldwork fluid (Lokot 2022: 4). Similar identities can lead to a better relationship. Mizock et al. (2011: 3) for instance mention that matching race and ethnicity between researcher and participant are important variables for comfort creation and openness during interviews. However, the multiple layers can mean that even if researcher and participant identities overlap in for example race, other aspects such as gender or social class can still change whether a researcher is welcomed as an insider or kept apart as an outsider. (Lokot 2022: 2) Regardless of identity markers, the researcher's cultural sensitivity has a positive impact on researcher-participant relationships (Mizock et al. 2011: 3).

My own research mirrors the complex intersectionality of identities, and the privileges connected to them. As a White Austrian woman my identity – both ascribed and chosen – is at first glance quite a contrast to my research participants. All four interview partners as well as the participants in my online survey were Black and, with the exception of one online survey participant, men who were not born in Austria. The interview partners were all Gambian and ten plus years older than me. In many ways these differences should have made it difficult for me to enter the field and I believe in case of the online surveys it did. However, my interview partners and I have had one thing in common, a shared passion and hence a point of connection – dancehall and reggae music. All of us in one way or another have been involved in the Austrian reggae-dancehall scene, which generates a sense of community amongst its members. In those community spaces I had crossed paths with most of my interview partners except for T-Smallz, who I have met through his wife, also active in the community. Through this shared identity and prior interactions, trust had been established and allowed me to access the information I needed for my research. I moreover believe that my Whiteness, age, and gender, despite being seemingly less important than my dancehall affiliation, did influence my stance. Being younger and female naturally put me in an inferior position in the patriarchal hierarchies we live in and therefore made me less of a “threat”. However, Whiteness can often overshadow

those points of inferiority and coupled with the affiliation to an institution of formal education, put me into an assumed position of expertise.

Besides my relationship with the interview partners, race additionally affected the interview process. Research (see Mizock et al. 2011: 12f) has found that the race of both the participants and the researchers influences the way understanding is created during qualitative interviews and hence also the originating information. This should be kept in mind during interviews (Mizock et al. 2011: 13) since it can explain why researchers deviate from their interview guidelines. Besides simply needing more details to answer complex questions and to strengthen relationships with interview partners, momentarily abandoning the guidelines is used to allow additional room for narrations concerning oppression and resistance. (Mizock et al. 2011: 2)

This can be done in different ways. Firstly, the researcher can speak openly about their motivations for doing their research and the biases they carry with them. This allows their interview partners to get a good understanding of the researcher's position within the discourse and lets them make a more informed decision on as how trustworthy they see the researcher. (Mizock et al. 2011: 2) Hence, before every interview I explained to my interview partner what my research is about and how I became interested in the topic.

Secondly, researchers can openly acknowledge existing social structures as well as hierarchies within them. This also includes but is not limited to recognizing the social identities of the interviewer and interviewee, which are marked by amongst other factors gender, race, and class. (Mizock et al. 2011: 3) Though, Mizock et al. (2011: 3) also warn researchers that self-disclosure and involvement can have the opposite effect and reinforce power imbalances.

Thirdly, researchers can give examples of experiences of oppression they have made or witnessed with an emphasis on parallels between their own and the participant's struggles and offer terms to refer to the experiences an interview partner is describing (Mizock et al. 2011: 2). During my interviews I for instance referenced my own experiences with language discrimination in order to encourage my interview partner to open up about their own language ideologies. In the following example I had asked about the languages TopGun aka Anker spoke growing up and how he experienced moving to Austria, where an entirely different language is spoken. In his answer he grouped Gambia's languages into local languages and English as an official language. Because I wanted to know more about how he felt about English I carried the conversation on as follows:

Me: "Ok so with English is it a bit like this high German that we have here in Austria? Because when I was growing up, I spoke my dialect right?"

TopGun: "Yea that's right."

Me: “and then when we got to school, they started pushing us that we have to speak proper German and if we don’t our grades were going down.”

This encouraged the participant to go back to English and share more details about the role of English in the Gambia.

White researchers further tend to use off-guideline comments to overtly validate or support accounts of racism from Black interview partners. This happened more often with White than Black researchers. (Mizock et al. 2011: 11) One reason for the researchers’ actions can be found in their reassurance of Black interviewees that they can express their mistrust towards White people openly despite the interviewer’s race (Mizock et al. 2011: 6).

White researchers also showed the tendency to take the initiative to create awareness among White interview partners if they showed a colourblind attitude (Mizock et al. 2011: 11). Similarly, Black researchers with White participants lay a focus on cultural identity, which too discourages the passive colour-blindness and White normative approach to culture (Mizock et al. 2011: 9).

While race did influence how I conducted my interviews as demonstrated in the examples above, the sense of community amongst my interview partners and I still allowed me access and narrowed the role of race. When it came to the online survey on the other hand, I felt like I lost the benefit of a sensed shared community and with that the trust of participants. Out of over 200 clicks to open the survey, only 14 filled out the entire survey. A few of these 14 were friends of mine that I asked directly and hence I benefited from the closeness. Other participants may have felt disconnected from me as a person. Perhaps they were even intimidated by the format and relative anonymity of the survey. Most likely, an offline format would have been a better solution for the intended target population. However, back in 2020/2021 Covid restrictions made offline options slightly more difficult. Events that were usually held at which people would have been accessible for questioning were not taking place as regularly or had entry restrictions. Hence, an online survey made sense at the time. Though if I had to do it again, I would do the questionnaires in person. This would be in line with some of the approaches used in African studies. The discipline often relies on qualitative, engaging¹⁷, and collaborative means in order to empower research participants (see also Mizock et al. 2011: 2).

Besides primary data, I believe my multiple identities further affected my secondary data. Both the choice and the analysis of data I used in my thesis are a result of my identity as discussed by Lokot (2022: 2). For instance, due to my academic background in African studies and the

¹⁷ „Engaging“ is a concept referring to the relationship between a researcher and the researched. This includes the closeness the research process creates between them as well as the process of making this closeness visible in the created work as an integral part thereof. (Offenberger 2019: 2)

values instilled in me through my studies, I frequently find myself opting for the work of African scholars, even if it is not published in journals preferred by Western academia. This is because I choose to amplify the voices of those embedded in the communities and structures I study. In my case this meant centring Caribbean academics such as Bryan (2004), Cooper (1995; 2004), Dawes (2018), Farquharson (2018) and Hope (2006). I additionally try to stay mindful of the privilege White researchers have in accessing prestigious journals for publication. As a White woman associated with a globally recognised university, I recognise the power I hold through the university's library. It gives me access to free research materials. I view the unequal access to publication opportunities as a reflection of as academia's inherent gender-, race-, and colonialism-based power dynamics. These dynamics influence who holds power within academics and who does not. (Lokot 2022: 3)

Power dynamics also influence the terminology used for languages. As discussed in chapter II, Jamaican is referred to in several ways. I eventually settled on Jamaican as supported by scholars such as Bryan (2004: 643), however I did struggle with the decision for quite some time. While some options such as “broken English” or “dialect” were never options at all, other terms like “Jamaican Creole”, “Patwa”, or “Jamaican Patois” were valid options. Especially the latter two are often used by Jamaicans themselves. “Jamaican Creole” on the other hand is a common reference to the language in academic writings. Nevertheless, I agree with Bryan (2004: 643) that Jamaican should be referred to as such in order to strengthen its perception as an independent, fully functioning language just like English or French. Despite the conscious decision to use “Jamaican”, I do from time to time find myself struggling with the duality of the term. Since it refers both to the language of Jamaica as well as things or people stemming from Jamaica, I find myself worrying whether or not the terminology confuses readers. However, I do recognise that these worries are a reflection of my inner bias because not once did I worry about the same issue when it relates to English, French, or German – all terms that too have a dual meaning. Therefore, I decided to stick with Jamaican to refer to the language of the Jamaican majority.

Part II. EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

While the first part of this thesis deals with prior research into Creole languages and Jamaican in particular, research on dancehall, and the language used across different Jamaican music genres over time, Part II explores dancehall in the context of the Gambia and the Gambian diaspora in Austria. It incorporates the primary data obtained from my interviews with the Gambian community leader and artists in order to explore how and why Gambian artists use Jamaican in their music.

The part is split into four subchapters starting with the general role of dancehall in the Gambia. I then continue by exploring the Austrian dancehall scene before focusing on the Gambian diaspora in Austria and the importance of dancehall within it. Thereafter, I introduce the artists I interviewed and explore their language usage, repertoires, and ideologies in connection with the literature introduced in Part I.

The reason why I have added a chapter on dancehall in the Gambia despite the research focus laying on the diaspora in Austria is that all interviewed partners grew up in the Gambia during their formative years. Moreover, in the interviews with the artists as well as DJ Taff as a community leader, they repeatedly spoke about being influenced by the music they consumed, while still living in their country of origin, where I argue they were socialised. Socialization is described by scholars (Ochse/Schieffelin 2012: 3) as “*the transmission of localized culture*” from one generation to the next. Thereby, the child takes up the role as the novice and originally had been understood as the passive absorber of culture, while the older person was seen as the intentional expert. However, this unidirectional and deterministic approach has been criticised. This comes as a result of the understanding that children not only instinctively conform to cultural norms found in speech, mannerism, and think patterns, but also, in the light of technological advancements, children often become the experts themselves. (Ochse/Schieffelin 2012: 4) Thus, they gain agency despite the assumed social inequalities between the generations (Ochse/Schieffelin 2012: 6). These inequalities often are a product of the assumption that in the case of language socialization, novices only become adept members of their respective community once they are proficient communicators (Ochse/Schieffelin 2012: 7). In this sense, language socialization can be seen as a uniquely local and situated phenomenon. However, language socialization does not only enable social engagement within speech communities but because of globalization also beyond them. Languages deliver sociocultural cues through linguistic feature. From the first day of life onwards, speakers must learn to navigate these clues

through ever changing contexts and hence “*not only become speakers of languages; they also become speakers of cultures.*” (Ochse/Schieffelin 2012: 8)

Therefore, to understand the context of the artists’ culture and language socialization, I find it necessary to explore the role of dancehall in Gambia before looking at the Gambian diaspora in Austria.

IV. Dancehall in The Gambia

To better understand the artists’ language use as laid out in detail above, I begin this part by looking into the role of dancehall in the Gambia. While many chapters and subchapters that do deal with dancehall have their focus laid on recordings, music, and artists (Stanley Niaah 2010: 3), this chapter also holds space for the wider practice of dancehall, culture, and its meaning for the community. Despite my focus on dancehall, in the context of the Gambia and in the understanding of the interviewees, reggae and dancehall cultures are interwoven and therefore I will speak on both genres but differentiate wherever possible. Since reggae seems to be of great importance to my interview partners and their upbringing, and it has not been discussed at length in previous chapters, I will begin this subchapter by briefly outlining the socio-historic landmarks of reggae formation.

