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An Inside Look at Gullah: What Makes it Distinctive

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0. Introduction

As a linguist, I value diversity. The theme of this conference is to consider "underrepresented linguistic varieties in the Lowcountry and beyond," and that fits very well with my interest in Gullah and other creole languages. As a linguist, I don't consider there to be any "incorrect" or substandard language forms. They are all fascinating and valued. (Well, to tell the truth, sometimes I make private judgments, such as when I hear someone say "just between you and I….") Sociolinguistically-speaking, one's attitude toward linguistic forms will tend to match one's attitude toward the people that use those forms.

If you tell someone (at least outside of the academic setting) that you are a linguist, you will probably get asked the same question I get asked: "How many languages do you speak?" You can hardly blame them for asking, because in some contexts such as the military, a linguist is defined as someone who learns to speak one or more other languages. I usually say that while I speak some Spanish and French, linguistics involves a study of the principles of language in general. In the process of trying to understand the nature of language in general, we are exposed to bits of lots of different languages. But I add that I have a special interest in creole languages, and three specific languages that I have focused on and can speak with some degree of fluency are French Creole as spoken on the island of Saint Lucia, Gullah (an English Creole), and the Portuguese Creole spoken in Guinea-Bissau, West Africa.

When I mention my interest in creole languages, an inevitable next question is "What really is a creole language?" Creolists love to debate that question. There is a class of languages we call creole languages that have a great deal in common in terms of structure, and a big question is how they got to be that way. Creolists are far from united on the question of *creole genesis*. A related question is whether creole languages are *exceptional*, that is, whether it makes sense to talk in terms of "normal" or "regular" languages on one hand, and creole languages on the other, which arose out of a situation that causes them to be exceptional in some important ways.

Without getting too invested in the debates over creole genesis and exceptionalism, I offer my simple definition of a creole as being a language that has an identifiable starting point, which is typically (but not always) in the context of colonialism and the slave trade. People are brought together—sometimes forcibly—from various languages, without having any language in common, and must devise a way of talking with each other. It begins with a pidgin language that is by definition *ad hoc* and nobody's native language, but when children are born into this context and the contact language variety becomes the native language of a community, it takes on a more definite shape, becoming what we call a *creole* language.[2] There is normally an identifiable

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[2] There are languages that have in fact become creole languages though they are still identified with the label *pidgin*, such as Hawaiian Pidgin (also known as Hawaiian Creole English) and New Guinea Pidgin English (also known as Neo-Melanesian).

superstrate language such as English or French, coming from the dominant colonialist culture, but this creole language is not English or French. It has its own distinctive structure. This distinctive structure *may* be explainable in terms of substrate influences, such as particular African languages, but this is debatable. It may be best not to explain creole languages as *mixtures* of English or French with certain other particular languages, but rather as *creolized* forms of English or French or Portuguese or whatever.

Regardless of what is the *lexifier language* (English, French, Portuguese, etc.), that is, the language that most of the words of the creole language obviously come from, there will be structural differences between the creole and its lexifier language, and furthermore the things that make the creoles different from each other tend to, at the same time, make them similar to each other, which begs for explanation, and thus the different theories of creole genesis.

There is the relexification model *a là* Claire Lefebvre of the University of Quebec that proposes that creole languages are substrate languages relexified with the vocabulary of the superstrate languages, so, for example, Haitian Creole is Fon grammar from West Africa with a French lexicon overlaid upon it. A similarity among the grammars of creole languages would reflect a common substrate influence, even though the superstrate might be French or English or some other colonialist language. There is the monogenesis hypothesis, which proposes that there was one original pidgin language that started in West Africa and was spread around by sailors, again subject to relexification. That is not a popular theory any more, but it is not dead completely, and it would help explain why creole languages are similar to each other. There is Derek Bickerton's bioprogram hypothesis, which concludes that creole languages are indeed exceptional in that they result from a clean break in language transmission whereby a new language has to be created. Without having any ancestral language passed down to them, children create the creole language using the default grammatical features that are innate in the human mind. Thus creole languages, more than any other, reflect the natural workings of the human mind, uncorrupted by millennia of linguistic history. There is Salikoko Mufwene's ecological model of language, which says that there is nothing exceptional about creole languages. Every language is a simple product of the input it has had, and creole languages can only be identified through our knowledge of their history, and not by a set of linguistic characteristics that they have in common.

Derek Bickerton makes a strong claim that a true creole language represents a break in transmission from ancestral languages whereby the children are in a position to create a new language, and he claims that the language created by children, which we call a creole language, tells us something important about the innate language faculty. This ties in with Noam Chomsky's conceptualization of universal grammar, which is supposedly somehow hard-wired into the brain. The idea is that humans have an innate faculty of language that interacts with exposure to bits of linguistic input in the environment and results in such an amazing capability of a child to acquire a particular language, to learn to speak. Creole languages constitute an interesting test case because of the inadequate exposure to any mother tongue in their formation.

What has gotten the most attention and generated the most excitement in the field of linguistics in the past several decades is the quest to determine what all languages have in common, and in turn to determine what that tells us about humanity as a species. What makes languages different and distinctive has become less important, and a challenge to overcome on the way to

figuring out what all languages have in common. In my evaluation, Derek Bickerton is at his best when it comes to pointing out widespread *tendencies* among creole languages. For Bickerton's biogenesis hypothesis to work as an absolute rule, he has to be selective in the data he will allow. In fact he is proudly selective, or as he might say, discerning.

In 1977, creolist Chris Corne wrote,

> Questions about the 'genesis' of the creole languages, their genetic relations with each other and with their source language(s), the processes of creolisation (and pidginisation), cannot be approached seriously unless we know something about the object being talked about, and that we shall not know (in sufficient detail) until a lot more of the unglamourous drudgery of careful descriptive work has been completed. (Corne 1977:2)

Four years later, in his book *Roots of Language*, Derek Bickerton (1981:44–45) countered,

> This statement shows a profound misunderstanding of the ways in which science is developed and knowledge increases. Empirical knowledge is no guarantee of certitude, and its absence no barrier to insight.... The view that theorists are mere grandstanding prima donnas, while the real work of the trade is done by the modest empirical plodder, is a widespread misconception in creole studies that merely underlines the immaturity of the field.... What is needed is not dogged fact-gathering... but the capacity to distinguish between the trivial and the nontrivial. The task of the theorist is to tell the field worker where to look and what to look for.

Like Chomsky, Bickerton exhibits a Platonic mindset where the goal is to discover the underlying forms, which are more real and significant than what we can perceive with our senses of sight and sound. Language data is like shadows cast on the wall of a cave, and the real goal of a linguistic science is to find out what is casting those shadows, which we will never observe directly. Both Noam Chomsky and Derek Bickerton have done very well for themselves pursuing this line of inquiry. Others of us will have to be satisfied with trying to find out what real, particular languages are like.

The quote from Bickerton and his general approach also suggest enlightenment thinking, such that the important things to be discovered must be discovered by pure reason, done by the right people. That means that those of us who are collecting data in the field are not in a position to know what is really important.

But what if we were to value diversity? What if we were to recognize that there are different logics, and a goal of studying particular languages and cultures is to discover their own rules and logic and what makes them distinctive? What if we were to celebrate the differences? What if the purpose of linguistics were to find the system at work in different languages in all their uniqueness? Theories come and go, but any information we can get about specific languages has enduring value—especially languages that are marginalized or endangered.

It is a privilege to be granted access to a language and culture, to try to see the world as they see it. The owners of the language may not care about your academic reputation, your publications or your theories. In Saint Lucia where my wife and I lived and worked for seventeen years, where our children were born and raised, where we got citizenship and built a home, where the language in question is a French Creole, there was a concerned expressed about "academic imperialism." It was a place where researchers came to collect data for their graduate degrees.

The question became, "When you leave, what are you going to do with the information you got here? Is it just for the sake of your degrees, your publications, to share with the academic world, building your reputation, and not to be shared with the people of Saint Lucia and benefit them?"

Gullah Geechee people have understandably developed a distrust of researchers and are wary of being "interpreted." They have been told that their language is peculiar and substandard. They have been taught that the sooner they learn to speak proper English, the better off they will be. Even those who are amused by the language and who have wanted to collect stories and tell anecdotes about it, acting like the experts, have demeaned the speakers of the language in the process, characterizing the language and its speakers as quaint, backwards, and something less than fully human.[3] Nobody likes to be interpreted, especially when it involves condescension or distortion. And even the most sympathetic of onlookers can be patronizing.

