

# *Creole paralinguistics in the African Diaspora:*

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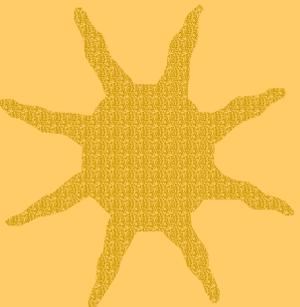
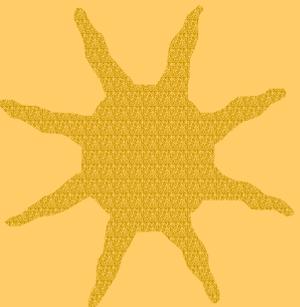
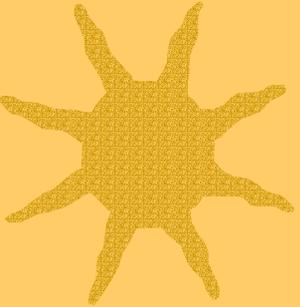
## *The case of kiss-teeth*

Peter L Patrick &  
Esther Figueroa



## *Pragmatic context of (KST)*

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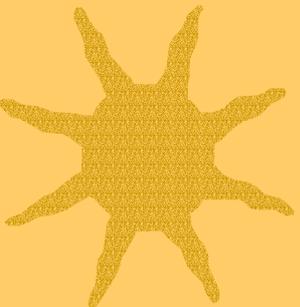
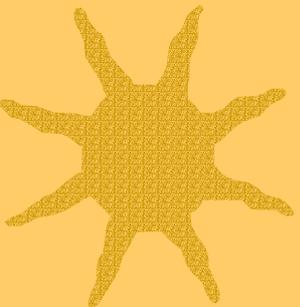
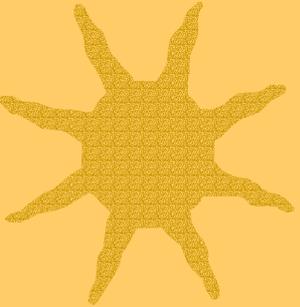


- ★ Part of a broad spectrum of pragmatic particles and paralinguistic gestures
- ★ Common across the African Diaspora but not identical everywhere
- ★ Overlooked by linguists studying African and Caribbean communication systems
- ★ Range of expressive functions and possible meanings for each element



# *Challenges for Description*

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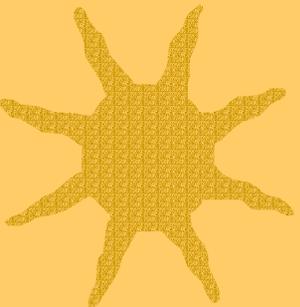
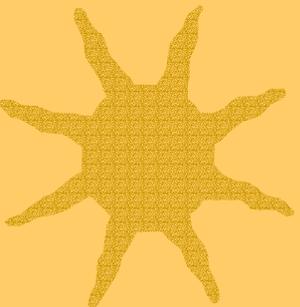
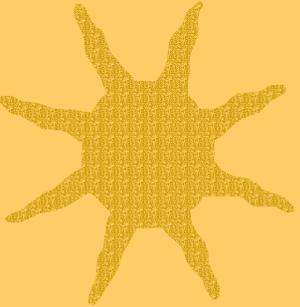


- ★ Resolve complex historical patterns of diffusion for the gesture and its names
- ★ Distinct forms with similar paradigmatic but contrasting syntagmatic properties
- ★ Link with other forms used to negotiate moral standing in Diaspora speech
- ★ Integrate speaker agency, indexicality & affect into existing lexical descriptions



# *Forms of the (KST) variable*

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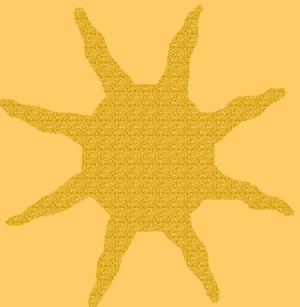
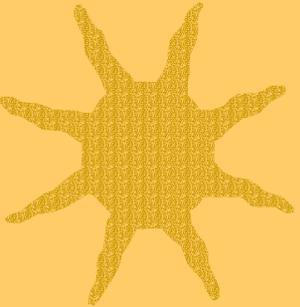
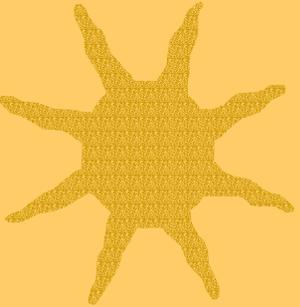
## Variant forms:

