

DISCOURSE CONSTRAINTS ON PAST MARKING IN TRINIDADIAN ENGLISH

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1. Introduction

One recurrent characterization of creoles is that creoles are the type of languages that tend to minimize redundancy. Past marking, along with number marking, has been often claimed by researchers (Todd 1971, Jones 1968, Mufwene 1984) to be a feature that shows this redundancy-minimizing tendency of creole languages. However, not all creole researchers took this position. For instance, Bickerton (1975:160) made an opposite claim. He claimed that in mesolectal Guyanese Creole (GC) the occurrence of a past adverbial with a verb in the same sentence significantly enhances the probability of the use of a past-marked verb form by GC speakers. His claim is against the recurrent assertion by some creole researchers that clear past linguistic context tends to eliminate the marking of a past-reference verb in creoles and that creole languages follow the economy principle in past marking.

Some creolists have suggested another constraint on past marking in creole languages, which functions in a specific genre of discourse, a narrative. Their claim has been that creole languages have a usage of the historical present (HP) just like standard varieties of English or French and thus verbs tend not to be past marked when they appear in "clauses which carry the backbone of the action narrative" (Givon 1982:119). Bollée (1977) and Corne (1977) claimed the existence of the HP usage in Seychelles Creole; Rickford (1986) and Patrick (1992) also suggested that the HP usage might exist in GC and Jamaican Creole (JC), respectively.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the above researchers' claims on these two discourse-related constraints on past marking (i.e., linguistic context and the historical present), which unfortunately have never been examined quantitatively based on real creole data. I will check their claims on the basis of Trinidadian English (TE) creole data and examine whether their claims are supported by actual creole data.

The organization of the paper is as follows. Section 2 will explain the variable to be studied and the data. Section 3 will examine various researchers' claims on the effect of linguistic context on past marking in creole languages based on Trinidadian English data. Section 4 will attempt to investigate whether TE data attest the usage of the historical present. Section 5 will summarize the findings and discuss their implications.

2. Past-marking in TE and the Data

TE can be roughly divided into two polar varieties (i.e. Standard Trinidadian English (STE) and Trinidadian creole vernacular) and intermediary varieties.¹ The forms and categories that indicate various past tense/aspect meanings in these varieties are variant as Table 1 on the next page shows.

Among the past tense/aspect meanings presented in Table 1, the variable which is examined in this paper is 'simple specific past', which I represent as {ed}. The variants of this variable are {σ} marking of creole perfective aspect and {ed} marking of STE past tense as shown in the table. The variable {ed}, i.e., 'simple specific past', includes neither 'relative past', whose reference point

Table 1. Features of Different Varieties that Indicate Past Tense/Aspect Meanings in TE

Meanings	TC vernacular	Mesolectal Varieties	STC
Simple Specific Past	\emptyset	\emptyset , 'ed'	'ed'
Habitual Past	\emptyset , <i>useto</i>	\emptyset , <i>useto</i> , <i>would</i> , 'ed'	'ed', <i>used to</i> , <i>would</i>
Relative Past	<i>did</i>	<i>had+V</i> , 'ed'	'ed', <i>had+V-en</i>

isn't necessarily the present time, nor 'habitual past'. These two are, as indicated in Table 1, different areas of variation with different variants and meanings. Unlike in standard varieties of English, where a past-marked verb always appears underlyingly in simple specific past contexts, both the marked variant, {ed}, and the unmarked variant, { \emptyset }, can occur in TE, as the following TE sentences show.

- (1)
- Yesterday young man visit me.
 - Yesterday a young man visited me.
- (2)
- Last month I tell mi father that I'll leave for Port of Spain.
 - Last month I told my father that I would leave for Port of Spain.

This study is based on 2239 tokens of the variable (ed) that I obtained from the recorded speech of 32 male Trinidadian speakers interviewed by Donald Winford in 1970 in Saint James and Mayo in Trinidad. It was noteworthy that there were some verbs which appear almost categorically past-marked through the TC continuum. As Table 2 shows, *do*, *be*, *can*, *have*, *go* were such verbs.