There are three key words in the title of this paper: "Gullah," "inside," and "distinctive." The rest of this paper will have as a goal to present what it is that makes the Gullah language distinctive, attempting—however imperfectly—to find an emic perspective reflecting an insider's view of the language; to discover the logic of the language, the individual system at work.

1. A Closer Look at the Gullah Language

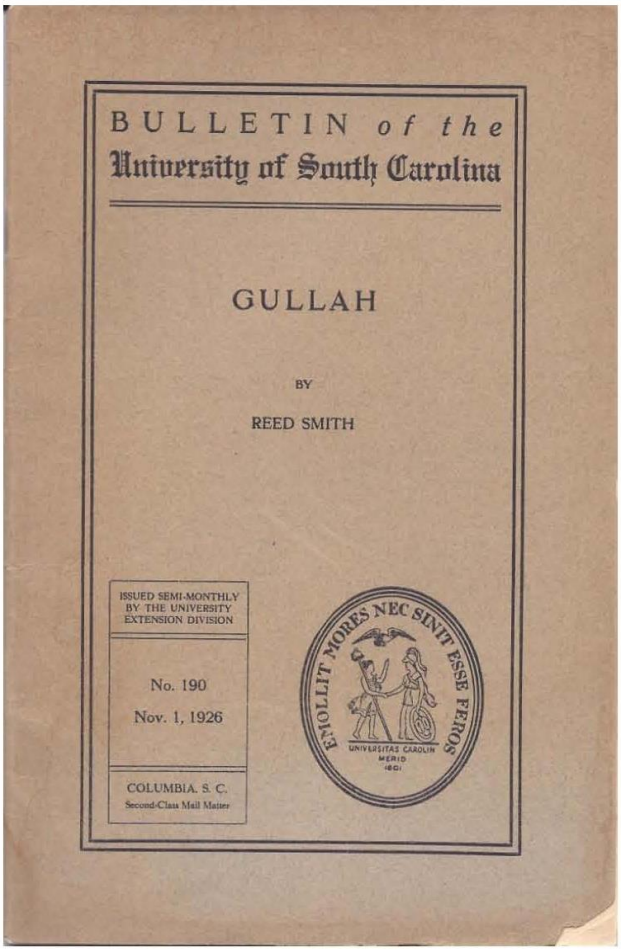
The name *Gullah* pertains to a language and a culture with a distinct heritage centered in the southeastern US along the coastal areas of South Carolina and Georgia, but extending into the southern coastal area of North Carolina and the northern coastal area of Florida. The name *Geechee* is preferred as a cultural identifier in some places, particularly in Georgia; and to show the unity of the culture, the combined name *Gullah Geechee* is now often used. Probably the name Gullah came from that of the Gola people in the Rice Coast area of western Africa, in what is now Liberia and Sierra Leone.

[3] Ambrose Gonzales, founder of *The State* newspaper in Columbia, South Carolina, published Gullah stories in *The Black Border* in 1922. Though Gonzales was in some ways progressive, here is a sample of how he describes the Gullah language and its speakers (1922:10):

> Slovenly and careless of speech, these Gullahs seized upon the peasant English used by some of the early settlers and by the white servants of the wealthier Colonists, wrapped their clumsy tongues about it as well as they could, and, enriched with certain expressive African words, it issued through their flat noses and thick lips as so workable a form of speech that it was gradually adopted by the other slaves and became in time the accepted Negro speech of the lower districts of South Carolina and Georgia. With charateristic laziness, these Gullah negroes took short cuts to the ears of the auditors, using as few words as possible, sometimes making one gender serve for three, one tense for several, and totall disregarding singular and plural numbers. Yet, notwithstanding this economy of words, the Gullah sometimes incorporates into his speech grotesquely difficult and unnecessary English word; again, he takes unusual pains to transpose numbers and genders.

For an interesting converse perspective, consider the situation when the Union Army soldiers took control of the islands off South Carolina during the Civil War. The Northerners were puzzled that the islanders could not understand basic English. Reportedly, "The incomprehension was of course mutual, and the standard Sea Island reaction to such strangers was said to be: 'Dey use dem mout' so funny.'" (Bennett 1908:340, quoted in Wood 1974:190–191)

The first published application of that name to a language[4] is John Bennett's 1908 article in the *South Atlantic Quarterly* titled "Gullah: A Negro Patois," which starts out, "There is a patois spoken in the mainland and island regions, bordering the South Atlantic Seaboard, so singular in its sound as constantly to be mistaken for a foreign language. It is found in no other portion of the South. Ordinary negro dialect found in books has no resemblance to it." In 1926, Reed Smith wrote a booklet called "Gullah," published as *Bulletin of the University of South Carolina number 190*. He wrote, "The term Gullah is a little-known word for a less-known people. It is applied to a special group-type of Negroes, limited historically and geographically to the sea-islands and the narrow tide-water strip bordering the coast counties of South Carolina and Georgia and a small section of north-east Florida. The language spoken by these Negroes constitutes a patois unique among the dialects of the United States."



Gullah, by Reed Smith
©1926, University of South Carolina, 45 pages

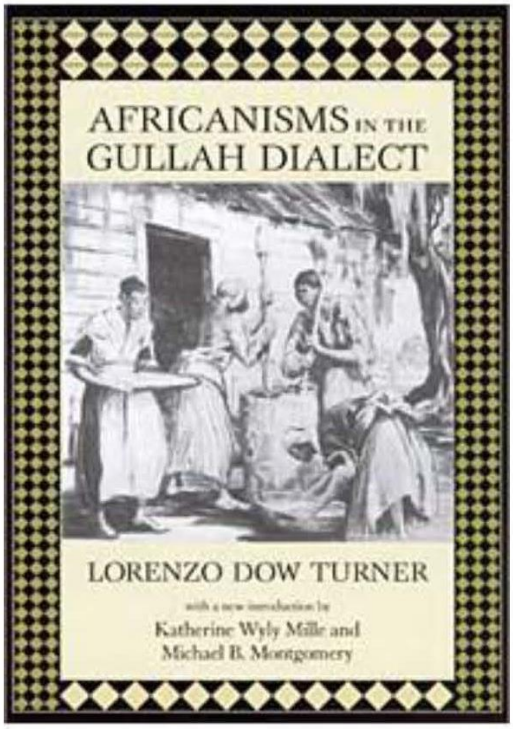
"Even to those familiar with the American Negro through the medium of either life or literature, the term Gullah is a little-known word for a less-known people. It is applied to a special group-type of Negroes, limited historically and geographically to the sea-islands and the narrow tidewater strip bordering the coast counties of South Carolina and Georgia and a small section of north-east Florida. The language spoken by these Negroes constitutes a patois unique among the dialects of the United States....

"Both the word Gullah and the Negroes so named came from the West Coast of Africa, but exactly where has not been agreed upon. There are two widely-held conjectures. One is that Gullah is a shortened form of Angola, the name of an African West Coast district lying south of the Equator and the mouth of the Congo River...." (p. 7)

"A second, more probable suggestion is that Gullah comes from the name of the Liberian group of tribes known as Golas living on the West Coast between Sierra Leone and the Ivory Coast...."

"Whether originally from Angola or from Liberia, these Gullah tribesmen after their enforced immigration to our shores formed a distinct and peculiar group...." (p. 8)

[4] The first documented use of that name for an individual was in the account of the Denmark Vessey slave rebellion of 1822 in Charleston. Jack Pritchard, reportedly originally from Angola, was known as Gullah Jack. He was executed as one of the leaders of the rebellion. Interestingly, Gullah Jack was also known as Couter Jack, *couter* being an English spelling of Gullah /kʊtə/ 'turtle'.



Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect, by Lorenzo Dow Turner
©1949, Univ. of Chicago Press, 321 pages

Republished in 2002 by the Univ. of South Carolina Press

"The distinctiveness of Gullah, the dialect of a large number of Negroes in coastal South Carolina and Georgia, has provoked comment from writers for many years. The assumption on the part of many has been that the peculiarities of the dialect are traceable almost entirely to the British dialects of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and to a form of baby-talk adopted by masters of the slaves to facilitate oral communication between themselves and the slaves. Other persons have not been wholly satisfied with this explanation. The present study, by revealing the very considerable influence of several West Africal languages upon Gullah, will, it is hoped, remove much of the mystery and confusion surrounding this dialect.