In the eyes of scholars (Dawes 2018: 37; Ebere/Charles-Ebere 2018: 135) reggae evolved as a tool of expression used by economically and politically deprived, mostly Black, working-class Jamaicans in the 1920s and 30s. Additionally, reggae is often associated with Rastafarianism, an Afro-Caribbean religion and culture (Ebere/Charles-Ebere 2018: 136). Despite the economic success of reggae artists, the music genre’s historical association with the lower class, has been carried into the present (Dawes 2018: 37). This economic success has been a result of the internationalization reggae experienced from the 1970s onwards, when it spread to the rest of the world as an important part of popular culture. During this period, reggae was also brought to West African countries. There, the music, Rastafarian, and the socio-political messages of its lyrics appealed to the people. Besides music as the driving factor for its internationalization, reggae culture brought with it the use and trade of cannabis in secular and ritual settings, fashion trends associated with Rastafarians, and missionaries of (Anglo-) Jamaican background. Thereby, these practises of Rastafarianism in West Africa strongly mirror those in Jamaica in form and function. (Ebere/Charles-Ebere 2018: 136)

One example for a West African artist, who picked up reggae, was the Senegalese musician, Momar Gaye. Gaye's music has been performed in a blend of Wolof, French, English, and Jamaican. In both musical style and lyrics, his work exemplifies the complex interplay of Indigenous, (post-) colonial, and diasporic influences, thus reinforcing the cyclical nature of global musical exchanges. (Stevenson 2018: 2) This phenomenon of reggae production and reproduction of musical styles driven by the interplay of global and local political, cultural, and economic experiences is also referred to as "*hybridization through globalization*." (Gaztambide-Fernandez quoted in Alvarez 2008: 579) At the same time, Gaye's work aligns with a broader tradition of African musicians who, drawing inspiration from Jamaican figures such as Bob Marley and Peter Tosh, have adopted this syncretic diasporic style as a vehicle for articulating anticolonial, anti-racist, and intercultural solidarities. This is because as a transnational genre whose global diffusion has been facilitated by commercial and media networks, reggae has been appropriated by diverse and marginalised communities as a means of sociopolitical and cultural expression. (Stevenson 2018:2)

Especially the youth has been able to identify with the genre and its ability to give a voice to those unheard. Therefore, "[i]t is not surprising that it has become a popular vehicle for meaningful social evaluation, social engagement, and change." (Ebere/Charles-Ebere 2018: 136) Alvarez (2008: 576) similarly ascribes this power of change to the genre's ability to both speak to the various struggles a certain Indigenous community experience and simultaneously relate to the hardships of others. This is a result of a shared "Indigenous" identity and fight for autonomy, justice, and dignity in a (post-) colonial world. Hence, reggae has been thriving as a form of protest music in places such as South and Southeast Africa, South America, Australia, and Papua New Guinea – all places that have been places of colonization, racialization, and social- and economic oppression. (Gaztambide-Fernandez quoted in Alvarez 2008: 579)

The act of using music as a tool for political expressions thereby is by no means accidental. In contrast, politicians and political movements have intentionally used music and its lyrics as a form of persuasion and to express their core beliefs. (Ebere/Charles-Ebere 2018: 138)

In West Africa for instance, Rastafarianism as a movement, which through reggae, has cemented itself into local performing and visual arts and literature, influencing local popular culture through its symbolism in connection to Emperor Haile Selassie I, and the consumption of marijuana. (Ebere/Charles-Ebere 2018: 138).

In the Gambia, reggae has had a similar effect by appealing to the youth. In the small country, youth aged 13 to 30 years represent the largest demographic group making up 36.7 percent of the population. They are also the most impacted by severe living conditions stemming from

poverty, limited economic opportunities, high unemployment rates, inadequate skill development and school dropouts, an overall fragile economy, and the forces of globalization. Among these young men, many have turned to cultural expressions and lifestyles that diverge from local Islamic values. Instead, they adopted aspects of a localised, urban youth subculture marked by pseudo-Rastafarian influences. This includes embracing visual markers of Rastafarian identity, such as listening to reggae music, wearing their hair in braids or locks, and smoking marijuana. Nevertheless, they continue to identify with the global Muslim community and do not engage in the religious and ideological practices of Rastafarianism. (Ebere/Charles-Ebere 2018: 134/138)

The reason for adopting Rastafarian-associated markers, however, often goes beyond the admiration of the culture and its practices. On one hand, it allows them to rebel against the lifestyle and culture of their parents and elders since practices such as wearing locks, listening to reggae music, and consuming marijuana are not compatible with the traditional values and life that had left them marginalised. (Ebere/Charles-Ebere 2018: 140)

On the other hand, this newfound identity acts as a tool to enter tourist spaces. Due to Western biases and the sexualisation and exotisation of Black bodies, their Rasta-identity allows the youth to seek out White, unaccompanied, middle-aged or elderly female tourists and signal their willingness to act as escorts in the hopes of earning money from it. (Ebere/Charles-Ebere 2018: 141) While for tourists these connections create the possibility to experience the local community away from mainstream tourism, the youth involved see their work as informal guides and cultural brokers in tourism as a way to make a living despite being unskilled, uneducated, and coming from underprivileged and vulnerable families. Often, the income they make support both their friends and family members and is much higher than average local wages. (Ebere/Charles-Ebere 2018: 140) Despite the seemingly successful practice, youth advocates, policymakers, and the media alike criticise it due to its waste of resources and potential (Ebere/Charles-Ebere 2018: 142).

To circle back to reggae and dancehall music and its consumption within Gambia, I would like to first look at the Gambia's musical landscape. Generally, Darka describes Gambia as a country, which is strongly shaped by its culture. In the sense of the country's music production, across genres this is expressed through the prominence of traditional music instruments, such as the kora and the djembe. These instruments are a common tool for Gambian musicians of various genres. (Darka)

Moreover, families of musicians, such as T Smallz' whose parents were traditional singers (griots¹⁸), are important members of society. Griot families not only craft the beforementioned traditional instruments, but they also function as storytellers and for instance sing at community events such as naming ceremonies. (T Smallz Suso) While these traditional expressions of music may not be directly comparable to contemporary music in the Gambia, there are noteworthy similarities (TopGun aka Anker). As mentioned, traditional music in Gambian culture has historically served as a medium for storytelling, a practice that remains significant. TopGun aka Anker recalls his childhood experiences, when he would listen to a "*Tariko*" in his language. *Tariko*, which translates to "storytellers," and are similar to griots but act within the Fulani culture. They too are artists who narrate the histories and stories of ethnic groups, nations, empires, and deities. This cultural context arguably shaped the artist's understanding of music as a tool for teaching and connecting to one's heritage and identity. (TopGun aka Anker)

Much like in Jamaica where individual music consumption used to be associated with the rich and collective listening with the masses (Kingston Mann 2016: 272), both traditional Gambian music as well as the consumption of reggae and dancehall for many years were communal experiences. For instance, DJ Taff recalls that growing up in the Gambia, the introduction to dancehall music was a significant part of his cultural experience. In addition to traditional music, reggae and dancehall dominated the musical landscape during the DJ's youth and were regularly played at neighbourhood gatherings (e.g. open-air parties that are common in African communities), on radio stations, and in recording studios. (DJ Taff). As a young boy in primary school, TopGun experienced the immersion into reggae music because his uncles and older brothers listened to it. After school, he and his peers would gather beneath a mango tree to listen to artists such as Demba Colta, Alpha Blondy, Bob Marley, Gregory Isaacs, Luciano, and Frank Paul. (TopGun aka Anker) Hence, while Afrobeats have gained prominence in recent years,

¹⁸ Griots or *jali/jalo* are traditional musicians in Mande society (T Smallz Suso). The griot tradition dates back to the thirteenth century, originating with the establishment of the Mali Empire under Sunjata Keita. In Mandé society, griots belong to the nyamakala caste, alongside artisans, such as blacksmiths, potters, and leatherworkers, and they traditionally marry within their group. They wield influence through speech, using their words to persuade, mediate, inspire, and provoke action. (Marchand 2015: 356) They function as conflict mediators, story tellers of historic events, advisors, spokesmen, diplomatic representation of a person of power, interpreters and translators, musicians who compose songs and tunes, teachers, reporters of news, and witnesses or contributors at important life ceremonies (McConnell 2020: 214). Historically, griots served political leaders and nobles. While they once primarily served the elite, contemporary griots now attract a broader audience, including politicians and entrepreneurs who commission them to celebrate their heritage and achievements. Their mastery of storytelling and music has earned them widespread recognition, with some achieving international fame through modern recording technology. (Marchand 2015: 356)

besides traditional Gambian music, reggae and dancehall were the most influential genres of his generation (DJ Taff).

As seen in the recounts of the two musicians, in the context of the Gambia, the musical experience for many artists is shared. Before reaching a level of national recognition, many of them grew up listening to dancehall and reggae music. This influence is deeply rooted, and artists like Sizzla, Bushman, Luciano, Yellowman, Vybz Kartel, and Bounty Killer, play a significant role in shaping the musical taste of Gambian musicians. As a result of the communal consumption, not only the artists but also the local audience have developed an ear for these genres. In response to this, Gambian artists often incorporate elements of reggae and dancehall into their work, blending familiar rhythms and styles with lyrics in local languages. This fusion of foreign genres and local languages not only appeals to the audience's pre-existing preferences but also helps the listener to understand the lyrics, making the music more accessible and easier to appreciate. (T Smallz Suso)

The access to the consumed reggae and dancehall music, however, was far more restricted in pre-internet years. In Bacau for example, T Smallz recounts that DJs predominantly used CDs, and in his earlier years, cassettes, rather than computers. Therefore, music was distributed through hard copies in the Gambia, which were funnelled through different channels. One of them was the acquisition of new music by DJs from record stores, such as “Carry on Sounds” in Banjul. These shops were essential for discovering new music, though their selection was often limited. New releases typically had to be brought from Europe from where record stores obtained their music. Through those shipments, they received the master copies for local distribution. Another avenue was for DJs within the Gambia to receive new records through personal channels from other DJs or family abroad. T Smallz himself received multiple CDs from his aunt and uncle who frequently visited from the UK. (T Smallz Suso) DJ Taff too recounts that in the past, his brother, who lived in Germany, played a significant role in providing access to music from abroad. His brother sent tapes of music from “Supersonic Sound” from Germany, “David Rodigan” from England, and “Stone Love Sound” from Jamaica. At the time, there were only a few major sound systems available. David Rodigan, known for his radio show “BFBS Radio Soul” in England, focused on reggae music, featuring interviews with artists and playing their music. DJ Taff's brother recorded these broadcasts and sent the recordings to the Gambia, thereby facilitating access to new music from Europe. This method of receiving and sharing music highlights the role of personal connections in expanding access to international music. (DJ Taff) Yet it also explains why there was often a delay of up to six months to a year before new music would reach the Gambia. In contrast, the current

digital landscape enables immediate access to newly released music, allowing Gambian audiences to engage with it on the day of its release. (T Smallz Suso) DJ Taff agrees that the availability of music has significantly improved with the internet. Previously, acquiring music required personal connections and access was often limited by storage constraints. In contrast, technological advances led to various platforms for easy and immediate access to music. This has greatly simplified the process of researching and obtaining music for both DJs and individuals. (DJ Taff) Though, even today personal connections are still of significance since connections to other artists are a valuable tool for career development for Gambian artists (Darka), both in Gambia and in Austria (OktoTV 2018). Darka recognises that not only do people know him within Gambia through his friendships with other artists, but such connections have also resulted in airtime on Senegalese radio stations and performance opportunities in Austria. (Darka)

Despite the former difficulties of obtaining reggae and dancehall music from Jamaica, T Smallz states that dancehall music played a significant role in uniting people in a positive manner. This has been particularly the case in Bakau, an area known for its stubbornness and frequent criminal activity. The presence of music, especially at parties, helped shift the focus away from potential crime and towards enjoyment and community engagement. For T Smallz, music provided a constructive outlet and served as a source of motivation and challenge. Being immersed in this environment, alongside peers who shared similar aspirations, fostered a collective drive to achieve success and be like their Jamaican role models such as Buju Banton. The cultural and social impact of dancehall profoundly influenced the artist's personal development and career. (T Smallz Suso)

Despite the apparent strong influence of Jamaican dancehall on the genre, DJ Taff observes that dancehall music from the Gambia has unique characteristics in comparison with its Jamaican counterpart. He notes that while Gambia has produced talented dancehall artists, the genre in this region often manifests as somewhat softer in tone than Jamaican dancehall. He believes this to be the result of cultural differences between Gambia and Jamaica. In Gambia, the cultural norms impose certain limitations on lyrical content, which constrain the explicitness often found in Jamaican dancehall. These social and cultural boundaries pose a challenge that local artists must navigate actively. (DJ Taff) T Smallz, on the other hand, explains that cultural adaptation of music is often unconscious and a result of listening to records rather than through secondary sources such as blogs, newspapers, or interviews. He notes that the contents of music records offer genuine insights into the artists' experiences and realities. Many of these experiences of Jamaican artists are not unlike those of Gambian artists and highlight the cultural

similarities between the two countries. Therefore, the artist finds it relatively easy to relate to Jamaican culture due to similar socio-economic conditions, such as experiencing hunger and facing crime, that he has experienced. (T Smallz Suso)

