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1 Introduction

The question of the relationship between stativity and past marking in Caribbean English Creoles (CECs) has been subject to much controversy in the literature. This distinction between stative and non-stative verbs is said to be crucial for analyses of past marking in Creole languages. The main issue involves the use of *anterior* (relative past) as well as *zero-marking* to convey past time reference. There has been disagreement over (a) the semantics and function of zero-marking as well as the relative past marker; (b) the way these types of marking interact with other the discourse context and the inherent lexical aspect (*aktionsart*) of the verb. This paper is part of my current work on past time reference in Belizean Creole (BC) in which I examine two main aspects of this debate: first the semantic function of the *relative past* and its relation to the unmarked verb in BC, and second, the discourse function of the relative past marker and the unmarked verb.

In this paper I focus on the discourse function of the relative past and the unmarked verb. Three types of spontaneous speech data will be examined: Genre A, in which the speaker has total control of the context and the topic; Genre B, in which the discourse context and topic is controlled, and Genre C, in which the discourse topic is fixed and the context is preset. I propose that a comparison of this sort not only allows for a more controlled quantitative analysis in which frequencies can be tabulated; but there can also be a precise description of the discourse contexts in which the relative past and the unmarked verb occur.

2 Overview

2.1 Past Marking and Stativity

Bickerton's (1975, 1984) claims that the *unmarked* verb always expresses *present* with statives and *past* with non-statives and that the *relative past* (*anterior*) marker expresses (*absolute*)¹ *past* with statives and *past-before-*

¹ This is part of my work in progress on the past time reference in BC. Thanks to Prof. D Winford, the Changelings group at OSU, and the audience members of NWA 30 for valuable comments.

past, with non-statives, have met with recent challenge. Jaganauth (1987), Pollard (1989), and Winford (1993, 2000), for example, argue that unmarked statives often convey past reference in certain discourse contexts. Likewise Gooden (2000 ms) showed that stativity² is not the sole deciding factor between an 'absolute past' meaning and a 'past-before-past meaning'. Both stative and non-stative verbs in the BC data examined were used to express past time reference.

2.2 Meaning and Uses

In a relative tense system, such as is employed by Creoles, an event/situation may be marked as past with the moment of speech (S) or with some other reference point in the past (c.f. Comrie, 1985). Given that Creoles have a relative tense system, an approach which takes into consideration morpho-syntactic information as well as discourse or contextual information is preferable to one which does not. It is therefore necessary to make a distinction between the meanings expressed by the past tense category: the *dominant meanings*, which we find represented in its canonical uses, and the *secondary meanings*, which we find represented in the discourse³ (Dahl, 1985).

2.3 Past Marking in BC

According to Winford (2001), BC like other Caribbean English lexified Creoles (CECs) has two categories of *tense*; *RELATIVE PAST*⁴ is one and *FUTURE* the other. In examining the relative past tense I will focus attention on past time reference where the situation/event is past in relation to the moment of speech, *absolute past*, and where it is past in relation to another past event, *past-before-past*. I will examine the ways in which these meanings are expressed by the unmarked verb and the relative past marker in discourse.

Relative past is expressed in BC by the auxiliary *mi* and appears preverbally, e.g. *mi gat*, *mi liv* in example (1) below.

² Through application of 'typical' tests for stativity in which stativity was treated as a feature of the lexical aspect (*aktionsart*) of the verb (Dowty ms, 1975, Smith 1995, 1997, Lakoff 1966, Mufwene 1983, 1984), it was shown that that some verbs, example, stance and relationship verbs, are *nonstative*, in a Creole context despite their classification as stative by some researchers (cf. Tagliamonte and Poplack 1993, Tagliamonte, 1998).

³ For example, in English 'future time reference' can be expressed by the PROGRESSIVE TENSE:

⁴ I use small caps here to distinguish between the grammatical categories and the semantic notions which are represented in lower case italics.