Table 2. Near-Categorically Marked Verbs

Verb	Marked %	N
<i>do</i>	95%	123
<i>have</i>	92%	171
<i>go</i>	92%	134
<i>can</i>	91%	43
<i>be</i>	90%	438
Total	92%	909

Bickerton (1975:104) suggests that *have* and *be* are exceptionally highly past-marked in GC. This is observed in TC too. But in TC some other irregular verbs are equally highly past-marked, as shown in the table. Considering that the average past-marking rate of the other irregular verbs was only 62%, the verbs listed in Table 2 behave very differently from the other irregular verbs (see Kang 1994 for a more detailed discussion). Accordingly, I will consider these verbs as 'exceptional' and exclude them in the analyses to follow. The number of the tokens after the exclusion of these exceptional verbs is 1330. The exclusion of these verbs is significant, as the following sections will show.

The 32 TE speakers were divided into three socio-economic class groups (SEC groups) based on their occupation, which shows a high correlation to social class and education, two main factors governing the control of the codes in contact in creole continua (Youssef 1991:90). The distribution of the informants were as follows: 13 middle class (MC) speakers (2 upper middle class (UMC) speakers and 11 lower middle class (LMC) speakers, to be exact), 10 upper working

class (UWC) speakers and 9 lower working class (LWC) speakers. The usage of these three groups approximates the range of varieties found in the Trinidadian creole continuum: the speech variety of the MC speakers can be roughly considered as 'acrolectal'; that of the UWC group and the LWC group as 'mesolectal' and as 'basilectal', respectively. What is noteworthy is that these three groups were found to have different norms of past-marking, as Table 3 shows.

Table 3. Past Marking Rate of each SEC Group²

SEC group	Marked %	N
MC	81%	389
UWC	59%	497
LWC	23%	444

3. Linguistic Context and Past-Marking in TE

Bickerton (1975:160) claimed that in GC "...where time-adverbs occur in a sentence, mid-to upper-mesolectal speakers characteristically use the past form, even when they have a 'very low' overall rate of past insertion" (my emphasis). Thus, according to him, in mesolectal GC (3a) is a much more unusual sentence than (3b) and *see* is much more likely to be produced past-marked in (3a) than (3b).

(3)

- a. I *see* him two month ago.
 b. I *see* him here.

(n.b. The speaker is addressing a past event in both (3a) and (3b))

One natural interpretation of Bickerton's statement is that a time adverb is likely to cause the speaker to past-mark the verb in the same sentence. In other words, Bickerton's statement can be interpreted as 'time-adverbs influence past-marking of verbs as linguistic context or constraint'. Further, this claim of Bickerton's implies that GC is a language that favors redundancy at least in past-marking.

I examined quantitatively whether Bickerton's claim is supported by my TE data. I considered as 'past time adverbs' only those adverbials which are clearly indicative of absolute past time reference. Thus those adverbials which are not necessarily linked to past time reference (e.g., 'after three days, for the summer, in two weeks') were not regarded as 'past-reference time adverbs'.

It isn't clear whether Bickerton had in mind only time adverbs and adverbial phrases, or any time adverbials including adverbial clauses (e.g. "when I came here, they began to fight," "they finished the job, while it was raining"), when he used the term "adverbial" (ibid:160). He does not give an example of a time adverbial clause in his explanation, but still it seems very possible that by "adverbial" he referred to all types of time adverbials including adverbial clauses. Accordingly I performed two analyses using both of these criteria. In the first analysis, only time adverbs and phrases were considered as time adverbials.

