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Niger-Congo borrowings to English: Semantic changes and grammatical adaptation

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Abstract

This article deals with the semantic and grammatical analysis of West African words integration into English language as presented in some dictionaries (Oxford English Dictionary 3rd edition 2010, Oxford American Dictionary 3rd edition 2010 and Collins English Dictionary 8th edition 2006 edited for ABBYY LINGVOx5). The analysis shows that the native (denotation) meanings of some African words related to African culture and tradition have been metaphorically negatively affected in English; and their grammatical adaptation (number) in English follows two different processes.

Keywords: Borrowings, Africanism, West African words, integration (assimilation), semantics, grammar, radiation and concatenation process, denotation, connotation, amelioration, deterioration.

INTRODUCTION

English and African languages are in contact since a long time throughout three major historical periods illustrated as follow: first, during the first discovery of the African continent, second during the period of slavery and finally the period of colonisation also called linguistic imperialism (Mazrui, 1969). These historical contacts have led to the integration of some Black African words in English lexicon (dictionaries). Among the four groups of African languages, the majority of Africanisms in English are from the Niger-Congo languages which itself is composed of the Congo languages (Bantu) and the Niger languages (Greenberg, 1970). The studies about the semantic development and grammatical adaptation of those African words, in English, are not numerous. Some studies also deal with the etymological analysis of Black African words (Africanisms) in English (Siaka Natalia V., 2015; Vass, Winnifred et al., 1993). The aim of this article is to analyse some African words entries in the quoted

English dictionaries and show the way they have shifted semantically by having new derived meanings; and finally illustrate their process of grammatical adaptation in English.

METHODOLOGY

In this work, the selected African loanwords in English are from the Niger-Congo language groups which are the languages of many black Africans, around 70% (Tim Ward, 2003). Those words are selected from internet sources, and their validity is checked with four English contemporary etymological dictionaries (Oxford English Dictionary 3rd edition 2010, Oxford American Dictionary 3rd edition 2010, Collins English Dictionary 8th edition 2006, and Merriam Webster's 11th collegiate dictionary). Those dictionaries along our study will help us find the semantic and grammatical integration of the African loanwords in English. The semantic field of those loanwords are about African cultural terms (traditional music and dance, fetish, food,...). We have decided to be

limited to these cultural notions since they are subject of an important semantic shift once borrowed into English. This semantic shift will be investigated at the denotation and connotation level of loanwords. For explaining the grammatical analysis or adaptation, we may resort to other (African) loanwords denoting natural resources (animals, plants,..) and depicting the process of the grammatical or morphological (number: singular, plural) integration.

The semantic processes of African loanwords adaptation in English

When a word is borrowed from one language to another, its semantic structure mostly undergoes important shifts or development in the recipient language. This semantic development be it by extension or restriction, by amelioration or deterioration, is underscored by two processes which are radiation (the spray or development of secondary meanings of words around the primary meaning, the link between the first meaning and the derived one are traceable); and concatenation process (the primary meaning remains static, and the secondary meaning of the word, not easily traceable to the primary, develops itself like a chain by having many additional meanings). These two processes are symbolised in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

Metaphorical semantic extension of African loanwords by radiation or concatenation process in English

Here we are concerned with loanwords which denotation and connotation components, by amelioration or deterioration, are affected in English. The following African anglicised words fall in this case:

"gumbo (gombo), goober, jazz, jive, juju, juke, jumbo, mojo, sambo, zombie, jumbie, banana, indaba, funk, boma."

These words after their integration in English have by semantic extension acquired new additional (derived) meanings. Some of those derived meanings are strongly negative, offensive and informal. We think that this is due generally to the bias Western people hold toward the African languages and sometimes to their (words) social use in the native environment or language to cover new linguistic concepts they did not have before.

In fact, the word "*Gumbo*" from Louisiana French, from Bantu "*ngombo*", is an okra, a green small vegetable with pods inside (seeds) used in cooking. This vegetable was used by Cajun people (black people from Louisiana in France who speak a French creole) in cooking. Later in 1838 the word "*Gumbo*" has been used to denote the

Louisiana creole language spoken by the Cajun people. This same word borrowed from French to American English has been used to denote a heavy sticky mud, a fine clayey soil especially in Central United States of America that becomes sticky and impervious when wet. The word gumbo is used here metaphorically to denote a sticky mud soil because gumbo by nature is a green soft vegetable, when cooked, it becomes more like paste and mud. The metaphor probably comes from this characteristics of gumbo. Still by semantic extension, the word gumbo comes to denote a type of Cajun music consisting of a lively blend of styles and sounds. Here the link between the vegetable Gumbo and the term Music is a bit faded, but the link can be accounted for it was a specific music performed by Cajun people also called gumbo people (people who used to cook with vegetable gumbo). Then, Gumbo in the sense of okra, a green vegetable with fine tip, is used positively to refer to ladies fingers. It is by analogy that the word gumbo is used to denote ladies finger, because the finger like the tip of Gumbo is also fine. But why it is not used in general to denote the finger of both man and woman. For sure perhaps this vegetable with attractive green colour is used to show the smoothness, the beauty of ladies fingers.