Besides the cultural adaption of the music itself, the consuming audience of it too is subject to local cultural expectation. Regarding gender for instance, DJ Taff notes that men outnumber women in club environments in the Gambia. Women are more commonly seen participating in social gatherings such as naming ceremonies and weddings, where their presence is more prominent. However, in nightclub settings, women are fewer and often faced with negative perceptions (e.g. being seen as prostitutes). This is because historically, there were only a few women attending dance events, and those who did were often engaged in smoking and drinking, or in the company of tourists – all perceived negatively in the local, Muslim communities. However, the view of female participation in this context has shifted over time and is less negative. Nevertheless, women remain underrepresented in dancehall and club scenes in the Gambia. (DJ Taff)

Lastly, speaking on the topic of changes in the Gambian reggae-dancehall scene, DJ Taff observed that there is a significant number of Gambian dancehall artists, both in the Gambia and the diaspora. Interestingly, according to him, artists based in their home countries, such as Jamaica or Gambia, are currently achieving greater success than those residing in Europe. This is because artists they have better access to local support and opportunities. In the past, international contacts and opportunities were more accessible to artists abroad but this dynamic has shifted. Today, local artists in Gambia are receiving substantial support and recognition, often surpassing their international counterparts in terms of local engagement. This shift is evident as Gambian artists are increasingly capable of filling large venues and achieving success previously reserved for international acts. The growing support for homegrown talent reflects a broader trend of valuing and promoting local artists. (DJ Taff)

In summary, this chapter has shown how reggae, originating from Jamaica as a form of expression for marginalised communities, was internationalised in the 1970s and influenced West African music, particularly through Rastafarian themes and social messages. In the Gambia, reggae and dancehall have shaped youth culture, with many adopting Rastafarian markers as a form of identity and social mobility, often linked to tourism and economic survival. Moreover, the communal nature of music consumption, both traditional and contemporary, has played a vital role in shaping Gambian artists, who blend reggae and dancehall with local languages, music instruments, and cultural influences. Despite past difficulties in accessing

music, the digital era has transformed availability and strengthened the local music scene and enabling homegrown artists to gain recognition and success within their communities.

V. Dancehall in Austria

Unlike in Gambia where dancehall is part of the public music landscape, I have had the experience that dancehall is a rather unknown genre for many Austrians. However, there are a lot of dancehall artists in Austria. Though, only a handful of them are known to a broader audience. (Darka) According to Darka, the reggae and dancehall scene in Austria can currently be described as developing (Darka) after experiencing a regression (DJ Taff).

In the past, a huge part of dancehall in Austria used to consist of so-called sound-boys. They were situated in cities all over the country. In St. Pölten, for instance, *The Dancehall Ultras* could be found, *Fireclut* in Linz, *Rasclut International* in Salzburg and *Invasion Sound* in Telfs. While these groups of DJs and producers have been active and playing dancehall and reggae all over Austria throughout the years, DJ Taff explains that their presence and impact has reduced over the years. He believes this may have been due to the negative perception of the scene in Austria by the older generations and the association of reggae to weed and the subsequent fear of other drug use. (DJ Taff) Despite these perceptions, dancehall as well as reggae have not only established themselves as part of the music scene in Vienna (DJ Taff) but can also be found in other parts of Austria, such as Tirol (TopGun aka Anker) and Linz (Darka). To local artists, festivals such as the “Hill Vibes festival” in Telfs, Tirol, (Hill-vibes.at n. d.) or the “Uprising festival” in nearby Bratislava, Slovakia, (Uprising n. d.) provide opportunities for them to play in front of a bigger audience and alongside international artists. (Darka)

Several of these artists in the Austrian dancehall scene are of Senegambian descent, including T-Smallz Suso, Graduate, TopGun, Ras Askia, Darka, and Limbo (DJ Taff). Moreover, both in Austria and in other European countries, the local Gambian communities are an essential part of the reggae-dancehall scene. Nevertheless, the crowds at dancehall events are very diverse (Darka) and of various nationalities (DJ Taff). DJ Taff too observed that the guest composition in his club significantly differs from his initial expectations. Initially anticipating strong support from the Senegambian community, he found that the majority of people attending events were international, and particularly Austrian and non-Senegambian African, patrons. This highlights dancehall’s broader appeal, beyond its expected demographic. The diverse following of dancehall in Austria is also reflected in the background of the DJs playing in local clubs. Some

of the DJs that regularly work at Nanang Club for example are DJ Wili (Congo), DJ Lala (SriLanka), DJ Ibra (Senegal), Jah Elevator (Gambia), and Brain Doctor (Austria). (DJ Taff)

Speaking about Nanang Club, an important person for upcoming as well as established artists in Austria is DJ Taff. With his club (Nanang), he created a space to promote artists and to bring them together to work in union. (Darka) DJ Taff himself has extensive experience as a DJ in Austria and its music industry. Over the years, he has performed as a DJ in numerous Viennese clubs. However, due to the unstable work environment, DJ Taff decided to open his own, permanent venue focused on reggae and dancehall music with the goal to provide a stable and consistent space for the community to gather and enjoy music. Nanang club now serves as a lasting location, where reggae lovers, dancehall enthusiasts, and the Black community can connect and celebrate their culture. However, while a focus is laid on reggae-dancehall music, by being open to other music genres such as hip-hop, Soca, Rap, and Afro beat(s), they attracted a wide range of listeners. DJ Taff notes that the venue has successfully drawn attention from various communities in other European countries such as England, Finland, and Norway. Some individuals travel to Austria specifically to experience the uniqueness of Nanang. This international interest underscores the venue's impact and its ability to engage a global audience. Further, clubs such as Nanang, are a landing point for Jamaican artists touring Europe. DJ Taff estimates that over the years, between 40 and 50 Jamaican artists have performed live in his club. The number would even be higher, if the club had the capacity to host live bands too. However, due to the current settings, the shows are limited to the dancehall-typical toasting over prerecorded rhythms. Musicians from Germany, England, and Finland, among other places, too have been invited to perform at the night club. (DJ Taff)

Moreover, besides international artists, Nanang club gives local artists the chance to promote their music through, for instance, single-release parties and live shows. DJ Taff is especially keen to bring Gambian artists living in and around Austria together and into the spotlight. (DJ Taff) Such performance opportunities are important and since for many local artists their music does not yet constitute a sustainable source of income. This means, artists permanently situated in Austria, like Darka and TopGun, need to earn a living through another occupation. One reason Darka names that hinders the development of an inclusive music industry in Austria, is the inner conflict within the Gambian artist collective. He believes that if they would work together more closely and put the communal over individual success, Afrocentric music like reggae, dancehall, or Afro beats could grow into a more lucrative industry than it is now. (Darka) Therefore, actors and spaces such as DJ Taff and his club are important meeting points, where such inner conflict can be bridged by a common interest.

Though, DJ Taff not only aims at bringing the community in Vienna together but also to spread awareness about dancehall music and culture across community borders. During the COVID-19 lockdowns, for instance, DJ Taff used the connections he has built to host an online talk show where he interviewed and promoted international and local artists with the purpose of educating people on reggae and dancehall culture. (DJ Taff)

Education seems to insofar play a role in the make-up of the Austrian attendants of events in Nanang club that the owner has noted that many young Austrians who frequent his club are university students, often pursuing a degree in African studies, social anthropology, international development, or related subjects. DJ Taff finds it easier to interact with them since he perceives these students as more knowledgeable and well minded towards Africa as a whole. Hence, he describes dancehall as a vehicle to bring likeminded people together because like DJ Taff says: *“It's gonna be hard. Hard for the people to meet and connect, you know, because the city is big, everybody has their corner but the dancehall parties [everybody comes together].”* (DJ Taff)

Not unlike his recounts on gender dynamics within the Gambian dancehall scene, DJ Taff notes that there is a predominance of men in the Austrian dancehall spaces. Among the women present, most are neither married nor have young children. Yet, he acknowledges that there is a growing number of young women, who are active in dancehall, participating in dance or performances in the scene. DJ Taff highlights that these women, despite their limited numbers, play a significant role in representing the dancehall culture in Austria as well as in Gambia. (DJ Taff)

Overall, the Austrian dancehall scene, though less mainstream compared to the one in Gambia, can be described as a developing subculture with a dedicated network of artists, DJs, and promoters, such as DJ Taff, who provide crucial spaces like Nanang Club to support the genre. While early Austrian dancehall was dominated by sound-boys across the country, its presence has declined due to potential negative perceptions. Yet, it remains sustained by a diverse audience, with a strong Senegambian influence and international interest. Events, clubs, and festivals like *Hill Vibes* and *Uprising* serve as essential platforms for both local and global artists, fostering connections, cultural exchange, and the prospects of local dancehall artists.

VI. Gambian Diaspora in Austria

Now that I have explored both the reggae-dancehall scene in the Gambia and Austria, I want to turn my focus towards the Gambian diaspora here in Austria. To understand who a part of the Gambian community in Austria is, I will introduce relevant demographic markers of the Gambia, Gambians living abroad, and those residing in Austria in the first subchapter. Moreover, reasons for youth migration out of the Gambia are explored briefly. In the second subchapter I will build on the previous chapters and explore the role dancehall plays in the community.

a. Demographic

The Gambia, often referred to as the "smiling coast of Africa" (TopGun aka Anker), is the smallest country in North-West Africa. The name is not only used to refer to the smile like coastline of the country but also the friendly nature of the people living in the Gambia. The community can generally be described as social. People tend to spend time together whenever they can, gathering under mango trees or at the side of the street to relax and chat. (T Smallz Suso)

The nation's colonial history is a tale of British rule, which has resulted in English being the official language of the country. However, Gambia features a diverse linguistic landscape that includes several local languages, such as Mandinka. There is also a small speaker group speaking the Creole language Aku, which shares similarities with Jamaican (TopGun aka Anker) and despite its numbered size has been mentioned by all four interview partners and hence seems to be of importance in connection to the topic of Jamaican and dancehall.

The demographic make-up of the Gambia is characterised by its youthful population, with 60% of its inhabitants being under the age of 30 (Mullings-Lawrence 2023: 184) and just over half of those people (36.7% of the total population in 2018) are between 13 and 30 years old (Ebere/Charles Ebere 2018:134). Therefore, Gambia has a significant, potential workforce. Yet, despite this demographic advantage, the country faces significant economic challenges, including high youth unemployment rates (38%) and widespread poverty (48%) (Mullings-Lawrence 2023: 184). In comparison, Gambia's GDP in 2018 was calculated at \$713, while for instance Italy's GDP was \$34,319 in the same year (Bah et al. 2023: 2).

The experienced poverty, which is especially felt by the young cohort described above, is a result of a multitude of factors such as "[...] *deteriorating economic opportunities, widespread*

unemployment, fragile economy, limited skills, and globalism.” (Ebere/Charles-Ebere 2018: 134) These factors have also led to a significant number of young Gambians leaving their homes in search of better social and economic prospects abroad. Many plan their departure from the Gambia with hopes of reaching Western Europe. This is evident in the migration numbers of 2014. The Gambia ranked among the top ten countries with the highest numbers of undocumented migrants in Europe, with arrivals reaching over 12,000 in 2016 before declining to 7,600 in 2017 and 4,500 in 2018. Over five years, nearly 40,000 young Gambians migrated to Europe using a route known as the "BackWay". (Faal 2020)

Globally, an estimated 141,000 Gambians were residing outside of their country of origin as of 2020. The largest communities are located in the United States, the United Kingdom, Spain, Germany, and Italy. Additionally, over 38,000 Gambians have acquired citizenship in other countries. Much like the country's make-up, the Gambian diaspora is predominantly composed of young individuals, reflecting the broader trends of youth migration driven by economic and social factors. (gainako.com 2021)

When it comes to the Austrian diaspora, in 2020, a total of 684 Gambian citizens resided in Austria. The numbers show a significant gender disparity as 553 were male and 131 were female. Between 2010 and 2019, an additional 133 Gambians were granted Austrian citizenship, of whom approximately 30 were female. Location wise, most of the Gambians in Austria are concentrated in the Vienna metropolitan area. (gainako.com 2021)

b. Importance of Dancehall in the Community

As for the role dancehall plays for the Gambian diaspora in Austria, I based my chapter on the information I have gathered through both the interviews and the online questionnaire.

