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The Basics
of
Main Clause Temporal
Marking in Krio

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The Basics of Main Clause Temporal Marking in Krio

1. Introduction

Krio handles the past/non-past distinction in a way which differs considerably from the way languages such as English, French and Finnish, for example, handle this temporal distinction.

The present NetNote will discuss the direct dependence of Krio temporal marking on the semantic nature of the main verb in question. The discussion will therefore focus on temporal marking in main clauses exclusively, because this particular perspective provides the natural starting point for the further exploration of the Krio tense-, mood- and aspect system.¹

2. The Impact of the State/Non-State Distinction

There is in Krio a systematic and direct correspondence between the semantics of the main verb as regards its internalized relation to time and the way the language uses morphological means to convey temporal distinctions. Briefly put, this means that the base form of stative verbs (see Nordlander, 1997; Comrie, 1976 and Bickerton 1981 & 1984, for example) is normally interpreted as indicating present time unless it is marked otherwise (see section 2.1).

For non-stative verbs, on the other hand, the situation is the reverse: The unmarked base form of a non-stative verb is always taken to be temporally located in the past (see section 2.2).

2.1 Present Time Marking of Stative Verbs

In (1) below the stative main verb no 'know' has no marking and will thus be interpreted as being temporally located in the present (or rather, simultaneous with the present focus of discourse (see Nordlander, forthcoming, NetNote #3 “The Sequential Nature of Temporal marking in Krio”).

1. A no di waala we don mit una, a no se una po, […].
   I know di wahala (‘trouble’, ‘woe’) rel comp meet you (pl), I know say you (pl) poor, […]
   I know the trouble you are in, I know that you are poor, […]
   *I know how hard pressed you are, and poor […]*  
   (Rev 1:9)

¹ Another NetNote “The Sequential Nature of Temporal marking in Krio”, deals with the the fact the Krio past/non-past distinction should rather be viewed as an anterior/non-anterior distinction, that is, as focusing on the relative sequencing of states, processes, events, etc., in relation to each other, rather than on their absolute location in time.
The same relation to the present normally obtains for all stative verbs, verbs such as memba ‘think’, ‘remember’, tink ‘think’, si ‘see’, yeri ‘hear’, ‘understand’, etc.

2.2 Past Time marking of Stative Verbs

In order to convey a past time location stative Krio verbs thus have to be marked in some way. This may be done using either of two pre-verbal particles, bin ‘anteriority’ or don ‘completion’. However, the temporal implications of these two markers when they occur together with stative verbs are different.

When the anterior marker bin is used the general message is that the state in question took place some time in the past:

2. Jizɔs bin no di bad tin we dɛn plan, so i se, “...”.
Jesus ANT know the bad thing rel they plan, so he say, “...”.
Jesus knew (about) the bad thing they planned, so he said, [“...”].
Jesus was aware of their malicious intention and said to them, [“...”].
(Matyu/St. Matthew 22:18)

The completive marker don, on the other hand, does not primarily convey a past time location like bin. Instead it focuses semantically on the fact that the process which resulted in the state in question has been completed. Thus it turns out that the past time location in (3) below is just a logical consequence of the fact that completion of necessity takes place previous to its temporal point of reference, here the moment of speech.

3. […]; yu dɔn no wetin a biliv, [...].
[…] you comp know what+thing I believe, [...].
[…] you have learnt what I believe, [...].
But you, my son, have followed, step by step, my teching, and my manner of life, my resolution, [...].
(Pol In Seken Lcta to Timoti/The Second Letter of Paul to Timothy 3:10)

2.2 Present Time marking of Non-Stative Verbs

Unlike stative verbs, which do not take any pre-verbal marking for present time location, non-stative verbs, irrespective of any further classification as processives, eventives and telics (see Nordlander, 1997), normally have to be pre-verbally marked in some way in order to indicate present time location. The most common marker in this respect is the imperfective aspect marker de, with a basic implication of simultaneity with the present moment. This might be pure on-going present time as in (4), habituality as in (5), or “future completion” as in (6).
4. [...] en a de advays una igen mek uma kam bay wayt klos fo [...].
[...] and I CONT advise you (pl) make you (pl) come buy white clothes for [...] 
[...] and I advise you again to come and buy white clothes to [...].
[So I advise you to buy ... ], and white clothes to [...].
(Reveleshon/Revelation 3:18)

5. Jon ansa se, “Mi de baptayz pipul wit wata, bot [...].
John answer say, “me HAB baptize people with water, but [...] 
John answered, I baptize people in water, but [...].
'I baptize in water', John replied, but [...].
(Jon/St. John 1:26)

6. Masta, mi gyal pikin de day, duya, kam put [...].
Master my girl child CONT die, please, come put [...]
Master, my daughter is dying, please come and put [...].
'My little daughter [...] is at death’s door. I beg you to come and lay [...].
(Mak/St. Mark 5:23)

2.3 Past time marking of Non-Stative Verbs

Although there are three different classes of non-stative verbs in Krio; processives, eventives and telics (see Nordlander, 1997), they basically behave in the same way as regards past time marking. In order to indicate a neutral (preterite) past time location for such a verb no marking is needed. In (6) below, the main eventive verb day ‘die’ doesn’t need any marking to be placed in the past, the base form is enough.

7. [...] bot dën wida en day bikos di grän no bin get wata.
[...] but they wither and die because the ground NEG ANT get water
[...] but they withered and died because the ground hadn’t received any water.
Some seed fell on the rock and, after coming up, withered for lack of moisture.
(Lyuk/St. Luke 8:6)

However, just as is the case with stative verbs, the anterior marker bin and the completive marker dän also mark non-statives for past time but with implications slightly different from those of the corresponding marking of statives. In (8) day is pre-verbally marked by bin but unlike the case with bin marking of statives, the temporal location of day is rather that of past-before-past. That is, the implication is that the event took place before something else that also took place in the past.

8. In fut dën bin day from we in mama bon am.
His foot plur ANT die from when his mama born OBJ
His feet were dead since his birth./His feet had been unusable since his birth.
At Lystra sat a crippled man, lame from birth, who had never walked in his life.
(Di wok We Den Aposul Bin Du/Acts of the Apostles 14:8)

As for completive marking of non-states with dän, we see in (9) that the message is that the event in question is given a past-time location. But just as is the case for statives (see
section 2.2), the focus is on the fact that the event has been brought to its completion, rather than on its past time nature.

9. Mi gyal pikin don day, bot kam go put yu an pan am en [...].
   My girl child comp die, but come go put you hand upon obj and [...]
   My daughter has died, but come and put your hand on her and [...].
   My daughter has just died; but come and lay your hand on her, [...].
   (Matyu/St Matthew 9:18)

2.3 Summary

The Krio system of past time marking is rather straightforward in its semantic dependence on the state/non-state distinction. Statives take anterior or completive marking for past time reference and no (morphological) marking for present time. Non-statives, on the other hand, are unmarked for pure past time reference but take anterior marking for past-before-past and completive marking for present relevance of (the completion of) past time event or process. Pure present time for non-states is in most cases indicated by the continuous marker.

<table>
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Primary Sources

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“Di Gud Nyus Bot Jizos Krays we Matyu Rayt”
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“Di Gud Nyus Bot Jizos Krays we Lyuk Rayt”
“Di Gud Nyus Bot Jizos Krays we Jon Rayt”
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“Pol In Seken Leta to Timoti”
“Rêveleshôn”


“The Gospel According to John”
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