A NOTE ON DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TENSE-ASPECT SYSTEMS OF KRIO AND ENGLISH

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The English-derived creole language Krio is the mother tongue of descendants of the liberated Africans who live in Sierra Leone (mostly in urban areas), in the Banana and the Bonthe Islands, and in and around Bathurst (Gambia). Certain linguists believe that Krio is spoken as a first language by an estimated 120 thousand people (cf. Hymes 1971:517).

The tense-aspect system of the verb in Krio differs from that in English. The finite verb in Krio can be used both as a stem-verb and with tense-aspect markers which are separate auxiliary words (free morphemes). As a rule, a finite stem-verb (i.e., verb without markers, since it has no paradigmatic forms) expresses momentary non-resultative action referred to past and not related to the moment of speech. In English this meaning is normally expressed by the Past Indefinite Tense. Thus, the Krio sentence: *Jɔn go (na) skul yestade*, corresponds to the English one: *John went to school yesterday*.

The same meaning can be expressed in Krio also by adding the tense marker *bin*, whose etymology can be traced back to the past participle of the English verb *be* (cf. Jones 1968: 85). However, since the finite stem-verb as it is can express this meaning, the marker *bin* is an optional one. For example: *Rabit* **bin** gɛt *smɔl fam* = *Rabit* gɛt *smɔl fam* — *The Rabbit* **had** *a small farm*. That means that a Krio speaker, if he does not sufficiently master English, can underdifferentiate the English Present and Past Indefinite Tenses.

There is a tendency in Krio to develop another meaning of the tense marker *bin*, that of indicating that one non-resultative action referred to past precedes another non-resultative action also referred to past. For example: *Mi bɔipikin* **bin** go-waka *nado, dɛn i* go *skul* — *My son* **had walked** *outside, then he* **went** *to school*. This meaning of the marker *bin* corresponds to one of the meanings of the English Past Perfect Tense.

The addition of the marker *go*, whose etymology is traced back to the English verb *go* (cf. Jones 1968:86), to the finite stem-verb corresponds to the English Future Indefinite Tense. Since the Krio marker *go* is irrelevant

to person, a Krio speaker can underdifferentiate the auxiliary verbs *shall* and *will* in English. Cf.: *A go ka na ya — I* **shall** come *here* and *I go ka na ya — He* **will come** *here.*

The aspect marker *dɔn*, whose etymology is traced back to the past participle of the English verb *do* (cf. Jones 1968:86), expresses the resultativeness of the action referred to present, past or future, according to the context. Completion or non-completion of the resultative action is also determined according to the context. For example:

(a) present:

A **dɔn** *jɔs* **rid** *boku pepa — I* **have just read** *many newspapers.*

(b) past:

Yu **dɔn rid** *boku pepa we a ka na ya — You* **had read** *many newspapers when I came here.*

(Completion or non-completion of reading is not indicated in both sentences).

(c) future:

Bai me mɔnt i **dɔn rait** *pat pa in wok — By May he* **will have written** *a part of his paper.*

(Completion or non-completion of writing is not indicated in the sentence).

So the marker *dɔn* with a finite stem-verb corresponds to the English Present, Past and Future Perfect Tenses. As the action is referred to future, the marker *dɔn* can be grouped with the marker *go.* For example: *Bai me mɔnt i* **dɔn rait** *pat pa in wok = Bai me mɔnt i* **go dɔn rait** *pat pa in wok.* The marker group *bin dɔn* has a quite specific meaning. It indicates that a resultative action was completed before a certain moment in past (after reaching the result). For example: *Tinkya yu* **bin dɔn tap** *na cif kɔmpaun bifo yu ka na yaso — It seems, you* **had lived** *at the compound of the chief before you* **came** *here.* Therefore the sentence: *I* **had stayed** *at home for two hours when you* **telephoned** *me* (at the moment of the telephone call the speaker was at home) can be translated into Krio only as: *A* **dɔn tap** *na os fɔ bɔt tu awa we yu* **tɛlifon** *mi.* The use of the marker *bin* preceding *dɔn* is impossible in this case.

The Krio tense-aspect marker *de*, whose etymology is not quite clear (cf. Jones 1968 : 86 and Dillard 1973 : 100), has several meanings, all of them related to its ability to develop momentary actions in time. The marker *de* indicates:

1) habitual, recurrent actions in present:

Mi bɔipikin **de go** *skul ɛbri de — My son* **goes** *to school every day.*

2) general statements:

Plɛnti pipul dɛm **de tɔk** *Krio na Salun — Many people* **speak** *Krio in Sierra-Leone.*

3) actions in progress referred to present, past or future:

(a) present:

A **de rid** *dis buk ya jisnɔ — I* **am reading** *this book just now.*

(b) past:

We dɛn **de go**, *dɛn si wan pamtri we* **bin gɛt** *plɛnti pamain pan am — As* **they were going**, *they* **saw** *a palm-tree which* **had** *much juice in it.*

(c) future:

We a **de si** *sɔmtin, a* **de fɔgɛt** *bɔt Fritɔng smɔl-smɔl — As I* **see** *something,* **I'll be** *gradually* **forgetting** *about Freetown.*

While the action in progress is referred to past or future, the marker *bin* or *go*, respectively, can be optionally used preceding the marker *de.* For example: Cf. above: *We dɛn* **bin de go**, *dɛn* **si**... and *We a* **go de si** *sɔmtin, a* **go de fɔgɛt** *bɔt* ....

The marker group *dɔn de* is used only to emphasize a progression of a resultative action referred to present, past or future. This group cannot be combined with the tense markers *bin* or *go.* For example:

(a) present:

Dis tem Ram **dɔn de kip** *bak — At this time (now) the Ram* **has been keeping** *back* (He has already retreated, but continues his movement).

(b) past:

We Rabit insɛf bin si se Lɛpet **dɔn de vɛks**, *naim i tɔn — As the Rabbit himself saw that the Leopard* **had been worrying**, *then he succumbed.*

(c) future:

A **dɔn de dɔn**[1] *afta tu awa — I* **have been finishing** *in two hours.*

The marker group *bin go* has a modal meaning of non-real wish or supposition, e. g.: *If a* **bin gɛt** *rait sus, a* **bin go wɛr** *am — If I had had good shoes, I* **should have worn** *them* (but I haven't).

The tense-aspect markers in Krio have different combinability with one another. They can be grouped as follows:

1. The marker *bin* precedes all the other tense-aspect markers,
2. The marker *go* precedes the markers *dɔn* and *de*,
3. The marker *dɔn* precedes only the marker *de*, and
4. The marker *de* is closest to the stem-verb (and sometimes even tends to behave like an affix).

In conclusion the author would like to thank Mr. R. Bob-Gray and Mrs. M. Scott-Boy, Sierra-Leonean students in Moscow, for valuable information and advice.

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[1] The notion verb *dɔn* "finish" is homonymic to the aspect marker *dɔn.*