Moreover, the word "Jazz" is from African American language, from Bantu "*jas*" (meaning to dance, to excite). In English it is used in the same sense to denote African American rhythmic dance. It is also used in an informal way to mean enthusiasm (a strong feeling of excitement and interest in something, and a desire to become involved in it) or liveliness (something more attractive or exciting). This derived meaning as enthusiasm or liveliness derived from the metaphorical use of the word jazz. Because dance, enthusiasm, attractiveness are collocation words in relation with music. This derived meaning as enthusiasm or liveliness may be due to the fact that jazz dance or music requires an involvement, a strong excitement. In addition to this, as a slang word, "Jazz" is used to mean a rigmarole which is a long and complicated process that is annoying and seems unnecessary. The Jazz dance qualified as something complicated can be accounted for by the fact that this African dance is usually characterised by a regular and forceful rhythm. This word is also used to denote an empty talk, because this song (jazz) was performed in a complicated African language not accessible for others (white people). By bias, the English people perceive it as a speech designed to deceive and mislead someone (Webster, 2003). The metaphorical derived meanings here have negatively affected the connotation meaning of the word, because we move from dance (positive connotation) to something complicated and nonsense (negative connotation). Here we say that the negative derived meanings are from the Western people misconception of African languages because a foreign language which is not understood by someone is not

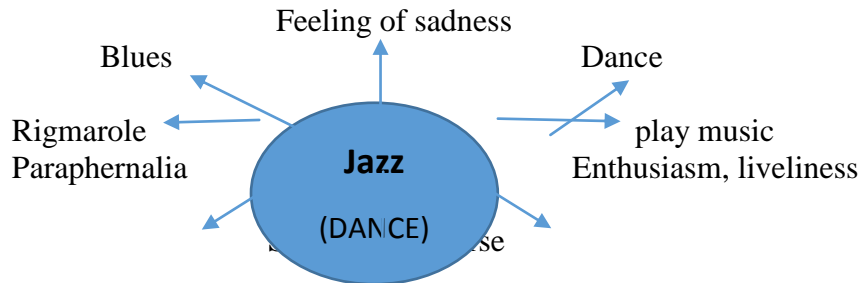


Figure 1. Schema of radiation process

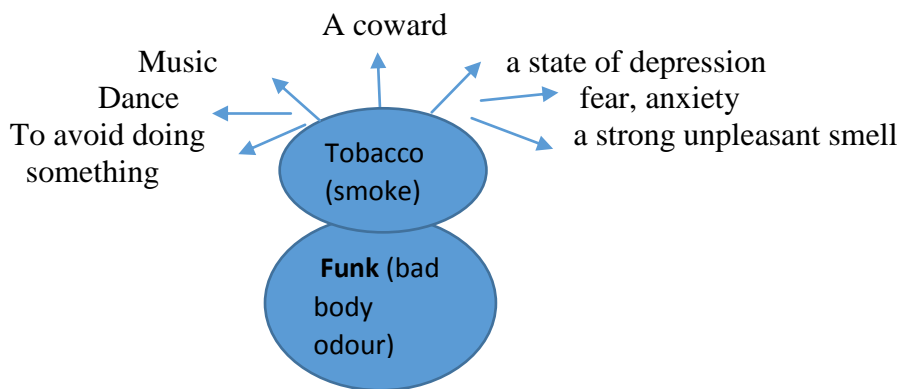


Figure 2. Schema of concatenation process

necessarily nonsense or misleading talk or speech. It is as if we qualify the Chinese or Russian languages as nonsense because they appear strange for us, this is really an offense. The same word Jazz is then used by African-American as a slang, an obsolete word to denote sexual intercourse between man and woman; this may be because during the performance of that dance both men and women (two opposed sexes) are intermingled. By extension the word Jazz similar to blues (black American music), is also used informally to denote the feelings of sadness (Oxford, 2006). This meaning is perhaps derived from one of characteristics of jazz music, because this African music is characterised by a slow sad song with strong rhythms. So, on the basis of one characteristics of the word, a new meaning is found. We think that this sadness as one of the characteristics of this song dated back long time ago. In fact, as this song is from Southern African American people, mainly slaves in Southern plantations of America, whose living condition as slaves was boring, probably in this song (jazz) they express their feelings of sadness and hopeless in their religious song. In short the different derived meanings are built by analogy with the semantic components of the word jazz. Those extended meanings are in general deteriorated because of the misconceptions Western people hold toward African languages.