- (1) *ĩ mi gat plees op ya we mii an hii mi liv*
he had a place up here where he and I lived (dwelled) (DW)

The prototypical use of this category (dominant function) in Winford's view (2000) is to distance some situation from the reference point being focused on in the discourse. As shown in (2), unmarked verbs also occur in BC and can be used to express 'absolute past' temporal reference though they have other functions and express other types of temporal reference as well (cf. Winford 2001).

- (2) *ĩ Øsi di koakanat di hang dung an den ĩ Øwaan wan*
She saw the coconut hanging down and then she wanted one. (DW)

3 Data and Methodology

The data described in this paper are spontaneous speech data⁵ from two sources, D. Winford's database (DW) based on fieldwork done in Bermudian Landing and from my own (SG) fieldwork in the same community and in Belize City during July 2000. From the DW database there is one speaker, age 58, and from the SG database there are 3 speakers, ages 16, 58 and 62. All informants reported use of BC and English, with English used only in formal settings such as church services. Elicitation sessions were carried out in informal settings, e.g. informants' homes, to facilitate use of BC.

In Genre A (DW), the speaker had complete choice over the topic and context of the discourse. The interviewer/fieldworker merely facilitated the flow of the conversation with minimal responses or questions to prompt the continuation of speech. In Genre B (SG), the context and topic are controlled. I used a set of fifteen pictures depicting a story which took place in the past. The pictures were organized in terms of the sequence of occurrence of events in the story. Informants were told that the story was real and depicted events that took place in the past. They examined the pictures for 5 minutes and were allowed to ask questions for clarification after which they were asked to retell the story while being tape-recorded. Informants were allowed to look at the pictures while telling the story. In Genre C (SG), the speaker had no control over the topic. A subset of the informants had difficulty retelling the picture-based story; these were typically older informants who had little or no formal education. In this case a discourse topic was cho-

⁵ The data is transcribed in broad phonemic transcription.

sen for discussion through direct questions about past events surrounding the 'days of the ferry'.⁶

4 Past Time Reference Interpretation

4.1 The Tense Locus

Chung and Timberlake (1985) describe tense as a directional temporal dimension, having a privileged point or interval of time called the *tense locus*. Tense therefore locates an event in time by comparing the position of the (event) frame with respect to the tense locus, which can be any point along the time dimension. Here I use the term *tense locus* (TL) to designate the point in time in relation to which an event/state is perceived as past. In a relative tense system the TL is some point in time given by the context, which may or may not be the moment of speech (S). An event is located at, before or after the TL. Gooden (2000 ms) showed that identifying the tense locus in the discourse is not always straightforward. It is not the case that it is *always* established by the time reference of another verb in the same or adjacent sentence.⁷ It is also not the case, as illustrated in (3), that the reference verb/clause has to precede (syntactically) the affected verb/clause.

- (3) A: Di mi doro na oso esde, mi bradi gi mi moni
 'When I arrived home yesterday, my brother gave me money'
 B: Baka di a dringi a dresi a koso wan heri yuru
 'After he drank the medicine he coughed for a whole hour'
 (Winford 2000)

Winford explains this as a case in which the speaker regards both the events as past relative to S and thus sees no need to distance one from the other. Interpretation of time reference is therefore based on the nature of the relationship between the tense locus and the event/state. So the event/state can

⁶ Before roads to Belize City were constructed, people commuted by river using first canoes (dori) then a ferry.

⁷ This is suggested in Tagliamonte and Poplack's (1993) analysis in which verbs were coded for temporal reference based on one of five potential relationships with the preceding 'reference verb': posterior, anterior, coincidence, repetition, and reorientation. For example, verbs which occurred in sequential order with Event 1 ordered before Event 2 were coded as posterior. e.g. When i sen, the vessel 'round her ruder touch, the bar (Tagliamonte and Poplack 1993:179)

be anterior to the reference point, simultaneous with it, or posterior to it (cf. Chung and Timberlake 1985:203 on event frame).

4.2 The Interpretation of Past/Meaning of Past

When the TL coincides with S, this gives an *absolute past* temporal reference (Comrie 1985:65). The diagram in (4) below is a temporal schema for 'absolute past' interpretation. The line represents time; the situation with an 'absolute past' time reference is therefore located prior to S where the TL is equal to S. The example in (5) illustrates.