The questionnaire showed that the twelve respondents were all introduced to dancehall music as children between five and 18 years of age, with the average respondent being twelve years old, when they were introduced to the genre. On a scale from “very important” to “not important”, six people said dancehall was very important to them, three chose important, two somewhat important and only one said that dancehall was not important to them.

Moreover, dancehall music holds profound personal significance to the respondents, serving not only as a form of entertainment but also as a source of emotional relief. It provides a sense of freedom and enjoyment, contributing to their overall well-being and offering a space for self-expression. Dancehall resonates with the respondents, often reflecting their lived experiences and lifestyle. For the respondents, this genre additionally offers inspiration and peace, uplifts

their spirit and evokes a feeling of shared understanding, since the artists have lived similar stories. Music, in this context, is more than a cultural product – it reinforces positive energy and promotes a sense of unity and connection. As such, it affirms the notion that music is truly "for the people" as stated in an open question by a respondent.

This importance explains why most respondents (9) stated that they listen to dancehall daily, two others 3-5 times a week and only one less than once a month and therefore only occasionally listens to dancehall. Moreover, dancehall is enjoyed at least once a week by half the respondents in clubs, private gatherings, and with friends. Two other respondents do so one to three times a month, while four only engage in listening to dancehall in clubs or private gatherings less than once a month. In regard to the locations where dancehall is consumed in, 91.6% of respondents claimed to listen to it at home, 83.3% in clubs, and 75% at their friends' house and at concerts respectively.

The consumption of dancehall music moreover occurs across various social contexts. According to the data, 83.3% of respondents reported listening to dancehall music alone. When examining shared listening contexts, two thirds of participants consume dancehall music with family, while a higher proportion, 75%, reported enjoying it with friends. This suggests that peer-based social settings are more common than familial ones for dancehall engagement. Similarly, two thirds of respondents indicated listening to dancehall with strangers, highlighting some degree of public or communal interaction, such as the consumption in clubs and at concerts. These patterns underscore the flexibility of dancehall music consumption, which spans intimate, social, and communal environments such as Nanang Club.

In Vienna, as I have already established in the previous chapter that DJ Taff is a pillar of the Gambian community in Vienna and therefore also an important point of connection for Senegambian artists (such as T-Smallz Suso, Graduate, TopGun, Ras Askia, Darka, and Limbo (DJ Taff)) in Austria (Darka). He is a DJ and club owner who has lived in Austria for approximately two decades now. Originally from Banjul, Gambia, he started DJing and selling music as well as arts and crafts to both locals and tourists as a young adult. (DJ Taff) After moving to Austria and DJing here for a while, he opened his own club called "Nanang" with which, he created a space to promote artists and to bring them together to work in union (Darka). DJ Taff took the step to open his own club due to the regular discontinuation of Black-community-focused events. The DJ explains that changing party locations every other month posed a challenge that created instability for both organisers and attendees. Hence, he established a permanent venue, where the community can gather consistently for reggae and dancehall events. A stable location offers both continuity and reliability for reggae-dancehall

enthusiasts and the broader Black community, as well as a chance for cultural exchange. (DJ Taff)

By hosting and promoting dancehall and reggae artists, DJ Taff moreover uses music as a tool to reinforce the positive aspects of Gambian culture and bridge the gap between the diaspora and the Austrian community (DJ Taff). This is possible because, while both in Austria and other surrounding European countries, the local Gambian community is an essential part of the reggae-dancehall scene, the crowds at dancehall events are very diverse (Darka). Therefore, dancehall can be seen as a unifying platform that fosters connections among like-minded individuals. As DJ Taff observes, in a large and fragmented urban environment, where people often remain within their own social circles, dancehall events create an inclusive space that facilitates interaction and community-building. (DJ Taff)

Through this interaction and the focus on positive aspects of Black culture, dancehall can further be seen as a tool to combat racism in Austria. TopGun reflects on his own experiences with discrimination, saying that he indeed has encountered racial discrimination since moving to Austria. He attributes this to ignorance among individuals who perceive Black people through a narrow lens due to the lack of personal experience not allowing them to see human beings as fundamentally the same across different cultures and societies. His response to discrimination therefore has been to assert his self-worth and confidence. (TopGun aka Anker) While cross-cultural interactions in clubs and projects, such as DJ Taff hosting online talk shows to promote international and local artists with the purpose of educating people on reggae and dancehall culture, can be interpreted as mitigating racial biases, DJ Taff acknowledges that in his opinion those attending events with a focus on Black popular culture are more likely to be open minded towards Black people in general. He has also noted that many young Austrians that attend his events are university students who often pursue a degree in subjects such as African studies, social anthropology, or international development. Therefore, DJ Taff finds it easier to interact with them since he perceives these students as more knowledgeable and well minded towards Africa as a whole. (DJ Taff) Hence, the crowd often attending dancehall events, might already be more openminded and educated on race issues, making dancehall a rather inefficient tool to overcome racial discrimination.

In summary, dancehall music plays a crucial role for the Gambian diaspora in Austria by providing emotional relief, self-expression, inspiration, and a sense of community, as shown by interviews and a questionnaire where most respondents ranked dancehall as highly important. Respondents mostly encountered dancehall in childhood and continue to consume it frequently

at home, clubs, and social gatherings, highlighting its importance in both private and communal spaces. DJ Taff, a Gambian DJ and club owner in Vienna, created a stable venue, "Nanang," to foster community cohesion, cultural exchange, and support for Gambian and Senegambian artists. Dancehall events serve as inclusive spaces that promote positive aspects of Black culture and facilitate cross-cultural interactions, although their impact on combating racism is limited, as audiences tend to already be open-minded and educated about African cultures. Overall, dancehall acts as a cultural bridge for the Gambian community while offering a shared space for identity affirmation and social connection.

VII. Language Usage of Gambian Dancehall Artists

This chapter explores the language usage of Gambian dancehall artists, examining how they perceive and engage with dancehall as a musical and cultural form, as well as how their linguistic choices reflect broader ideologies and artistic aspirations.

The first subchapter introduces three Gambian dancehall artists, providing insights into their backgrounds and musical journeys. This is followed by an analysis of their understanding of dancehall as a genre, including how they interpret its stylistic and thematic elements within their own artistic practice. A short summary of their view on the role of musicians is given next before the third subchapter investigates the artists' language repertoires, highlighting the multiple languages they employ, such as English, local Gambian languages, and Jamaican, and how these linguistic choices contribute to their musical identity. Furthermore, the discussion extends to dancehall language ideologies, exploring artists' perspectives on authenticity, linguistic creativity, and the influence of Jamaican culture on their music. Lastly, the chapter examines the role of dancehall artists beyond music-making, considering their impact as cultural ambassadors, community influencers, and representatives of a global artistic movement. Through this analysis, the chapter aims to shed a light on how language functions as both a creative tool and a means of cultural negotiation for Gambian dancehall artists.

a. Introduction of Artists

In the following subchapter I will introduce the three dancehall artists I have chosen to interview for the purpose of this study. All three artists are male and were born in Gambia and lived there for several years before moving to Austria. More information on their upbringing, career backgrounds, and public image is to be found below.

i. TopGun aka Anker

“I am a person [...] and music is part of me, and nobody can stop that. That I have to tell you because I love it. And I love to achieve good music, I love positive vibes. I love humanity.”

(TopGun aka Anker)

TopGun aka Anker was born and raised in a small village in the Gambia. In 2000 when he was 19 years old, he moved to Tirol, Austria, where he lived in St. Johann, before moving to Vienna. Still in Tirol he was introduced to DJing by a friend who was working in a reggae and dancehall club called “Riverhouse” in Fieberbrunn. With him, he began his career as an MC in the club. Later, TopGun began to write his own songs and to record them in his friend’s studio. He, due to his limited experience in the music industry, then burned CDs of his first album. He sold them himself to his acquaintances and gave the rest out as promotional material to fans, friends, and family. (TopGun aka Anker)

Even though he only started producing in Austria, his love for music dates back to the time when he was still living in Gambia. TopGun was always an avid music lover. He said that ever “[...] since he was just a little boy going to primary school[, music] was something that was already part of [him]”. To this day he describes making music as more than just a means to fame. To him, music is happiness as he not only enjoys putting songs together but also that he brings joy to his listeners, who can relate to his message. This also becomes more evident in his persistence, despite not earning any money from his music. He finances the production of songs as well as his living expenses through formal employment at a construction company. (TopGun aka Anker)

Regarding the music he creates, TopGun on one hand does not consider himself to be an artist of a specific genre. This is because he does not believe his songs can be grouped together into one genre despite having features of it. On the other hand, the artist says he makes reggae and dancehall music that is also influenced by RnB and afro beats. He accredits the focus on the mentioned genres to his upbringing. Ever since his youth, TopGun has been listening to reggae music. For him, reggae music, RnB, and hip-hop are the primary genres he is familiar with because they were widely available through television and radio. As he grew up and felt inspired to become an artist, he followed in the shoes of the musical styles and influences that were deeply ingrained in him. This also includes the languages used in them. In TopGun’s case, this was mostly English. Hence, and thanks to his formal education in English, he too writes most of his lyrics in English. (TopGun aka Anker)

During his career TopGun has collaborated with several artists such as Ras Askia with whom he created the song “Appreciation”. Another collaboration with a Hungarian artist has resulted in his album “Mama Art”. (TopGun aka Anker)

His career also resulted in singles such as “On my Way”, “Thank you Mama”, “Want you, Somebody to love”, and “Nah sell out” (TopGun 2012).

ii. T-Smallz Suso

“Music took me away from the street. In the beginning, it was passion and love, then I realised it could change my life.”

(T Smallz Suso)

T Smallz Suso originally comes from Bakau, New Town, Gambia, the smiling coast of Africa (T Smallz Suso), where he was born in 1986 as the grandson of Alieu Suso, a well-known kora maker and player in the Gambia (tsmallzsuso).