The result of the analysis (Table 4 on the next page) shows that Bickerton's claim doesn't hold in the TE data. Bickerton's claim was that mesolectal GC speakers produce significantly more (ed) forms when a time adverbial appears with a past-reference verb. Since mid-mesolectal to upper-mesolectal GC varieties are comparable with basilectal to mesolectal TC varieties,³ it is expected that the speech varieties of WC speakers be subject to such a conditioning by temporal

adverbials as Bickerton suggests — if his claim holds in TC too. However, according to the data the WC speakers showed only slightly higher past-marking when there was a time-adverbial than elsewhere. The difference was not statistically significant (UWC: $\chi^2=1.13$, $p>.30$, LWC: $\chi^2=1.86$, $p>.10$) The MC speakers past-marked verbs slightly higher when there was no time-adverbial. This difference was not statistically significant either ($\chi^2=.14$, $p>.70$). In short, in none of the three SEC groups, were verbs occurring with a time adverbial past-marked significantly higher than the others as Bickerton suggested.

Table 4. Past Temporal Adverbials and Past-Marking Rate of Verbs

SEC group	With Adverbial	Without Adverbial
MC	80% (N=44)	81% (N=345)
UWC	62% (N=29)	58% (N=468)
LWC	30% (N=30)	20% (N=414)

In the second analysis, adverbial clauses were considered as 'time adverbials' in addition to time adverbs and phrases. No major difference was made by the inclusion of adverbial clauses. In none of the three groups, adverbials caused any significant raise of the past-marking of verbs, as Bickerton suggested (Table 5). The results of the two analyses do not support Bickerton's claim and suggest that the existence of a past-time adverbial in the sentence is not a real constraint on past-marking of verbs in TE.

Table 5. Temporal Adverbials and Past-Marking Rate of Verbs (including temporal clauses)

SEC group	Adverbial	No Adverbial
MC	81% (N=54)	81% (N=335)
UWC	61% (N=41)	59% (N=454)
LWC	27% (N=48)	22% (N=396)

As pointed out earlier, the suggestion made by Bickerton is equivalent to the claim that past temporal context made explicit by the use of a temporal adverbial somehow causes creole speakers to past-mark verbs significantly more often than elsewhere.⁴ A different line of hypothesis that can be made is that creole speakers might past-mark verbs less often when linguistic context makes it clear that the speaker is talking about a past event or state.

This functionalist hypothesis can be considered plausible if DeCamp's (1971:16) statement that "a creole, like a pidgin, tends to minimize redundancy" can be a universal statement about creole languages. Actually some researchers made a claim similar to this hypothesis. For instance, Jones (1968:87) suggested that in Krio, which is suggested by Holm (1989:406) and Bickerton (1975:47) to be grammatically close to Caribbean English creoles, unmarked past-reference verbs usually appear with a time adverbial; and Todd (1971:193) made a stronger claim that in Cameroonian English⁵ "the unmarked verb form⁶ is only used with past time reference when the time context is unambiguous" (my emphasis), meaning that the unmarked verb can occur only when an adverbial or some other linguistic context explicitly indicates that a past event is being discussed.

For TE at least, Todd's claim seems immediately refuted by the result presented in Table 4 and 5, but Jones' suggestion that creole speakers might mark verbs less often in clear past temporal context does not seem unreasonable, considering that {ed} marking assumes less 'functional load' when linguistic context clearly indicates that the speaker is referring to a past event. I examined the data to see whether this hypothesis is supported in TE.

One problem I had in testing this hypothesis was how to quantify linguistic context. Linguistic context or 'cotext', is not something that could be easily or accurately quantified. The problem lies in the decision as to what can constitute past temporal linguistic context. There will not be disagreements over identifying a past temporal adverbial in the same sentence (e.g. I saw her yesterday), or an (ed)-marked verb or a past adverbial in the preceding clause (e.g. "she came here and find me"; "we play cricket there yesterday and come back to school") as constituting past temporal context. But it could be that sometimes, a question of the interviewer about a past event can also be past temporal context (e.g. how did that accident happen?, what was Carnival like in those days?). Or it seems that, as Todd suggests (1971:193), sometimes a past-marked verb in the previous sentence can also be past temporal context (e.g., "The godfather died. The godmother die.").