(4) Schema: |-----Situation/Event-----TL=S--|

-----time----->

- (5) A: Yu memba da kriezi haus dē Yuustu ha da Barrack Road de? *Do you remember that crazy house (asylum) they used to have at Barracks Road there?*
- B: Wich kriezi haus? Dā Barracks? *Which crazy house (asylum)? At Barracks?*
- A: da Barracks *At Barracks*
- B: yes *yes*
- A: Unu Yuustu go rown de an plie an faas wid dē kriezi piipi dē? *Did you (pl) used to go around there and play and interfere with (tease/make fun of) the crazy people?*
- B: No wi doz go rown de, wi mi ha₁ wan fren mi gaan₂ iin de, ī stepfaada mi chap op₃ ī ma rait an di gial gaan kriezi, we doz go de go luk fi shi, siem wi go luk fu meri go rown...mi deh striet da Barracks₄ *No, (but) we used to go around there, we had a friend who went in there, her stepfather chopped up her mother right and the girl went crazy, we usually go and visit her just like we go searching for (a) merry-go-round...(that) was straight (right) at Barracks.*

Observations: The statives (*ha 1* and *deh 4*) and the non-stative (*gaan 2*) refer to *absolute past* situations as in the preceding examples. The implication is that the situations being referred to by the verbs no longer have cur-

Given these observations, we might reasonably expect to find similar patterns in the BC narratives⁹ shown below. Background information gives a backdrop to the main storyline; explanatory material necessary for interpreting the events of the story e.g. time, place, characters (Schiffrin 1981; Wallace 1982, cited in Pollard 1989) (*orientation*) and may also indicate the value of events in the narrative (*evaluation*). Foreground information on the other hand, advances the storyline or indicates the main points of the story (*complicating action*). The narratives are divided in sections along these lines, with the unmarked verbs indicated by \emptyset and verbs and copulas with *mi* in boldface for ease of reference.

5.2 The Data

5.2.1 Genre A: Speaker controlled context and topic

In this extract the speaker describes apparent sibling rivalry, which resulted in one child living outside the home with someone else.

(5)	Wen ai \emptyset kom ₁ huom ai \emptyset si ₂ we dah mi di problem ₃ wid S. an i tuu breda dem,	<i>When I came home I saw (perceived) what the problem was with S and his two brothers.</i>	Comp. Action
5	dah laik de neva laik a, K and L, an ai \emptyset si ₄ it an' we ai had	<i>It was as if they never liked him, K and L, an I saw it an what I</i>	Eval.
10	waz tu du ai had waz tu muuv fran mai Ma wid S but wen ai \emptyset muuv ₅ fran mai Ma wid S ai \emptyset muuv ₆ owt ai \emptyset kom ₇ ya.	<i>had to do I had to move from my Ma with S but when I moved from my Ma with S I moved out, I came here,</i>	Comp. Action
15	Ai mi liv ₈ op iina waa opstiez bifo ai \emptyset muuv ₉ ya an S kudn stie wid mi kaaz i mi tuu smaal ruum ₁₀ , so ai \emptyset lef ₁₁ S	<i>I lived in an upstairs (building) before I moved here and S couldn't stay with me because there were two small rooms so I left</i>	Em- bed.Ori ent.
20	dah Mis S.	<i>S at Miss S.</i>	Eval.

⁹ I use narrative here in a broad sense to cover a range of genres including stories, reports, and plans, among others (cf. Ochs 1997).

mango kaa dē luk raip rait, nau
ã juusi'.

