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# **CREOLE LEARNER VARIETIES IN THE PAST AND IN THE PRESENT: implications for Creole development**

**Bettina MIGGE & Margot van den BERG**

## **ABSTRACT**

Second language (L2) acquisition is widely assumed to have played a role in the emergence of creole genesis. However, the impact of L2 acquisition may not have been restricted to its genesis. In Surinam, newcomers outnumbered locally-born speakers of the Creole throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century. To date we know little about the effects that this disproportion of non-native vs. native speakers may have had in the initial and subsequent stages of development of these Creoles. In this paper we combine historical and contemporary data in order to investigate the impact of L2 acquisition and use on developing creoles. We examine several linguistic features in contemporary native (L1) as well as non-native (L2) creole speech in order to reveal the differences in the underlying L1 and L2 systems. These are then compared with their equivalents in the available historical sources. The findings suggest that L2 acquisition affected the development of some linguistic subsystems while others appear little influenced.

**Keywords:** Surinamese Creoles, creolization, negation, tense & aspect, L1 & L2 acquisition

## **1. Introduction**

Discussions about the role of second language (L2) learning strategies have a long history in the literature on the genesis and development of creoles.

Since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century there is renewed interest in the study of the shared processes involved in both L2 learning and creole genesis (Winford 2003; Lefebvre *et al.* 2006; Siegel 2008).

L2 acquisitionists working with Clive Perdue and Wolfgang Klein in particular provide a valuable framework for comparing proto-typical L2 practices and developing creoles. According to these scholars, outcomes of second language learning, so-called learner varieties, are systems, characterized by a particular lexical repertoire and by a particular interaction of organizational principles that principally differ from native varieties in their underlying organizational principles (Klein & Perdue 1997; Dimroth & Starren 2003; Hendriks 2005).

In pidgin and creole (P/C) studies, the nature of learner varieties and their role in shaping creole grammars have hardly been explicitly studied because there is a longstanding bias towards discovering the grammatical system of creoles, and because locally-born children are traditionally assumed to be the main agents of creole genesis. Following Bickerton (1981), it is widely assumed that the structural elaboration differentiating a complex creole from its simple pidgin ancestor results from nativization, namely the acquisition of native speakers by a language. While foreign-born adults (non-native speakers) contribute innovative features to the developing language, locally-born children play a crucial role, via first language acquisition, in stabilizing and elaborating the linguistic system (see for example DeGraff 1999 among others).

This classic view of creole development has in recent years been further developed by researchers working on expanded Pacific Pidgins and Hawai'ian (*cf.* Roberts 2000; Siegel 2008). For instance, Siegel (2008) posits a three-generational rather than a two-generational model, and argues that substrate calquing and second language use, rather than first language acquisition, played an important role in the development of creoles. He posits the following model: that the first generation who was dominant in their ancestral language introduced new morphosyntactic features to the pidgin through substrate calquing. The second generation, who were bilingual in an ancestral language and in the emerging contact language and who also made frequent use of the pidgin, assigned new functions to such features mostly based on models found in their ancestral languages. Finally, the third generation who were mostly monolingual in the contact variety further systematized and firmly established their use.

In the case of the Surinamese Creoles, the picture is more complex and a similar clear-cut three generational development model finds little support (*cf.* Arends 1989; Essegbey & Bruyn to appear; Migge & Winford 2009; Kramer 2009; van den Berg 2007).<sup>1</sup> However, Siegel's emphasis on the role of substrate influence via transfer in the development of creoles is clearly of interest for the Surinamese context. Demographic data suggest that Sranan was being learned and practiced mostly as an L2 by newly arriving enslaved Africans, free Europeans and later indentured labourers for a considerable amount of time after its initial emergence. Even in late 18<sup>th</sup> century Surinam, over a century after initial colonization, only 30% of the black population was locally-born (Arends 1995: 269). The Maroon Creoles nativized more quickly, but they, particularly Ndyuka and to a lesser degree the other Eastern Maroon varieties, have also been and continue to be practiced as L2 varieties (*cf.* Légise 2007 for the modern context). To date it is still unclear what effect this numerical dominance of non-native over native speakers has had on the development of these creoles.

In this paper we will take up this issue, drawing on historical as well as contemporary data. In contrast to other creoles, a remarkable corpus of 18<sup>th</sup> century language materials in and on Sranan is available that provides us with a unique window on 18<sup>th</sup> century Sranan language practices.<sup>2</sup> The contemporary data come from recordings and discussion with native and non-native speakers of the Creoles of Surinam in French Guiana. In order to explore the similarities and differences in the underlying L1 and L2 systems, we first examine three linguistic features, namely negation, and imperfective and past time marking, in the contemporary varieties and then compare them with their Early Sranan equivalents. The aim of this study is to improve our understanding of the role and relative impact of strategies of second language learning and use on the development of creole grammar.

The paper is organized as follows. Part One provides some background on the data and outlines the research methodology in more detail. In Parts Two to Four we compare the distribution of the three linguistic features in our contemporary and historical corpora. Part Five summarizes the findings and discusses the implications for theories of creole development.

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1. Note that Smith (2009) and Veenstra (2006) propose a more abrupt scenario that is more in line with a three generational development model.
  2. Historical texts for the Maroon Creoles are much less substantial, but due to close similarities between these languages, the Early Sranan corpus can also provide important insights into the development of the Maroon Creoles.

## 2. Data & Methodology

### 2.1. The contemporary language data

The French overseas department of French Guiana (Guyane Française) is highly multilingual. Current estimates put the number to about 30 languages belonging to several families of languages (*cf.* Léglise & Migge 2006). Besides French, the official language, they include Amerindian languages from the Cariban (Kali'na, Wayana), Tupi-Guarani (Emerillon, Wayampi), and Arawak (Lokono, Palikur) family of languages, various European languages such as Brazilian Portuguese, (Surinamese) Dutch and Spanish, English-lexified creoles (Aluku, Ndyuka, Pamaka, Saamaka, Sranan Tongo, Guyanese Creole), French-lexified creoles (the Creoles of French Guiana, Martinique and Guadeloupe & Haitian Creole), and Asian languages like Hmong and varieties of Chinese. In the last 30 years, French Guiana has received considerable numbers of migrants from the Guiana region (Guyana, Surinam, Brazil) and from outside of the region (Haiti, China), and processes of urbanization have given rise to a fair amount of internal migration.