The artist’s name T Smallz Suso is a combination of three names. The first two are nicknames from his youth. T stands for trouble, which he has gotten into in school. Hence, his father and people around him lovingly started to call him trouble. Smallz, on the other hand, was a reference to his stature as a child, since he was one of the smallest pupils in the classroom. Therefore, when the time came to choose an artist’s name for himself, he decided to use the two names he was already known by in his hometown. Hence, trouble and small were combined into T Smallz. Lastly, he added his sure name to it making it T Smallz Suso. He did so because he is proud of his family name, and it allows him to be internationally identified with the kora and therefore West African musical traditions. He describes his artist’s name as a reflection of the nature of his music: “*a combination of traditional music and more popular music.*” (T Smallz Suso)

As his name suggests, T Smallz comes from a family of musicians with both his parents being griots, traditional singers. Moreover, his family makes traditional instruments. Therefore, the artist was surrounded by instruments and music from an early age. Through the teachings of his family and witnessing them singing at naming ceremonies and other social events, he was encouraged to pursue music as a career. Due to the access his grandfather’s and uncles’ profession as instrument makers granted, T Smallz started playing and making instruments as a young child, stepping into their footsteps. The artist therefore learnt to play kora as well as djembe between the ages of five and seven and is still actively playing them today. His family’s position in society as griots also allowed T Smallz to be enrolled in school as a boy. There, he was influenced by other music genres than his family’s traditional music. (T Smallz Suso)

Despite not always focusing on music during his childhood, when he seriously started making music at the age of 15. Though, the basics he acquired as a child were important skills to fall back on. However, from when T Smallz started his music career, it would be another five years until the artist recorded his first song “Rise and Shine” in 2006. (T Smallz Suso)

T Smallz says that his involvement in music has significantly impacted his life. Initially driven by passion and love for music, he soon recognised the potential for making a living through his music. This realization prompted a transformation, leading him to become more socially engaged. Music for him acts as a catalyst for personal growth that provides opportunities to travel and exposure to diverse cultures and locations. It also allows artist to interact with different communities, which broadened his understanding of the world. Thus, his dedication to music has not only shaped his career but also elevated his overall perspective on life. Therefore, some inspiration for his songs stem from his perceived similarities and differences of different places he visits. He uses those impressions to come up with songs that he wants to do for a certain community. (T Smallz Suso)

The skills needed to professionally record music, however, had to slowly be learned by the artist. Despite his early training in the handling of instruments and first experiences of playing in a band, working with technology and digital recordings was new to him. Hence, in 2008/09 T Smallz said he learnt how to work together with a band and how to record his tracks professionally. According to the principal “each one, teach one” T Smallz and his friends worked together and taught each other the necessary skills. (T Smallz Suso)

T Smallz admits, however, that initially, he faced challenges in maintaining good relationships with industry professionals, which led to long periods of waiting. To overcome this, he decided to invest in his own equipment, including a sound card, computer, and microphone, enabling him to work independently. This shift not only saved time but also allowed him to gain valuable knowledge and skills. As a result, T Smallz began to focus more on self-production rather than relying on external studios. He dedicated substantial time to independently working on his computer in the studio, which significantly enhanced his technical skills and understanding of the production process. To do so, access to the internet was crucial for him, though it was limited in the Gambia. Hence, as mentioned above, he relied on his social network for access to the software in order to learn how to produce music faster. After improving internet access, T Smallz discovered online tutorials that revealed techniques and insights previously unknown to him. These tutorials simplified the manipulation of software and techniques he had previously struggled to master on his own, thereby increasing his proficiency. (T Smallz Suso)

The artist also acknowledges the significant influence of technology on creativity besides music production. He highlights how the availability of a laptop and various software tools has spread access to a wide range of musical resources. These technological advancements allow musicians to experiment and create unique artistic expressions by integrating various genres. While it is common to recognise elements of reggae, blues, or jazz in contemporary music, artists are increasingly drawing from multiple sources and reinterpreting them to develop distinct and original styles. Thus, technology facilitates the fusion of different genres. (T Smallz Suso)

The genre with the most influence on T Smallz Suso's fusion music according to him is dancehall. Nevertheless, T Smallz describes himself as an Afrobeat artist because he sees Afrobeat as the base that has been influenced by other genres like dancehall, reggae, and hip-hop. The base however remains to be traditional African instruments. Nevertheless, T Smallz said he could be put into the dancehall box since the genre has the biggest influence on his music. (T Smallz Suso)

Moreover, the artist claims that the cultural and social impact of dancehall profoundly influenced his personal development and career since dancehall music provided a constructive outlet and served as a source of motivation and challenge. Being immersed in this environment, alongside peers who shared similar aspirations, fostered a collective drive to achieve success and the wish to be like their role models such as Buju Banton. (T Smallz Suso)

Notable albums and songs released by T Smallz Suso are his first hit "Chono Life" released in 2010 (Ogong'a 2021), his album "Sembo" including 20 different tracks released in 2021 (Ogong'a 2021), "Belly Dancer", "Taamala", "Smack Dat", and collaborations such as ReUnite featuring Jeepstarr, "Kunukunbal" featuring Endi, "Dann Dolle" collaborating with Maaboo, and "Fire Dancer" in collaboration with I-Octane (tsmallzsuso).

iii. Darka

"When you don't know where you are coming from then you will not know where you are going."

(Darka)

Darka was born and raised in Budung, Gambia. As a teenager, around 16 or 17 years of age, he moved to Austria and pursued a career in football before turning to music in the form of singing and playing djembe. The 39-year-old artist now lives and works in Linz. (Darka)

While Darka has only been making music for the last 13 years, he has loved it ever since his childhood in the Gambia. In the beginning music was merely a hobby that he pursued with his

friends. Together with them, he often found himself freestyling and just enjoying making music at their weekly reggae jam sessions. (Darka)

Since these early days of engaging in live music, Darka's music has been played on radio stations in both Gambia and Senegal (Darka). He has also given interviews (OktoTV 2018) and had his performance live streamed (OktoTV 2024) on the Austrian TV station OktoTV. The artist further has had the opportunity to be the opening act for famous dancehall artist Bounty Killer when he was performing in Austria. This was an important moment for Darka since he claimed to have been influenced greatly by Bounty Killer as a child. (Darka)

While dancehall is part of Darka's music repertoire, over the years the artist has been exploring different genres, such as roots reggae, to find his own personal style. This has led him to currently focusing mainly on Afro music, while in the past it was mostly reggae. His reggae songs focus on having a conscious message, emphasizing themes of unity and equality, such as "one people, one world" and "one blood". They underscore the idea that everyone is fundamentally the same. He believes that if people embraced these principles and accepted one another, global issues, including those exacerbated by events like the COVID-19 pandemic, could be mitigated. Darka's music hence aims to promote togetherness, love, and enjoyment of life, advocating that life is too brief to harbour animosity. Instead, he emphasises the importance of maintaining positive relationships and fostering mutual respect. (Darka)

Despite his strongly reggae-focused past, Darka considers himself to be a world artist. This is because his music comprises of elements of different genres. His song "One People", for instance, he describes as a mixture of reggae and hip-hop. At the time of the interview (2021) the artist was solely working on Afro music. He notes that to him it is important to find his own style since a certain uniqueness is ascribed to Afro artists such as for instance Burna Boy, who incorporates diverse genres like hip-hop and RnB into his music. To find his own niche in Afro, Darka combines Afro music with dancehall and more traditional Gambian music features. These include for example the use of traditional instruments such as the talking drums or the kora, an instrument the singer dreams to learn how to play. (Darka)

Playing an instrument is important to Darka because to him live performances and traditional instrumentation are more important than digital production. He notes that while some producers use technology to digitally modify and enhance drum sounds or other elements, these digital reproductions often lack the authenticity of live instruments. For example, the sound of a talking drum or a kora produced through a laptop may not accurately capture the real, nuanced tones of these instruments. Darka argues that the authenticity and richness of live performance and

traditional instruments are essential for achieving the desired musical quality and connection he wants for his music. (Darka)

In order to advance his career and incorporate music traditions and languages from other West African countries (e.g. Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal) Darka stated he had plans to collaborate with artists from said countries. Inevitably, those plans were interrupted by Covid-19 not giving the artist a chance thus far to release any collaborations with other artists. However, he stated he had worked on unreleased music with a Jamaican artist before. (Darka)

Some of Darka's songs include "Girl Wine", "Gambian Juice", "Darka Don Dada" (DarkaOfficial 2019), "Good Morning" (Darkaofficial 2020), "Darka free up the youth", and the collaboration "Full Energy" featuring Jah Phinga (Darka 2023).

b. Artist's Understanding of Dancehall

As established in the previous chapters, in the Gambian context and according to the interviewees' understanding, reggae and dancehall cultures are closely connected. Therefore, in the following subchapter I explored the artists' definitions, understandings, and limitations of dancehall. All three artists, as well as DJ Taff as a community spokesperson, defined dancehall in comparison with reggae music, emphasizing the close ideological perception of the two genres.

According to TopGun, the evolution of dancehall began with artists like Beenie Man, who contributed to shaping dancehall's distinct identity. Figures such as Lady Saw, the "Queen of Dancehall," further solidified its genre-specific characteristics and although dancehall and reggae share similarities, they are not identical, with each genre possessing unique attributes and cultural contexts. Top Gun explains the distinction between dancehall and reggae music lies in the characteristic of dancehall with its focus on more energetic and rhythmic elements, often tailored for club environments. He believes dancehall represents a modification of reggae that is suited for dancing. Thereby, TopGun asserts, the differences between dancehall and reggae music are not attributed to technological changes but rather to the distinct "vibe" and focus of each genre. Reggae music often functions as a medium for preaching and teaching through emphasizing meaningful storytelling and social commentary. In contrast, dancehall is designed to create an energetic atmosphere primarily through rhythm and beat, rather than through lyrical content eliciting physical responses and enjoyment. Thus, the primary distinction between the two genres lies in their lyrical focus and the overall purpose of their music. (TopGun aka Anker)

Similarly, T Smallz too believes that dancehall music is derived from reggae, resulting in only a subtle difference between the two genres and that the primary distinction lies in their tempo and stylistic elements. Dancehall typically features a faster tempo and a greater emphasis on rhythm, while reggae is characterised by a slower tempo and more melodic elements. The artist acknowledges however that defining dancehall music is complex. He finds it challenging to precisely define the differences between the two genres, suggesting that the classification of a song depends more on the artist's perception as a dancehall performer than on the elements of their music. For instance, contemporary dancehall artists may perform over hip-hop beats and still be classified as dancehall artists, despite the beats being distinctly hip-hop. T Smallz envisions a future where the distinction between genres will no longer be made, and artists will be recognised more for their individuality rather than being of a specific genre. He suggests that, although genres like jazz and blues will retain their distinct identities, popular music, due to its fluidity, might become a base for artists to be identified primarily by their names rather than by the genres they perform. For example, Popcaan is an artist who now is known as a dancehall artist, yet he also explores various other genres such as Afrobeats and trap. (T Smallz Suso)

This evolving landscape complicates the task of defining the genre, as modern music often blends elements from various styles, leading to genre-crossing practices. T Smallz reflects that while traditional dancehall from the 90s has distinct sonic characteristics, such as specific rhythms and production techniques, the genre's contemporary manifestations may not always adhere strictly to these conventions due to the fluid nature of modern music production and genre classification. This shows that the specific elements that the genre's identification is based on vary over time because the genre evolves making the genre's boundaries increasingly fluid. (T Smallz Suso)

Darka agrees that contemporary trends have introduced significant changes to the genre's sound and presentation. He too observes that many recent dancehall tracks blur the line between genres, often by incorporating elements of blues, salsa, or other musical styles. This makes it challenging to classify them as undoubtably dancehall. Darka highlights that one genre has especially often been integrated into current dancehall tunes: Afrobeats. Many artists seem to now be producing tracks that are more aligned with Afrobeats than with traditional dancehall. This is especially interesting since according to Darka, reggae and dancehall music are deeply rooted in African musical traditions, with the nyabingi drums being a notable example of an African influence on these genres. Other traditionally African musical instruments, such as the kora and xylophone, also influenced modern instruments like the guitar and piano. (Darka)

Besides the overlapping understanding of the artists that dancehall and reggae are intertwined but do have different characteristics, three of the four interview partners further agreed that dancehall songs have an inherent rudeness (Darka, DJ Taff, TopGun aka Anker). Therefore, artists should be sensitive regarding the content during the production and release of dancehall music (TopGun).