However, the last two contexts were not considered in the analysis as clear past contexts. It is because they can be clear past contexts in some cases but there are other cases where they are obviously not.⁷ It was supposed that the exclusion of these two contexts would make the analysis more robust. Thus the following method was used in the analysis. I first examined whether a past temporal adverbial (adverb, phrase or clause) occurs with the verb token. The following examples are such cases.

- (4)
- a. "They have cement company as I told/tell you yesterday."
 - b. "She died/die the other day."
 - c. "When I saw her there, she say/said hello to me."

If a past-reference adverb or adverbial phrase occurs in the same clause with the verb token, or if a past-reference adverbial clause appears right before or after the clause in which the verb token appears (like in (4c)), I assumed that there is clear past temporal linguistic context.

When no past temporal adverbial was used with the verb token, I checked the previous clause (if there is any) in the same sentence. If the previous clause contains either a past-marked verb or a past adverbial, I assumed that the previous clause constitutes past temporal context. However, the tokens which follow the past-marked form of near-categorically marked verbs were not considered as occurring in clear past context, but rather excluded in the analysis. This decision was made in consideration of 'exceptionality' of these verbs in their past marking behavior. Thus, I considered the following verb tokens as occurring in a clear past temporal context originating from the previous clause.

- (5)
- a. "Since mi mother liked music, I go/went to a music school." (past verb)
 - b. "I come here twenty year ago, and I find/found her there." (past adverbial)

On the other hand, verb tokens which have no past adverbial in the same sentence or which do not have a preceding clause with a past verb or adverbial were considered as occurring without past temporal linguistic context. Examples are given in (6).

- (6)
- a. "They come here and begin/began to plant cocoa".
 - b. "Well, that take/took cares of cocoa."

In each SEC group I chose five speakers⁸ who showed past-marking rates closest to the average marking rate of their respective SEC group, and examined whether they really mark verbs

as hypothesized above — i.e., whether they past-mark those verb tokens occurring in clear past temporal context significantly less than the other tokens. This hypothesis was not supported by the TE data as shown in the table below.

Table 6. Past-Marking Rate in Clear Past Context

SEC group	Marked %	N
MC	85%	118
UWC	51%	75
LWC	24%	49

The UWC speakers showed a slightly lower {ed} marking rate in this context than elsewhere but not significantly (Recall the average past-marking rate of each of the SEC group is 81%, 59% and 23%, respectively (Table 3)). The MC group and the LWC group, on the other hand, show a slightly higher past-marking rate in clear past context than in other contexts. These inconsistent results suggest that there is no structural difference in TE speakers' past-marking behavior in clear past contexts, and that they mark verbs in the same way in clear past contexts as in any other contexts. Therefore, these results fail to support not only Todd's (1971) claim but also Jones' (1968) suggestion. The findings presented in Table 4, 5 and 6 allow us to conclude that linguistic context does not play a major role in the past-marking behavior of TE speakers.

4. Historical Present in TE?

As mentioned earlier, a number of researchers (Bollée 1977, Corne 1977, Mufwene 1984, Rickford 1986, Patrick 1992) suggested that the historical present or a usage very comparable to the historical present is found in the creole they studied.

Bollée (1977) and Corne (1977:102) claimed that some unmarked forms in Seychelles Creole narratives can be explained by the presence of the historical present (or "narrative tense" (Bickerton 1981:84)) in this language. Recently two other researchers working on Caribbean English creoles made a similar suggestion. Rickford (1986:383, 1987:186) suggested that the historical present might exist in GC, mainly based on a significant difference between the past-marking rate of verbs appearing in complicating action clauses and that of verbs occurring in noncomplicating action clauses in his narrative data.⁹ Patrick (1992:455) also indirectly suggested the existence of historical present usage in JC, noting that the non-narrative clauses generally favor past-marking, while "sequenced clauses" (Patrick's concept close to that of complicating action clauses) slightly disfavor it in his Varbrul analysis of his JC data (*ibid*:351, 419).