Jive: from African American, from Wolof *jev* is a fast

dance to music with a strong beat, especially popular in United States of America in 1950s. The first prevailing derived meaning for this word in 1920s considered now as old-fashioned and informal is a "nonsense talk". That is why it is used to denote informal languages especially meaningless or misleading African speech. This prejudice from English people is an attempt to deny the authenticity of African languages. Later the original meaning (dance, music) which was substituted by nonsense talk has come into light by being considered as the first meaning. This means that there is "meaning reversal" because the negative derived meaning which was prevailed is considered now as second meaning. The extended meaning (nonsense talk or thing) from the word jive is extremely full of negative connotation, misconception and bias; because this attributive meaning comes from the fact that the jive music was first performed in African American vernacular languages which were hermetic, inaccessible for white people. This speech used during the worshipping of Black African ancestral gods was not even easily understandable for some Black fellows, because its understanding or rituals requires initiations. This denigration is even attested by the word banjo (from Kimbundu *mbanza*) which is considered as a Negro corruption from Spanish, while this word (a musical instrument) is from Bantu language. Their attitude is as if African people do not have an authentic (formal) language

Mojo: a West African word from Gullah *mocco*, from Fulani *moco'o* meaning "traditional medicine man" is used in English by extension to denote witchcraft, a magic power, a small object or a collection of small objects in a leather bag that is believed to have magic powers. It also means to give mystic power to somebody for self-protection. As witness, those magic objects called amulets were used during Ivorian politico-military crisis in 2002 by northern soldiers (as seen with the Colonel Koné Zakaria during the crisis of 2010) called New Forces in 2005. Those amulets are generally bound, attached around people's hips or upper arms as a means of protection against their enemy. These derived meanings have impacted on the original meaning (a traditional healer) of the word *mojo*. Because being a traditional doctor does not necessary mean you are a witch, since a witch as defined by Oxford (2006) is a woman who is believed to have magic powers, especially to do evil things. But what about the one who uses it to heal people? Is he a witch? This asserts that the meanings derived metaphorically are semantically motivated. Owing to the notion of invisible power, used in healing people, contained in the connotation meaning of the word *Mojo*, it is used negatively to qualify anything related to witchcraft.

Sambo: from Bantu *nzambu*, was first used as the name of a character in a book of children entitled "The Story of Little Black Sambo" (1899) by the English author Helen Bannerman. That book was very popular both in Britain and in United States of America. But now this word once used as an address form is an archaic, offensive and taboo word for Black American people. In that sense it is regarded as an insulting term for black people. It is also used as an archaic term to denote the offsprings, the children of a Black person and also for a mulatto people (a person born from black and white parents). Later in USA, the term Sambo's Restaurants was named after the main character in the book and was criticized by African Americans. Why this word, only the name of a character, is used to address Black people in a general way? Why are Black people opposed against its use as an address form? Probably, a negative connotation was attached to this name or word to address Black people. As a matter of fact, the word "sambo" probably from Bantu word *nzambu* is a black monkey. So, it is by analogy with monkey mainly the black one that the word Sambo has been used as the name of a black character in the novel. That is why it is considered as an offensive word towards black people. For a better understanding of the metaphorical use of the word "Sambo", we think that it is important to know what the story of Little Black Sambo is really about.

Juju: first from Hausa (West African language) *jùju* in 1894 means fetish; then from Yoruba *jújú* or *jojo* in 1982 means dance. The two languages showing mutual intelligibility are interrelated. The word *juju* is now used as an object, an amulet used in West African magic. It is also metaphorically used to denote anything which involves

the use of magic power. It is only in 1982 that came the meaning of a type of Nigerian music that uses guitars and drums. We wonder whether the sense of music is a semantic derivation from the original meaning (fetish) or it is a new borrowing which coincides morphologically with the first borrowed word, because the first meaning is presented as from Hausa, while the second is presented as from Yoruba. The difference between them is only at the level of tone variation represented by the supra-segmental feature above the segments. We think that the two meanings are interconnected because most of African traditional dances cannot be performed in general without mystic or magic demonstration. So, one meaning is probably derived from another. As African traditional dances and music make use of magic demonstration in general, we suppose that the meaning fetish and amulets are derived from the notion of dance and music. Like the word *Mojo*, the word *juju* by extension is also used metaphorically to cover any process in which a mystery or magic is exploited to confuse people.