However, TopGun asserts that dancehall music encompasses a broader range of themes than often portrayed, highlighting that it includes conscious and educational songs. He notes that both dancehall and reggae artists can produce music with positive and instructive lyrics. Contrary to the perception that dancehall is predominantly associated with explicit or negative content, TopGun believes that the genre can convey meaningful messages beyond the commonly featured themes of sexuality or controversy. He expresses a preference for avoiding explicit content in his own dancehall songs, because of the impact such language may have on younger audiences. However, TopGun acknowledges that the prevalent emphasis on provocative or explicit content in dancehall music can overshadow more positive messages, which he believes should be promoted to provide a better influence for future generations. (TopGun aka Anker)

On the other hand, Darka believes that dancehall's rudeness lies in the linguistic choices rather than the content of the songs with the lyrics of dancehall songs often being unnecessarily rude and aggressive. In his opinion they should be toned down. (Darka) TopGun agrees and notes that some songs require editing to create a clean version before their release due to their inclusion of potentially offensive language. For instance, TopGun and a collaborator from Hungary completed a song, which, despite being mixed and mastered, remains unreleased because it contains words the artist himself deemed inappropriate and uncomfortable. He ultimately made the decision to hold the song's release, citing concerns about its suitability for some audiences, particularly children. TopGun's commitment to maintaining respectful and appropriate content underscores his belief in the importance of upholding certain standards in music by avoiding language that could be seen as inappropriate or disrespectful. (TopGun aka Anker)

While DJ Taff is not a musician, as a DJ he does control what kind of music is played and therefore I have included his understanding of dancehall here as well. Especially since much like TopGun, the DJ emphasises the importance of maintaining a positive message within the dancehall genre. He asserts that dancehall can be both celebratory and uplifting, advocating for its capacity to convey positive messages while people dance and party. For DJ Taff, it is crucial that dancehall music avoids aggressive or disrespectful content, particularly towards women,

and refrains from glorifying violence. He acknowledges that some aspects of dancehall may promote negative themes, such as gangster imagery and derogatory representations of women. However, he believes that dancehall with positive content and respectful messages is valuable and should be promoted. DJ Taff evaluates the genre as having a mixed impact, estimating that 50% of dancehall music is positive while 50% may carry negative elements, in contrast to reggae, which he views more favourably overall saying 80 to 90 percent of reggae is “good”. (DJ Taff)

These attitudes of the Gambian artists can also be observed when engaging with Gambian dancehall music since the dancehall scene in Gambia exhibits distinctive characteristics. While there are several talented artists in Gambia contributing to the genre, their music tends to be comparatively softer than Jamaican dancehall. This can be attributed to cultural influences since in Gambia, the scope of expression in music is constrained by societal norms, as there are boundaries to the themes and language that can be used without judgment. This contrasts with Jamaica, where artists often enjoy greater freedom of expression and may speak more freely in their lyrics. In Gambia, controversial or explicit content may provoke a negative reaction from the public. (DJ Taff)

T Smallz believes the cultural adaptation of Gambian dancehall music is often unconscious and a result of listening to records rather than through secondary sources such as blogs, newspapers, or interviews. He notes that the contents of music records offer genuine insights into the artists' lived experiences and realities – many of them experienced by Jamaican artists not being unlike those of Gambian artists. This highlights the cultural similarities between the two countries. T Smallz also finds it relatively easy to relate to Jamaican culture due to similar socio-economic conditions, such as experiencing hunger and recurrent crime. Nevertheless, T Smallz perceives Jamaica as more violent than the Gambia. (T Smallz Suso)

In conclusion, in the Gambian context, reggae and dancehall are closely connected, with artists acknowledging their similarities while also emphasizing differences in rhythm, tempo, and purpose. While some argue that dancehall is inherently more provocative, others believe its themes can be diverse, advocating for more positive and educational content. Additionally, Gambian dancehall is shaped by cultural and societal norms, making it softer and more restrained compared to its Jamaican counterpart, reflecting the different levels of artistic freedom in both regions.

c. The Role of Musicians

One aspect that the interviews revealed to play a role in the artists' linguistic as well as creative choices is the role and purpose, they ascribe to themselves as musicians and to their craft within society.

To TopGun music plays a significant role in shaping the attitudes and behaviours of the youth. He asserts that many young individuals aspire to emulate their favourite artists, making it crucial for musicians to be mindful of the messages they convey, especially since the modern era provides unprecedented access to music for all age groups. Consequently, the content of the lyrics should be carefully considered to positively influence and enhance the mindset of listeners. When it comes to reggae and dancehall music, the artist notes that the latter often includes explicit or controversial language that, while potentially popular and commercially successful, may not always be suitable for young audiences. For TopGun, the primary goal of music is to offer value and positive impact to its listeners, particularly younger generations who are impressionable and influential in shaping the future. Therefore, TopGun takes his responsibility of being an artist seriously and sees it as a leadership role. Using Vybz Kartel as an example, he notes that even while incarcerated, Kartel's impact remained strong, with followers imitating his persona. (TopGun aka Anker)

TopGun argues that many artists today are primarily focused on achieving fame and financial gain. He contrasts this with the mindset of those who are deeply committed to a greater cause, suggesting that such individuals approach their work with a broader perspective. TopGun asserts that a strong belief in a purpose beyond personal gain leads to a more profound impact, as opposed to being driven merely by superficial desires for fame and wealth. (TopGun aka Anker)

He further asserts that music must improve society and foster creativity. He emphasises the importance of understanding history to enrich one's perspective on life and subsequently use music as a tool to guide listeners towards a more informed future. (TopGun aka Anker) This attitude is in line with the countries rich griot tradition which traces back to the 13th century. In the Mali Empire under Sunjata Keita, griots were part of the "nyamakala" caste within Mandé society. Therefore, griots were grouped in with artisans such as blacksmiths, potters, and leatherworkers, and have historically adhered to endogamous practices. Their command of speech serves as a powerful tool of persuasion, mediation, emotional evocation, and mobilization. Traditionally, griots played a crucial role in servicing political rulers and influential families through preserving their family history, performing praise songs, acting as

diplomatic intermediaries, maintaining oral histories, engaging in political discourse, and providing entertainment. While their function was historically confined to the elite, contemporary griots engage with a broader audience but still get commissioned by political leaders and entrepreneurs to celebrate lineage, ethnicity, and achievements. Their expertise in oration and musical performance has garnered them significant prestige across West Africa, with recording technologies further elevating some to international prominence. (Marchand 2015: 356)

The aim to use music for teaching is shared by Darka who desires to provide a positive example for his children, who are of mixed Austrian and African heritage, by addressing his own experiences with racism and violence in his music. Reflecting on his past, he recalls encountering racial hostility while playing football, which led to physical confrontations that he now views as problematic. He asserts that life is fleeting, and it is crucial to overcome hatred and embrace togetherness, as the individuals we may oppose today could be essential to us in the future. Therefore, Darka's music embodies his commitment to fostering unity and love, advocating for harmony and mutual respect. (Darka)

Darka, however, is not the only one whose artistic choices have been impacted by their personal experience. TopGun too believes that their personal choices and public image are intertwined with their professional work. He suggests that considerations about one's future family and the impact on one's children are crucial. For instance, he cites his own experience as an artist, where his daughter struggled to understand the imagery in his music videos, which featured multiple women. This confusion led her to question his behaviour, illustrating the personal repercussions that public personas can have on family life. TopGun concludes that managing one's public image is essential, particularly when it may affect one's family. (TopGun aka Anker)

The interviews highlight that artists' linguistic and creative choices are influenced by their perceived societal role and responsibility. TopGun views music as a tool for shaping youth attitudes and fostering positive change, emphasizing the importance of responsible messaging over commercial success. Similarly, Darka integrates his personal experiences with racism and violence into his music to promote unity and mutual respect, demonstrating how personal and public identities intersect in shaping artistic expression.

d. Language Repertoires

Culter and language, while two different entities, are closely linked. Ochse and Schieffelin (2012: 1) even argue “[...] *that language is a fundamental medium in children’s development of social and cultural knowledge and sensibilities.*” Therefore, in this subchapter, I explore the three musicians’ language repertoire to find out not only which languages they speak but also in which context they have been learnt and used. Rather than having an isolated look at their language usage in their music, incorporating language repertoires allows to explore the musicians’ language ideologies and socialization.

Language socialization research thereby emerged in the 1980s to address the sociocultural factors affecting children’s communicative practices, which were overlooked in previous research. It highlights the importance of the content, source, and language variety in children’s learning instead of solely focusing on the acquisition of sounds and structures. (Ochse/Schieffelin 2012: 2) Language socialization is said to result in children and novices becoming fluent communicators and integrated members of their communities. This process is universal and underpins engagement within and across linguistic communities, contributing to globalised institutions. (Ochse/Schieffelin 2012: 6ff)

Despite being more context-inclusive, the term ‘socialization’ has been criticised for being deterministic and overly focused on the transition into adulthood, with similar critiques directed at the concept of “enculturation”. Moreover, research from the early 20th century often argued that children’s conformity to cultural norms is instinctive. Yet, this view has since been challenge showing that younger individuals, empowered by new technologies, can at times assume the expert role. Though, social inequalities in expert-novice interactions remain. (Ochse/Schieffelin 2012: 3f)

Despite the universal applicability of the theory, language socialization is deeply local and context-dependent, as individuals are immersed in social interactions from birth. Through exposure to culturally embedded linguistic cues, they develop an understanding of diverse social contexts and not only learn a language but also the cultural frameworks that shape communication. Language socialization bridges key dualisms, such as nature/nurture, individual/society, and mind/culture, highlighting its role in both personal and collective development. (Ochse/Schieffelin 2012: 8)

In postcolonial societies, language socialization among young children plays a crucial role in driving language shift. In Dominica (West Indies), where the declining status of Afro-French Creole in relation to English for instance is shaped by socialization practices in which caregivers

emphasise English as the language of respect, while discouraging the use of Creole since it was regarded as inappropriate. (Ochse/Schieffelin 2012: 15) Especially in conflict situations or when a steep language hierarchy prevails in a country, as is the case in many postcolonial locations such as Dominica, language ideologies become even more apparent in speakers' language choices (Slezak 2019). Similarly, small-scale changes in language socialization can, in some cases, be a significant factor in the process of language shift (Ochse/Schieffelin 2012: 15). In the case of this case study, the fact that the artists grew up in a multilingual, postcolonial society, and additionally listening to music sung in Jamaican from an early age (Darka; TopGun aka Anker; T Smallz Suso), may have affected their own language choices and their cultural understanding.

Before diving into the artists' language repertoire, I will now define the term as I have used it for the purpose of this thesis. Thereby, I would like to begin with the definition provided by Gumperz (cited in Pütz 2004: 227; Huber 2012: 19). Gumperz was the first to introduce the term "linguistic repertoire" in 1964. This term describes a unit consisting of various languages and dialects, which together form a "behavioral whole" (Huber 2012: 19). These linguistic resources do not always correspond directly to the associated speech community (Huber 2012: 19). However, they form the basis for speakers' continuous decision-making regarding language choice (Pütz 2004: 227).

Next, I will discuss the definition provided by Pütz (2004). Strictly speaking, Pütz expands on Gumperz's definition by dividing it into two distinct repertoires: the "linguistic repertoire" and the "communicative repertoire" (Pütz: 226f). According to Pütz (2004: 226), the linguistic repertoire refers to "[...] *the totality of linguistic resources available to a speaker in specific situational contexts.*" This indicates that the linguistic repertoire is constantly evolving and requires speakers to express themselves in a register-appropriate manner, adapting to the given situation. In contrast, the communicative repertoire, as defined by Pütz (2004: 227), is broader, encompassing not only linguistic elements but also all paralinguistic and nonverbal aspects. The concept of linguistic repertoire applies not only to monolingual speakers but also to multilingual individuals. In the latter case, language choice and code-switching become particularly relevant. Whether consciously or unconsciously, multilingual speakers must choose from their available linguistic resources to express themselves appropriately in any given communicative situation. This principle also applies to monolingual speakers to some extent, as different registers and sociolects represent distinct components of the linguistic repertoire. Furthermore, the linguistic repertoire is directly linked to a heterogeneous society.

Consequently, the analysis of linguistic repertoires focuses on linguistic variation and function in relation to the speaker's social environment. (Pütz 2004: 227)

This perspective can be well complemented by Huber (2012: 24) who states that the linguistic repertoire is "*based on a broad spectrum of voices, discourses, and codes, which are to be understood together with embodied emotional experiences.*" Another aspect of Huber's (2012: 24) definition that differs from previous ones is the idea that a linguistic repertoire also includes languages that speakers do not speak but wish to have as part of their repertoire.