Speakers of Surinamese Creoles are at the centre of such migration movements. They currently constitute about 40% of the overall population and make up an even higher proportion in the western part of the department. The three related Eastern Maroon Creoles (EMC) – Aluku, Ndyuka and Pamaka – are spoken natively by more than 30% of the population (Léglise 2007). Native speakers of Sranan Tongo are restricted to the few Arawak villages and a few Kali'na villages.

The Creoles of Surinam are also widely used as a lingua franca in western French Guiana where they are locally referred to by the generalizing terms *Takitaki* or *Businenge Tongo* which may refer to all the Creoles of Surinam or just to a subset such as the three related EMCs (*cf.* Léglise & Migge 2006). A school survey showed that more than 65% of 6<sup>th</sup> grade children in the west declare speaking Ndyuka or *Takitaki* as an L2 (Léglise 2007).

The data for this study come from a wide range of interactions involving persons of European, Guianese, Haitian, Chinese, Brazilian and Amerindian (Kali'na) origin. Some of the interactions had an interview character while others were service encounters or informal chats (*cf.* Migge & Leglise in prep.). People's competence in the language, learning trajectories and usage patterns also differ. One person was essentially at the one-word stage while most others had progressed to an intermediate or high level of competence. Some people learned '*Takitaki*' in their youth while others only learned it later in adult life.

Finally, some used ‘*Takitaki*’ only for a limited number of work-related interactions while others used it regularly for a wide range of interaction types, including with peers, partners and in-laws, and in some formal interactions.

## 2.2. Historical sources

The texts that were consulted for the present study were retrieved from the Sranan Section of the Surinam Creole Archive.<sup>3</sup> They include a) religious texts such as bible translations and hymns (Schumann 1781); b) judicial documents such as transcripts of interrogations and witness reports (Court Records); c) official documents such as a peace treaty; d) travel reports; e) documents that were created for the purpose of language instruction such as dictionaries and language manuals by a Moravian missionary (C. L. Schumann) as well as secular persons (J.D. Herlein, P. van Dyk, J. Nepveu and G. C. Weygandt). Because of this variety of text types, variation within and among the texts may correspond to different dimensions, ranging from diachronic to social, stylistic and geographical. Furthermore, variation within and among the texts may be linked to the different speech events represented in these texts, ranging from recorded and recalled to imagined and invented. While recorded texts are the most reliable (van den Berg & Arends 2004), texts belonging to other text types need to be assessed carefully in terms of representativeness and validity. Detailed assessments can be found in the works of Smith (1987), Arends (1989, 1995), Bruyn (1995) and van den Berg (2007) among others. The sources are presented in Table 1.

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3. The Suriname Creole Archive (SUCA) is a joint project of the Radboud University Nijmegen, the University of Amsterdam and the Max Planck Institute Nijmegen supported by NWO (<http://suca.ruhosting.nl>, under construction).

text	year	document type	page	SR tokens	token total
Court Records	1707-1767	dl; we	-	500	-
Herlein	1718	w; dl	3	200	400
Nepveu	1762	pt	12	1.900	1.900
Van Dyk	c1765	w; dl; pl	108	14.000	28.000
Nepveu	1770	w; dl	8	700	1.800
Schumann	1783	dl; dc	205	20.000	40.000
Stedman	1790	we	-	300	-
Weygandt	1798	w; dl; pl	144	15.000	30.000
total			480	52.600	102.100

(w = word list; dl = dialogue; pl = play; dc = dictionary; we = Sranan words and expressions in text in another language; pt = peace treaty)

**Table 1 The texts in the Sranan section of SUCA  
that were used in this study**

### 2.3. Methodology

We have selected three morphosyntactic features for comparison between contemporary native and non-native creole speech and Early Sranan: Negation, Imperfective aspect and Past time reference. We focus on these aspects of the verb phrase because they have figured prominently in the literature on L2 learning.

First, we examine these features in contemporary native and non-native creole speech in order to reveal the similarities and differences in the underlying L1 and L2 systems. Subsequently, their Early Sranan equivalents are studied. We posit that similarities between L1 practices and Early Sranan (but not L2 practices) suggest that a feature emerged rapidly and that its emergence was mostly likely not characterized by a protracted period of variation preceding stabilization. By contrast, we take similarities between L2 practices and Early Sranan (but not L1 practices) to be indicative of a slow process of development of the investigated feature; its emergence involved one or more stages, and/or several different models were in competition prior to the feature's stabilization. Similarities between L1, L2 and Early Sranan suggest that the investigated feature may have emerged via converging developmental paths in L1 and L2 acquisition. Differences between L1, L2 and Early Sranan call for other explanations,

such as contact-induced changes modelled on languages not encountered in the other setting. For example, Dutch and German may have exerted some influence on (the representation of) Early Sranan, but only (Surinamese) Dutch influences L1 and L2 practices in French Guyana, indirectly through Sranan and directly because some L1 speakers did all or part of their education in Surinam.

### 3. Negation

Negation markers are among the few closed class items that are typically found in the Basic Variety (BV), an early but relatively stable state in the process of spontaneous (adult) second language acquisition (Klein & Perdue 1997). They tend to precede the part of the utterance over which they have scope and occur at the topic-focus boundary (Klein & Perdue 1997 : 318). Because the placement of negation (and other scope particles) depends to a certain extent on the topic-focus structure of the utterance, and on the position of the elements over which they have scope, its position ‘indicates which part of the utterance is to be affected by the particle, and its scope can be described as ‘adjacent and to the right’” (Dimroth & Watorek 2000: 309).