If these researchers' claim is true, it is probable that HP usage will be found in TE too, since, as observed earlier, Caribbean English creoles share a surprising number of phonological, grammatical, structural properties. Thus, in this section, I will examine whether HP usage is attested in my TE data. An analysis will be made of 29 fully-blown narratives in the data (10 narratives from the MC group, 9 narratives from the UWC group and 10 narratives from the LWC group). Incomplete narratives, i.e., brief anecdotal stories told during an interview, were not included as the data for the analysis. This decision was based on my judgment that it is probable that even in standard varieties of English like Standard American English or Standard British English (where HP is well established), the use of HP will not occur often in incomplete narratives.¹⁰

As observed in Labov and Waletzky (1967), Labov (1972) and Schiffrin (1981), clauses in narrative are divided into complicating action clauses and noncomplicating action clauses. Complicating action clauses describe the main developments of the story in the order of their

occurrences. Noncomplicating action clauses include abstract (summary of the story), orientation (clauses which provide the audience with background information such as time and place of the event), evaluation (clauses which describe the narrator's feelings on the ongoing actions) and coda. HP is known to occur mostly in complicating action clauses and only marginally in orientation clauses (Schiffrin 1981:47).¹¹

Accordingly, if TE has HP usage, verbs appearing in complicating action clauses should be percentage-wise less often past-marked than those in noncomplicating action clauses. Thus one way of checking whether there is HP usage in TE is to check whether there is any difference in past-marking between complicating and noncomplicating action clauses. However, there is one serious problem in this simple comparison method. The problem is that near-categorically past-marked verbs occur much more frequently in noncomplicating action clauses than in complicating action clauses. As Rickford (1986:383) and Patrick (1992:347) observe, an absolute majority of verbs appearing in complicating action clauses are non-stative verbs, whereas a majority of verbs occurring in noncomplicating action clauses are stative verbs such as *be* and *have*. Passives, negative constructions and modals also appear frequently in noncomplicating action clauses. This means that the percentage of verbs *be*, *have*, *do*, *can* — all are near-categorically marked verbs in TE — is very high in noncomplicating action clauses.

In standard dialects of English, a simple comparison of the marking rate of verbs appearing in complicating action clauses and that of verbs occurring in noncomplicating clauses causes no problem because every verb is underlyingly past-marked except instances of HP. But in TE — and in varieties like Guyanese English and Jamaican English — this simple comparison is very problematic, because a majority of the verbs (67%:175/260, in my TE data) that appear in noncomplicating clauses are near-categorically marked verbs while only 10% (36/368) of verbs found in complicating action clauses are such verbs. Thus a simple comparison of past-marking rates is bound to find a significant difference between the two.

In spite of this skewed distribution of these near-categorically marked verbs in narratives, Rickford compares the marking rate of verbs in complicating action clauses with that of verbs in noncomplicating action clauses, and primarily based on this difference suggests the presence of HP in GC. Patrick (1992) too includes the tokens of *have*, the highest marked verb (68%) among all the verbs in his JC data (ibid:376), in his narrative analysis.¹² Considering that *have* accounted for 16% (42/260) of the tokens of the verbs that occur in noncomplicating actions in the TE data, it is expected that the inclusion of *have* in his analysis must have significantly affected the Varbrul probability comparison of his "sequenced and nonsequenced clauses" (ibid:348, 419).¹³

In short, my argument here is that a simple comparison of past-marking rates is faulty because near-categorically marked verbs occur much more frequently in noncomplicating action clauses. I suggest that a more reliable way of examining the existence of HP usage in Caribbean English creoles is to compare the marking rates of verbs in these two types of clauses after the exclusion of near-categorically marked verbs from the tokens for the narrative analysis. This decision results in a big change in the whole picture as the table below shows.

