Creoles in contact in French Guiana & Suriname: implications for language documentation

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Creoles often exit in contexts characterized by multilingualism. “Members of a creole community” tend to have varying degrees of exposure to the Creole, varying degrees of exposure to other languages, different levels of competence in each language, different attitudes towards them, different language use patterns, and different patterns of contact. Heterogeneity represents the norm rather than the exception.
Introduction

- Viewed from this perspective, the notion of a language as a solid, self-contained and distinct system which does not interact with other such entities with which it physically coexists appears like a fiction. However, despite mounting evidence, linguistic description and documentation tends to shy away from dealing with the consequences of this evidence.

**Aim of this paper:** to chart a new approach to documenting languages that place linguistic heterogeneity, lge variation and change and language contact at the centre rather than at the periphery.
A multilingual and multiethnic zone

Due to arbitrary (colonial) border-drawing, slavery, indentured labour schemes and recent migration,

→ the “same” traditional groups are present in several states
→ + contact between groups
French Guiana

French official language
4 French-based Creoles (Guyanais, Haïtien, Martiniquais, Guadeloupéen)

5 English-based Creoles
Nengee (Ndyuka, Aluku, Pamaka), Samaka, Sranan tongo

Amerindian languages
Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, Guyanese English, Hmong, Cantonese, Javanese, Hindustani, Arabic

Lingua franca: French, Créole guyanais, portuguese, sranan tongo & ndyuka

Suriname

Dutch official language
6 English-based Creoles
Sranan tongo, Ndyuka, Pamaka, Samaka, Kwinti, Matawai

Hindustani
Javanese

Amerindian languages
English, Brazilian Portuguese, Guyanese English, Cantonese, French, Spanish

Lingua franca: Sranan tongo & Dutch
Western French Guiana

Schoolchildren Linguistic repertoires
What we observed socially & linguistically

In Western French Guiana, migration, rapid urbanization and the emergence of new intra and inter-ethnic/social group interaction patterns led to

- code-switching and code mixing mainly between EMC and Sranan
- contact with other languages, e.g. Dutch, French, Créole Guyanais, English (code-switching, loanwords)
- levelling between EMC (case of dialect contact)
- emergence of reduced practices for non native, re-used by natives ‘foreigner talk’
- extensive use of Sranan and Nengee (Ndyuka) as lingua francas
- srananization of EMC in urban contexts
The term *Takitaki* found in old books concerning Sranan tongo in Suriname gained currency around 2000 in French Guiana.

It is used to refer to the English-lexified Creoles (from Suriname).

BUT its actual referents vary:
- e.g.: Maroon Creoles (Ndyuka, Saamaka)
- e.g.: Maroon Creoles & Sranan Tongo
- e.g.: Newly emerging lg based on above lgs

The term *Takitaki* is typically used by/to non-Maroons BUT also used by Maroons to cover ethno-linguistic differentiation

> We started documenting *Takitaki*
In search of a method

- Given the fuzzy and multi-referent nature of the term *Takitaki*, mapping of its complexity involves:
  - exploration of its **ideology**
    * analyze the views and discourse of all local social actors
  - examination of the **social context & processes**
    * what are the social profiles of *Takitaki* speakers?
    * they use *Takitaki* to do what, where, when and why?
  - investigation of **linguistic practices** called *Takitaki*
    * identify their struct. & interactional nature
    * establish differences among them & to ‘native’ practices
For me all that sounds like bad French is Creole and everything that sounds like bad English is Takitaki.

There are two kinds of Takitaki: the Takitaki of Amerindians and the Takitaki of the Blacks.

We say Takitaki but there are differences/ there are Aluku, Ndyuka, Pamaka as real languages.

I knew how to speak Nengre [Sranan Tongo] already, right. I knew Takitaki already, thus when the person speaks, I see what they want to say.

Look, it’s the same language, it’s not difficult, you have to listen carefully then you’ll understand directly.
### Social profiles of some takitakiaki speakers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Time in FG</th>
<th>Languages spoken</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Circumstances</th>
<th>Description of practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metropol. French</td>
<td>2 yrs</td>
<td>French, Spanish, English, Takitaki</td>
<td>Nurse (hospital)</td>
<td>– to patients – at the marketplace</td>
<td>L2 reduced variety codeswitching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metropol. French</td>
<td>3 yrs</td>
<td>French, English, Takitaki / Nenge</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>– to local friends – to parents / children</td>
<td>L2 variety w/ interference mixing EMC / sranan elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amerindian Arawak</td>
<td>always</td>
<td>Nenge, French</td>
<td>Educational assistant</td>
<td>At home In the village</td>
<td>L1 (sranan + mixing EMC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maroon</td>
<td>30 yrs</td>
<td>Nenge, Sranan, French, Dutch</td>
<td>Assistant tourist off., educational</td>
<td>to kids, family, friends,</td>
<td>L1 EMC mixing EMC–sr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guyanese</td>
<td>8 yrs</td>
<td>Guyanese English / Creole, Businengre</td>
<td>Seller (Market; door–to–door)</td>
<td>With clients, neighbours, friends</td>
<td>Fluent L2 (mixing EMC–sranan)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
multilingual practices (EMC L1 speaker)