The expression of negation evolves via the use of holophrastic (or anaphoric) negation in the pre-BV (stage 1), to a focus operator and later topic-focus linker in the BV (stage 2) to forms that correspond more closely to the syntax and morphology of negation in the target language (stage 3). But already in the pre-BV, negation is integrated in the utterance structure, as it is either a comment on a topic X or it has in its focus an element X. Once lexical categories and thematic arguments are acknowledged by the learner, the item that expresses negation, the negation operator, begins to act as a focus sensitive operator, being placed in pre-focus (typically pre-verbal) position. When focus is no longer the main drive behind the placement of negation in pre-verbal position, a syntactic motivation is assumed for the placement of negation in this position (see Dimroth *et al.* 2003).

#### 3. 1. Negation in contemporary L1 varieties

In the L1 varieties of the EMCs and Sranan clausal negation is expressed by a negation operator or negative particle, *ná* or *á(n)* in the EMCs and *no* in Sranan, that directly precedes the verb and its auxiliaries (1). However, our EM L1 data involve variation between EMC and Sranan forms. This is most prominent among young urbanized Maroons who are at pains to project an urban identity (*cf.* Migge 2007).



- (1) a. *Mi án biibi.* (PM 17)<sup>4</sup>  
 1s NEG believe  
 ‘I don’t believe it.’  
 b. *No, yu no musu aksi a man tu.* (SN 8b)  
 No, 2s NEG must ask DET man true  
 ‘No, you’re right, you surely shouldn’t ask him.’

Constituent negation is expressed by *ná wan* ‘not one’ preceding a constituent that is headed by a noun (2a). When it occurs in combination with clausal negation in the EMCs, the negated constituent does not occur in clause initial position (2b) unless it is clefted.

- (2) a. *ná wan sani a abi a ini en osu fu den teke beli en.* (ND1)  
 NEGone things 3s have LOC in 3s house for they take bury 3s  
 ‘He has nothing in his house to bury him with.’  
 b. *I á poy bay ná wan enkii sani.* (ND1)  
 2s NEG can buy NEG one single thing  
 ‘You cannot buy a single thing.’

In Sranan, the use of *no wan* ‘not one’ is less restricted; the negated constituent can occur in clause initial position without fronting or clefting (3).

- (3) *Ma no wan sukutaki, no wan korkoribromki, noti no*  
 but NEG one search-talk NEG one flatter-flower nothing NEG  
*ben yepi.* (from Eersel 2008)  
 PAST help  
 ‘But not a single request, no flattery, nothing helped.’

The negative constituent adds emphasis (*cf.* Huttar & Huttar 1994: 253). Compare for instance the sentences in (4): (4a) with constituent negation has an emphatic reading while (4b) without it does not. In (4a), everybody without exclusion is referred to while in (4b) it is implied that only some, usually the majority, are included.

- (4) a. *Ná wan sama ná o wani.* (PM 27)  
 no one person NEG FUT want  
 ‘Nobody doesn’t want (to do this).’

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4. See abbreviations p. 277.

- b. *Sama án lobi fa i anga en e libi.* (PM 17)  
 person NEG love how 2s with 3s IMPF live  
 ‘People don’t like the way you and him live.’

The negative pronoun *noti* ‘nothing’ and negative adverb *noiti* ‘never’ also require clausal negation if they follow the verb (5).

- (5) a. *da a ná o lei noiti moo.* (PM 20)  
 then 3s NEG FUT drive never again  
 ‘Then he won’t transport food for us any more.’  
 b. *mi án be sabi notí.* (PM 4)  
 1s NEG PAST know nothing  
 ‘I didn’t know anything (about it).’

If they occur in clause initial position, clausal negation is omitted (6).

- (6) *Noiti de wani a kon fu pasa na wan taa ana sonde den ana* (PM4)  
 never 3p want 3p come for pass LOC one other hand without 3p han  
 ‘They (government) never want any (monetary) help to go to Maroons without first it going through them.’

### 3.2. Negation in contemporary L2 varieties

The expression of negation in the L2 varieties of the Surinamese Creoles is similar to that found in the L1 varieties. In the L2 varieties (7), as in the practices of urbanized younger EMs, the EMC and the Sranan clausal negators are used interchangeably.

- (7) a. *Nownow mi ná e go na a munde [...] bika mi án*  
 nownow 1s NEG IMPF go LOC DET Monday because 1s NEG  
*be de ya tok.* (HM)  
 PAST COP here D  
 ‘Now, I’m not going on Monday because I wasn’t here, ok.’  
 b. *No mi no o teki a kans ye!* (HM)  
 no 1s NEG FUT take DET chance D  
 ‘No, I will not take the chance!’

L2 varieties also make use of constituent negation (8a). In contrast to L1 varieties, however, constituent negation does not appear to be very common in L2 varieties. Furthermore, in L2 varieties non-fronted negative constituents in clause initial position may co-occur with clausal negation (8b-c), as in Sranan (3) above, but unlike the L1 EMCs. In fact, there is only one example in the

L2 corpus in which a negative constituent occurs without a clausal negation marker (8d).

- (8) a. *I ná abi ná wan pikin?* (G1)  
 2s NEG have NEG one child  
 ‘You don’t have a child?’
- b. *Beina ná wan sama ná e taki faansi enke mama bee tongo.*  
 nearly NEG one person NEG IMPF talk French like mother belly tongue  
 ‘Nearly no one speaks French as their mother tongue.’ (FM)
- c. *No wan sma no sabi fa mi e meki resept.* (C2)  
 NEG one person NEG know how 1s IMPF make respect  
 ‘No one knows how I respect people.’
- d. *No wan tra sani de, wan bureau, yu go a tapu.* (FM)  
 NEG one other thing COP a office 2s go LOC top  
 ‘There is nothing else. An office, you go upstairs.’

Clausal negation is also combined with inherently negative quantifiers such as *neks* (< Dutch *niks* ‘nothing’) and *no(o)iti* (< Dutch *nooit* ‘never’) in L2 varieties (9). Such constructions are much more frequent in all L2 varieties than those involving *ná wan/no wan*.

- (9) a. *mi no abi neks fu taki.* (PN)  
 1s NEG have nothing for say  
 ‘I don’t have anything to say.’
- b. *nooiti mi ná e denki fu ogi.* (KG)  
 never 1s NEG IMPF think for bad  
 ‘I never intend to do bad things.’