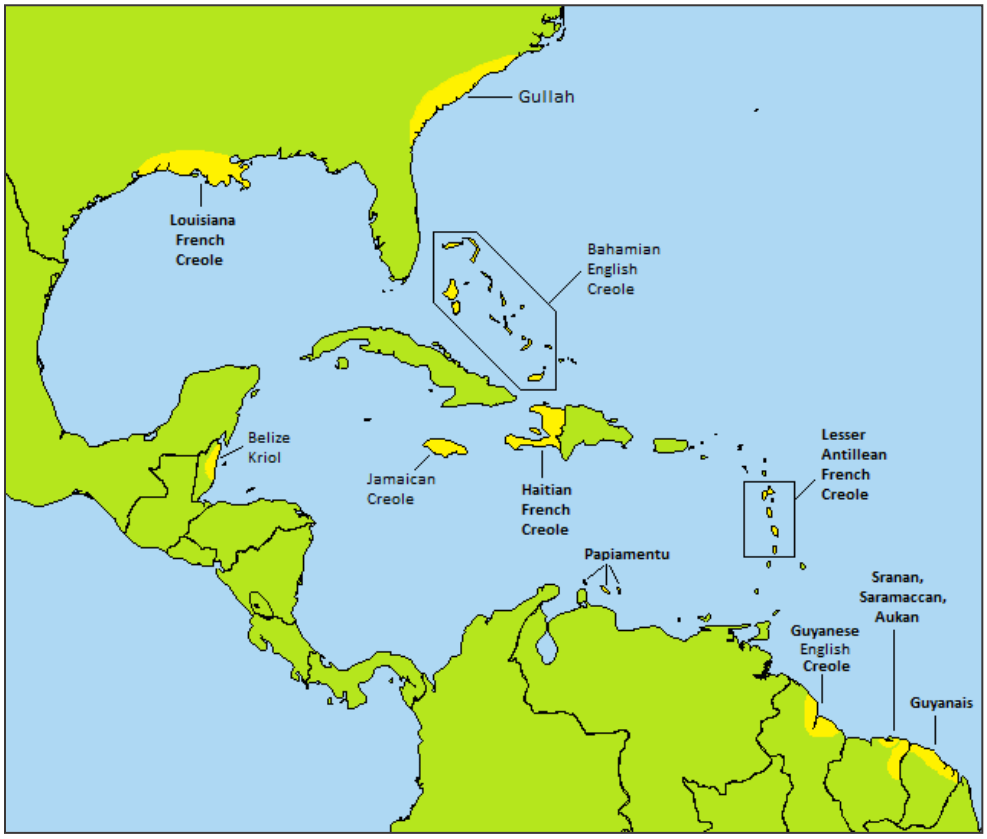
"Gullah is creolized form of English revealing survivals from many of the African languages spoken by the slaves who were brouth to South Carolina and Georgia during the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth. These survivals are most numerous in the vocabulary of the dialect but can be observed also in its sounds, syntax, morphology, and intonation; and there are many striking similarities between Gullah and the African languages in the methods used to form words. The purpose of this study is to record the most important of these Africanisms and to list their equivalents in the West African languages." (from the preface to the first edition)

The most important and most detailed exposition of the Gullah language is Lorenzo Dow Turner's 1949 landmark work *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect*,[5] based on several decades of fieldwork and research. Turner was the first to recognize Gullah for what it was: a creole language with roots in West Africa. He wrote in his preface, "Gullah is a creolized form of English revealing survivals from many of the African languages spoken by the slaves who were brought to South Carolina and Georgia during the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth. These survivals are most numerous in the vocabulary of the dialect but can be observed also in its sounds, syntax, morphology, and intonation…. The purpose of this study is to record the most important of these Africanisms and to list their equivalents in the West African languages." We are indebted to Turner for collecting many Gullah names and other words and painstakingly tracing their origin back to West African sources, and particularly for the data he includes in his book in the form of narratives that he recorded from Gullah speakers and wrote phonetically, adding his translation of them. He even left sound recordings of these narratives.

Lorenzo Dow Turner at work

[5] Originally published in 1949 by the University of Chicago Press, after going out of print Turner's *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect* was republished in 2002 by the University of South Carolina Press, edited by Katherine Wyly Mille and Michael B. Montgomery and with their introduction added.

The existence of Gullah as a language can be attributed to the fact that West Africans from various language groups were forcibly brought together in what became the United States, and some, because of their knowledge of rice culture back in their homeland, were set up to work relatively independently in the southeastern coastal area to produce rice. Without a language in common, of necessity the enslaved Africans created a new language based in the input they had available. Gullah is an English Creole, in that among the languages that went into its formation, English was politically dominant and contributed to the biggest and most recognizable portion of its vocabulary. The purest, most distinctive form of a creole language is in technical terms called the *basilect*, and in the case of Gullah, the basilectal form is known as "deep Gullah." As the original formation of such a language is known as *creolization*, so also when a creole language is in prolonged contact with its lexifier language, it typically undergoes a process called *decreolization* whereby it gradually loses some of its distinctiveness and comes to resemble more its lexifier language, in the case of Gullah being English. Thus Gullah is in a class with other languages that arose in similar circumstances. There are a number of English, French and other creole languages that developed especially, but not exclusively, in the Atlantic part of the New World, as seen in the following map.



Map: Atlantic creole languages

Creole languages are typically stigmatized, considered not to be real languages, symptoms of ignorance, bastardizations of "real" languages, labeled as "broken."[6] Older speakers can tell stories of being disciplined for speaking "broken English," or even of having the Gullah "beaten

[6] I was told of one person who denied being a Gullah speaker, when asked by an interviewer. When the interviewer asked someone else about this man, whether he wasn't a Gullah speaker, the response was, "Oh, yeah, he a Gullah speaker. He speak it real bad."

out of them." Parents, hoping for a better life for their children, have avoided passing the language on to their children or even exposing them to it for fear it will hinder their thinking and ability to communicate. English was perceived as the language of upward mobility.

The 2010 US census listed the number of speakers of Gullah as 350, which is a completely unreliable, presumably self-reported, figure. No proper language survey has been conducted to count the number of speakers of Gullah, and it is likely that none ever will get done. But besides the stigmatization problem, another complication is that due to the decreolization process, there is no clear way to mark where Gullah leaves off and English takes over. Having said that, there are markers of Gullah's distinctiveness as a language, as I will present in the following discussion. There is the issue of bilingualism and code switching. Different language varieties might be used in different contexts. Even if someone is recognized as being a Gullah speaker, it might not be clear whether that person speaks Gullah as a first language and English as a second language, or vice-versa. Due both to normal processes of language change and due to stigmatization, the encroachment of English means that Gullah is a doubly-endangered language.

2. Gullah Phonology

The phones and phonemes of Gullah are not the same as those of English, nor the possible consonant clusters and syllable shapes, nor the intonation. Virtually all Gullah words are taken from English or some other language, but in the borrowing, phonological adjustments are made so that the words fit into the natural sound patterns.

English has several fricative phonemes that Gullah lacks: the voiced bilabial fricative /v/, and the voiced and voiceless interdental fricatives /ð/ and /θ/. As a result, when English words were borrowed into Gullah, the English /v/ was manifested in Gullah as /b/ or a /w/, as in *hab* 'have', *dob* 'dove', *willage* 'village', *wittle* (or *bittle*), 'victuals'. English words with a voiced or voiceless *th* sound correspond to Gullah words with a /t/, /d/, or /z/, as in *anyting* 'anything', *dout* 'without', and *lezza* 'leather'. Gullah does not have the [ɚ] vowel phoneme that some dialects of English have, so, for example, *wod* in Gullah corresponds to English 'word'. It is normal for languages to adapt the pronunciation when borrowing words from another language.

	front	central	back
close	i		u
near-close	ɪ		ʊ
close-mid	e	ə	o
open-mid	ɛ	ʌ	ɔ
open	a		ɑ

diphthongs: ɑɪ, ɑʊ, ɔɪ
nasal vowels: ẽ, ə̃, õ, ɑ̃

Table 1: Gullah vowel phonemes

	bilabial	labiodental	alveolar	postalveolar	palatal	velar	glottal
stop							
voiceless	p		t			k	
voiced	b		d			g	
nasal	m		n			ŋ	
fricative							
voiceless		f	s	ʃ			h
voiced			z				
affricate							
voiceless				ʧ			
voiced				ʤ			
lateral			l				
approximant	w		r		j		

Table 2: Gullah consonant phonemes

The possible consonant clusters and syllable shapes in Gullah overlap with those of English but are not exactly the same. Though Gullah has an /r/ sound, it does not have it in the post-vocalic position; that is, it occurs in the onset of a syllable but not in the coda, as exemplified by Gullah *critta* 'creature' and *demarra maanin* 'tomorrow morning'. Clusters of /str/ and /ʃr/ are not allowed at the beginning of a syllable in Gullah but other clusters are allowed, as in *scrange* 'strange', *scraight* 'straight', *swimp* 'shrimp'.