- ★ *kiss-teeth*
- ★ *suck-teeth*
- ★ *chups*
- ★ *cho!*
- ★ *Kst!*



## *Nonlexical Kst! form: phonetics*

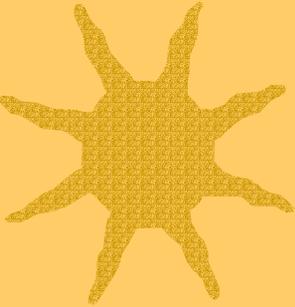
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- ★ Conventionalized set of sounds which are normative but vary widely in form
- ★ Parameters: lip tension, intensity, point & type of articulation, pitch, duration, punctuality, tongue position
- ★ Velaric ingressive airstream w/a dual closure: 1 velar, 1 palatal or labio-dental
- ★ A single click, or an affricate; a series of discrete bursts, or a continuous stream



# *African cognate & related forms*



★ Efik *asiama*

★ Ewe *tsóò*

★ Fongbe *céÂj*

★ Gambian Krio  
*tšipú*

★ Wolof *tšipú*

★ Guinée–Bissau/  
Casamance *cia*

★ Hausa *tsaki*

★ Ibibio *sicɔp*

★ Kikongo *tsiona*

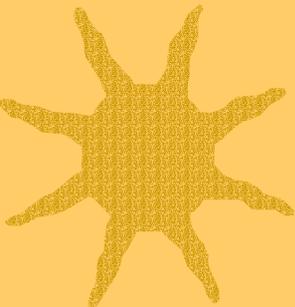
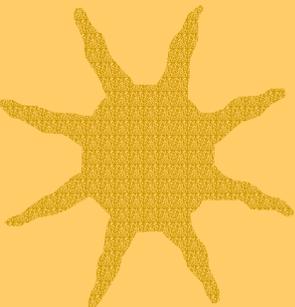
★ Kiyansu *nswea:b*

★ Kimbundu  
*mushoshu*

★ Twi *twéaa, twô*

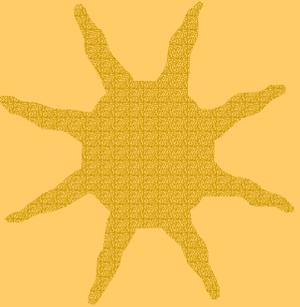
★ Wolof *tšipú*

★ Yoruba *kpòšé*

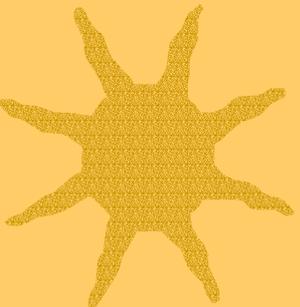
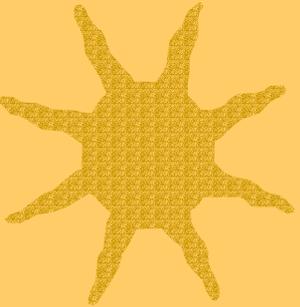




## *Americas: cognate/related forms*



- ★ Aluku (*meki*) *tjuu*
- ★ Brazilian *muxoxo*
- ★ Gullah *pshaw* /šʌ/
- ★ Haitian *kuipe*,  
*kipe*, *kwipe*, *tuipe*,  
*tchuipe*, *tchoupe*
- ★ Papiamentu *chupa*
- ★ Saramaccan *kòòn*
- ★ Sranan *chupa*

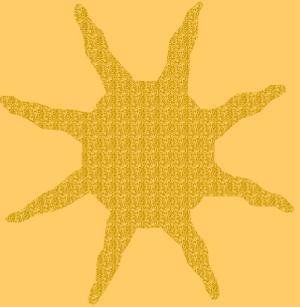


- ★ East Caribbean  
*cheups*, *stchoops*  
*steups(e)*, *stroops*,  
*stupe-you-mouth*
- ★ West Caribbean  
*suck/kiss/hiss/*  
*chip-you-teeth*
- ★ Pan-American:  
*chaw*, *pchuh*, *chu*,  
*chut*, *cho*



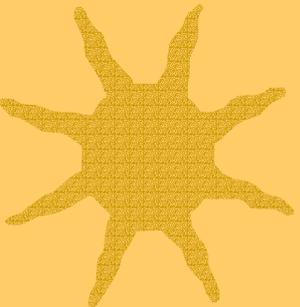
## *Distribution in the Americas:*

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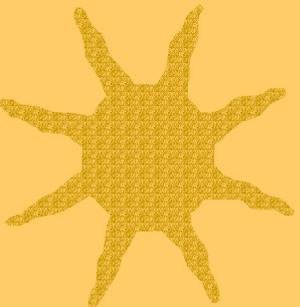
★ *Kiss-teeth*: strictly West Caribbean

★ *Suck-teeth*: N America, W Caribbean, Barbados/Guyana/Trinidad; not attested otherwise in S America or S Caribbean