In contrast to L1 varieties, negative quantifiers may occur without clausal negation in both clause-initial and clause-final position in L2 varieties (10).

- (10) a. *gi mi a sani, noit mi luku a sani.* (SL)  
 give me DET thing never 1s look DET thing  
 ‘Give me that the thing, I have never looked at the thing.’
- b. *ma na fu dati mi taki neks.*  
 but FOC for that 1s say nothing  
 ‘That’s why I said nothing.’

The comparison shows that L2 varieties differ from L1 varieties in the relative frequency of use of negative constituents and quantifiers and the rules governing their co-occurrence with clausal negation. The placement of negative constituents and quantifiers in L2 varieties mainly serves the function of focus

marking which is reminiscent of the behavior of negation markers in the BV as reported by Dimroth & Watorek (2000) and Dimroth *et al.* (2003).

### 3.3. Negation in historical sources

Basic negative clauses do not differ much across the various sources of Early Sranan; the negation operator *no* is placed in between the subject and the verb, preceding markers of tense, mood and aspect, and auxiliaries (11a).<sup>5</sup> In copula-less clauses, *no* precedes the nominal predicate (11b).

- (11) a. *effi mi no ben takki gi ju, ju no ben sa sabi.* (Sch 1783: 15)  
           if 1s NEG PAST talk GIVE 2s 2s NEG PAST FUT know  
           ‘If I didn’t tell you, you would not have known.’  
       b. *jou no meester vor mi.* (CR 1707)  
           2s NEG master of 1s  
           ‘You are not my master.’

Combinations of clausal negation and negative quantifiers such as *notti* ‘nothing’ (< Engl. *nothing*) and *nimmere* ‘never’ (< Dutch *nimmer* ‘never’) are encountered in most of the sources, see for example (12).

- (12) a. *mi no habi notti va takki.* (Sch 1783: 125)  
           1s NEG have nothing to say  
           ‘I have nothing to say.’  
       b. *Mino jerri zo wan zant nimmere* (VD c1765: 79)  
           1s-NEG hear so a thing never  
           ‘I have never heard such a thing.’

However, when the negative quantifier occurs in clause-initial position, the clausal negation is dropped, as in (13).

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5. The negation operator is occasionally represented as *na* in Schumann’s (1783) dictionary and Van Dyk’s (c.1765) language manual. Although these occurrences may just be unintentional spelling errors by the authors, or the type setter in the case of Van Dyk, they remind us of the EMC negation operator *ná*. Since both Schumann and Van Dyk include many features that can be associated with the vernacular of the population of African descent, in particular of the enslaved people on the plantations (van den Berg 2007), it may very well be the case that *no* and *na* were negation operator variants in some of the plantation varieties of Early Sranan.

- (13) *nebretem mi ben du datti*, OD. *mi no ben du datti nebretem* (Sch 1783: 121)  
 never 1S PAST do that / 1SG NEG PAST do that never  
 ‘Never did I do that; I never did that.’

The negative construction *no wan* ‘NEG one/a’ differs from *notti* ‘nothing’ and *nimmre/nebretem* ‘never’ in that it cannot co-occur with clausal negation in basic negative sentences. Instead we find constructions such as (14a-b).<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, we find examples such as (14c), where the preposition *na* splits up the negative construction *no wan*, while the meaning of the entire construction appears unaffected by this change.

- (14) a. *mi no de go wanpeh*, OD. *No wan peh mi de go*  
 1S NEG IMPF go one/a-place / NEG one/a place 1S IMPF go  
 ‘I am going nowhere.’ (Sch 1783: 134)  
 b. *dem no sa doe joe wan santie* (CR 1760)  
 3P NEG FUT do 2S a thing  
 ‘They will not harm you.’  
 c. *no wan peh, no na wan peh* (Sch 1783 : 133)  
 NEG one place NEG LOC one place  
 ‘nowhere’

These findings suggest that *no wan* was not a lexicalized negative quantifier that modified nouns in Early Sranan, even though pronominal *no wan* ‘no one; nobody’ is encountered from the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century onwards. They further suggest a more syntactic rather than a more focus-sensitive motivation underlying the use of the clausal negation. The clausal negator seems to overrule the use of the constituent negator, and the negator *no* no longer appears adjacent to the item it has in focus.

### 3.4. Negation in L1, L2 and the historical sources

Our discussion of the expression of negation revealed some remarkable similarities between L1 EMC and Early Sranan varieties. In both sets of varieties a negated constituent in non-clause-initial position combines with preverbal clausal negation. In clause-initial position, it only combines with clausal negation when it is under focus. This contrasts with modern Sranan and contemporary

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6. The only instances in which clausal negation co-occurs with *no wan* in the sources is when the negated constituent is emphasized by means of placing intonational stress on *wan*. In Schumann’s (1783) dictionary intonational stress is orthographically marked. In other sources, it can be inferred from the context that *wan* is stressed.

L2 varieties where clause-initial negated constituents may always combine with clausal negation. We hypothesize that this difference between L1 EMC/Early Sranan and modern Sranan/L2 varieties is due to the latter having being heavily influenced by other languages for a prolonged period of time, and therefore involving a greater degree of variation. Finally, modern L2 varieties differ from L1 EMC and L1 Sranan in that they do not make frequent use of constituent negation; preverbal negation is the preferred strategy. This is also true for Early Sranan. This may be because of convergence: in the L1 linguistic system, preverbal negation is the unmarked strategy to express negation, while constituent negation is the marked strategy, bringing an item into focus in an explicit manner. In L2 learning the preverbal position is the pre-focus position, where the negator occurs when it begins to act as a focus-sensitive operator (Dimroth & Watorek 2000; Dimroth *et al.* 2003). Because the syntactic and focus-sensitive positions overlap, and constituent negation is relatively marked, the preverbal position is the preferred position for the negator. Thus, we conclude that the domain of negation must have stabilized early onwards.