Jamboree: from American Slang means a large party or a celebration with a large number of people and a lot of excitement, fun, enjoyment and drink. The second (derived) meaning is a large rally of Scouts or Guides. In fact, by rally we mean a large public meeting, especially one held to support a particular idea or political party or someone else. The first and derived meaning seems to be semantically interrelated, but we think that the second meaning is extended to cover political event, organisation where people convey a political message, ideology to audience; while the word originally means only a party, a feast with many person where we drink and entertain ourselves. There was here no question of political ideology that is why in some dictionary (Webster) a third meaning is derived as a long mixed program of entertainment. It also means a large and often international gathering of Scouts (cars race). All the derived meanings are positively built by analogy with the semantic component of the first sense in order to cover new linguistic realities or concepts. In short, the first meanings is positively extended to cover new social concepts (politics and rally).

Indaba: from Zulu in 1827, originally means a discussion or conference held by Zulu people about a serious matter. From Zulu to English language, the meaning of this word has been implicitly extended positively, and now it means a large meeting at which politicians, professional people and others have discussions about an important subject such as a national indaba (discussion) on a political crisis. We wonder whether in 1827 the meaning of this word covered the notion of politics or professional people. It was a discussion held in African (Zulu) traditional societies such as in villages about a topic that bathers people. Moreover, this word in informal context means a difficulty or matter that concerns someone. For example, his own indaba was how to leave the prison. These new meanings in all probably derive from the first

meaning. In fact, during conferences, meeting and discussion, people are always triggered and bothered by some problems that they hope solving. That is why the word *indaba* is by extension used to mean a person's own concerns or difficulty.

Gooper: from Kikongo *nguba* in 1834 originally means a peanut. Later it has been used negatively as a noun to denote people from the South-eastern part of United States of America, especially those from Georgia or Arkansas. From this word the nickname a "Gooper State" has been coined for the State of Georgia. Why American people use the name of a vegetable to denote a person and a State? In fact, the derived meanings from gooper are very offensive. They show a critical attitude, an insult towards the Georgian people and their State, because Gooper person or State by metaphor means an unsophisticated person or State. These negative or deteriorated meanings come from the metaphorical use of the word gooper. In fact, gooper is a perishable vegetable, a seasoning fruit which does not resist for a long time. The use of this word to refer to Georgian people and their State can be due to the fact that those people like a peanut are weak, not strong and cannot perform hard work, and their country is also weakly and poorly developed. This weakness of strength for hard work performance like farm work was noticed with the Indian people during slavery period who died because they could not resist hard work. So, they were replaced by Black African slaves who were resistant. On the basis of this viewpoint, we could also call Indian people "gooper people", and also some poor countries a gooper state. In short, by analogy the denotation meaning of gooper has been negatively affected. So, the first meaning has been strongly negatively deteriorated by being used as an offensive word.

Funk(y): from Kikongo *lu-fuki* (1623), originally meant "bad body odours". It is later used to denote a musty smell, a strong offensive smell. But in 18th century, considered as Oxford university slang, this word by analogy with the previous meaning has been used in the sense of tobacco smoke; because tobacco smoke has also a bad smell (odour). The link between this derived meaning and the first one is still traceable because of their shared common semantic features (bad odours). But, later in 1743 this word was used informally to denote a state of fear or anxiety or depression of somebody to do something. For instance, he was in a funk (afraid) to go hunting, or he funks behind the door not to be seen. The link between this meaning and the original one is implicit, because how do we move from the sense of bad smell to denote the state of fear, depression and anxiety of somebody? Does the depression or anxiety comes from the metaphorical use of "bad smell"? What is strange is that in 20th century, it comes to denote a type of dance music with a strong rhythm developed by African American musicians in the 1960s. The last derived meaning (music) far from the original one (body

odour) is used as the prevailing or first meaning, then comes secondly the sense of fear and anxiety, finally comes the sense of unpleasant smell. This means that there is an upheaval in the meaning chronological order, because the last derive meaning has become the first meaning as presented by dictionary entries, and the first meanings have become the secondary one. So, from the negative connotation (bad body odour) of the word, we move to the positive connotation (music, dance). Taking into account this semantic analysis of word structure, we can say that the original meaning has been drastically changed to denote new concepts. This can be called a "pure semantic assimilation". In this case, the semantic assimilation is made by the concatenation process.

Fandango: from Spanish American, probably from African language, is originally a lively (full of life and energy) Spanish American dance for two people typically accompanied by castanets or tambourine. Moreover, by meaning expansion this word is used to denote a foolish and useless act or thing. It is also used to denote an elaborated or complicated process or activity. The notion of foolishness or complicatedness derived from the first meaning (dance, music) may be due to the fact it is a dance which performance requires a great deal of effort, energy which make people tired. It is probably from this negative connotation contained in the first meaning that the word fandango is used to mean a useless act or complicated process or activity to be performed. Here again, the word denotation and connotation meanings moving from the concept of dance and music to that of useless act or thing is strongly negatively affected. This negative meaning is also from Western people misconception or bias toward African languages.