Table 7. Differences in Past-marking Rate between Complicating and Noncomplicating Action Clauses before and after the Exclusion of the Near-categorically Marked Verbs

SEC group	Complicating action clauses		Noncomplicating action clauses	
	before	after	before	after
MC	74% (N=99)	68% (N=90)	88% (N=118)	79% (N=29)
UWC	54% (N=151)	51% (N=146)	78% (N=76)	43% (N=28)
LWC	19% (N=118)	14% (N=94)	48% (N=66)	14% (N=28)

Only in the data for the MC group are the tokens from complicating action clauses less past-marked than those from noncomplicating action clauses. This, accordingly, suggests that the only group that might use HP forms is the MC group. It is because if HP is used in complicating action clauses like standard varieties of English, the past-marking rate of verbs in noncomplicating action clauses cannot be higher than or equal to the past marking rate of verbs in complicating action clauses.

At this time we need to reconsider what the historical present is. Wolfson (1982:3) defines HP as "the use of the present tense, in narrative, to refer to events which began and ended at some time previous to the moment at which the narrative itself is told" (my emphasis). Accordingly the historical present is not morphologically different from the present tense at all. That is, HP is marked '-s' when the subject is a third singular person and 'Ø' elsewhere. Therefore one way of checking whether HP usage is present in the narrative speech of Trinidadian MC speakers is to examine whether '-s' marking is used in putative instances of HP — i.e., past-referring verbs in the narrative which are not past-marked — when the subject is a third singular person.¹⁴

I first checked how often the MC informants mark 3rd sg present '-s' in their interview speech. They showed 74% of '-s' marking (142/193) in careful style and 61% (97/159) in casual style. Overall, 68% of the tokens (239/352) in the data were marked with '-s'. The analysis of the data for the MC speakers found 19 unmarked (i.e., not past-marked) past-reference verbs with a 3rd sg subject in the narratives.¹⁵ 13 occurred in complicating action clauses and six in noncomplicating action clauses. None of the 13 verbs in complicating action clauses were '-s' marked, but three among the six verbs in noncomplicating action clauses were marked with '-s'. The non-complicating action clauses where the '-s' marked verbs appear were all orientation clauses.

The question arises as to how to interpret this result. There are a few problems that prevent us from reaching a definitive conclusion on the existence of HP in the narrative speech of MC speakers. First of all, the number of tokens is not large enough. The sample size of 19 is short of 20 or 30, which are considered as an adequate size of the sample in sociolinguistic studies (Milroy 1987, Guy 1980). The second problem is that '-s' marked verbs were found only in orientation clauses, not in complicating action clauses. As observed earlier, in Standard American English (SAE), HP is predominantly found in complicating action clauses and only occasionally in orientation clauses. Thus the result that no '-s' marked verb was found in complicating action clauses could come either from a small sample size or from a lack of HP usage in the varieties used by the MC speakers. The third problem is that all the three '-s' marked verbs were found from the speech of one UMC speaker (G.B.). Thus it might be that HP could be found only in the speech varieties of only a certain group of MC speakers. These three problems do not allow us to reach any definite answer to the question of whether the Trinidadian MC speakers use HP.

The examination of the narratives produced by the UWC and LWC speakers showed different results. The analysis of the whole interview data found that the UWC speakers and LWC speakers respectively mark 3rd sg present '-s' 52% (174/334) — 56% (96/171) in careful speech and 48% (78/163) in casual speech — and 23% (87/378) of the time — 25% (45/181) in careful speech and 21% (42/197) in casual speech. There were 37 verbs (21 in complicating action clauses) in the UWC data and 53 verbs (32 in complicating action clauses) in the LWC data that have a 3rd sg subject and occur without past-marking in past contexts in narratives. Not one token was marked '-s' among these 90 verbs. Considering the 3rd sg present '-s' marking rates of these two SEC groups, this result is a rather strong piece of evidence that the usage of the historical present does not exist in basilectal and mesolectal varieties of TC.