★ *Chups*: Jamaica, dominates E Caribbean; absent other W Caribbean, N America

★ *Cho* predominates in N America, W Caribbean, but also Barbados/Guyana

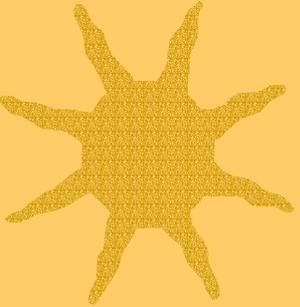


★ Brazilian & Saramaccan forms unrelated

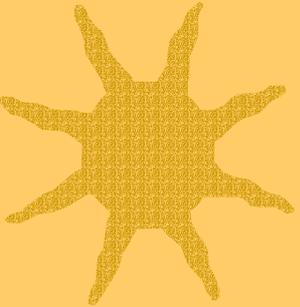


## *Literary examples: lexical forms*

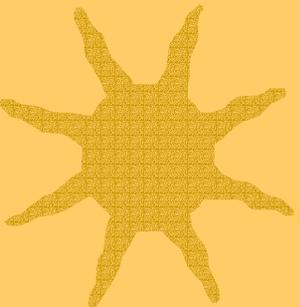
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★ Mum go out and say, “How it go?” Him kiss him teeth, “Me kick down de gal.”



★ “The great people–them!” Malvern exclaimed and sucked her teeth. “They’s like the poor. We’ll always have them with us.” [*Barbados: Paule Marshall*]

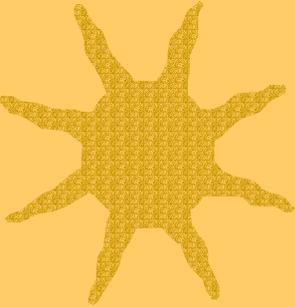


★ From the time Slim reach my house he start to stchoops. He say the place too small, the turntable bad, the needle need changing... [*Grenada: Keens–Douglas*]

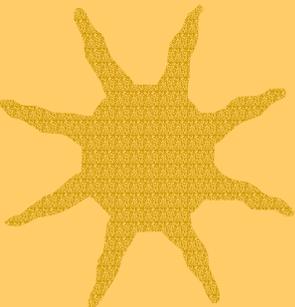


## *Examples: Onomatopoeitic forms*

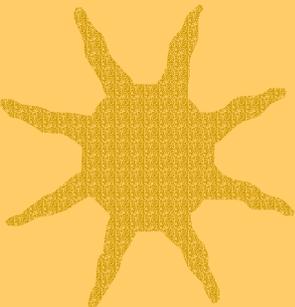
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★ “Is so you wan you pickney behave.  
Cho woman. Yu was always a fool.”  
*[Jamaican: Olive Senior]*



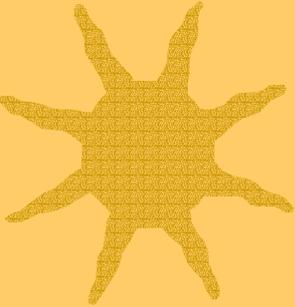
★ Eh–eh! Shake–up suck her teet  
tshwaah and walk *bram–bram*  
through de office towards de door  
mark ‘Private’. *[Jamaican: Miss Lou]*



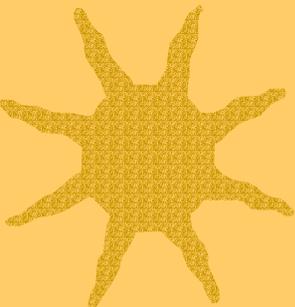


# *Dictionary of Jamaican English:*

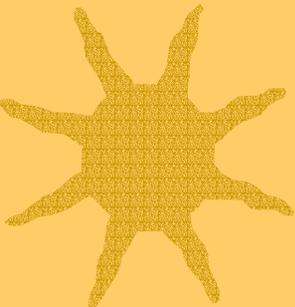
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★ *Cho*: “An exclamation expressing scorn, impatience, disagreement, expostulation, annoyance, etc. ...”



★ *Chups*: “disdain, impatience... sense of having been wronged, when one is in a position to say so (e.g. when a servant is made to do something against his will)”

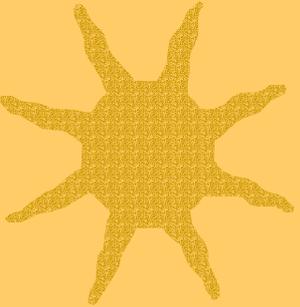


★ *Suck-teeth*: “annoyance, displeasure, ill-nature, disrespect... insult, mark of scorn”

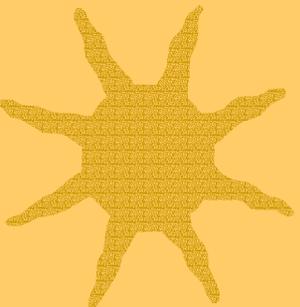


## *Refined lexical approach fails*

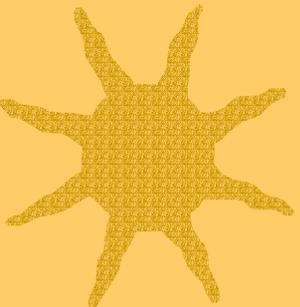
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★ Patrick 1995: “generalized marker of negative affect”. Identifies a shared property, leaves room for agency but...