The intonation of Gullah is markedly different from English. Outsiders hearing the language remark that it has a melodious quality and for the most part they cannot understand what was said. It sounds like the foreign language that it is. If the only differences between Gullah and English were that Gullah took English words and gave them an odd pronunciation, we might be inclined to describe Gullah as a dialect of English rather than as a distinct language. But we are looking at what makes Gullah *structurally* distinctive, starting with the phonology. The distinctiveness of Gullah becomes even more clear when we examine the grammar.

Note that the orthography used in this paper for writing Gullah is adapted from English orthography. Wherever the pronunciation of a Gullah word is significantly different from the pronunciation of the corresponding English word, the spelling is adapted to reflect the Gullah pronunciation. Examples are *nough* 'enough', *cona* 'corner', *deysef* 'themselves', and *chullun* 'children'. It is an imperfect system. A danger in writing Gullah this way is that it might contribute to the misimpression that Gullah is a corrupted form of English. The advantage is that this orthographic convention makes written Gullah accessible to both English speakers and Gullah speakers who are not linguists but who are literate in English. Occasionally in this paper Gullah words are written phonetically, with square brackets [], or phonemically, with slashes //.

3. Word Morphology

One of the most important things to note about Gullah word structure is that words are basically mono-morphemic. Languages of the world vary in morphological complexity, from isolating languages like Gullah that have one morpheme per word, to agglutinative languages that attach subject and object markers to a verb, making it into a complete sentence by itself. English is somewhere in between. Gullah contrasts with English, where it is common for words to have complex stems and inflectional or derivational affixes. Gullah words do not take prefixes and suffixes and are not broken down into smaller meaningful parts. Nouns have an invariant form and do not take a plural suffix. Verbs in Gullah, too, keep a consistent shape are not declined or inflected for tense, person or number. That is not to say that Gullah sentences do not keep track of time, or that knowing when something took place as expressed in Gullah is all a matter of context and guesswork, as some outsiders have claimed who do not understand the system. There is a very definite system at work, different from the system at work in English. This will be explained more completely in the next section.

Gullah verbs fall into two classes, which we label as stative and nonstative, using terminology that has become standard in creole linguistics (see Frank 2007). It is not just a matter of semantics. Stative verbs such as *lob* 'love' or *hab* 'have' behave somewhat differently in relation to nonstative verbs such as *nyam* 'eat' or *wok* 'work'. Again, the significance of this difference will be explained more completely in the next section. This works in Gullah like the stative/active verb distinction that Welmers (1973:346) describes for Niger-Congo languages such as Yoruba: **"**For statives, a reference to present time may use the same construction that refers to past time if an active verb is used…. In Yoruba, the construction in question is the simplest construction in the language, consisting of only a pronoun and a verb root."

Gullah has a symmetrical pronoun system, with a second-person plural pronoun *oona* (or another pronunciation such as *hunna*) that apparently comes from an African language and is shared with other Caribbean English Creole languages such as Jamaican. Gender is not distinguished in the Gullah pronoun set, which contributes to its symmetricality: the Gullah pronoun *e* corresponds to English *he/she/it*.

	SUBJECTIVE		OBJECTIVE	
	singular	plural	singular	plural
1st person	A	we	me	we
2nd person	ya	oona	ya	oona
3rd person	e	dey	um	dem

Table 3: Gullah pronominal system

There are separate but overlapping subjective and objective pronoun sets. Unlike the English *I/me/my* distinction, Gullah does not have a different, third set of pronouns for possessive. In Gullah, for both nouns and pronouns, possession is indicated by syntactic position. This will be further explained in the next section.

4. Phrase and Sentence Structure

Gullah has its own rules of grammar, and in this section we will look into distinctive noun phrase, verb phrase and clause structures in the language. The **noun phrase** consists of a head noun optionally preceded by various modifiers—specifier, number, adjectives—and optionally followed by a plural marker and/or a relative clause.

NP = (predeterminer) (specifier) (number) (adjective) noun (*plural)*

All parts of the noun phrase are optional except for the head noun itself. The specifier slot can be filled by a definite or indefinite article (*a/de*), or by a noun or pronoun or an embedded NP. If a noun or pronoun appears in this position before the head noun, then its role is one of possession. Here are some examples:

a nyoung man	'a young man'	specifier+adjective+noun
seben leetle chullun	'seven little children'	number+adjective+noun
de biggity preacha	'the conceited preacher'	specifier+ adjective+noun
all me fren dem	'all my friends'	predeterminer+specifier+noun+plural
ya wife sista dem	'your wife's sisters'	NP+noun+plural
de shree black hoss dem	'the three black horses'	specifier+number+adjective+noun+plural

The third-person objective pronoun *dem* serves as the plural marker in Gullah. It is not just coincidence that the plural marker takes the form of the third-person plural pronoun. This pattern has been noted as a tendency for creole languages in general. For example, in Haitian French Creole, the third-person plural pronoun is *yo*, and *yo* goes after the head noun in Haitian to make the noun plural.

It has already been noted that Gullah verbs are not declined or inflected for tense or for number agreement with the subject. The Gullah **verb phrase** is distinctive in that, instead of verbs being marked for tense with a suffix like the English *–ed* or aspect like the English *–ing* to denote time and continuity, separate words—particles—go before the verb to mark tense, mood and aspect. The following is the set of preverbal tense-mood-aspect markers in Gullah:

been	anterior tense
gwine	prospective mood
da	imperfective aspect
done	completive aspect

All four of these tense-mood-aspect markers would rarely, if ever, co-occur in the same verb phrase, but the relative order is as follows:

VP = (done) (been) (da) (gwine) verb

The combination of *been* + *da* is common and takes the form *beena*. We have also already noted that two categories of verbs are stative and nonstative, which have different syntactic behaviors.

Before giving examples of verb phrases, it is necessary to reintroduce the distinction made in the previous section between stative and nonstative verbs, since the two sub-classes behave differently with respect to time reference. Gullah works basically the same way that Welmers (*op cit*) noted for Niger-Congo languages, whereby stative verbs have a default time reference of present state, but nonstative verbs (which Welmers calls active verbs) have a default time reference of past. This fact has been a cause of confusion for some outsiders to the language, who have incorrectly concluded that there are no rules for time reference in Gullah; it is all a matter of context. On the contrary, there is a very definite system at work, which becomes more evident once the distinction is made between stative and nonstative.

In order to show how the verb phrase works in Gullah, it is necessary to have two charts —one for stative verbs and one for nonstative. Some examples of stative verbs in Gullah are *hab* 'have', *wahn* 'want', *lob* 'love', *tink* 'think', and *know* 'know'. Again, the distinction is based not just on semantics, nor on transitivity, but on how this sub-class of verbs behaves in the context of the larger verb phrase to denote time reference:

A hab a heapa money.	'I have a lot of money.'
E hab a heapa money.	'He/she has a lot of money.'
E been hab a heapa money.	'He/she had a lot of money.'
E beena hab a heapa money.	'He/she used to have a lot of money.'
E gwine hab a heapa money.	'He/she will have a lot of money.'
E been gwine hab a heapa money.	'He/she was going to/would have a lot of money.'
E done hab a heapa money.	'He/she already has a lot of money.'
E done been hab a heapa money.	'He/she already had a lot of money.'

Stative verb phrase construction

Note that the imperfective aspect marker *da* does not normally go before a stative verb, with the exception of the combination of *been* + *da* = *beena*. The explanation is that stative verbs do not need the addition of an imperfective aspect marker to make them present reference. This contrasts them with nonstative verbs, for which the simple, unmodified verb in the context of a declarative sentence has the default meaning of past time reference. The addition of the imperfect aspect *da* before a nonstative verb makes the time reference either present or timeless, e.g., *Dey da go* can mean either "They are (presently) going" or "They (usually) go."

The tense marker *been* can be put before a nonstative verb, but in this case the meaning is not simply past, but what creolists call *anterior* tense. The term refers to a prior time. In the case of stative verbs, which have the default meaning of present, the addition of *been* before the verb make the time reference past. For nonstative verbs, which are already by default past time reference, *been* before the verb makes it past-past, i.e., pluperfect. The following verb phrase chart, like the previous one, is taken from Frank 2007:162.

A gii ya de money.	'I gave you the money.'
A da gii ya de money.	'I give/am giving you the money.'

