

Completive aspect markers in Caribbean creoles: From completion to temporal priority and associated pragmatic functions.

Don Winford
Ohio State University

All Caribbean creoles have markers of what is usually referred to as Completive aspect, which derive from a verb meaning “finish” – for example, *don* in Caribbean English creoles; *kaba* in Surinamese creoles and in Papiamentu; *fin(i)* in Caribbean French creoles. In all of these creoles, this marker is used to refer to a situation that occurred or began in the past, whose results extend until the moment of speech (Detges 2000: 143). In creoles like Sranan Tongo (SN) and Trinidadian Creole (TC), the marker has acquired the status of an adverbial indicating a particular kind of temporal priority quite similar to what L. Michaelis (1996: 479) describes for English *already*. In this paper, I focus on the meanings and uses of SN *kaba* and TC *don*, particularly the kinds of argumentative or expressive functions they serve in discourse. Like *fin(i)* in Seychelles French Creole, these markers are used to “indicate [...] that a past action and its results are in immediate relation to the present moment, and continue to be decisive for future action” (S. Michaelis 1993: 72, trans. by Detges 2000: 142). Like propositions containing English *already*, those containing *don* and *kaba* can be used to serve particular argumentative goals. Moreover, such propositions can also have the (related) function of pointing to further consequences implied by what was asserted. It is these kinds of implication that set the uses of TC *don* and SN *kaba* apart from the uses of Completive markers in other creoles, which have evolved to different degrees or in different directions along the path of grammaticalization.