So den di son mi di go iin.
Eniwie hi no di studi dat. Hi
Øgaan bai di mango chrii. I
Østanop front a it ã i Øtink i
Ødi rimemba hau i ma Øtel ã i
ku go swim bot kip awie fram
di mango chrii. Hi no di studi
dat hi di Øtink bowt hau juusi
di mango an hau nais.... i wā
ties....so gā ahed an hi Øgaan
an hi

Østaat tu pik dung mango fi
hi an i fren Derrick. I Østaat tu
pik dung mango nau. Derrick
Østaat to iit..An den..hi Ødi
swing pan di mango chrii nau i
Ødi chrai ek iself di shuo Der-
rick hau hi ku swing pã chrii.
So nau afta hi Øswing pan
chrii.... i Øgaan an i Øklaim
di chrii an iivin mi di kom iin.
Hi no di studi dat. Hi jus Ødi
showtop Derrick an Øtel Der-
rick hau hi deh pan di mango
chrii an hi kud du dis ã dat pan
di mango chrii. Nau i Øgaan
an i Ødrapan i
Øbos...skriepop i nii an i
Øbus i tuo an den afta dat i
Ørimemba i ma Øtel ã yu
kud swim bot kip awie fram di
mango chrii bikaa i dienjaros:
So nau i Øgaan huom an i
Østaat tu kra i an i Øtel i ma
we Øhapen. I Øtel i ma hau
hi mi di klaim di mango chrii l

they look ripe right now and juicy'.

*So then the sun was going down.
Anyway he was not paying atten-
tion to that. He went to the mango
tree. He stood up in front of it and
he thought, he was remembering
how his mother told him he could
go to swim but to keep away from
the mango tree. He was not paying
attention to that he was thinking
about how juicy the mango (would
be) and how nice....it would
taste....so he went ahead and he
went and he started to pick man-
goes for himself and his friend Der-
rick. He started to pick mangoes
now. Derrick started to eat and
then he was swinging on the tree
and he went and he climbed the
tree acting up himself showing
Derrick how he could swing on the
tree. So now after he swung on the
tree he went and he climbed the
tree and evening was coming. He
was paying no attention to that. He
was just shouting to Derrick and
told Derrick how he was on the
mango tree and he could do this
and he could do that on the mango
tree. Now he went and he fell and
he burst...scraped up his knee and
he burst his toe and then after that
he remembered his mother told
him 'you could swim but keep
away from the mango tree because
it is dangerous. So now he went
home and he started to cry and he
told his mother what happened. he
told his mother how he was
climbing the mango tree and he*

an hi Øskriep hi nii ā Øbos i tuo. So i ma Øhuol i hed an i ma Østaat tu baal an i ma Øtel ā. 'Yu rimemba a Øtel yu no go pā da mango chrii. Rimemba a Øtel yu i dien-jaros'. Hi neva Ølisen so aal hi ku du da kraai nau. So i ma Øtel ā 'wel...yu diserv it sins yu Øgaan pan di mango chrii an a sen yu fi Ø g a a n. swim...yu no going a non a dem.. Yu no, no o swim agen..yu laan yu lesn'.

scraped his knee and and burst his toe. So his mother held her head and his mother started to bawl and his mother told him. ' Do you remember I told you not to go on that mango tree. Remember I told you it is dangerous'. He never listened so all he could do was cry now. So his mother told him well you deserve it since you went on the mango tree and I sent you to swim..you are not to do any of them. You will not swim again....you have learnt your lesson.

Observations: All of the unmarked verbs in this extract mark foreground information. Following the pattern observed for other CECs, the seven instances where *mi* is used in the text (lines 1-5, 25, 45) all mark background information. However, a different pattern is seen in Genre C.

5.2.3 Genre C: Controlled topic

In the extract below, the conversation is between myself and a 58-year-old farmer about the ferry that used to be operated in the village more than 15 years prior to our conversation (lines 16-18).

- (9) SG: So yu eva go dung de pan i feri? Michel se dē ...di feri yuustu go kraas, dung bai Misa Paul. *So did you ever go down there on the ferry? Michel said they...the ferry used to go across, down by Mr. Paul.*
- RJ: Yes a yuustu werk de tu, werk an di feri tu *RJ: Yes I used to work there too, work on the ferry too.*
- 5 SG: Hau dat werk? *SG: How does that work?*
- RJ: Wel.. yu kud tek a luk...a hav wān uol wan rait ya.... Wā gai niē *RJ: Well... you could take a look...I have an old one right here.... A guy called Alan Silasi and he...a kooli*
- 10 Alan Silasi an hi...wān kooli *guy and he drew..the ferry and he told me that it is like this [looking at painting on the wall]*
- gai an hi jraa..di feri i tel mi se iz laik dis [looking at painting on the wall] yes, iz di onli ting fi rimemba