Lastly, I would like to add Slezak's (2019) understanding that linguistic repertoires further stand in relation to its exploration. Based on this, Slezak conceptualises the linguistic repertoire as a process that often begins with a numerically listed set of languages, which is not the primary focus. However, in the end, she often observes a diverse picture that provides insight into what language can encompass. Furthermore, the idea of the linguistic repertoire as a process highlights that it is not static but context dependent. The given situation significantly influences which linguistic resources are available and which can be accessed. Additionally, one's personal stance toward a language varies from context to context. Thus, "*one and the same language can feel closer or more distant, depending on the context or its purpose.*" (Slezak 2019)

Therefore, I understand the linguistic repertoire as encompassing the languages, dialects, registers, and nonverbal elements an individual uses or does not use to communicate in different contexts. It is dynamic, evolving through social interactions and shaped by situational demands. Beyond spoken languages, it includes aspirational ones and reflects personal experiences, social expectations, and communicative environments.

Regarding my interview partners' language repertoire and their language socialisation, I believe they were foremost shaped by their locality since Gambia as a nation is home to several ethnic groups and therefore a mixture of languages and cultural practices. In Gambia, the Mandinka people constitute a significant portion of the population. Although English was introduced during British colonial rule and remains the official and institutionalised language, used in formal education, commerce, and healthcare, local languages like Mandinka continue to be widely spoken in everyday communication. While English is primarily reserved for formal contexts, TopGun believes that local languages, such as Mandinka, are undervalued. The diversity of languages in the Gambia can be seen in TopGun's language proficiency since he speaks Mandinka, Wolof, and English fluently but also knows some Jola, Fula, and Saraule. He is further proficient in German. (TopGun aka Anker)

T Smallz too can speak both Mandinka and Wolof as well as English. He strongly connects the latter with international reach, while Mandinka and Wolof represent home. (T Smallz Suso)

Darka, who speaks Mandinka, Wolof, Jamaican, and English adds that besides English and West African languages, certain social groups further tend to converse in Jamaican. According to Darka, he and some of his friends tend to code switch between Jamaican, Mandinka, and English. He said: “*Then after a little bit of Mandingo again Patwa. you feel like you are in Kingston somewhere.*” (Darka) The artist states that he has taught himself how to speak Jamaican and claims that this practise is so common that even Jamaicans refer to Gambia as the second Jamaica. (Darka)

One language spoken in the Gambia that is mentioned by all interview partner in connection to Jamaican is Aku. TopGun for instance perceives both Jamaican and Aku as being incomplete or broken forms of English. Hence, he believes they are related. (TopGun aka Anker) This perception is shared by DJ Taff who too sees Aku as broken English, which he further equates with Jamaican (DJ Taff). Darka on the other hand refers to Aku as a form of Pidgin English and as “the old Patwa”. He recalls a situation with a Jamaican friend of his as follows:

“I was talking to him, and I was supposed to say, ‘over there so’ and I told him ‘over yander’, meaning ‘over there’. And he was like: ‘[...] How can you speak the old Patwa? Where do you know this from?’”

(Darka)

He goes on stating that Africa is the origin of everything, and that people are often not aware of that connection. (Darka)

Contrarily, in DJ Taff’s view, Gambians often do not know how to speak Jamaican. Nevertheless, he thinks they often understand it. The DJ draws a connection to the language Aku, which is spoken in Gambia. He explains that Aku was brought to the Gambia by formerly enslaved people who had settled in Freetown, Sierra Leone, and then moved to Banjul, Gambia. Therefore, Gambians are accustomed to the sound of the English based Creole. (DJ Taff) Therefore, while none of the interview partners speak Aku, it is part of their language repertoire due to the importance it plays in their life.

Another critical junction in the musicians’ development of their language repertoire that they all shared was their move to Austria. The new environment resulted in a drastic shift in their linguistic environment that each of them had to navigate. For instance, when TopGun moved to Austria, he had to learn German quickly because his new environment in Tirol neither provided many opportunities to speak the Gambian languages he was accustomed to nor English. Moreover, the artist was confronted with racial biases since he experienced that in Austria people are biased towards the language use of Black people. In his experience people in Vienna are taken aback by his proficiency in the Tyrolian dialect that he acquired while living there. (TopGun aka Anker)

Thus, the musicians' language repertoires not only reflect their individual trajectories and cultural influences but also highlight the broader sociolinguistic dynamics at play in postcolonial and diasporic contexts.

In this chapter I therefore examined the language repertoires of the three Gambian musicians I had interviewed, revealing how their multilingual backgrounds and exposure to various linguistic influences, both local and global, have shaped their language ideologies and socialization. Through their fluency in languages like Mandinka, Wolof, English, and Jamaican, as well as their encounters with Austrian German, their linguistic choices illustrate the fluid and evolving nature of language use in globalised, postcolonial societies. The artists' perspectives further underscore the interconnectedness of language, culture, and identity, as well as the impact of historical and social factors on their communicative practices. The impact the artists' language repertoire and the therein embedded language ideologies have had on their language choice in their music will be discussed in detail in the next subchapter.

e. Dancehall Language Ideologies – Of Identity and Belonging

As previously mentioned, speakers' language choices are not independent of language ideologies (see also Pütz 2004: 230). The associated language evaluation can also be explained through ideologies, as they often influence one's perception of a language. For example, there is the notion that languages can be classified into levels and formally assessed.

This evaluation of languages is sometimes very evident in everyday life, such as when judges:

„[...] von vornherein davon ausgehen, dass Leuten aus afrikanischen Ländern, aus afrikanischen Herkunftsländern, ein schlechtes Englisch sprechen, oder ein Englisch sprechen, das nicht perfekt ist.“

(Slezak 2019)

"[...] automatically assume that people from African countries, from African backgrounds, speak poor English or speak English that is not perfect."

(Slezak 2019)

Similarly, my interview partners evaluate the languages available to them, which ultimately influences their language choices. Believes such as DJ Taffs, that Jamaican negatively influences the ability of Gambians to speak proper English and even going as far as claiming that Jamaican “[...] *spoils many English[es]*” (DJ Taff), has consequences on the languages used by artists. The DJs understanding of Jamaican is thereby in line with the years-long misunderstanding that Jamaican and other Creole languages are merely a worse version of English due to their lexical similarity (Sebba 1996: 51). Despite other artists making similar

negatively connotated comments towards Jamaican, calling it “broken” (sic!) (TopGun aka Anker), this perception does not seem to influence or drive the artists’ language choice. Contrarily, TopGun explains that he uses Jamaican in his lyrics because its structure seems to better fit the rhyme schemes in his lyrics. The artist finds it easier to combine the different lines in his music into a song, when using Jamaican due to letter dropping. (TopGun aka Anker)

Therefore, other factors must be more important in the process of language selection. Slezak (2019) argues that language use can further depend on communication or interaction partners. In this process, not only one's own expectations are considered, but also what the speech partner expects, uses, or understands. Language choice is therefore an adaptation process. As a result, such situations can lead to parties not basing their language choice on the actual communication possibilities but rather limit them to those that appear acceptable. (Slezak 2019)

A good example of such considerations is that TopGun, despite the rhyme-advantage mentioned above, he claims to use standard English for around 95 to 99 percent of his lyrics because he does not want to imitate anyone by using Jamaican (TopGun aka Anker). T Smallz shares the sentiment of not wanting to imitate anyone. When it comes to using Jamaican in his music, he explained that he can use some Jamaican but not to the extend a Jamaican artist would. This is especially the case in collaborations. In his own words, T Smallz explained why he prefers to use a Gambian language when working with Jamaican artists as follows:

“I cannot be 100% like he is because this is his house, this is his own. You know. But I can bring my house to his [...] house. And this makes my house noticed and that’s what I did with the language.”

(T Smallz Suso)

Besides trying not to copy others, the artists use languages with their possible audience reach in mind. T Smallz for instance stated that he can speak both Mandinka and Wolof as well as English, which is one of the primary languages used by T Smallz in his music. This is largely due to English being able to reach a broad international audience. However, there are situations, when he aims for a song to achieve significant success in specific regions (e.g. Senegal), in which he incorporates region-specific languages such as Wolof into his lyrics. Thus, he can ensure that the local audience can understand the content. He further explains that if the song should appeal to listeners beyond the Wolof-speaking community, he may feature an artist who speaks French. By combining English, Wolof, and French in the same song, he enhances its potential to engage a more diverse audience. (T Smallz Suso)

TopGun, in accordance with his perception of Jamaican stated above, refers to English as “*the clearer language*” (sic!) in comparison to Jamaican, explaining that a wider range of listeners can understand and engage with the music if it is in English. Therefore, to broaden his audience,

the musician primarily sings in English. However, he has recognised the growing demand for the inclusion of Mandinka. Though he has not produced any yet, but he had begun working on some songs – both in collaboration with a friend and on his own. (TopGun aka Anker)

Darka, who uses a fast variety of languages in his music such as Mandinka, Wolof, English, and Jamaican, also tries to include different languages in his songs to reach a wider audience. He states that Jamaican gives people from Jamaica a part they understand and relate to. On the other hand, Mandinka and Wolof speaks to listeners from Gambia, Mali, and Senegal, and English is universally understood, including by Europeans. An example for his integration of different languages into his music is the song “Good Morning”. In it, the artist codeswitches between English and Mandinka. (Darka) While the chorus is mostly in English, the verses use both languages (Darkaofficial 2020).

The interviews also made clear that the choice of language is strongly connected to feelings of identity and belonging since, according to T Smallz Suso, representing your roots and identity is an important part of language choice in music. This notion thereby is twofold.

On the one hand, the artists incorporate Gambian languages to connect themselves to their roots and the Gambian audience. Overusing Jamaican as an African artist can therefore leave the impression that one is a sell-out, ignoring their African identity (see also Ghanaweb.com 2018). Thus, the aspect of cultural representation instead of attempting to outdo Jamaicans in their own style is crucial. For example, T Smallz states that if he would collaborate on a song with Jay-Z, he would not try to out-rap him in English. Instead, he would incorporating his own language to help him stand out on the track. This form of cultural representation has become a concept that African artists are increasingly aware of in recent years. T Smallz adds that maintaining a strong and consistent presence in and connection to his home country will also benefit his international reach. Regardless of his location, he will always represent the Gambia, and this identity will accompany him wherever he goes. However, this does not imply that he will not use English. In fact, when working on projects such as an album, he tries to cater to diverse audiences by segmenting the album. For example, he might divide the album into distinct sections, with one part specifically tailored for his Gambian community and another for his international audience. (T Smallz Suso)

On the other hand, the musician also acknowledges that as a dancehall artist, fusing Jamaican into the lyrics is a necessity because incorporating Jamaican into dancehall music is essential for gaining acceptance within the dancehall community. The extent to which this is necessary, however, depends on the target audience. For example, in Guinea, Conakry, the artist Takana Zion enjoys immense popularity despite the fact that many of his dancehall songs are performed

entirely in his local language. These songs are widely embraced within Conakry, even though the language differs from traditional dancehall music. On the other hand, the rhythmic elements as well as the vocal style clearly identify the music as dancehall by adhering to dancehall conventions. (T Smallz Suso)

Darka agrees that the language in dancehall and reggae is supposed to be at least partly Jamaican. While he believes that one can use other languages like German for other genres, such as hip-hop, and make it work, dancehall requires a distinct code to match both the lyrics as well as the expectations of listeners. (Darka)

Therefore, T Smallz and Darka recognize the importance of “we-code” versus “them-code” in dancehall, which are based on the social ideologies connected to the languages involved and create notions of identity and belonging. (Deuber 2018: 153)

The only interviewed artists who disagreed was TopGun. He stood his ground arguing that using Jamaican solely because he feels pressured to by the genre is not an option for the musician. In his view, reggae and dancehall can be in any language, stating that there is good reggae music in German too. Personally, TopGun actually aims to avoid Jamaican in his lyrics. This is not because he does not want to or cannot speak it but rather to make his lyrics more accessible to a broader audience. (TopGun aka Anker)