#### 4. Tense and aspect

Tense and aspect are studied extensively in L1 and L2 acquisition research, uncovering a strong relationship between inherent lexical aspect of verbs and the acquisition of tense-aspect morphology (Andersen & Shirai 1996; Sugaya & Shirai 2007; Bardovi-Harlig 2000). The Aspect hypothesis summarizes this relationship, predicting that at the early stages of acquisition, learners predominantly use past tense and perfective aspect forms with punctual and telic verbs and progressive aspect forms with activity verbs (Sugaya & Shirai 2007; Andersen & Shirai 1996). Li & Shirai (2000: 50) summarize the predicted order of development of tense-aspect morphology across different types of verbs as follows:

	State		Activity		Accomplishment		Achievement
(Perfective) Past	4	←	3	←	2	←	1
Progressive	?	←	1	→	2	→	3
Imperfective	1	→	2	→	3	→	4

Note: Numbers represent order of acquisition, from the earliest (1) to the latest (4).

**Table 2. The development of tense-aspect morphology**

In what follows, the expression of tense and aspect in L1, L2 varieties and Early Sranan is studied from this developmental perspective.

#### 4.1.1. Imperfective aspect in the contemporary L1 varieties

Most Surinamese Creole L1 varieties express imperfective aspect with the element *e* (Winford & Migge 2007: 85-91).<sup>7</sup> *E* can occur with a wide range of verbs such as state verbs (STATE), activity verbs (ACT), accomplishment-denoting verbs (ACC) and achievement-denoting verbs (ACH) expressing a progressive (PRO), habitual (HAB), continuous (CON) as well as inchoative (INC) occurrence of the state or event denoted by the main verb.

- (15) a. CON+ACT *On pe! Da a mi anga i e nyan a*  
           Q place then FOC 1s with 2s IMPF eat DET  
           *pina fu saanan.*  
           suffering POSS Surinam  
           ‘What! You and I suffer/get the bad part of Surinam.’
- b. PRO+ACT *A tii e kali i.*  
           DET elder IMPF call 2s  
           ‘The elder is calling you.’
- c. HAB+ACT *Mi ná e go a ini sama taki.*  
           1s NEG IMPF go LOC in person talk  
           ‘I don’t typically interfere with people’s discussions.’
- d. INC+ACC *Den e poli den pikin.*  
           3P IMPF spoil DET child  
           ‘They are spoiling the children.’
- e. CON+STATE *Tii A. e de fi en so moo(n).*  
           Elder A. IMPF COP for 3s so nice  
           ‘Elder A is doing well.’
- f. PRO+ACH *I e feni mma B. teki.*  
           2s IMPF find elder B take  
           ‘You managed to secure elder B for yourself.’

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7. Seuren (1981) was perhaps the first to trace the imperfective aspect marker (*de*) to the copula/existential verb *de* which ultimately derives from the English locative adverb *there* (Smith 1987). It is being debated whether this process took place in Suriname (Arends 1989; Migge 2002) or elsewhere (Smith 2001), as it could have been imported by enslaved Africans prior to their arrival in Suriname. In Saamaka imperfective aspect is expressed by *ta* which derives from English *stand* (*tan* in the older sources).

*E* may also express (imminent) future with motion verbs.

- (16) [A asks B if she wants something to eat; B declines saying that she intends to leave, *i.e.* will be leaving soon:]

B: *Mi e gwe.*  
1s IMPF leave

‘I’ll leave to go upriver tomorrow.’

#### 4.1.2. Imperfective aspect in L2 varieties

*E* is also found in similar contexts in L2 varieties (17).

- (17) a. INC+ACC     *A uwiiri seefi e fatu tok.* (RA)  
                         DET hair self IMPF fat right  
                         ‘The hair itself is getting thicker, right.’
- b. PRO+ACT     *I e yoku.* (Krl)  
                         2s IMPF joke  
                         ‘You are joking.’
- c. HAB+ACT     *Di den e kari bita uwiiri.* (Krl)  
                         which 3p IMPF call bitter leave  
                         ‘Which they refer to as bitter leave.’
- d. CON+STATE     *da mi go aksi wan man sa e sabi.* (Krl)  
                         then 1s go ask one man who IMPF know  
                         ‘Then I go and ask a man who is knowledgeable.’
- e. PRO+ACH     *I e bay wan machine.* (Krl)  
                         2s IMPF buy one machine  
                         ‘You are buying a machine.’

In L2 varieties, *e* may also receive an immediate future interpretation.

- (18) *La Poste seefi mi e boon!* (Ww)  
                 post.office self 1s IMPF burn  
                 ‘Even the post office I will burn down!’

The main difference between L1 and L2 practices is that *e* appears to be optional in L2 varieties. Most L2 speakers use *e* in more than 60% of the cases and few use only or predominantly  $\emptyset$  (Migge & Léglise in prep.). At this stage, it appears that absence of *e* is more common if the verb is preceded by the Sranan negative marker *no*.

- (19) a. *a no Ø sabi pe mi e tan.* (PiM)  
                 3s NEG IMPF know where 1s IMPF stay  
                 ‘He doesn’t know where I live.’



- b. *solanga a no Ø puru stoff, a bun moro bun fu tapu en.*  
 so.long 3s NEG IMPF pull puss 3s good more good for cover 3s.  
 ‘As long as it does not have puss, it is better to cover it.’

In terms of the *Aktionsart* of the verb, absence of *e* appears with a wide range of verb types – absence is frequent with activity verbs, but they are also most frequent in the data.

- (20) a. CON+STATE *a beibi Ø sibii?* (PiN)  
 DET baby IMPF sleep  
 ‘The baby is sleeping.’
- b. PRO+ACT *Mi Ø takitaki nanga a uman da u Ø taki*  
 HAB+ACT 1s IMPF talktalk with DET woman then 1p IMPF talk  
*creole.* (Kr)  
 creole  
 ‘When I’m chatting with my wife, then we generally speak in Haitian Creole.’
- c. CON+STATE *Ma kande den man Ø feele fu den Ø feele*  
 but maybe DET man IMPF afraid for 3p IMPF afraid  
*fu a bubu.* (P)  
 for DET tiger  
 ‘Maybe these people are afraid of the tiger?’
- d. PRO+ACC *suma Ø bau a oso? Na Englishman nanga*  
 who IMPF build DET house FOC Englishman with  
*brasilian.* (G1)  
 Brazilian  
 ‘Who is building houses [in Guyane]? Guyanese and Brazilians.’
- e. HAB+STAT *Eya mi be go luku fa Cayenne Ø tan.* (G1)  
 yes 1s PAST go look how Cayenne IMPF stay  
 ‘Yes, I went to see how it is in Cayenne.’