A <u>been gii</u> ya de money.	'I <u>had given</u> you the money.'
A <u>beena gii</u> ya de money.	'I was giving/used to give you the money.'
A <u>gwine gii</u> ya de money.	'I <u>will give</u> you the money.'
A <u>been gwine gii</u> ya de money.	'I was going to/would give you the money.'
A <u>done gii</u> ya de money.	'I already gave/have already given you the money.'
A <u>done been gii</u> ya de money.	'I <u>had already given</u> you the money.'

Nonstative verb phrase construction

The following are some examples of nonstative verbs in Gullah:

aks	'to ask'	*hep*	'to help'	*pit*	'to put'	*speck*	'to expect'
bring	'to bring'	*laan*	'to learn/teach'	*ron*	'to run'	*tek*	'to take'
ceebe	'to deceive'	*lib*	'to live'	*sabe*	'to save'	*tote*	'to carry'
come	'to come'	*mek*	'to make'	*say*	'to say'	*waak*	'to walk'
cyaa	'to carry'	*nyam*	'to eat'	*see*	'to see'	*wok*	'to work'
git	'to get'	*pick*	'to pick'	*sleep*	'to sleep'	*yeh*	'to hear'

Gullah has much in common with other creole languages, not just in origin and sociolinguistic dynamics, but also in structure, while at the same time Gullah is structurally different from English in some key respects. Thus Gullah is not to be classified as an Indo-European—specifically West Germanic—language like English, but rather as a member of a different class of languages called creoles. To help make this point, a comparison is made between Gullah and another creole language with which this author is intimately familiar, Saint Lucian French Creole. The following table is copied from Frank 2007:164.

Gullah	**French Creole**	**English**
We <u>come</u>.	Nou <u>vini</u>.	'We <u>came</u>.'
We <u>da come</u>.	Nou <u>ka vini</u>.	'We <u>are coming</u>.'
We <u>been come</u>.	Nou <u>té vini</u>.	'We <u>had come</u>.'
We <u>beena come</u>.	Nou <u>té ka vini</u>.	'We <u>were coming/used to come</u>.'
We <u>gwine come</u>.	Nou <u>kay vini</u>.	'We <u>will come</u>.'
We <u>been gwine come</u>.	Nou <u>té kay vini</u>.	'We <u>were going to/would come</u>.'

As a French Creole rather than an English Creole, almost all of the words of Saint Lucian Creole are different from Gullah, yet there are striking similarities in structure. In neither Gullah nor Saint Lucian Creole are the words declined or inflected with prefixes and suffixes. In Saint Lucian Creole and in Gullah, and in Creole languages in general, tense, mood and aspect are applied to verbs in the form of preverbal particles, and in the same sequence, and to denote the same time reference. The Saint Lucian Creole tense-mood-aspect markers *ka, té,* and *kay* correspond to Gullah *da, been,* and *gwine* for the meanings of progressive, anterior and prospective.

Turning our attention from noun and verb phrase structure to **clause structure**, we note that Gullah is an SVO language, meaning that clause subjects, verbs and objects normally occur in that order. English, too, is an SVO language, as are creole languages in general and many other languages such as Hausa, Arabic and Yoruba, though there are languages that have a different normal order like SOV or VSO, or may be unrestrained in the order of subjects, verbs and objects. As is the case with any language that lacks case marking on nouns to signal clause roles, having a well-established normal sequence within a clause is important for the interpretation of the clause.

What is especially interesting about Gullah clause structure is the **copula** construction. In fact there are three different copula constructions in Gullah that all correspond to just one in English using "is" as a copula verb. The first of these we call an equative clause, which has *da* as a copula verb. The equative clause involves two noun phrases—subject and complement—conjoined by *da*, as in the following examples:

Equative Clause = NP + da + NP

Ya da David.	'You are David.'
E da me fada.	'He is my father.'
Dis man da de leada.	'This man is the leader.'
Dis time yah da a ebil time.	'This time here is an evil time.'
Da God wok.	'[It] is God's work.'
Who ya da?	'Who are you?'

One of the most obvious features of Gullah speech is that *da* is frequently heard, pronounced [də]. The same form is used both as a progressive aspect marker before nonstative verbs and as a copula verb itself.

The second type of copula construction in Gullah is the locative clause, which uses the locative copula *dey*, which means something like 'is (located)', and what comes after *dey* is an adverbial or a prepositional phrase that describes a location. Here are some examples:

Locative Clause = NP + dey + NP

E dey dey.	'He/she/it is there.'
Dey dey dey.	'They are there.'
We sista dem dey yah wid we.	'Our sisters are here with us.'
De cat dey een de house.	'The cat is in the house.'

Note that *dey* is used only in present reference. *Been* is used for past reference, same as with *da*.

In some contexts, Gullah has a null copula. Whereas an equative clause involves the copula *da* followed by a noun phrase, and a locative clause has the copula *dey*, a third type of copula construction in Gullah is the descriptive clause. In a Gullah descriptive clause, there is a subject noun phrase or pronoun followed by a complement in the form of an adjective or adjective phrase or a descriptive prepositional phrase that describes the subject.

Descriptive Clause = NP + Adj/PP

E nice.	'He/she/it <u>is</u> nice.'
Dem skeeta bad.	'Those mosquitos <u>are</u> bad.'
E mo olda den me.	'He/she <u>is</u> older than I.'
Dat gyal purty down.	'That girl <u>is</u> quite attractive.'
Ya ain good fa nottin.	'You <u>are</u> not good for anything.'
E een a fambly way.	'She <u>is</u> in a family way (i.e., pregnant).'

In present time reference, the Gullah descriptive clause has no explicit copula verb, but Gullah equative, locative and descriptive clauses all share *been* as a past tense copula verb form.

5. Lexicon

Like any other language, Gullah has thousands of words; the number has not been calculated. Most Gullah words are borrowed from English, while some can be traced to various African languages. There are some words that have made their way into English by way of Gullah, such as "tote," "mojo," "gumbo," "yam," "chigger," "goober," and "jukebox." There have been attempts over the years to present Gullah word lists or simple dictionaries, the first appearing in 1888 as an appendix to Charles Colcock Jones Jr's collection of *Negro Myths from the Georgia Coast*.

GLOSSARY

Abnue, avenue
Agg, egg
All ob er sutten, quickly and unexpectedly
An, and
Arter, after
Arur, each, either
Ax, ask

Bactize, baptize
Bague, to beg
Barruh, barrow
Beber, beaver
Bedout, without
Ben, bend, bent, been
Berry, very
Bes, best
Bex, vex, vexed
Bidness, business
Biggin, begin, began
Bimeby, by and by, presently
Binner, was, were
Bittle, victuals
Blan, in the habit of, accustomed to
Bole, bold
Boun, resolved upon, forced to
Bredder, brother
Bref, breath
Bres, breast
Bresh, brush-wood, to brush
Broke up, to leave, to depart
Brukwus, breakfast
Buckra, white man
Bud, bird
Budduh, *Buh* } brother
Buhhine, behind
Bun, burn
Buss, burst, or break through

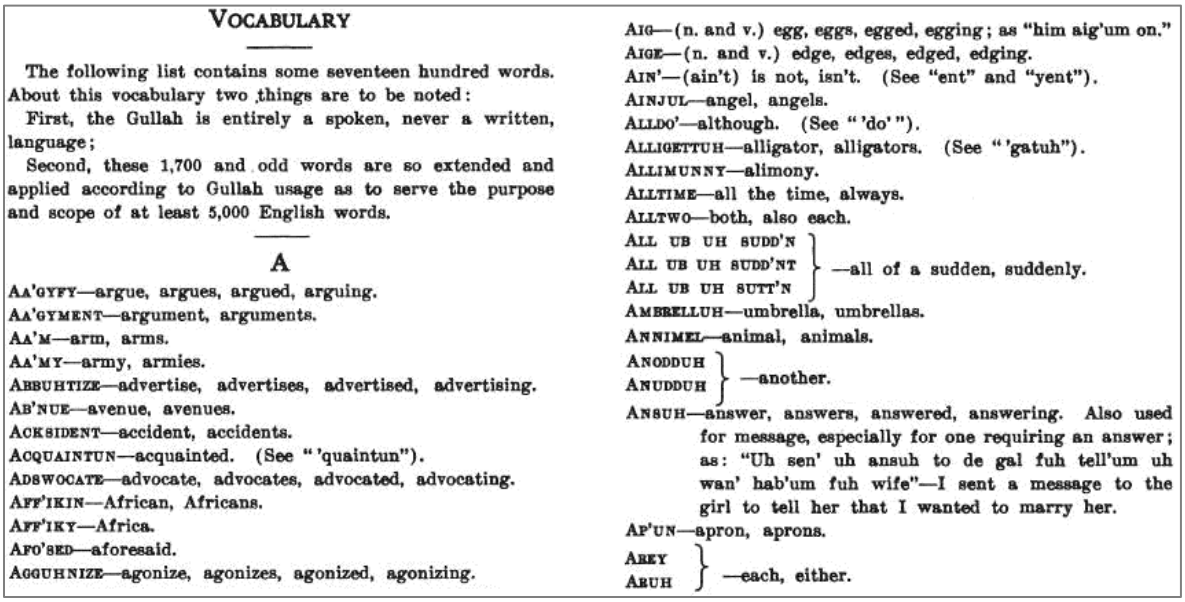
Cahr, carry
Caze, because
Ceive, deceive
Cept, accept, accepted, except
Chillun, children
Conjunct, agree to, conclude
Cote, court
Crack eh teet, make answer
Crap, crop
Crape, scrape
Cratch, scratch
Cut down, disappointed, chagrined

