

Doubling up our words

I would love for someone to explain to me why Jamaicans so frequently "double-up" their words. Has anyone at the University taken the time to study this curious phenomenon?

It's obvious that some examples of this occurrence are just English words that we've gotten into the habit of saying twice, perhaps for the sake of emphasis. (Perhaps it's easier to simply double-up a word than to find additional words to help emphasize a point?) Or perhaps it's a part of a Jamaican liking for deliberate over-exaggeration in our descriptions of even everyday things? Other words appear not to be English at all and perhaps may have been passed down to us by our African ancestors? Consider the following examples: Batta batta: To survive or merely get by. E.g. "How yuh stay Ralston?", "Bwoy Lenny, mi jus deh yah a batta batta inna di recession"; Bumpy-bumpy: Very bumpy. Covered in bumps. e.g. "Gweh! Yuh face bumpy-bumpy like soursap!"; Cabba-cabba: Uncivilised. "Is when she get so cabba-cabba?"; Chacka-chacka: Untidy. Disorganised. Cyass-cyass: A noisy quarrel or controversy. (See Ray-ray) Studies have shown that the persons most likely to be involved in cyass-cyass are fool-fool, cabba-cabba people who enjoy the mix-up and ray-ray. Deady-deady: Unexciting. Boring. Conventional Jamaican wisdom is that deady-deady relationships often lead to infidelity. e.g. "Leroy, mi tyad ah the deady-deady lovin. If yuh nuh careful yuh ah go find Joe Grind inna yuh life!"; Degeh-degeh: Singly. "Is only one degeh-degeh one leave. Dibby-dibby: Not worthy of respect. A dibby-dibby girl is best avoided. A dibby-dibby, licky-licky girl should be shunned like the curse. Dooguh-dooguh: Sexual intercourse. What's popularly known today as "dagging". (Popularly known in places where it hasn't been completely banned by the Broadcasting Commission, that is.) Fenkeh-fenkeh: Second rate. Lacking vigor or vitality. See pyah-pyah. Fool-fool: More than ordinarily foolish. Good-good: Pristine, high quality. e.g. "Bwoy is mi good-good scarf yuh tek a shine shoes?!"; Or "Imagine! Dis dutty bwoy go breed di parson good-good daughter!"; Gwaany-gwaany: To be boastful. A show-off. Henka-henka: To pine for/long for. e.g. "The Olint money gone! It nuh mek sense yuh ah henka-henka after it!"; Labba-labba: To speak or talk excessively. Also known as "chatty-chatty".

Lay-lay: To waste time, procrastinate. E.g. "Instead of working yuh deh a lay-lay pon computa a day time!"; Licky-licky: Greedy. Licky-licky people frequently meet tragic ends. e.g. "Is licky-licky him did licky-licky, why Linval go eat off the young ackee dem an dead!"; Meckeh-meckeh: Thick in texture or consistency. Nuff nuff: Large/plentiful in number. E.g. "Yow, yuh tink dis recession is a play-play ting? Is nuff-nuff people gwine lose dem work when Government cut public sector jobs"; One-one: Singly. One by one. "Mertle, yuh nah see Pastor Brown an di church sister dem? Him jus a pick dem off, one-one; like ripe mango offa di tree!"; Play-play: Not serious or meaningful in nature. E.g. "Junior, mi tyad of the play-play relationship. Why we can't get married?"; Pyah-pyah: Second rate. Of inferior quality. See fenkeh-fenkeh; Ray-ray: Controversy, pandemonium. Sawka-sawka: To treat roughly, often in a sexual context. e.g. "No Elva, last night mi haffi stop him half way through an ask him how him a sawka- sawka di ting so!"; Wagga-wagga: Fat. Obese. The other end result of licky-licky behaviour. Walla-walla: To wallow or indulge in. Warra-warra: The definition of "warra-warra" is a little hard to pin down but it seems to refer to a person's "private parts". As in: "Dutty bwoy, don't mek ah tell yuh bout yuh warra-wara!"; Or "Move yuh warra-warra from side ah mi"; Woi-woi: Far away. Remote. (N.B. Sometimes we even "triple-up" our words – e.g. "I can't believe him leave you and the baby without a penny? Jus so-so so") thingsjamaicanlove.com