In L2 varieties, unlike L1 varieties, *e* may be used to convey future with motion (21a) and non-motion verbs (21b-c).

- (21) a. *Bernie Speer kon, a taki a no e kon moro.* (ST)  
 Bernie Speer came 3s talk 3s NEG IMPF come more  
 ‘Bernie Speer came here and she said that she is not going to come again.’
- b. *u ná e si tonton R. fosi u Ø gwe!* (PiN)  
 we NEG IMPF see uncle R first 1p IMPF/FUT leave  
 ‘We won’t see uncle R. before we’ll leave.’

## c. [talking about life and death]

*Na vakansi u e teki, u e abi fu dede.* (Ku)  
 FOC holiday 1P IMPF take 1P IMPF have for die  
 'It's holidays that we are taking [right now, but] we're going to die.'

## 4.1.3. Imperfective in early sources

In Early Sranan, imperfective aspect meanings are expressed by (spelling variants of) *de*, auxiliaries such as *tan* 'to stay' or *begin* 'to begin; to start', or they are not expressed at all (zero,  $\emptyset$ ). For limitations of space, we restrict our discussion to *de*. As in L1 varieties, it occurs with a wide variety of verbs in the sources, expressing a progressive, habitual, continuous as well as inchoative occurrence of the state or event denoted by the main verb. Some examples of *de* with state verbs, activity verbs, accomplishment verbs, achievement verbs as well as semelfactives are presented in (22).<sup>8</sup>

- (22) a. HAB+STATE: *Gado de sabi alla membre va wi, bevo wi pulu*  
 god IMPF know all thought of 1P before 1P remove  
*muffe na tongo* (Sch 1783: 116)  
 word LOC tongue  
 'God learns all our thoughts, before we utter them.'
- b. INC+ACH: *da siri de gi heddi* (Sch 1783: 63)  
 the seed IMPF give head  
 'The seed is germinating.'
- c. PRO+ACT: *watra de pissi na dem hai* (Sch 1783: 56)  
 water IMPF urinate LOC 3P eye  
 'Water is running from their eyes; they are crying.'
- d. PRO+SEM: *a de meki koffokoffo* (Sch 1783: 84)<sup>9</sup>  
 3S IMPF make cough.IDEO  
 'He is coughing.'
- e. PRO+ACC: *mi de go na dorro* (Sch 1783: 33)  
 1S IMPF go LOC outside  
 'I am going outside.'
- f. CON+STATE: *da vol de slibi (od. siddom) na eksi tappo*  
 the chicken IMPF sleep sit.down LOC egg top  
 'The chicken is sitting on the egg.' (Sch 1783: 39)

8. A semelfactive is a type of verb that is used in reference to an event that happens only once.
9. While the reduplication may give the impression of non-semelfactivity, *meki koffo-koffo* can be used as a semelfactive ('to give a cough') as well as a non-semelfactive ('to be coughing').

While the examples in (22) show that *de* is an established imperfective aspect marker by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, other examples reveal that its use is optional rather than categorical throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century. All sources contain instances of unmarked verbs, while the discourse context suggests that *de* would have been appropriate if it had been obligatory. For example, we find in Nepveu (1770):

- (23) a. *a de wakka langa him* (N 1770: 277)  
           3s IMPF walk with 3s  
           ‘He is having an affair with her.’  
       b. *a fourfouro langa him* (N 1770: 277)  
           3s steal with 3s  
           ‘He is having an extramarital affair with her.’

Aspect is marked in example (23a), while it is not marked in (23b). Example (23a) is a paraphrase of the sentence ‘he/she has a relationship with him/her’; (23b) conveys the same meaning, but qualifies the relationship as an extramarital one. Towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century *de* is used increasingly to mark imperfective aspect. For example, more instances of *de* are found in Weygandt’s language primer, which is an extended revision of Van Dyk’s (c1765) language primer, than in the original Van Dyk. A detailed comparison of these sources (van den Berg in prep.) reveals that Weygandt corrected some uses of *de* in Van Dyk. He also inserted *de* where unmarked verbs occur in Van Dyk, compare (24a) with (24b).

- (24) a. *Joe jam morre metti liki briddi* (VD 1765: 27)  
           2s eat more meat like bread  
       b. *Joe de n’jam moro metie lekie brédee* (Wey 1798: 95)  
           2s IMPF eat more meat like bread  
           ‘You are eating more meat than bread.’

In conclusion, we summarize that *de* emerged as an imperfective aspect marker from the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century onwards, but it appears to be an optional, rather than a categorical item. Further research is needed to determine what precisely governs the use of *de* in Early Sranan.

## 4.2. Expression of past time reference

The Surinamese Creoles have a relative tense system in which the tense locus may be either the moment of utterance (speech time) or some other reference point.

#### 4.2.1 Contemporary L1

In the contemporary Surinamese Creoles past time reference is either expressed by the particles *ben* (Sranan) and *be* (EMC) which precede the verbal head (25a) or by the unmarked verb (25b) optionally modified by temporal adverbials. Constructions using the unmarked verb occur once reference time has been established (*cf.* Huttar & Huttar 1994: 491-492).

- (25) a. *Di wi anga bakaa be e wooko a be tan so.*  
           when we with Europeans PAST IMPF work it PAST stay so  
           ‘When we were working with the Europeans, it was like that.’  
       b. *I yee baala Si kosi Se. (PM4 NSF)*  
           you hear Mr name curse name  
           ‘Did you hear (that) Mr Si cursed Se?’

Verbs that have more of a state-type interpretation such as *sabi* ‘to know’ and *tan* ‘to stay’ generally require *be* to locate the state in the past because their default interpretation is present time reference. When *ben/be* precede an activity-denoting verb in a past context, *ben/be* locate the activity as having taken place prior to the point of reference in the past, *i.e.* ‘a past before past’ or background information (*cf.* Winford 2000: 401 for Sranan). If *ben/be* are combined with *o*, *sa* or *wani*, they express a hypothetical or counterfactuality meaning (*cf.* Winford 2000: 409).