★ Too wide a range of affective states: expressions of regret, affection, sexual provocation, persuasive discourse



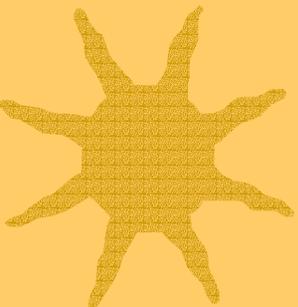
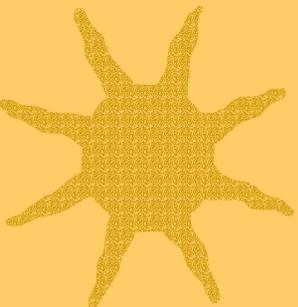
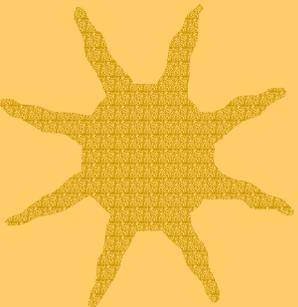
★ Often used to negotiate a positive moral positioning for themselves vis-à-vis interlocutors or objects of discourse



## *Positive affect with (KST)*

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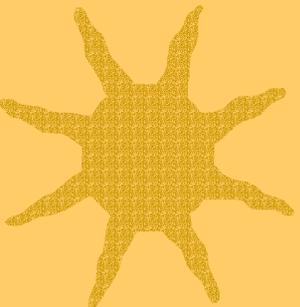
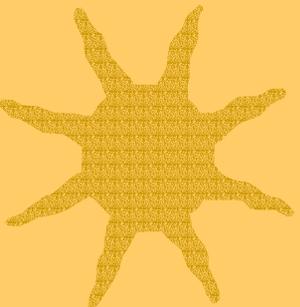
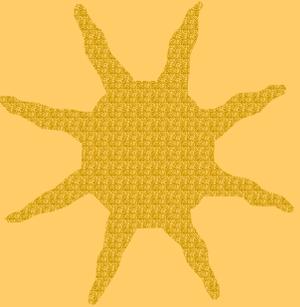
★ “De fus’ young man I ever nus, he very much in de same way as you is, and I bring him round. Nice young man! he come court me before he sick: I used to pretty den; dat is a long time ago. He most my fus’ sweetheart. Chaw! How I lub him! Those times was different from now.” *(Hamley 1862)*





# *Problems with lexical approach*

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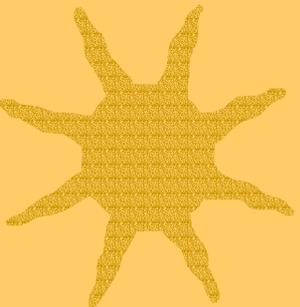
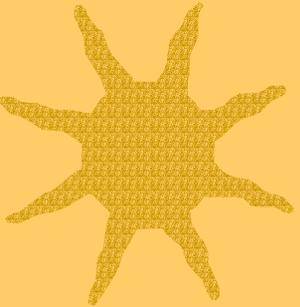
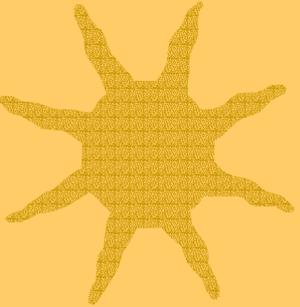


- ★ Lists: partial, contingent, inadequate
- ★ The meaning of (KST) is not a single semantic unit, or set of such units
- ★ Analyse geographical distribution and diffusion w.r.t. both function and form
- ★ Distinguish ideophones & onomatopoeia from metalinguistic labels
- ★ Examine related signs as a set, with reference to shared pragmatic functions



# *Developmental continuum*

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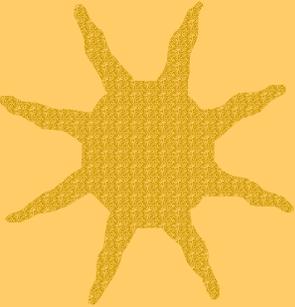


- ★ *Kst!*: pre-lexical, physical/audible gesture, not integrated into the linguistic system
- ★ *Cho!*: ideophone, semi-lexical, but w/o grammatical category, must be interjection
- ★ *Chups/steups*: still an ideophone, fully lexical (N/V), can name gesture, refer to sound, or directly represent it
- ★ *Kiss/suck-teeth*: no longer an ideophone, fully lexical (N/V), metalinguistic label

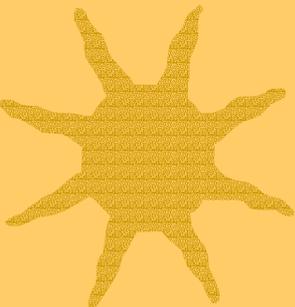


## *Oral vs literate forms of (KST)*

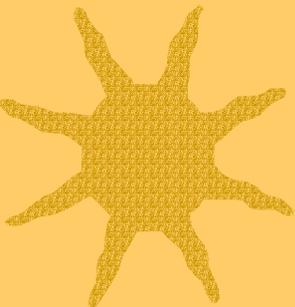
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★ Degree of lexicalization: linked to frequency of use in linguistic genres?