Darter, daughter
Day, there, is, to be, am
Day day, to be there
Den, then
Der, was, were, into
Dest, *Dist* } just, only
Destant, distant, distance
Det, death
Diffunce, difference
Disher, this
Do, door
Dout, without
Drap, drop, dropped
Duh, was, were
Eh, he, she, it, his, her, its
Element, the sky, upper air
En, end
Enty, are you not, are they not, do you not, do they not, is it not

Faber, favor
Faid, to be afraid
Fambly, family
Fanner, a shallow basket
Farruh, *Farrur* } father
Feber, fever
Fedder, feather, feathers
Fiel, field
Fine, supply with food, find
Flaber, flavor
Flo, floor
Flut, flirt
Foce, force
Forrud, forehead
Fren, friend

sample from *Negro Myths from the Georgia Coast*, by Charles Colcock Jones Jr. (1888)

In 1922, newspaper publisher and politician Ambrose E. Gonzales, published a collection called *The Black Border: Gullah Stories of the Carolina Coast (With a Glossary).* Gonzales took a different approach to writing Gullah, using apostrophes to show where a Gullah word seems to be missing something in comparison with the English standard. He claimed to have documented 1700 Gullah words and names.[7]



VOCABULARY

The following list contains some seventeen hundred words. About this vocabulary two things are to be noted:

First, the Gullah is entirely a spoken, never a written, language;

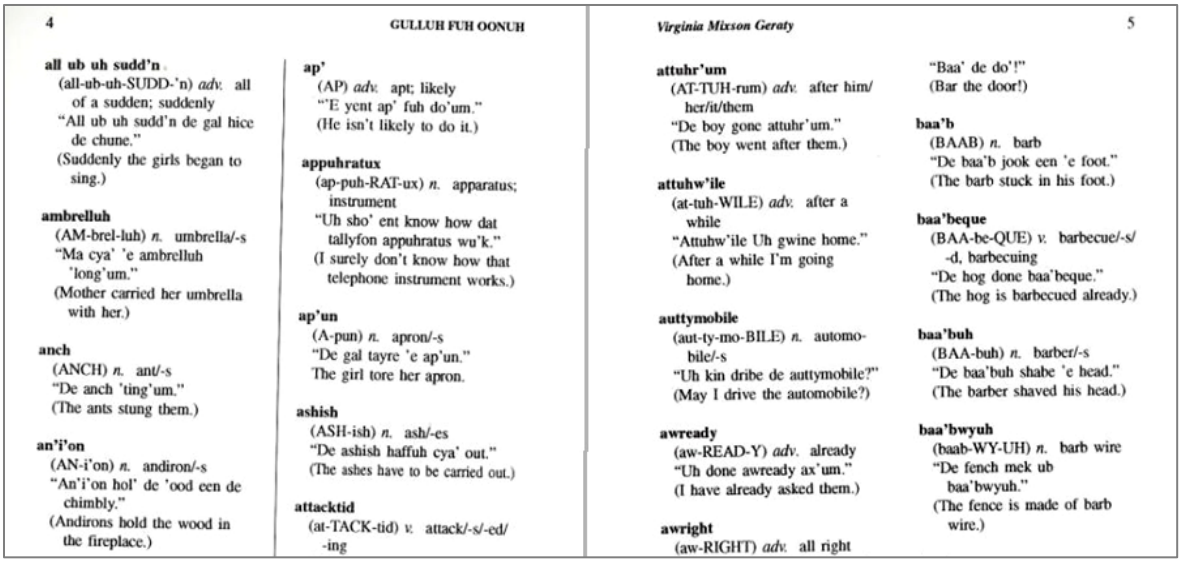
Second, these 1,700 and odd words are so extended and applied according to Gullah usage as to serve the purpose and scope of at least 5,000 English words.

A

AA'GYFY—argue, argues, argued, arguing.
AA'GYMENT—argument, arguments.
AA'M—arm, arms.
AA'MY—army, armies.
ABBUHTIZE—advertise, advertises, advertised, advertising.
AB'NUE—avenue, avenues.
ACKSIDENT—accident, accidents.
ACQUAINTUN—acquainted. (See "'quaintun").
ADSWOCATE—advocate, advocates, advocated, advocating.
AFF'IKIN—African, Africans.
AFF'IKY—Africa.
AFO'SED—aforesaid.
AGGUHNIZE—agonize, agonizes, agonized, agonizing.
AIG—(n. and v.) egg, eggs, egged, egging; as "him aig'um on."
AIGE—(n. and v.) edge, edges, edged, edging.
AIN'—(ain't) is not, isn't. (See "ent" and "yent").
AINJUL—angel, angels.
ALLDO'—although. (See "'do'").
ALLIGETTUH—alligator, alligators. (See "'gatuh").
ALLIMUNNY—alimony.
ALLTIME—all the time, always.
ALLTWO—both, also each.
ALL UB UH SUDD'N / ALL UB UH SUDD'NT / ALL UB UH SUTT'N —all of a sudden, suddenly.
AMBRELLUH—umbrella, umbrellas.
ANNIMEL—animal, animals.
ANODDUH / ANUDDUH —another.
ANSUH—answer, answers, answered, answering. Also used for message, especially for one requiring an answer; as: "Uh sen' uh ansuh to de gal fuh tell'um uh wan' hab'um fuh wife"—I sent a message to the girl to tell her that I wanted to marry her.
AP'UN—apron, aprons.
AREY / AREUH —each, either.

sample from *The Black Border: Gullah Stories of the Carolina Coast*, by A. Gonzales (1922)

More recently, the late Virginia Mixson Geraty published a sort of dictionary of the Gullah language under the title *Gulluh Fuh Oonuh: A Guide to the Gullah Language*, based on Gonzales (1922), using apostrophes to show where letters are "missing."



4 GULLUH FUH OONUH

all ub uh sudd'n (all-ub-uh-SUDD-'n) *adv.* all of a sudden; suddenly
"All ub uh sudd'n de gal hice de chune."
(Suddenly the girls began to sing.)

ambrelluh (AM-brel-luh) *n.* umbrella/-s
"Ma cya' 'e ambrelluh 'long'um."
(Mother carried her umbrella with her.)

anch (ANCH) *n.* ant/-s
"De anch 'ting'um."
(The ants stung them.)

an'i'on (AN-i'on) *n.* andiron/-s
"An'i'on hol' de 'ood een de chimbly."
(Andirons hold the wood in the fireplace.)

ap' (AP) *adv.* apt; likely
"'E yent ap' fuh do'um."
(He isn't likely to do it.)

appuhratux (ap-puh-RAT-ux) *n.* apparatus; instrument
"Uh sho' ent know how dat tallyfon appuhratus wu'k."
(I surely don't know how that telephone instrument works.)

ap'un (A-pun) *n.* apron/-s
"De gal tayre 'e ap'un."
The girl tore her apron.

ashish (ASH-ish) *n.* ash/-es
"De ashish haffuh cya' out."
(The ashes have to be carried out.)

attacktid (at-TACK-tid) *v.* attack/-s/-ed/-ing

Virginia Mixson Geraty 5

attuhr'um (AT-TUH-rum) *adv.* after him/her/it/them
"De boy gone attuhr'um."
(The boy went after them.)

attuhw'ile (at-tuh-WILE) *adv.* after a while
"Attuhw'ile Uh gwine home."
(After a while I'm going home.)