- 15 hi an dis da kupt¹ yiaaz nau. Dis
about nier fiitiin.. muor dan dat
bikaaz feri diez don lang taim.
yes, it is the
only thing to remember him (by)
and this is a couple years now.
This is about, nearly 15...more
than that because ferry days are
long gone.
- 20 SG: So wen di piipl kom yaso² we
yu du? [pointing at painting]₁
SG: So when the people come
right here, what do you do?
[pointing at painting]
- RJ: ..so aal a dē haus ya da weh³ mi
de uova riva an den dis mihagny
stump de a waata said
RJ: ..so all of these houses right
here that were across the river
an then this mahagony stump is
on river bank,
- 25 weh paa yu Øtel mi yu mi di bied
an waã lagwud stump de rait dung
de..iida dis wan ar dis wan⁴
where you told that you were
bathing and a logwood stump is
right down here....either.this one
or that one
- 30 [pointing at picture] An dis a Ødi
feri, dis a Ødi tuu tong, den di⁵a
Ødi waiya, di kieblon den...dat da i
lii haus op da tap pan ā.
[pointing at picture] And this is
the ferry, these are the 2 tongs
then this is a wire being cabled
up then that is the little roof on
top of it.
- 35 Den yu a tun ā so..laik tuu baaj yu
no.
Then you turn it so.....like 2
barges you know.
- SG: ok
SG: ok
- RJ: ..an den yu tun an den..an yu si
hau di waiya string kraas wei di,⁶
riva? An a rait so i mi stie bai₁
kuzn..ongkl Paul de..ahaa..rait bai
40 di waata said. Yu going dung yu,₁
supuos fi si dis..waa big aiyen bai
kuzn Jean de:
RJ: ..and then you turn and
then...and you see how the wire
is strung across the river? And
that is exactly how it was beside
cousin..uncle Paul there, ahaa
right at the river bank. (If) you
are going down you are sup-
posed to see this...a big iron
beside cousin Jean there.
- 45 SG: Oh!.....mi siit an a wanda a
wah
SG: Oh!.....I saw it an I was
wondering what it was.
- RJ: Aah yes yes! ..ahaa..i kyari di,
kiebl
RJ: Aah yes yes! ..ahaa..it car-
ried (supported) the cable
- 50 SG: So dē put di kyaar dem pān dē⁷
ar wa
SG: So they put the cars on there
or what..?
- RJ: Yes, yes.... but den, di chuck,
RJ: Yes, yes.... but then the

- di kyaa dem go ya, chuk, di kyaa
dem go op ya, chuk an aal, chuk
but nat
55 bus, no bus chuk, a& kaa aha bi-
kaaz if a mi feri diez de& big ik-
wipment di kom uova ya kudn
kom pan da feri
- SG: Tuu hevvy?
60 RJ: Dē tuu hevvy ahaa karek
- SG: So piipl go pan de
RJ: Yes afta wen...i du so an kyari
ova di chuk an den di piipl dē kum
owt. Di piipl dēn kum owt
65 ān waak dung di siē kut we yu go
weh yu bied..wen yu go dung tu
waata said ya.
- SG: A rait ya mi bied, rait de
70 RJ: Yes, yes! Yes yu si, yu si hau
ting werk owt...dis a di lagwod
stump we de rait dung de nau..
- no chruu....den dis a Ø wā kau pen
75 we mi uova de op paa di Chaini dē
liv rait nau. Wā big
- kau pen fi Misa Russell, di siē gai
we gat di bus dē, Misa Russell we
80 niē Tuts...ahaa a fi hi
- pa mi hav wāā paascha uova di
riva so dis a Ø i kau pen, dī bwai
jraa dī kaḡpen tu..si dī
- haus iin di mhmm..si wā neks lii
85 haus we mi de uova de tu. Den dis
a wā kanuu we dē mi gat saida
- truck, the cars go here, truck, the
cars go up here, trucks and eve-
rything but not
buses, no buses trucks and cars
aha because if it were ferry days
those big equipment that are
coming over here (now) could
not come on that ferry
SG: Too heavy?
RJ: They are too heavy, ahaa
correct
SG: So people go on there
RJ: Yes after when...I do this
and bring over the truck and
then the people come out. The
people come out and
walk down the same path
where you go to bathe... when
you go down to the riverside
here
SG: It is right here that I bathe,
right there
RJ: Yes, yes! Yes you see, you
see how things work out! ...this
is a logwood stump that is right
down there now
isn't true.....then this is cow pen
that was over there up where the
Chinese people live right now. A
big
cow pen for Mr. Russell, the
same guy who has the buses Mr.
Russell who is called Tuts...ahaa
it is his
father who had a pasture across
the river so this is his cow pen.
The boy drew the cow pen
too..see the
house in the mhmm..see an-
other little house that was over
there too. Then this is a canoe*