#### 4.2.2. Past time reference in L2 varieties

The situation seems to be relatively similar in L2 varieties where predicates are marked for past time by the marker *be* or *ben*. However, once the time frame has been set, such marking is no longer necessary, particularly with activity-denoting verbs.

- (26) A: *Saide i be kon a Guyane ? (FM)*  
           why 2S PAST come LOC French Guiana  
           ‘Why did you come to French Guiana?’

- B: *bika mi án be wani meki suudati, da mi be sabi*  
 because 1s NEG PAST want make soldier then 1s PAST know  
*wan association na Soolan neen mi Ø kon fi wooko na a*  
 one association LOC St. Laurent then 1s come for work LOC DET  
*association, neen den Ø tya mi kon a suudati a Cayenne.*  
 Association then 3p carry 1s come LOC soldier LOC Cayenne  
 ‘Because I didn’t want to go to the army. So I knew an association in St.  
 Laurent, thus I came to work there. They made me go to the army in Cayenne.’

There are a number of instances in the L2 data where the past marker appears to be overused in that the timeframe was established, but speakers still continued to use *be* instead of the unmarked verb form.

- (27) A: *ohoo ma i seefi, i kweki a Haiti anda? (Kr)*  
 Oh but 2s self 2s raise LOC Haiti over-there  
 ‘Oh, but you yourself, you grew up in Haiti?’  
 B: *ai baya dati na langa tin toli. Ai mi ben kweki na Haiti*  
 Yes friend that PRE long time story yes 1s PAST raise LOC Haiti  
*wel en baka dati mi be kon na Sranan.*  
 Well and back that 1s PAST come LOC Sranan  
 ‘Yes my friend, that’s from a long time ago. Yes I grew up in Haiti and then I came to Surinam.’

The L2 corpus also includes some examples where *be* is used as a ‘past before past’ or background marker (28a-b) and others where it marks hypothetical or counterfactuality in conditional clauses (28c), as in L1 varieties.

- (28) a. *mi gi a man feifi euro a tra dei, i sabi a*  
 1s give DET man five Euro LOC other day you know DET  
*man fu tyari a sani, a taki a be wani wan dringi a*  
 man for carry DET thing 3s say 3s PAST want one drink 3s  
*ná be abi pikin moni. (StL)*  
 NEG PAST have small money  
 ‘I gave the guy five Euro the other day, you know the guy who was to bring the thing, he said he wanted to get a drink, he didn’t have any change.’  
 b. *No na ini wan bigi boto. A abi ala sani u e wroko*  
 no LOC in a big boat 3s have all things 1p IMPF work  
*sigisi wrokoman kapten, a kapten be de wan*  
 six workers captain DET captain PAST COP a  
*Jampanner ya, mi be de barman. A no sowmaar a*  
 Japanese here 1s PAST COP barman 3s NEG nothing DET

*boto dati a no somaar* [...] (PI)  
 boat that 3s NEG nothing

‘No, inside a big ship. It had everything. We were six crew members and a captain, the captain was a Japanese, I was the barman, it wasn’t any kind of ship.’

- c. *A no so, mi be o gi yu, yu e kali mi*  
 3s NEG so 1s PAST FUT give 2s 2s IMPF call 1s  
*giiliman, yu no sabi.* (StL)  
 greedy.person 2s NEG know

‘It’s not like that. I would have given you, [but then] you called me a greedy person, you don’t know.’

#### 4.2.3. Early Sranan

Relative past is expressed by variants of *ben* in the early Sranan sources. Prototypically, *ben* locates a certain situation as occurring prior to the time reference point established in the discourse, that is the moment of speech or some reference point in the past. In the dialogue represented in (29) the reference point is the period of departure from France. Thus, *ben* indicates that the talking took place prior to the leaving.

- (29) [A] *Hoe zan den ben takki da.tem joe kommote na frans konderi.*  
 Q thing 3p PAST say when 2s come.out LOC France country  
 ‘What did they say when you were leaving France?’  
 [B] *Den ben takki van noeffe zomma disi ben go trouw*  
 3p PAST say of many person REL PAST go marry  
 ‘They spoke of many people who were getting married.’ (VD c1765: 36)

The earliest attestation of *ben* is Herlein’s (1718) text, see (30a) below. Nepveu (1770) corrects this sentence, leaving out *ben* among other alternations (30b). Indeed, *sendi* ‘to send’ is a non-stative verb; when unmarked it usually expresses ‘past time reference’, if the point of reference is speech time. Example (30c) is a dialogue from Weygandt’s manual that is similar to the Herlein dialogue.

- (30) a. *No mie ben benakese ta entre ples a reddi wen* (HL 1718: 122)<sup>10</sup>  
 NEG 1S PAST send-ask SAY other please again ?  
 ‘No, I already sent to ask someone else if it would please her.’
- b. *no mi sendi hakisi, na tara plessi a reddi* (N 1770: 274)  
 NEG 1S send ask LOC other please/place already  
 ‘No, I already asked somewhere else’ or:  
 ‘No, I already asked someone else if it would please her.’
- c. [A] *Joe dé go kiesie fiesietie na joe tidee sabathem?*  
 2S IMPF go get company LOC 2S today evening  
 ‘Are you receiving company at your place this evening?’
- [B] *Miesie Annaatje ben sen aksie mie ofoe mie sa dé na*  
 Miss Anna PAST send ask 1S if 1S FUT COP LOC  
*hoso, ofoe. Wan tra soema kom* (Wey 1798: 121)  
 house if one other person come  
 ‘Miss Anna sent (someone) to ask me if I’ll be at home or if another  
 person is coming.’

Although the point of reference is not made explicit in the examples in (30), based on the discourse context it can be argued that it is not the time of speaking, but some time in the past. Thus, Nepveu’s correction may not necessarily be an improvement; he may have mistaken the reference point as speech time under the influence of his native tongue.