auttymobile (aut-ty-mo-BILE) *n.* automobile/-s
"Uh kin dribe de auttymobile?"
(May I drive the automobile?)

awready (aw-READ-Y) *adv.* already
"Uh done awready ax'um."
(I have already asked them.)

awright (aw-RIGHT) *adv.* all right
"Baa' de do'!"
(Bar the door!)

baa'b (BAAB) *n.* barb
"De baa'b jook een 'e foot."
(The barb stuck in his foot.)

baa'beque (BAA-be-QUE) *v.* barbecue/-s/-d, barbecuing
"De hog done baa'beque."
(The hog is barbecued already.)

baa'buh (BAA-buh) *n.* barber/-s
"De baa'buh shabe 'e head."
(The barber shaved his head.)

baa'bwyuh (baab-WY-UH) *n.* barb wire
"De fench mek ub baa'bwyuh."
(The fence is made of barb wire.)

sample from Gulluh Fuh Oonuh: A Guide to the Gullah Language, by Virginia Geraty (1997)

[7] See also a *Websters Gullah-English Thesaurus Dictionary* for sale online at www.amazon.com/Websters-Gullah-English-Thesaurus-Dictionary/dp/0497835053/. The author is listed as Philip M Parker, with publication date of 2008. It seems what Parker has done is harvest the words from Ambrose Gonzales' 1922 Gullah glossary, without attribution, after the copyright expired. The information about Gullah in this "thesaurus dictionary" is unreliable.

A need remains for a proper Gullah dictionary, and a desire for such a dictionary has been expressed within the Gullah community. It would preferably be made with Gullah words spelled orthographically, but with phonetic pronunciations added. It should have parts of speech listed, and different senses of the words, illustrative sentences, and etymologies. It should include data from historical texts such as Turner (1949) and possibly Jones (1888) and Gonzales (1922), and also contemporary Gullah data. It should have cross-references to other similar dictionaries, including the *Dictionary of American Regional English* (Cassidy *et al* 1985), the *Dictionary of Bahamian English* (Holm and Shilling 1982) and the *Dictionary of Carribean English Usage* (Allsopp 2003). I have made steps toward compiling such a dictionary, and the following are some example entries:

ainty ['ɛ̃ni] INTERJ. tag question: isn't it (so)? didn't it? doesn't it? aren't I?. ***Dem wittle good fa sho, ainty?*** *This food is really good, isn't it?* ***A gwine git dey aaly, ainty?*** *I am going to get there early, aren't I?* (See also **ain**, **cyahn**.) < English *isn't it*.

bukra ['bʌkjʌ] N. white person. (Compare Bahamian **buckra** 'white man' as attested in *DBE*; Caribbean **backra** 'white person, white man' as attested in *DCEU*.) < Efik *mbakara* 'master'.

da [də] V. to be. ***Mista Green da me oncle.*** *Mr. Green is my uncle.* ADV. imperfective aspect marker. ***A da gii ya de money.*** *I am giving you the money.*

dem [dɛm] PRON. 1) third-person plural objective pronoun; them; those. ***Dat wa A tell dem yestiddy.*** *That's what I told them yesterday.* ***Dem people ain hab nottin fa nyam.*** *Those people don't have anything to eat.* 2) pluralizer, after a noun. ***De ooman dem ain say nottin.*** *The women didn't say anything.* 3) and others. ***We see Mary dem oba ta de maakut.*** *We saw Mary and the others over at the market.* < English *them*.

demarra [də'mɑjə] ADV. tomorrow. ***E da gwine dey demarra.*** *She is going there tomorrow.* (See also: **yestiddy, taday**, **tareckly**.) < English *tomorrow*.

down [dɑᵘn] ADV. emphasizer: truly, quite, exceedingly. ***De beah been mad down.*** *The bear was quite angry.* ***A Gullah down****. I am truly Gullah.* ***E faddown an e been hut down.*** *He fell down and was badly hurt.* ***biggity down*** *arrogant.* (See also **too, tommuch**.)

gombo ['gombo] N. okra. < Kimbundu *ngombo* 'okra'.

jook [dʒʊk] V. to poke, stab. ***Dey jook um fa see ef e been dead****. They poked it to see if it was dead.* ADJ. disorderly, infamous, wicked, of ill repute. ***Ya ain fa go ta de jook jaint an listen ta dat music****. You must not go to the juke joint and listen to that music*. (Compare Bahamian **jook** 'to poke, stab or wound (somebody or something)' as attested in *DBE*; Caribbean **jook**, **juck**, **juke** 'to poke, stab' as attested in *DCEU*.) < Fulani *jukka* 'to poke'.

nyam [ɲɑm] V. to eat. ***De boy nyam all the wittle cause e been too hongry****. The boy ate all the food because he was quite hungry.* (See also **wittle**.) < Fulani *nyami* 'to eat'.

wensoneba ['wɪnsonɛbə] ADV. whenever. ***Wensoneba we da gwine dey, dey dey dey too.*** *Whenever we go there, they are there too.* (Syn: **all time**; see also **whosoneba**, **wasoneba**, **weheba**.) < English *whenever*.

6. Texts

Important collections of Gullah texts include Jones 1888 and Gonzales 1922, and especially the fourteen texts that Turner collected in 1932–33 and published in 1949, transcribed phonetically and with English translation. Turner made sound recordings of these published texts and other Gullah texts on aluminum and lacquer discs, which are archived at the Indiana University Archives of Traditional Music and were eventually digitized. The following narrative text, about an earthquake in 1886, was told by Rosina Cohen of Edisto Island, SC. It appears here in a slightly different form from how Turner presented it in his book, written here orthographically instead of phonemically.

Di Eartquake, told by Rosina Cohen (from Turner 1949:268)

An di eartquake? Ya aks me if I know bout di eartquake? Lawd, how mussy! Wen di eartquake, ma son, Calwary couldn hole di people. Ya yeddy di people holla all rong an holla so moanful: "O Lawd! O Lawd! Di wol gwine end." Say we da gwine sa.

Tell—disya same man weh I da stay dey now—him granfada say, "Oona stan still," say, "I see—I see eartquake fo tiday."

Dat was a night een August. I dohn know di date. I cyaan tell ya I know di date, ka I ain know di date. I wohn lie, say I know di date, bot I know da August. An dey—it jes a go up come dong. An if ya hab wata, ya—if ya hab wata een ya pail, ebry bit—ebry bit taan oba. An e mek a big—wen di eartquake sorta little cease an ya go een di fiel, e gii you—e mek a big, wite—big, wite hole, like a grabe, like a grabe. An di sand wite! Now we fraid, ka dey say da gwine fall een on us. Dat dey is di eartquake now. Dat is di eartquake. An ya neba—dem bukra had fa mek we shut op dat hole. Dat is di eartquake—weh di eartquake big. Ya ondastan? Eartquake big dey, big dey. O, yes! Eartquake big dey, big dey. O, yes! Eartquake big dey. Oo! Eartquake! Big eartquake! Oo!

My chillun all been big one. O, yes! Dey all been big one. Dey all hab dey sense. Dey all jes a cry. Why, da all rong dis section could I yeddy hoopin an holla—all rong, an so moanful. An Calwary couldn hole di people. Di chuch inside jes as tick; outside ebryting da cry: "O, Lawd! O, Lawd! We done! We ain know wha tis." Edward Whaley say: "No!" say, "I see disya ain gone kill ya, bot it is di eartquake."

Den e fus sorta little null a little bit—sorta little null, ke ebryting da now gone sink dong, ya know. So e die so—di eartquake. Say da gwine dat a way. I tell ya, all right.

Here is another Gullah text, told by Leo Gaston of Coosawhatchee, SC, which I recorded and transcribed:

Di Root Ooman, told by Leo Gaston

Leh me tell ya a story. Is paat ob it een Gullah an paat ob it not. Dis happen een Coosawhatchee. It haffa do wid witchcraft as well. Okay?

Mista Jim—I'm not gonna say lass name, okay?—had a faam nex to Miss Rachel house. Di hog git out. So, Mista Jim raisin cain, tellin dem chirren dey betta come git dey hog. So Miss Rachel sen dem boys oba deh ta git di hog.