In sum, though we were not able to reach a definitive conclusion on the existence of HP usage in acrolectal Trinidadian English, it was revealed that HP usage is not present in basilectal

and mesolectal varieties of TC. The latter was concluded based on two pieces of evidence. The first was that in the narrative data for the UWC and LWC speakers, the past-marking rate of verbs occurring in complicating action clauses was higher than or as high as that of verbs that appear in noncomplicating action clauses. The second was that in the same data, no 3rd sg present '-s' marking was found in any putative HP's. This finding has possible implications that the existence of HP in such varieties as mesolectal to upper mesolectal GC and JC is doubtful in that the varieties of English spoken by the Trinidadian UWC group — mesolectal varieties of TC — are generally considered as grammatically closer to standard varieties of English than mesolectal JC or GC and as comparable to upper mesolectal JC or GC (cf. Holm 1989:460, Winford 1992:4). When it is considered that both Rickford (1986) and Patrick (1992) were unable to show any clear evidence of the existence of HP and that their analyses were problematic as previously observed, the findings in this section argue against the presence of HP usage in basilectal to upper mesolectal varieties of JC and GC.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I first showed that the effect of linguistic context suggested by some researchers does not hold in TE. Neither the redundancy-reducing tendency (the functionalist hypothesis) nor the redundancy-increasing tendency (Bickerton's suggestion) were supported by the TE data. The findings in this paper defy especially the common belief that creole languages follow the principle of economy in past marking. It won't be possible to hastily generalize the findings in TE to other creole languages. However, our findings definitely call for quantitative studies in other creole languages to verify the common functionalist hypothesis in creole languages.

This paper also provided evidence that HP usage is not present in basilectal and mesolectal TC varieties. I didn't commit myself to the existence/ non-existence of HP usage in acrolectal varieties of TC. As stated earlier, the finding that Trinidadian basilectal and mesolectal varieties lack HP usage has possible implications for the existence of HP in other Caribbean English creoles. It may suggest that the existence of HP in such varieties as mesolectal GC and JC is doubtful in that mesolectal varieties of TC are generally considered as grammatically closer to standard varieties of English than mesolectal JC or GC.

NOTES

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¹Following the common practice, I will refer to both the creole vernacular and the intermediary varieties as Trinidadian Creole (TC). The Standard English of Trinidad will be referred to as STE.

²The two UMC speakers showed 87% (45/52) of past-marking rate, while the LMC speakers showed 80% (270/337) of past-marking. There was no difference in past-marking rate between the Saint James speakers and the Mayo speakers. As the appendix shows, the Mayo speakers in each SEC group showed a slightly higher past-marking rate than their Saint James counterparts. But the difference was not significant.

³For similarities among Caribbean English Creoles (CEC's), see Holm (1989:446) and Bickerton (1981:48). For differences in the degree of conservativeness between TC and other CEC's such as GC and JC, see Winford (1990:241), Holm (1989:460) and Bickerton (1981:47).

⁴This redundancy-increasing tendency in natural languages is reported by Scherre and Naro (1992:23) and Schiffrin (1981). Scherre and Naro (1992:23) suggest that in Brazilian Portuguese "semantically plural verb tokens preceded by marked plural subjects in the same clause or other marked verb tokens with the same subject in the preceding discourse are more likely to be explicitly marked for plural than similar tokens preceded by unmarked subjects or verbs". Schiffrin (1981:51) also shows that in English narratives past-marked verb forms tend to cluster rather than to alternate repeatedly with unmarked verbs forms (i.e. HP tense forms).

⁵To be more specific, the varieties of Cameroonian English referred to by Todd are those spoken in West Cameroonian coastal regions.

⁶In Cameroonian English and Krio, past meaning is indicated by the anterior marker *bin*, as in many other English Creoles spoken in Atlantic and Pacific areas.