Boma: from Swahili is an enclosure in Eastern and Southern Africa (for many kind of domestic animals) made with wooden sticks in bush as a camp of protection especially for animals. This word once borrowed to English is used not only as a camp to protect animals, but also to protect people. That is why in English it denotes a police post and a magistrate's office (Collins). These two meanings are built by analogy with the first meaning. In fact, a police office or a magistrate's office and animal enclosure play the same role in the sense of protection. The difference is that the police and magistrate's offices are social institutions built to protect people from the threat, the injustice of the others; while the first is only for the protection of animals. We think that it is because of the notion of protection contained in the first meaning of boma, and also the function performed by police officers and magistrates that the first meaning of the word has been extended to denote police office and magistrate office too.

Mumbo-jumbo: this word from Mandingo language in 18th century originally denotes a supposed African idol. It is a foolish religious reverence, ritual or incantation performed by African people. In 19th century, this word acquired the following current derived meanings: a

meaningless, unnecessarily complicated language, activity or nonsense thing that usually intended to obscure and confuse people; also an object of superstitious awe or reverence. In other word, its current informal meaning is a language or a ceremony that seems complicated and important but is actually without real sense or meaning. For instance a religious/medical mumbo jumbo (complicated languages specific to religion or medicine). The negative derived meanings are from the metaphorical use of the original word (meaning) mumbo-jumbo. In fact, African people used to worship their idols in a hermetic and complicated language which is not even always understood by some other African people. It is a specific language with specific incantations only accessible for those who are initiated to it. In that case it was not possible for white people to understand it. It is because of the complexity of the understanding of that speech the word mumbo-jumbo (the name of an idol) is used to denote anything which is complicated and meaningless. And now the original sense: an idol or a masked figure is abandoned; only the complicated speech used for worshipping that idol is negatively taken into account and applied to new concepts (anything that are complicated, nonsense). The connotative meaning of this African word is deteriorated since the derived meanings are considered as informal, disapproving and even as offensive towards African languages. Because a language or speech that is not understood by other people is not necessary meaningless and nonsense for those who speak and understand it. In general, we notice that words (nouns) denoting African religious, musical concepts or other things in relation with African languages are negatively semantically extended to cover new concepts.

Juke: from Gullah *juke*, from Mandingo *dzugu*, originally denoted someone who is wicked, or an enemy. This word once borrowed into English language, its original sense has been affected; we can even say drastically affected. Because in English its current sense is a roadhouse, nightclub, or bar ran by African American in 1900s that especially provides food, drinks and music for dancing. The link between this current sense and the original one (enemy) seems to be faded because we think that dance or music and enemy are neither compatible nor collocation words, that is why we think that the original meaning has been drastically affected. Moreover, by lexical extension the word *juke* has been used in collocation with "box" to form a compound "jukebox" which means now a machine in a pub or bar that plays music when you put coins into it. The suffix "box" was added to refer to the machine playing music in the bar. This jukebox originally is probably from "juke-bawd": a house where we pay money for having sex with a person (prostitutes), because "bawd" means a woman in charge of a brothel. In that house there were loud music (songs, plays) and people dealing with sex in an amusing way. Along with language evolution the negative connotation

attached to this word has been abandoned to give place to the meaning of music and machine playing that music. Here one component of the denotative meaning (amusing with sex) has been abandoned, but the second meaning which is music has been kept and extended to cover by concatenation process too, the concept of machine playing music; and the connotative meaning of the word has also been ameliorated by moving from negative connotation to positive one. However, the second derived meaning used generally in sport is to deceived or mislead your opponent with the ball by moving in a zigzag fashion as seen with Ronaldinho the Brazilian football player in 2008. Example to juke your opponent with ball. This secondary meaning can be seen as the result of the metaphorical use of the original word because an opponent can be considered as an enemy that we try to faint at.

Banana: from West African language (Wolof) is a long curved fruit which grows in clusters in hot countries and has soft pulpy flesh and yellow skin when ripe. From this first meaning is derived a second meaning which seems not to share a link with the original meaning of banana. In fact, the word banana is used informally as an adjective "bananas" to mean: silly, crazy, insane and extremely angry. For instance if somebody becomes extremely angry, crazy or silly, we can say that he is going bananas; it looks like a phraseological unit. In English the phrase to "go bananas" is used as an idiomatic expression that is why the link between the first meaning and the derived meaning is faded. In addition to this, the word banana by lexical extension has been used as an offensive word in collocation with other native word such as the term "banana republic" to mean a poor country with weak government depending financially on other countries. This third meaning is derived from the metaphorical use of the banana fruit or tree. In fact, banana trees in tropical regions are weak and cannot stand for many years; they only last for one season after producing the yellow fruit which itself is perishable over a certain short period. And the banana trees grow in tropical areas (third world countries) mainly in African countries which are considered as underdeveloped or developing countries. Perhaps it is on the basis of this negative connotation contained in the meaning of banana that it has been used to denote poor countries. From a positive connotation of the word banana we acquired new meanings full of negative connotation, hence the semantic deterioration of the word banana. But, it is necessary to state that among the three meanings, the first meaning in the sense of yellow fruit is the prevailing one that many speakers are acquainted with.