★ Interviews in rural Jamaica: *Kst!* occurs 20/hour, *Cho!* 4/hr, others hardly at all



★ Oral & folk print materials: *Cho!* occurs 1/45 pages, others less than 1/100 pp

★ Literary fiction: metalinguistic labels the most common form by far, *Kst!* absent



## *Literate expression of resistance*

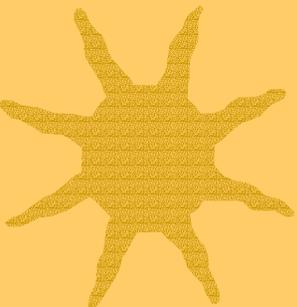
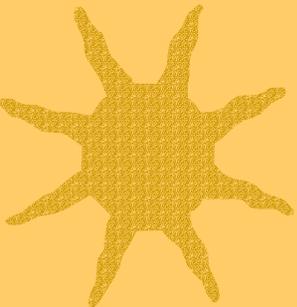
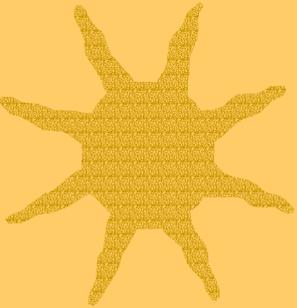
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She could not read or write a word in English  
but took every vowel and consonant of it  
and rung it around, like the articulated neck  
of our Sunday dinner sacrificial fowl.

In her anger she stabbed at English,  
walked it out,

abandoned it in favor of a long kiss-teeth...

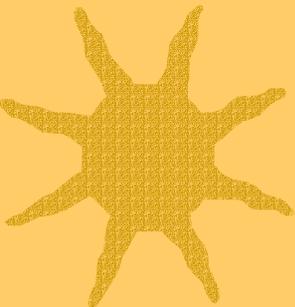
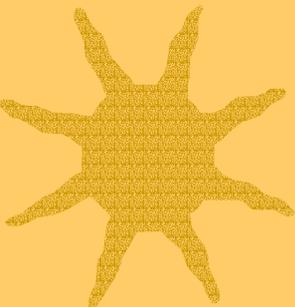
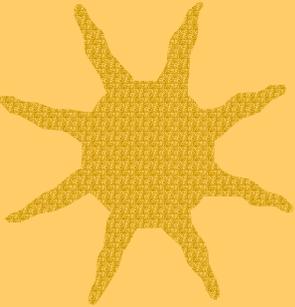
*Lorna Goodison 'Turn thanks to Miss Mirry' 1999*





## *Oral expression of moral force*

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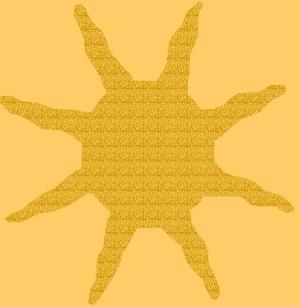


MeMa did get so vex that she just shut her Bible and tell Big Mout Doris how she just say a wicked thing and was just a tough head nayga and would never find redemption she so blasphemous and fill up with evil thought. And Big Mout Doris say, “Cho, is because I talk truth and you don’t like it...” *(Senior 1987:123)*

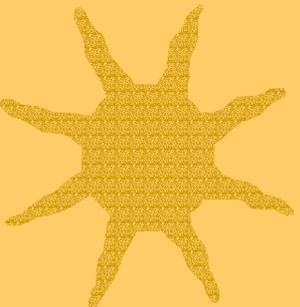
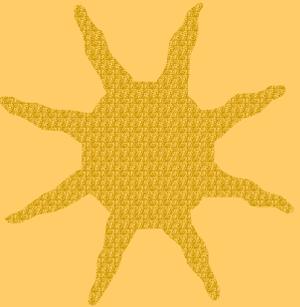


*(KST) replaces sociable speech:  
Son-son's recollection, I*

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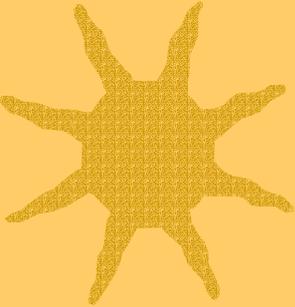
1. My madda was off to Englan' an..
2. One day he was down dere
3. An I see 'im an- a nex man seh to me
4. Seh, 'You don' see you faada-in-law,
5. Bwoy you kyaan call to 'im?'
6. [KST!] Mi suck mi teet'.
7. Mi gwan, dat time I was workin',