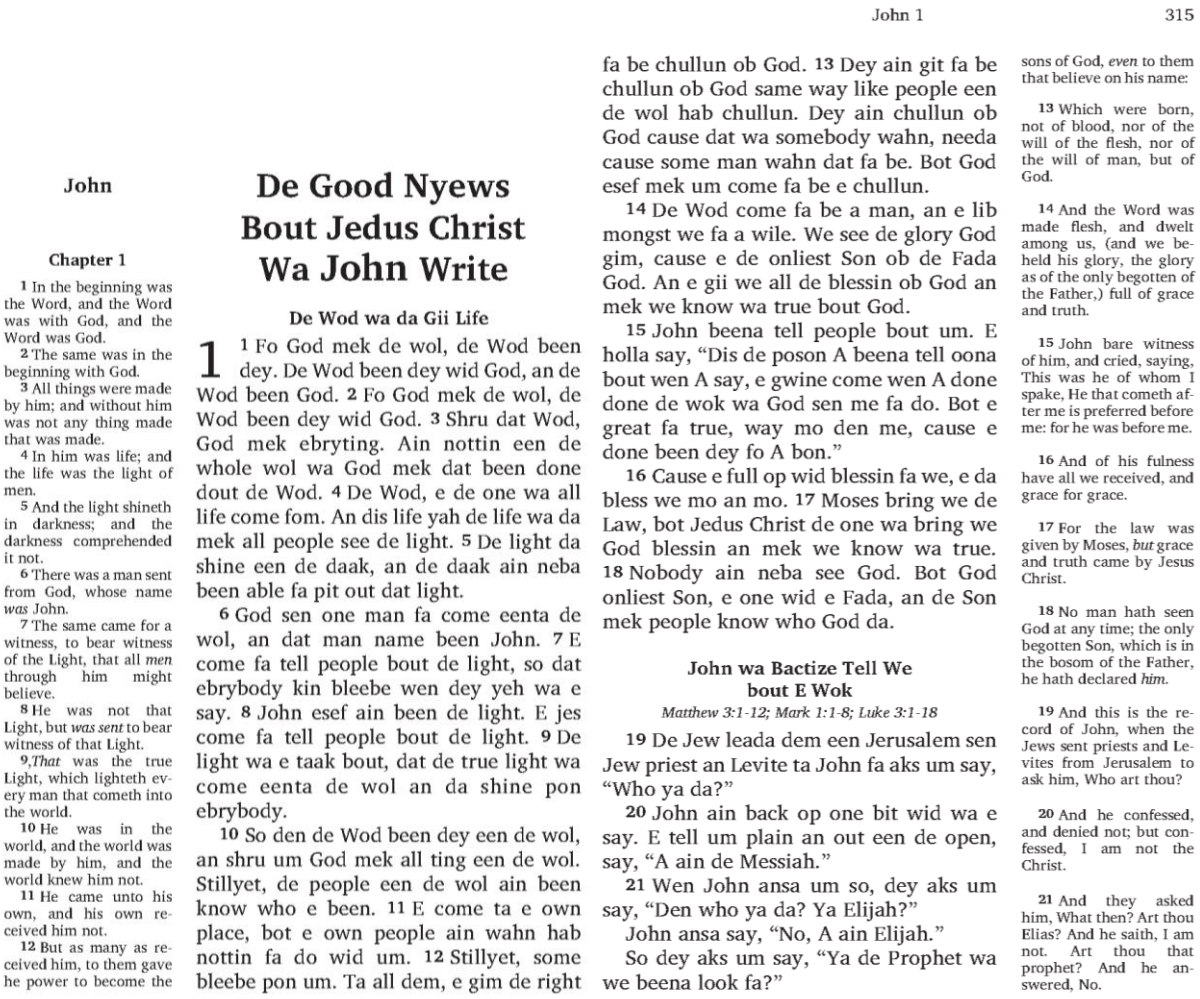
Mista Jim raise cain an kick one a di boys. So Miss Rachel went an ask um, "Jim, I know di hog hab git out, an, uh, I wahn know, I sen dem chirren oba dey fa git um, an you kick my boy." Say, "Mista Jim, weh ya foot ya kick dat boy wid?"

"Dis foot right yah."

Say, "Fo sundown dis ebenin ya fa tek ax fa cut um off."

Sho nough, Jim cut his foot off wid de ax. Now dis was di root ooman. You dohn fool wid di root ooman.

Beginning in 1979, a project was conducted to translate the New Testament of the Bible into Gullah, and it was published in 2005. The following is a sample page from the Gullah *Nyew Testament*:



John 1 315

John

Chapter 1

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
2 The same was in the beginning with God.
3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.
4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.
5 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.
6 There was a man sent from God, whose name *was* John.
7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all *men* through him might believe.
8 He was not that Light, but *was sent* to bear witness of that Light.
9 *That* was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.
10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.
11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.
12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name:
13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.
14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.
15 John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me.
16 And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.
17 For the law was given by Moses, *but* grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.
18 No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*.
19 And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?
20 And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.
21 And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No.

De Good Nyews Bout Jedus Christ Wa John Write

De Wod wa da Gii Life

1 1 Fo God mek de wol, de Wod been dey. De Wod been dey wid God, an de Wod been God. 2 Fo God mek de wol, de Wod been dey wid God. 3 Shru dat Wod, God mek ebryting. Ain nottin een de whole wol wa God mek dat been done dout de Wod. 4 De Wod, e de one wa all life come fom. An dis life yah de life wa da mek all people see de light. 5 De light da shine een de daak, an de daak ain neba been able fa pit out dat light.

6 God sen one man fa come eenta de wol, an dat man name been John. 7 E come fa tell people bout de light, so dat ebrybody kin bleebe wen dey yeh wa e say. 8 John esef ain been de light. E jes come fa tell people bout de light. 9 De light wa e taak bout, dat de true light wa come eenta de wol an da shine pon ebrybody.

10 So den de Wod been dey een de wol, an shru um God mek all ting een de wol. Stillyet, de people een de wol ain been know who e been. 11 E come ta e own place, bot e own people ain wahn hab nottin fa do wid um. 12 Stillyet, some bleebe pon um. Ta all dem, e gim de right fa be chullun ob God. 13 Dey ain git fa be chullun ob God same way like people een de wol hab chullun. Dey ain chullun ob God cause dat wa somebody wahn, needa cause some man wahn dat fa be. Bot God esef mek um come fa be e chullun.

14 De Wod come fa be a man, an e lib mongst we fa a wile. We see de glory God gim, cause e de onliest Son ob de Fada God. An e gii we all de blessin ob God an mek we know wa true bout God.

15 John beena tell people bout um. E holla say, "Dis de poson A beena tell oona bout wen A say, e gwine come wen A done done de wok wa God sen me fa do. Bot e great fa true, way mo den me, cause e done been dey fo A bon."

16 Cause e full op wid blessin fa we, e da bless we mo an mo. 17 Moses bring we de Law, bot Jedus Christ de one wa bring we God blessin an mek we know wa true. 18 Nobody ain neba see God. Bot God onliest Son, e one wid e Fada, an de Son mek people know who God da.

John wa Bactize Tell We bout E Wok

Matthew 3:1-12; Mark 1:1-8; Luke 3:1-18

19 De Jew leada dem een Jerusalem sen Jew priest an Levite ta John fa aks um say, "Who ya da?"

20 John ain back op one bit wid wa e say. E tell um plain an out een de open, say, "A ain de Messiah."

21 Wen John ansa um so, dey aks um say, "Den who ya da? Ya Elijah?"

John ansa say, "No, A ain Elijah."

So dey aks um say, "Ya de Prophet wa we beena look fa?"

sample from *De Nyew Testament,* translated by the Sea Island Translation Team (2005)

7. Reclaiming a Linguistic and Cultural Heritage

Gullah is an endangered language, and there is a great need to collect more information, such as in the form of oral histories and traditional folktales. These texts would be valuable for the content, but if they could be audio recorded and transcribed in a way that is faithful to the form of the Gullah speech, they would be most valuable as a record of how Gullah is still spoken. Gullah has always had its context where it is not only been needed for communication but also valued for its richness of expression. It is a strong marker of cultural identity and social solidarity that people may hide at times from outsiders but do not want to lose. Over the past few decades, even attitudes toward Gullah *as publicly expressed* have changed dramatically. Positive, supportive attention has helped shape the public attitude toward Gullah as a language. The publication of the New Testament of the Bible in Gullah has played some role in this shift in attitudes. Concern has been expressed among people who identify themselves as Gullah that a

valuable cultural treasure is in danger of being lost. In 2009 the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission conducted a series of twenty-one public meetings along the Gullah Geechee Corridor and asked, "What are the three features of the Gullah Geechee culture that you think must be protected, preserved or continued? What must remain for future generations?" The most common answer was "the language," "the speech itself," "our original language," "the idioms of the Gullah Geechee need to be taught," "oral traditions," "the language, storytelling."

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