Despite their strong stance on Jamaican being an integral part of dancehall, Darka admits that in Gambia, there are artists that do sing in Mandinka or Wolof and their lyrics are great (Darka). T Smallz additionally believes music performed in for example Swahili can still be recognised as dancehall due to its characteristic beat and flow, even if the lyrics are not understood. He believes that if you present a Jamaican dancehall enthusiast with various versions of a song, such as reggae, hip-hop, and Afrobeats, they will instinctively identify the dancehall version, regardless of the language. (T Smallz Suso)

This can be explained by the stylistic consistency within dancehall music regardless of the language choice. Darka makes a comparison with his perception of Sarkodi, a prominent artist from Ghana. While an American listener might express admiration for Sarkodi despite not fully understanding the lyrical content of his music, his skilful use of punchlines clearly establishes him as a hip-hop artist. This example underscores the notion that music transcends language barriers. In the case of dancehall with non-Jamaican lyrics, listeners from Jamaica might not categorise it as traditional Jamaican dancehall, though they would probably recognise it as African dancehall, identifiable through its characteristic beats. (Darka)

In the context of music transcending language choices and barriers, T Smallz uses the saying "*music has no boundaries*," (T Smallz Suso) which suggests that the language used in music

should not really matter. Advances in technology now allow music to be translated into various languages, making it less of a barrier. The essence of music like its melodies, the soul part of it, plays a crucial role in how it is received by listeners. For instance, if an artist is not fluent in a particular language, such as German, and attempts to incorporate it into their music, the result might not be linguistically perfect. However, the overall quality of the song can still be appreciated by the audience. An example is the song "Jerusalema" by Master KG. Even though many listeners may not understand the lyrics, the song has become a global success. (T Smallz Suso)

Besides the artists' language usage in their own music, I was further interested in how language choices may be influenced during collaborations with other artists and how a consensus is found. Only TopGun and T Smallz stated that they have collaborated with other artists.

In terms of language choice, collaborations do not affect TopGun's choice of language in music. Most of his songs are written primarily in English as discussed before. Even when collaborating with artists, who sing in other languages, the crucial factor for the artist is understanding the other's lyrical content and creating a thematic alignment of their lyrics to ensure that the English lyrics and those in the other language are maintaining a cohesive overall message. For him, it is crucial not only for listeners to enjoy the music but also to understand the language in which it is sung. (TopGun aka Anker)

On the other hand, T Smallz has collaborated with various dancehall artists globally. Notably, he has worked with I-Octane, a dancehall artist from Jamaica, and Terry Geez from Nigeria, who is primarily associated with Afrobeats. His language choice therein has been very intentional and goal oriented. For instance, in his collaboration with I-Octane, T Smallz composed his own verse and wrote the English chorus for the song, incorporating some Wolof to represent his heritage. His intention was to ensure that listeners could distinguish his cultural background despite the collaboration. Given that I-Octane was featured on the track, T Smallz aimed to create a unique identity for himself by blending English with Wolof. This fusion allows listeners to recognise the African origin of the song, particularly when they hear the Wolof segments, which in the artist's eyes adds an element of excitement and cultural authenticity to the dancehall rhythm. (T Smallz Suso) Therefore, even in collaborations, identity building is on the forefront of reasons for language choices.

All in all, in the context of dancehall performed by non-Jamaicans, struggles of multiple identities have led to Jamaican becoming a double-edged sword for the artists. On the one hand, using Jamaican is seen as essential for the identification with the genre. With arguments such

as that, while there are a lot of successful dancehall artists who do not speak Jamaican, it is appropriate to have some Jamaican in your music as a reggae or dancehall artist. (T Smallz Suso) On the other, it can also lead to perceptions of inauthenticity if overused. This goes as far as the accusation that artists who frequently use Jamaican may be sell-outs. Nevertheless, due to the genre's pressure artists like the two Ghanaian dancehall artists Shattawale and Stonebwoy still feel compelled to use it. This is likely due to the expectations of their dancehall-oriented audience. (T Smallz Suso)

Moreover, languages are used to create and strengthen identities. Jamaican can present the artists as a tool to show belonging to the dancehall scene and establish their identity as a reggae-dancehall artist. This is especially important because of today's reclamation of power by Jamaican dancehall artists through their use of Jamaican. Jamaican artists deliberately use the language associated with lower-class Jamaicans as a way to resist global neo-colonial values. By speaking Jamaican Patois, they compel international audiences to learn the language if they want to sincerely engage with dancehall and Jamaican culture (Kingston Mann 2016: 274). In doing so, they reverse traditional power dynamics, positioning Jamaicans as the authorities while outsiders must put in effort to understand both the music and its language (Kingston Mann 2015: 479). For Gambian artists, similarly, incorporating Gambian languages reflects their Gambian heritage and creates an invisible bond with their country of origin and their audiences there, strengthening their identity as Gambian musicians. Though, they too must understand and produce Jamaican to an extent to access the global dancehall audience and the music in it. Meanwhile, the inclusion of English seems to stand for their internationality, their movement in both geographical space and culture, and their agency within a world of globalisation, where the audience is no longer limited to a given speech community.

Part III: CONCLUSION

VIII. Conclusion

This thesis has addressed critical gaps in the study of dancehall music and the linguistic practices within it, particularly in relation to non-Jamaican artists in the Austrian diaspora. By examining the language repertoires, ideologies, and linguistic choices of Gambian dancehall artists, it has demonstrated how Jamaican functions as a transnational, performative tool for identity construction in globalized cultural spaces.

Through a combination of interviews and surveys, the thesis has contributed to the understanding of dancehall's evolution, particularly in the ways Gambian artists navigate its stylistic and thematic boundaries. While recognizing dancehall's historical and ideological connection to reggae, the study has also revealed how the genre is constantly reshaped by its practitioners, with contemporary artists blending elements from hip-hop, Afrobeats, and other musical traditions. This finding underscores the fluidity of genre classifications and highlights the ways in which dancehall, as a global phenomenon, continues to evolve in response to cultural and linguistic hybridity.

Additionally, the study has shed light on the role of musicians as cultural agents, revealing that many Gambian dancehall artists view their craft not only as entertainment but as a means of social influence and responsibility. Their perspectives reflect both a continuation of the West African griot traditions and a contemporary engagement with music as a platform for shaping societal attitudes, particularly among the youth. This challenges the dominant perception of dancehall as primarily provocative or commercially driven, instead emphasizing its potential for positive and conscious messaging.

Furthermore, this research has provided empirical insights into how Gambian artists engage with Jamaican as a marker of dancehall culture and belonging within the global dancehall community. The findings highlight how their use of language is shaped not only by musical influences they grew up around but also by broader socio-cultural and ideological considerations. This study has shown that language is not merely a medium of communication in dancehall but an active site of identity negotiation, where artists assert their place within a musical tradition that extends beyond national borders, while other languages are used to keep their connection to their Gambian roots.

As previously mentioned, speakers' language choices are not independent of language ideologies. For instance, some artists believe that the use of Jamaican may negatively impact

their English proficiency, while others recognise the structural advantages it provides for musical composition. Despite these contrasting perceptions, Jamaican remains an integral part of their linguistic repertoire reflected in their music. While some artists see Jamaican as essential for genre legitimacy, others resist pressures to conform entirely to its linguistic norms. The balance between using Jamaican and maintaining a unique artistic identity is delicate, reflecting broader issues of authenticity and cultural representation. Some artists fear being perceived as inauthentic if they overuse Jamaican, while others see it as necessary for gaining recognition within the dancehall scene. This duality underscores the complex dynamics of language in the globalized music industry.

Language choice is further influenced by audience reach and identity considerations. Artists like T Smallz, Darka, and TopGun strategically decide when to incorporate Gambian languages, English, or Jamaican to connect with different listener groups. Some prioritise English for its broad international reach, while others integrate Wolof or Mandinka to strengthen ties with local audiences. In collaborations, musicians often balance these choices to maintain both authenticity and accessibility.

Ultimately, this research highlights the dynamic nature of language and music as vehicles of identity, demonstrating how Gambian artists in Austria engage with dancehall not only as a genre but as a cultural practice that allows them to navigate, negotiate, and assert their artistic and social identities on a global stage.

IX. Limitations and Future Research

By focusing on the underexplored intersection of language, music, and identity in transnational dancehall communities, this thesis has contributed to broader discussions on linguistic globalization, cultural hybridity, and the role of language in artistic expression. The empirical research presented in this study has several limitations that need to be considered. Yet, it has provided a foundation for further research into the diasporic circulation of Jamaican and its socio-cultural significance beyond the Caribbean.

Firstly, the study focuses on a specific group of Gambian dancehall artists based in Austria. This narrow sample size of three male artists and one community spokesperson in the music scene may not fully represent the broader experiences of non-Jamaican dancehall artists across various diaspora communities. Beckford Wassink (1999: 82) also mentions gender-based differences in language attitudes towards Jamaican with men seeing Jamaican in a slightly more positive light than women. Expanding the research to include artists from different cultural

backgrounds or geographical locations as well as of both genders could offer a more inclusive understanding of the linguistic choices and identity construction within the global dancehall scene.

Secondly, the study relies heavily on self-reported data through interviews and surveys. This methodology introduces the possibility of bias, as artists may present their language choices in ways that align with a desired image rather than reflecting their true practices. Therefore, the topic could benefit from data triangulation in the form of a linguistic analysis of the artists' lyrics. A more thorough examination of the syntax, phonology, and code-switching patterns within the lyrics could provide deeper insights into the role of Jamaican as a performative tool in the dancehall music of non-Jamaican artists. Such a linguistic breakdown could strengthen the argument about how language is strategically employed in the construction of identity and in navigating the global dancehall space.

Another opportunity for future research could be the inclusion of audience perspectives in the analysis. While the study provides valuable insights into the linguistic choices of artists, it does not fully explore how audiences interpret or respond to these choices. Understanding the reception of language by listeners is essential for gaining a more holistic view of the role of language in transnational dancehall music. Future research could benefit from incorporating audience analysis to explore how language usage influences fan engagement and identity construction within the diaspora.

While I did explore the influence of digital and social media platforms, such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram, in terms of their role in making dancehall music accessible globally, it did not explore how digital spaces shape language practices. The globalization of dancehall has been facilitated by these platforms, and understanding their impact could offer valuable insights into how non-Jamaican dancehall artists interact with their audiences and use language to engage a wider fan base.

Furthermore, the study does not examine the evolution of language practices over time. Artists' linguistic choices may evolve due to various factors, such as changes in industry trends, personal experiences, or feedback from their audiences. A longitudinal study tracking these shifts could reveal how non-Jamaican dancehall artists adapt their language usage and identity construction throughout their careers, providing a deeper understanding of the dynamics within the genre.

Lastly, DJ Taff, suggested that further research into dancehall in the Senegambia region would reveal cultural differences between the region and other sides of dancehall culture, and provide insight into how local cultural norms influence the genre's development. (DJ Taff)

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Appendix

Declaration of Consent

Research project:

Master thesis with the topic: language usage of dancehall artists in the Gambian diaspora in Austria

Interviewer: Nadine Okalanwa

I was briefed on the process of transcribing, data storage, and analysis of the given interview. I am aware that my participation in this interview is by voluntary and I have the possibility to stop and leave at any point during the interview. I further am aware of my right to withdraw my given consent at any time without any negative consequences for myself.

I agree to

- the digital recording of the interview.
☐ yes ☐ no
- the transcription and coding of the interview.
☐ yes ☐ no
- the use of the interview for research purposes.
☐ yes ☐ no
- the publication of interview sequences in written form in the above mentioned thesis.
☐ yes ☐ no
- the discussion and sharing of the interview transcript with thesis supervisor Assoz. Prof. Mag. Dr. Birgit Englert.
☐ yes ☐ no
- the use of interview sequences during public presentations.
☐ yes ☐ no

I would like my data to be used

☐ in anonymized form. ☐ under the following name:

_____.

Under the above mentioned circumstances I agree to participate in the interview.

Place, date, name (in block letters)

signature