⁷For instance, in cases when there are long pauses between the two sentences, or when two totally different events are discussed — i.e. when there is a topic shift (e.g., "The godfather died. John got a job."):

⁸The selected speakers are as follows — MC group: A.H., D.G., J.B., Mr. M., Mr. S.; UWC group: L.D., A.W., J.A., K.F., G.N.; LWC group: A.E., L.L., K.D., M.R., V.B.

⁹HP is found mostly in noncomplicating action clauses in dialects of English, as will be explained later.

¹⁰HP can occur only when it is established that the audience knows the speaker is talking about a past event — i.e. only when "tense is freed from its main job of providing a reference time" (Schiffrin 1981:51). In incomplete narratives, the establishment of the past as a reference time is harder to achieve.

¹¹30% of complicating action clauses were instances of HP usage in her data, but HP usage was found only in 3% of orientation clauses and in none of the other types of noncomplicating action clauses.

¹²In JC, *have* is very highly marked compared to other verbs, for the average past marking rate of the verbs in his JC data was only 36%.

¹³Another problem in Patrick's (1992) suggestion of HP in JC lies in his method of analysis. His "sequenced" clauses are not restricted (i.e., not identical) to complicating action clauses in the narrative. He (ibid:293) notes that "I will refer to 'sequenced clauses', which may be anything from full-blown performed narratives to a simple pair of clauses describing two actions in sequence", saying that "iconic sequencing of events and clauses" is "the heart of the definition of narratives". But considering Wolfson's (1976, 1979) suggestion that even in narratives told during sociolinguistic interviews, fewer instances of HP are likely to be found than narratives told in other situations, his method is dubious. The probability (weight) for past-marking of his "sequenced" clauses and "nonsequenced" clauses was .46 and .62, respectively.

¹⁴Rickford (1986:390) points out the need to examine 3rd sg present '-s' marking to argue for the existence of HP. I follow his suggestion here, and am indebted to him. Rickford didn't find any '-s' marking in his "putative HP's" in his GC data. However, Bonnette marks 3rd sg present '-s' only 21% of the time in her nonnarrative speech. Thus the failure to find any 3rd sg present '-s' in narrative didn't lead Rickford to reach a conclusion that HP usage is doubtful in Bonnette's speech (upper mesolectal/acrolectal GC).

¹⁵These verbs could include { \emptyset } marked verbs (i.e., verbs marked with the creole perfective aspect marker (\emptyset)), real HP instances and, possibly, verbs which are underlyingly past-marked but whose past-morpheme is missing because of a deletion-like process. However, among the 19 verbs only 5 were regular verbs whose past morpheme can be affected by this process.

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Appendix: Each Informant's Past-Marking Rate

NB. (M) signifies a Mayo speaker; the rest are Saint James speakers.

MC

A. H.*	15/18	83%
G. B.*	30/34	88%
D. G.	11/14	79%
R. M.	21/23	91%
J. B.	6/7	86%
A. B.	25/36	69%
M. K.	15/17	88%
C. R.	12/28	43%
L. E.	64/73	88%
G. M.	28/38	74%
Mr. M.(M)	34/39	87%
Mr. S.(M)	40/47	85%
C. S.(M)	14/15	93%

*-marked speakers: upper middle class speakers

UWC

L. S.	25/33	76%
L. D.	73/121	60%
C.S.	7/35	20%
J. A.	35/56	63%
A.W.	37/62	60%
K. F.	14/25	56%
G. N.	22/36	61%
R. W.	20/42	48%
J. B.(M)	22/32	69%
O.G.(M)	38/55	69%

LWC

L. S.	17/42	40%
A. E.	10/42	24%
B. L.	13/28	46%
M. J.	6/53	11%
L. L.	5/31	16%
H. M.	10/74	14%
K. D.	10/53	19%
M. R.(M)	22/74	30%
V. B.(M)	10/47	21%



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