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# Quantifying Lexicographic Improvement: From the Dictionary of Jamaican English to the Jamaican National Dictionary

Joseph T. Farquharson, *University of the West Indies, St. Augustine*



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Quantifying Lexicographic Improvement:  
From the *Dictionary of Jamaican English* to the *Jamaican National Dictionary*.

Joseph T. Farquharson  
University of the West Indies, St. Augustine

Almost every year new projects commence with the aim of updating existing historical dictionaries. Given the heavy financial and personal investment that any such project requires, having a way of quantifying the real value of the update would be most welcome. This paper reports the findings of a pilot project (Jamlex Phase II) which seeks to quantify the 'improvements' made by the web-based, multimedia *Jamaican National Dictionary* (JND) over its forty-odd year-old predecessor, the print-based *Dictionary of Jamaican English* (DJE), with a view to justifying the need to update the work of the DJE.

The pilot project will seek to update work on one of the smallest letter ranges in the DJE, the letter E. The letter E is spread over 9 columns on 5 pages and contains approximately 86 headwords (not counting headwords used for cross-referencing only). This pilot will provide sufficient data to conduct a preliminary analysis of the potential contribution of the update. The analysis will take into consideration the number of times the JND is able to improve on the DJE's 'etymology unknown/uncertain', its earliest and latest attestations, and the number of new parts of speech and new senses added. Seeing that the difference between the micro-structure of the DJE and that of the JND is not that great, quantifying the comparison should not be difficult.

From the results of this preparatory investigation, we can make projections about the likely contribution of the entire project even before we get to the end. The statistics should come in handy for potential funding agencies which generally require more than promises of what and how much can be accomplished.