*(KST) as pointed indirection:  
Son-son's recollection, II*

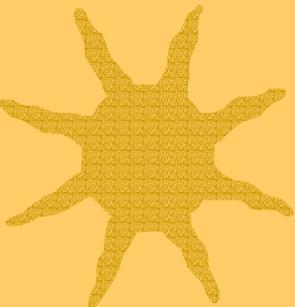
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8. Mi suck mi teet' an' mi go a work

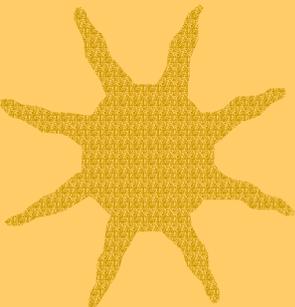
9. An come back, an' mi come back.

10. De man 'im seh,



11. Mi mosn' treatin' my faada-in-law so,

12. Man, not because 'im use to give  
floggin' an' ting.



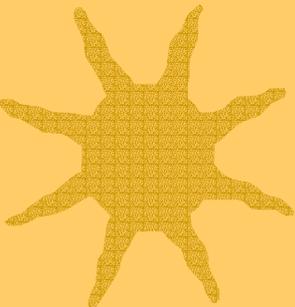
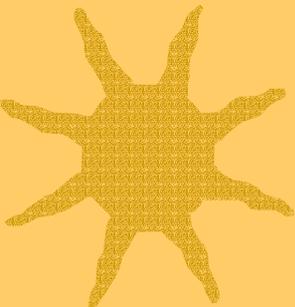
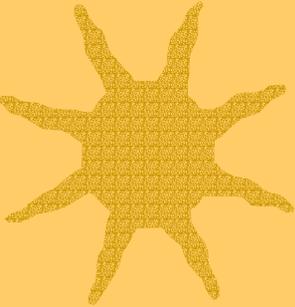
13. Mi seh, "But, de man do mi bad, man."

*[JC-R4b, 7/18/92, E St. Thomas]*



# *Locational factors in the performance of (KST)*

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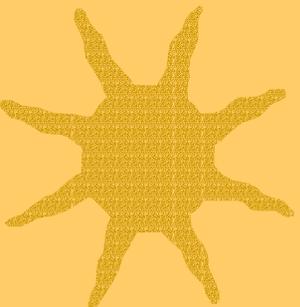
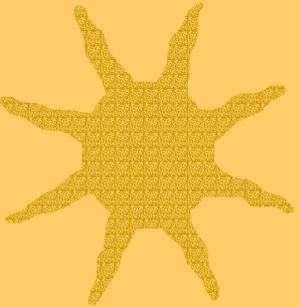
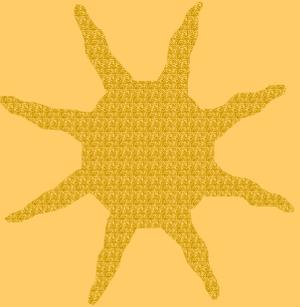


- ★ Utterance–initial, –medial, or –final
- ★ Occurs as a speaker initiative...
- ★ or a turn–taking response to another’s action or utterance...
- ★ or a back–channel without claiming the floor, in which case...
- ★ its placement against the floor–holder’s speech may indicate the linguistic object of the utterer’s expressed attitude.



## *Sequential factors in the performance of (KST)*

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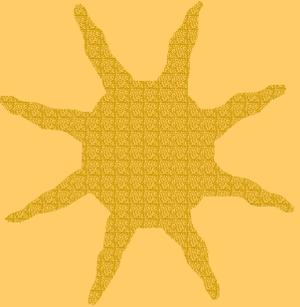


- ★ Successive utterances of *Kst!*, or *Kst!* plus *Cho!*, may bracket units of talk
- ★ The effect may be varied in repetition.
- ★ Lip tension (pout) may precede (KST), thus contextualizing it,
- ★ Or may co-occur with it,
- ★ Or may continue afterwards as part of a post-utterance physical attitude.

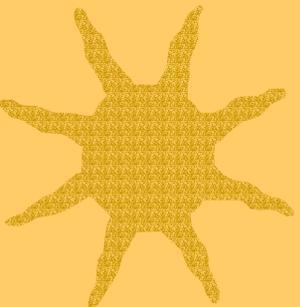


## *Narrative use: 'Maaga Lion', I*

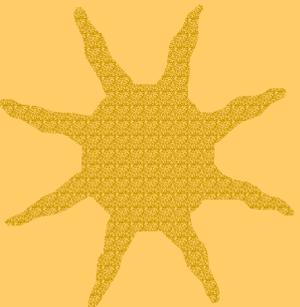
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1 I saw this Maaga Lion now... coming down.