1 B: Da i de anga congé nounou?
2 E: Aii, mi de *nanga congé* nou te *lek’ tra* mun, bigin fu *tra* mun. *Le sept*, da mi bigin baka. ‘
3 B: Soutu wooko i e du?
4 E: *Sortu wroko* mi e du? Mi e du wan *sers*.
5 B: Mh?
6 E: Wan *sers* mi e du, wan *tra wroko leki* soudati, fu *la mairie / lameri* gi *la mairie / lameri*. Ma mi *hoop* taki *nanga kontrakt*, den man ná e gi wan langa *kontrakt*, *siksi* mun, *ef’i* e *wroko* bun, den man gi i *siksi* mun baka, te *nanga* tu yali, a kaba, den man *stop* en.

*Sranan* Ndyuka undetermined *(EMC/sranan)*

French / créole guyanais

Dutch
Example of reduced L2 Takitaki

| Woman 4: | mi ná taki faansí! ‘I don’t speak French.’ |
| Doctor: | a go bon? ‘Is she well? (lit. she/it went/did good)’ |
| Woman 1: | ai mama / mama fu mi e go? ‘Yes, mother, my mother, is she doing well?’ |
| Doctor: | mama ça go bon? ‘Mother is she doing ok?’ |
| Woman 1: | a i mi e akisi fa a mama fu mi e go! ‘It’s you that I’m asking how my mother is doing!’ |
| Doctor: | a e go bun? ‘Is she doing well?’ |
| Nurse: | non elle demande. ‘No, she’s asking.’ |
| Doctor: | mais j’en sais rien moi si elle va bien! ‘But I don’t know if she’s doing well.’ |
‘I met a man at La PAF, I asked the guy, what do you do all day? You come, you take three people and put them in prison, for three hours, then you bring them back to Albina. And when the man comes back, what do you do now?’
Codeswitching EMC / Sranan

- na den dati mi sabi moo bun, den goon sani, den guluntu sani bika mi wooko pliti planga, pliti udu anga den saramaka tu, den udu nen, den sani di den e pepeka. ‘It’s those that I know better, the agricultural things, the vegetable things because I also split planks and wood with Saamakas, the names of woods, the things that they saw with a chain saw.’

- te i taigi en wan sani, a no man taigi en a srefi fasi da a kengi a sani drai en na nyun wortu. Da na so u taki nanga en nanga G. Da te a taki G da den tra man fi i taki yu ko tet! ‘When you told him something, he could not say it in the same way, thus he changed it to a new word. That’s how we talked to G. Thus when he spoke, G, then the others said ko tet.’
Fuzzy borders accross languages – « floating segments »

I ne e ferstan san mi e du nou. Mi kan rei tu trip, i ferstan tok, mi kan lei tu trip / mi e lei den man fu mi

I ne e ferstan san mi e du nou. Mi kan rei tu trip
I ne e ferstan san mi e du nou. Mi kan rei tu trip,

I ferstan tok mi kan lei tu trip / mi e lei den man fu mi i ferstan tok, mi kan lei tu trip / mi e lei den man fu mi
Data, point of views and activities that are related but do not overlap

A bunch of practices
- Approximation
- Convergence
- Identity issues
- Performance (doing)

multilingual & heterogeneous

Speakers discourse
Naming issues always situated categorization & ideology
Homogenizing or differentiating

Takitaki
(a usefull fuzziness)

Linguists point of view
Naming issues
Categorization
Ideology
Homogeneity

Lg names
Ideology as a sorting device

Social & linguistic practices

Discourse
- to researchers
- spontaneous speech
Ideology

Social positioning
- Global level / WFG
- Local / interlocutors

Linguistic ideology

Practices

Discourse
Instead of looking at one phenomenon, we tried to capture the complexity
- using different frameworks
- through different approaches
- looking at different phenomena
- using different types of data
## Types of data and approaches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of data</th>
<th>Issues phenomena</th>
<th>Method / approach</th>
<th>Framework</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spontaneous speech</td>
<td>Structural variation</td>
<td>Variation and change</td>
<td>Sociolinguistics &amp; Descriptive ling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilingual speech</td>
<td>Code-switching and mixing</td>
<td>Quali/quanti approaches to synchronic language contact</td>
<td>Contact &amp; corpus linguistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactions</td>
<td>Social meaning (Identity and performance)</td>
<td>Qualitative approach to interaction</td>
<td>Anthropological linguistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discourse</td>
<td>Ideology, Naming issues</td>
<td>Qualitative approach to discourse</td>
<td>Discourse Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declaration of practices</td>
<td>Sociolinguistic context</td>
<td>Quantitative approach to questionnaires &amp; interviews</td>
<td>Sociology of language &amp; Sociolinguistics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

=> use of different approaches to document a synchronic process of language contact