Jumbo: this words, from Swahili language, originally denoted a chief, a person who is large and clumsy. By metaphor, this term in 1882 became popular as the name of an elephant at London zoo. Later, still by the use of metaphor, in 20th century new derivative and specialised meanings has come as follow: it is restricted and used

now in Western societies as a specialised vocabulary to denote a Boeing 747 (a large plane carrying hundreds of people). This word in Swahili language has never denoted a big plane since this concept does not exist in their language.

In short, from the semantic analysis of African words in English, it comes out that although few African words are semantically assimilated in English, they are in general assimilated negatively because most of the derived meanings from African words especially words denoting cultural or traditional concept (religion, music, dance) such as *mojo*, *goober*, *gumbo*, *jamboree*, *jazz*, *jive*, *juju*, *juke*, *mumbo-jumbo*, *sambo*, *zombie*, *funk*, *boogie*, are full of negative connotation giving rise to meaning deterioration since the derived meaning from them are mostly considered as informal and offensive. Whenever we are concerned with a concept related to African languages or speech, this concept is qualified as nonsense or meaningless. This means that the meaning extension of those words is subjective and strongly motivated.

Grammatical adaptation of African words (Niger-kongo) in English

Grammar can be defined as the rules in a language used to change the morphology of words and joining them into phrases or sentences. In general words borrowed from one language to another lose their morphological patterns like the inflectional bound morphemes used to indicate the plural and infinitive mark of a word, or the derivational morphemes used to change words grammatical classes. This is because in general words are not borrowed with their grammatical morphemes, since they are going to be adjusted, adapted to the (grammatical) morphemes of the receiving language. This grammatical assimilation of loans allows their regular functioning in the grammatical system of the receiving language.

In this part, the grammatical adaptation of African loans will be concerned only with the number (singular/plural). By numbers, we refer to the inflectional morphemes used to make difference between the singular and plural form of a word. In English, the inflectional morphemes used to indicate the mark of plural depends on words final phonemes. In general the inflectional morpheme [s] is used to show the plural form of words. But when the word is ended by the following graphemes [ch, sh, o, s, ss, x, z] the plural mark is indicated by the morpheme [es], pronounced as [iz], like in “kisses, touches, boxes”, etc. In case it is ended by the grapheme [y] and preceded by any consonant phoneme, the plural mark is indicated by the morpheme [ies] pronounced as [iz], like in “beauties, cherries”, etc. There are also some nouns which are invariable, meaning that they are always use in singular or plural form.

However, the singular and plural inflectional morphemes in African languages are very different from the English plural patterns. In fact, in Bantu languages, there are a great number of bound morphemes used to indicate the singular and plural form of words. There are no identical morphemes for the plural or singular mark of words, in general for Bantu words (nouns). That is to say each category of words along with their semantic markers or group is identified with its singular and plural morphemes. For instance, the noun classes are distinguished by nominal prefixes presented in the table1.

About the Niger languages composed of nine subgroups languages (.....), the placement of their grammatical morphemes share some similarities with that of Bantu languages but there is sometimes some differences. In fact, with the West African languages (Niger) the grammatical mark (singular, plural) are characterised by nominal prefixes or suffixes or by both the combination of prefixes and suffixes (Dolphyne 1988). Example, in Akan (Baule): “bah-ku” means a child, and “bah-mu” means the children or children; in Mandingo it is “denh” (child) and “denh-ou” (the children or children). The terms in bold are the grammatical morphemes of number. Those grammatical morphemes of West African (Niger) languages are well illustrated with the Akan (Fante dialect) languages as follows. In fact, Akan has three ways of forming grammatical morphemes of number: first by the use of the prefixes **e-**, **ε-**, **ɔ-**, **o-**, **a-**, and **i-** (in the Fante dialect); second by the use of the **-ni** suffix, and third is by the use of the prefixes **o** and **ɔ** together with the **-ni** suffix (Dolphyne 1988). Examples of words with the prefixes are **ε-kom** ‘famine’, **o-bi** ‘somebody’, **a-ba** ‘seed’; Togo-**ni** ‘a Togolese’; **o-sigyani** ‘a spinster’ and **ɔ-kwantu-ni** ‘a traveller’. Few are illustrated here in table 2.