Similar to a secondary (modal) use of *ben* in contemporary L1 Sranan (Winford 2000; Wilner 1994), Early Sranan *ben* can convey a sense of hypotheticality or suggestion, to ‘soften’ the effect of a piece of advice, an invitation or a request, as in the example below. It is taken from the opening lines of a dialogue between two ladies, one visiting the other.

- (31) *Mi ben wan kom na misi na disi zabatim.* (VD c1765: 32)  
 1S PAST want come LOC lady LOC this evening  
 ‘I would like to visit the lady this evening.’

### 4.3. Conclusion

There are several interesting similarities and differences between the use of the imperfective aspect marker in the three data sets. Unlike the predictions presented in Table 1, our data do not exhibit a strong relationship between

10. *Benakese* is a contracted serial verb construction, *sen(i) aksi*, which roughly translates as ‘to send to ask’. The first verb *sen(d)i* is misprinted as *ben*. For a more detailed discussion, see van den Berg (2007) and Arends (1995). The word *wen* is unknown.

inherent lexical aspect of verbs and the occurrence of tense-aspect morphology. Our findings show that in both contemporary L2 varieties and Early Sranan the imperfective marker can occur with all possible types of verbs, expressing all possible kinds of aspectual meanings. The main difference is that unlike the contemporary L1 varieties it is optional in the contemporary L2 varieties and Early Sranan. It is not fully understood at present what precisely governs its distribution in these varieties. Two explanations suggest themselves. First, it may be possible that the distribution of the imperfective marker is determined by factors such as the presence of the negation operator and by discourse or pragmatic factors. This would explain why the imperfective marker is not obligatory: its occurrence is not syntactically motivated but rather driven by the speaker's desire to underscore the status of the state/event in the discourse and/or by whether or not temporal information is easily recoverable from the context (cf Benazzo 2009: 15). Second, the variability in the presence of TMA markers may also be indicative of the fact that the use and functions of the imperfective marker were/are not yet fully conventionalised in early Sranan and contemporary L2 varieties. Essentially, they would be representing earlier developmental stages and the L1 varieties would represent later stages. For instance, Slobin (2004) concludes on the basis of a comparison of the development of the future marker in Tok Pisin and TMA markers in Nicaraguan sign language that developed from several varieties of Home Signs, that this kind of variability is typical of emerging linguistic systems developed by L2 speakers. He credits their obligatory use to the agency of children acquiring the system as an L1. This has strong parallels with our case suggesting that the obligatory use of the Imperfective marker in L1 Eastern Maroon varieties was due to nativization. Further research is needed to clarify this.

The use of the relative past tense marker in the contemporary L1, L2 and Early Sranan varieties is very similar, although there is some indication of overuse in contemporary L2 varieties and Early Sranan. This is not atypical of L2 practices (cf. also Siegel 2008).

## 5. Conclusions and implications

The findings presented in this paper show some remarkable similarities and differences between contemporary L1 and L2 varieties and Early Sranan. The three investigated areas of grammar are very similar in the three types of data. Each subsystem involves the same variants and their distribution is also broadly similar in the three types of data. This suggests that there is diachronic



and synchronic continuity between these three varieties: The language(s) has/have not been subject to drastic change. Continuity between them is particularly clear in the area of negation where we find close resemblance in the distribution of negative operators and negative constituents between (some) L1 (varieties), L2 varieties and varieties represented in the early texts. This suggests to us that some areas of grammar did not pass through several developmental stages, appear to have been little affected by L2 practices and consequently nativized quickly.

However, other subsystems of grammar such as imperfective marking and the use of the past time marker were subject to variation in the early sources. *E* alternated with zero and in the case of the past marker there was some tendency of using *ben* as an obligatory rather than as a relative past marker. These patterns of variation resemble those found in L2 varieties in general and those in contemporary L2 varieties of the Surinamese Creoles in particular, but differ from contemporary L1 patterns. This suggests at least two things in relation to the impact of L2 practices on creole development. First, L2 practices affected some areas of grammar in the early varieties, possibly those areas whose makeup differed in the native languages of the early users and creators of the languages, but were subsequently levelled probably as a result of increased nativization. Second, some areas of grammar stabilized relatively slowly, supporting the view that creole grammars emerged gradually via several stages rather than abruptly (Arends 1989).

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## ABBREVIATIONS

ACC	accomplishment-denoting verb
ACH	achievement-denoting verb
ACT	activity-denoting verb
BV	Basic Variety
CON	continuative aspect
COP	copula
D	discourse marker
DET	definite determiner
FOC	focus marker
FUT	future marker
GIVE	the serial verb 'give'
HAB	habitual aspect
IDEO	ideophone
IMPF	imperfective marker
INC	inchoative aspect
LOC	general locational preposition
NEG	negation marker
P	plural
PAST	past time marker
POSS	possessive marker
PRE	presentative marker
PRO	progressive aspect
Q	general question morpheme
REL	relative marker
S	singular
SAY	the serial verb 'say'
STATE	state-denoting verb
1	first person pronoun
2	second person pronoun
3	third person pronoun

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#### RÉSUMÉ

La contribution des processus d'acquisition d'une langue seconde (L2) à l'émergence des créoles est largement reconnue. Cependant, l'impact de la langue seconde ne pourrait se limiter à la genèse du créole. Au Suriname les nouveaux arrivés étaient plus nombreux que les locuteurs natifs du créole pendant tout le 18<sup>e</sup> siècle. À ce jour, les effets éventuels de la disproportion entre les locuteurs natifs et les non-natifs sur le créole, pendant sa genèse et ultérieurement, sont à peine connus. Dans cet article nous avons combiné des données historiques et contemporaines afin d'étudier l'impact de l'acquisition et de l'utilisation de la L2 sur l'évolution des créoles. Nous examinons plusieurs aspects linguistiques de discours contemporains dans le créole de locuteurs natifs et non-natifs afin d'éclairer les différences sous-jacentes du système de la langue première et seconde. Celles-ci sont ensuite comparées à leurs équivalents provenant de sources antérieures. Cette comparaison nous a permis de conclure que certains sous-systèmes du créole ont davantage été influencés par l'acquisition de la langue seconde que d'autres.