2 Him have a big 'bout 6-pound bag full wit' guinep an it runnet' over, running over.



3 So I just Kst! pick off two, man.

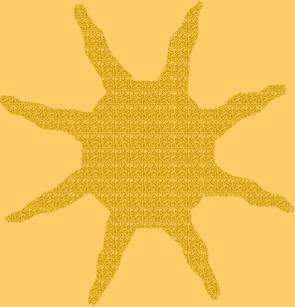
4 Kst! Cho, who tell me fi do dat?

5 Maaga Lion jus gi' a man-dem de bag fi hold, man.

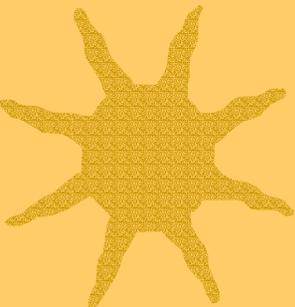


## *Narrative use: 'Maaga Lion', II*

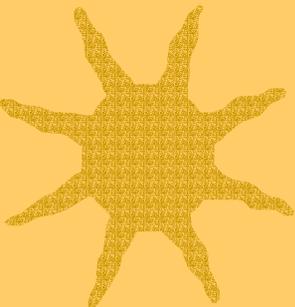
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6 Cho [*laughs*], start rock me wid some decent right left an' ting!



7 Belly bottom! When mi a defen' belly bottom, face! an' so on.



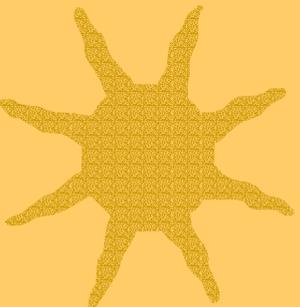
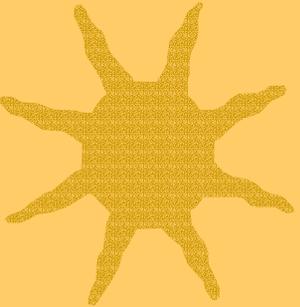
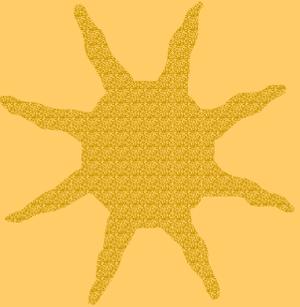
8 [*laughs*] Man a gi' me some decent right hand, man, an'...

9 Kst! I seh, Cho! Mi kyaan tek dis no more.  
*[JC-U44b, 11/13/89, Kingston]*



## *Summary: Functions of (KST)*

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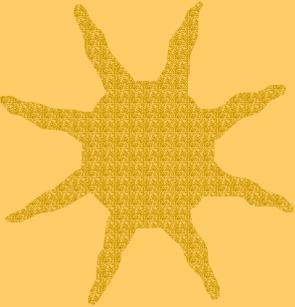


- ★ An inherently evaluative, inexplicit oral gesture w/a sound-symbolic component
- ★ Forms are geographically distinct and differentially distributed across modes
- ★ Stable set of functions over the Diaspora
- ★ Often used to negotiate moral position
- ★ Closely linked to community norms and expectations of conduct and attitude

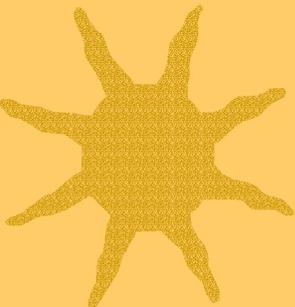
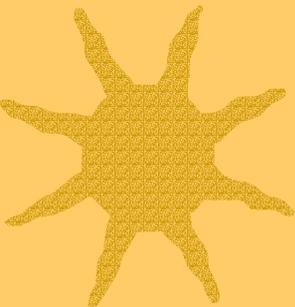


## *Summary: Functions of (KST)*

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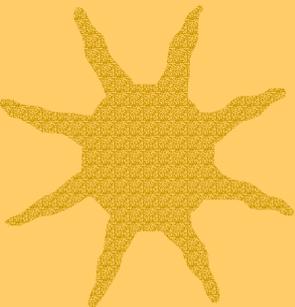
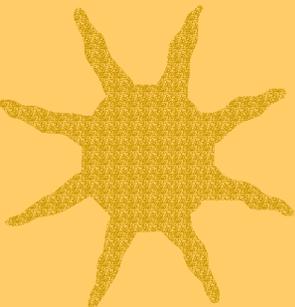
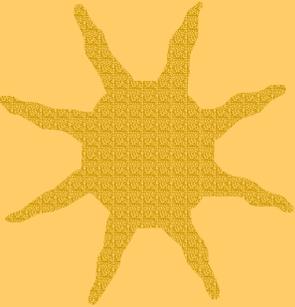
- ★ Participates in indirect–discourse system
- ★ Requires co–construction of intention by speaker and hearers
- ★ May be proscribed in contexts requiring explicit and direct discourse (courtroom)
- ★ Moving inwards from the edge of the linguistic system via lexicalization...
- ★ ..while remaining central to the speech community's expressive armoury.