Words in general are not borrowed with their grammatical morphemes since they are going to be adjusted to the grammatical patterns of the recipient languages. However, with African loanwords in English, this is not the same case. In fact, some African words are borrowed together with their original singular grammatical morphemes (“**malanga**, **indaba**, **mampara**, **impala**, **marimba**, **marabi**, **macaque**, **macoco**, **mbira**”, etc) while others during borrowing their grammatical morphemes of number are deleted (fundis from **umfundis**, mamba from **imamba**, sangoma from **isangoma**, sambo from **nzambu**). In this case their grammatical adaptation in English will probably follow two different processes. In fact, African words which grammatical patterns of number (singular) are deleted before their integration in English are generally submitted to the English inflectional grammatical morphemes (plural) as follow: **fundis**, **mambas**, **sambas**, **jujus**, etc. those which morphemes (singular) are kept generally remain invariable in English because their inflectional forms (morpheme) are unknown in English. This is witnessed by the following words: **indaba** (S) → **indaba** (PL). It is the same case for these

Table 1. The grammatical morphemes (singular and plural) of Bantu languages (the Congo languages).

Class	Nominal prefix	Examples	Semantic category
1 (SG)	<i>m-, mw</i>	<i>Mtoto</i> 'child'	Animates
2 (PL)	<i>wa-, w-</i>	<i>watoto</i> 'children'	
3 (SG)	<i>m-, mw-</i>	<i>Mti</i> 'tree'	Plants, nature, body parts
4 (PL)	<i>mi-, m-</i>	<i>miti</i> 'trees'	
5 (SG)	<i>ji-, ∅</i>	<i>Chungwa</i> 'orange'	Fruits, everyday objects, some nouns of Arabic origin
6 (PL)	<i>ma</i>	<i>Machungwa</i> 'oranges'	
7 (SG)	<i>ki-, ch-</i>	<i>Kitabu</i> 'book'	Everyday objects, animals, diminutives, languages
8 (PL)	<i>vi-, vy-</i>	<i>vitabu</i> 'books'	
9 (SG)	<i>∅-</i>	<i>njia</i> 'path'	Kinship terms, animals, natural elements, foreign nouns
10 (PL)	<i>∅-</i>	<i>njia</i> 'paths'	
11 (SG)	<i>u-, w-</i>	<i>uzuri</i> 'beauty'	Singular abstract nouns
12	<i>ku-, kw-</i>	<i>kujua</i> 'to know'	Verbal nouns

Adapted from Petzell, 2005.

Table 2. Some grammatical morphemes of West African (Akan) languages

Singular	Plural	Gloss
ɛ-dan	a-dan	house
ɔ-ko	a-ko	battle
a-deɛ	n-neɛma	thing
a-boa	m-moa	Animal

From Monica Amoah APENTENG 2014

words: bonobo, bwana, fufu, kalimba, kabaka, kwela, impala, indaba, mbaquanga, mbira, mbalax, lapa, mampara, marimba, marabi, macoco, merengue, macaque, malanga, ngoma, ngwee, vuvuzela, etc. There are some exception: "lapa"; this word is from Sotho **lelapa**. Despite the deletion of the (singular) morpheme (**le**), this word remains invariable.

Besides, loans from African languages ended by the grapheme or phoneme [o] do not always follow the English grammatical rule (pattern). In English, words ended by this phoneme always form their plural form with the inflectional morpheme [es] in word final position like in "tomatoes, potatoes, avocados", etc. But African words in general ended by this phoneme or segment [o] are not always assimilated grammatically following this English native process. They, instead of being assimilated with the morpheme [es], are nearly always adapted with the phoneme [s] like the other words in general. The following data illustrate this viewpoint: jumbo (S) → jumbos (PL). This is also the same case for these words in plural: sambos, mambos, gumbos, milos, bongos, bozos, fandangos, mumbo-jumbos, tangos, voodooos, etc. However, only few of them such as "mojo, banjo" can use either the plural mark [s] or [es] (cf. Oxford English dictionary, 3rd ed).

CONCLUSION

Most of African loanwords in English are from the Niger-Congo (Bantu languages and the West African languages) languages, a subgroup of Niger-Kordofanian family. The data (17) under our study are about lexical words denoting the concept of African popular music, dance, culture and traditions. At the level of semantics, those African words in English are assimilated metaphorically following mostly the radiation process. The native meanings of those African words are generally altered in English because once borrowed into English language they have acquired new derived negative meanings. Those negative meanings have negatively affected the connotation and sometimes denotation meanings of African words since the derived meanings are mostly offensive and disapproval. Generally when we are concerned with a word denoting African music or speech (fandango, jazz, jive, and goober, etc.), this word on the basis of bias western people hold toward African languages received new informal and disapproving meanings. Because of this misconception the etymology of an important number of African word remains unknown or is ascribed to other languages that is why the Old English Dictionary treats some African words as the Negro

corruption of some Spanish words (this is the case of the word banjo).