dis..... Di bwai we kō rait
iinya an jraa...rait owt hau di Ber-
mudian Landing feri mi .laik

*that they had
beside this...The boy...came right
in here an drew...drew what the
Bermudian Landing ferry was
like.*

hau i, mi stie. Di yunga jenarieshan
dē no nuo wat iz a feri.....

*The younger generation they do
not know what a ferry is. [SG]*

Observations: In lines 29-31 all the copulas are zero-marked and the meaning is present as the speaker is looking at a picture of the ferry, which is painted on the wall. If we compare this to clause in lines 74-76, we see that where as the physical descriptions have present tense interpretation, the things being described, e.g. their location, no longer have current relevance, so the speaker distances them from S with the use of *mi* ('absolute past' interpretation). The same is true for the clause in line 81, Mr Russell's father no longer has a cow pen across the river (absolute past) but the picture of it is still on the wall (present):

The speaker also gives background information to orientate the listener as to which Russell is being referred to lines 77-79. Notice however, that it is the foreground information, of the ownership of the cow pen, which is marked by *mi* and the background information, which is unmarked. This seems to go against Pollard's and other researchers claims, however, if we bear in mind that from the speaker's viewpoint it is the foreground information that no longer has current relevance and must necessarily be distanced from S, then we can begin to understand the choice of *mi* in this case. *Mi* is used to indicate remoteness of the situation being described whereas zero indicates the relevance of the situation to speech time. The speaker knows it is no longer the days of the ferry (line 16-18) and in fact offers an evaluation of what would have happened if that were the case lines 55-58.

As shown in (10), another speaker MY (female, 62) talking about the days of the ferry uses the unmarked verb to mark foreground information.

- (10) SG: So yu on di chruk an di
 chruk go on di feri?
MY: ahaa. Bot yu Øhav taim
 wen di chruk Økom ova
 wen i drai...an i miebi kud
 kyari yu to St.Paal, ahm
 Rancho Delorez, Flowas
 Bank, but wen i Ø rien i
 kyaan du it bikaaz wi no Ø

*So you are on the truck and the
truck goes on the ferry?
ahaa. But you had times when
the truck came over when it was
dry (season)...and maybe it
could take you to St.Paul's
(Bank) ahm Rancho Delorez,
Flowers Bank, but when it
rained it could not do it because*

hav aal weda ruod laik now	<i>we did not have all weather</i>
yu noh.....	<i>roads like now, you know.....</i>

6 Summary and Discussion

As shown, both the relative past marker and the unmarked verb can be used to present foreground and background information in discourse. Whereas this might suggest that there is variation, the more important question is what governs the speakers' choice of past marking. The observations here suggest that the speaker's assessment of the situation (viewpoint) is relevant for the assignment of ground and consequently use of the relative past marker or the unmarked verb. Problematic cases remain, e.g. lines 25-26 'weh paa yu Øtel mi yu *mi di bied*' where you told me you were bathing. This is background information so that the listener can locate the tree stump. Both verbs indicate absolute past time reference yet one is marked, the other is unmarked: Additional examination of spontaneous speech data coupled with more detailed discourse analysis will only enhance our understanding of past-time reference in Creole languages.

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