## *Contact Info:*

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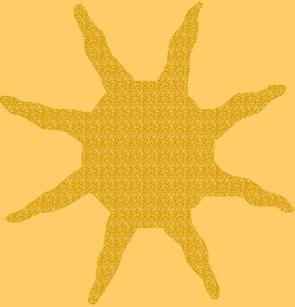


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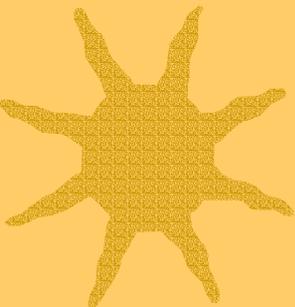


## Core References:

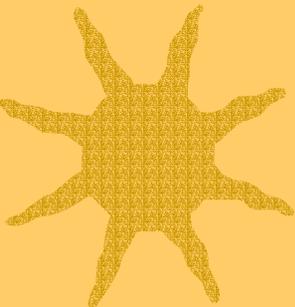
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★ Esther Figueroa & Peter L Patrick. 2002. “Kiss-teeth.” *American Speech* vol. 77, no.4: 383-397.



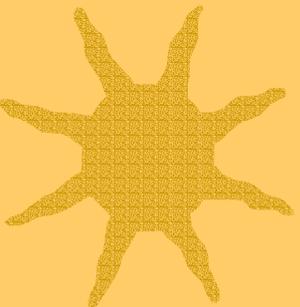
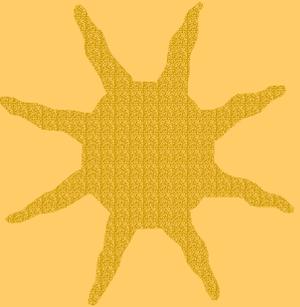
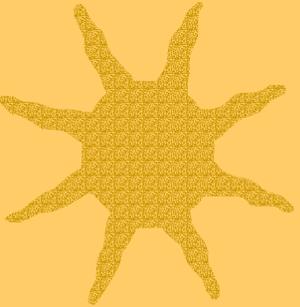
★ Peter L Patrick & Esther Figueroa. “The meaning of *kiss-teeth*.” Fc. in A Spears & J DeJongh, eds., *Black language in the U.S. and Caribbean: Education, history, structure, and use*.



★ Rickford, John R. & Angela E. Rickford. 1976. ‘*Cut-eye* and *suck-teeth*: African words and gestures in New World guise.’ *Journal of American Folklore* 89: 294-309.



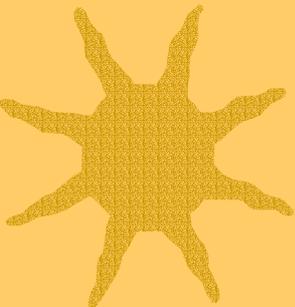
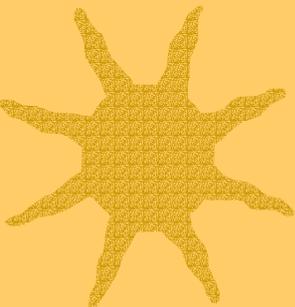
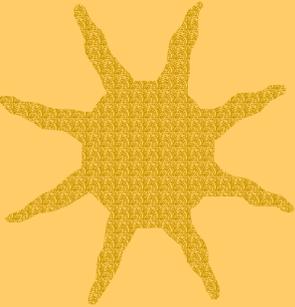
## *Thanks to our informants!*



- 
- ★ Jennes Anderson and Mark Figueroa, also Peetra, Jo and Nara Anderson–Figueroa (Jamaican); Junior Bailey (Jamaican); Edward Baugh (Collymore quote); Ken Bilby (Caribbean, S American and African data and references); Randi Christensen (African American); Mary Coit (Trinidadian and Guyanese); Carolyn Cooper (Jamaican); Michel Degraff (Haitian); Samuel Grant (Jamaican); Joan Houston Hall (*DARE* data); Anita Herzfeld (Limón Creole); Magnus Huber (Nigerian historical data); ...



# *Thanks to our informants!*



- 
- ★ ...Pamela Knight (London Jamaican); Bettina Migge (Surinam Creoles); Thomas Minott (Jamaican); Mervyn Morris (Jamaican); Salikoko Mufwene (Bantu); Abolaji Samuel Mustapha (Nigerian English); Ken Patrick (Jamaican); Michelle Paul (US English); Velma Pollard (Jamaican); Suzanne Romaine (ideophones); Olive Senior (Jamaican); John Singler (Liberian); Michelle Straw (British English, London Jamaican); Leonard Zwilling (*DARE* data).
  - ★ Dedicated to the late Frederic Gomes Cassidy, John & Dorothy Figueroa, & Miss Lou.