At the level of their grammatical adaptation in English (about the number), two major processes are noticed. The grammatical inflexion of number of English and African languages are different since African languages are characterised by nominal prefixes and suffixes indicating the singular and plural mark of words while English uses suffixes indicating the plural mark. By two processes we mean that some African words are borrowed together with their singular grammatical inflexional morpheme (Malanga, indaba, mampara, and marimba, etc...) while other during borrowing (their integration) their singular grammatical morphemes of number are deleted (sangoma, sangololo, mamba, etc...). Those borrowed which grammatical marks are deleted are most of the time submitted to the English plural inflexional grammatical morpheme "s" (mambas, sangololos, mojos, etc...); however, those borrowed with grammatical morphemes most of the time remain invariable (Malanga, mampara, indaba, etc...). there are some exception for each case.

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Appendix: Data Collected From West African Languages

Words	Words meanings (the original or native meanings)	Word Origins	Year of Borrowing
1 banana	A long curved fruit which grows in tropical areas (Africa) and has soft pulpy flesh and yellow skin when it is ripe.	Via Portuguese or Spanish, from Mandingo (Wolof: <i>banaana</i>).	late 16 th C. (circa 1597)
2 Boma	An area (an enclosure) surrounded by a fence, often made of sticks, used to protect animals or people.	from Swahili	19 th C.
3 fandango	It is a Spanish dance in which two people dance very close together.	From Spanish probably of African origin.	18 th C. (circa 1770)
4 funk	a type of dance music with a strong rhythm, developed by African American musicians.	From <i>kikongo</i> <i>lu-fuki</i> "bad body odor".	20 th C. (circa 1960)
5 Gumbo (gombo),	a small green vegetable, also an okra.	From Louisiana French "gombo", from Bantu (the Angolan word) (<i>ki</i>) <i>ngombo</i> .	Late 19 th C. (circa 1875)
6 goober	Another name for peanut	From Kikongo (Angolan language) <i>nguba</i> akin to Kimbutu <i>nguba</i> .	Late 19 th C (circa 1834)
7 indaba	A discussion among Bantu people of southern Africa. Also a conference, a topic.	From Xhosa and Zulu	19 th C. (circa 1827)
8 jamboree	It is a party, celebration, or other gathering where there is a large number of people, fun, and enjoyment, a big noisy party or event.	Originally USA slang, perhaps from Africa.	mid 19 th C. (circa 1864)
9 jazz	A kind of music of African-American origin, characterized by rhythms.	Uncertain origin; probably from Bantu word <i>jas</i> : 'to cause to dance, excite', from West African languages (Mandinka: <i>jasí</i> , from Temne: <i>yas</i>)	20 th C. (circa 1913)
10 jive	a fast dance to music with a strong beat, especially popular in the 1950s in USA, denoting meaningless or misleading speech.	Possibly from Wolof word: <i>jev</i> .	20 th C. (circa 1920s)
11 juju,	A fetish, charm or amulet of West African people; probably	Perhaps from French "joujou"(toy), from Hausa <i>djùdju</i> (evil spirit, fetish). It also refers to a type of Nigerian music called <i>jùjù</i> .	19 th C. (first meaning: 1884; second: 1982).
12 juke	A roadhouse, nightclub, or bar, especially one providing food, drinks, and jukebox music for dancing; from Gullah <i>juke</i> "disorderly".	It likely originated from Wolof as <i>dzug</i> , meaning "live wickedly", from Mandingo <i>dzugu</i> "wicked"	20 th C. (circa 1930)
13 jumbo	Originally denoting a large and clumsy person.	from Swahili <i>jumbe</i> or <i>jumbo</i> "chief" or from <i>Kongonzamba</i> "elephant" probably of African origin, compare with Gullah <i>moco</i> 'witchcraft' from	19 th C.
14 Mojo	an amulet, charm, or magic spell.	<i>Fulamoco'o</i> "medicine man, shaman",	Early 20th C. (circa 1926)

Appendix contd

15	Mumbo-jumbo	Foolish African religious (idol) reverence, ritual, or incantation.	Probably from Mandingo <i>mama dyumbo</i> or <i>Maamajombo</i> , "a masked dancer, name of a tribal god".	18 th C. (circa 1738)
16	sambo	An archaic and taboo word for Black in USA.	From American Spanish "zambo" (denoting a kind of yellow monkey): a person of Black descent; probably related to Bantu <i>nzambu</i> "monkey". Or Fula <i>sambo</i> meaning "uncle"	18 th C.
17	Zombie (jumbie)	In some African and Caribbean religions and in horror stories, it is a dead body that has been made alive again, reanimated by supernatural spirit (a snake).	From West African origin; compare with Kikongo <i>zumbi</i> "good-luck fetish" akin to Kimbundu <i>nzúmbi</i> or <i>nzambi</i> . It is originally the name of a snake-god.	Early 19 th C. (circa 1871)