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Bettina Migge

To cite this version:

Bettina Migge. The speech event kuutu in the Eastern Maroon community. G. Escure & A. Schwegler. Creoles, contact and language change: Linguistic and social implications, John Benjamins, pp.285-306, 2004. hal-01496442

HAL Id: hal-01496442

https://hal.science/hal-01496442v1

Submitted on 27 Mar 2017

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Appeared in: 2004. In G. Escure & A. Schwegler (eds.), *Creoles, Contact and Language change: Linguistics and social implications*, 285-306. Amsterdam/ Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

The speech event *kuutu* in the Eastern Maroon community*

Bettina Migge
Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität

Sociolinguistic analyses of creoles are generally restricted to morphosyntactic aspects, drawing their data from vernacular speech in informal interviews. While this approach has undoubtedly contributed to a better understanding of the grammatical competence of creole speakers, it has provided relatively little insight into their communicative competence.

The present study follows the "ethnography of speaking" approach (Hymes 1972) to investigate the social and linguistic properties of an important formal event in the Eastern Maroon community, the *kuutu* 'council meeting'. The data underlying this study were collected among the Pamaka maroons. My investigation shows that the *kuutu* event is characterized by structured social and linguistic practices that provide important face-saving strategies, and create an aura of dignity, importance and respectability. The social practices described here include participation privileges, and procedures for organizing and holding a *kuutu*. Concomitant linguistic practices include turn-taking procedures as well as lexical and pragmatic choices. The social conventions and speech acts described here are primarily associated with titled persons and elders, who are the sole active participants in a *kuutu*. The analysis provided also suggests that speech genre analysis offers important insights into the nature of linguistic varieties and the social meanings they index.

* I thank two anonymous reviewers, Jack Sidnell, and the editors for valuable comments and criticisms. The research was supported by the IRD Cayenne (*Laboratoire linguistique*) and the *Délégation générale à la langue française* under the project *Langues, pratiques et ressources linguistiques en Guyane*.

1. Introduction*

Sociolinguistic research on creoles generally relies on speech data collected in relatively informal social settings. This methodological approach can be traced back to quantitative sociolinguistics that identified the vernacular as the most representative speech genre (Labov 1972, Milroy 1987).[1] Participants in such settings are assumed to employ their most "natural" speaking style, since they are thought to pay little or no attention to overt societal speech norms.

However, anthropological research has provided abundant evidence that all (speech) behavior is subject to social monitoring and thus equally "natural". In both formal and informal interactions people select their social and linguistic practices based on various social considerations, such as situational appropriateness (the practices characteristic of a specific setting), the goals of the interaction, and the social identities they want to project (Eckert 2001). The main difference between formal and informal settings is that each involves a different set of social and linguistic norms. Participants in formal contexts target different types of social and linguistic practices than those who engage in informal contexts. An exclusive focus on only one kind of social setting and speech style thus appears to be arbitrary, and obviates a full understanding of the range of linguistic practices available within a community and cross-linguistically.

In addition, sociolinguistic research often investigates structural and macro-social constraints that condition the variation between the local standard language (typically the superstrate) and the creole. Analyses that focus exclusively on morphosyntactic features, such as the copula or pronouns, pay little attention to the social meanings users attach to individual variants — with the exception of Sidnell (1999) —, and to the features of particular speech events — with the exception of Abrahams (1983), Sidnell (2000), and Rickford (1986).

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[1] As observed by Sidnell (p.c., June 2003), this methodology also has its origins in relatively unchallenged ideas about creole languages, as these reoles are typically characterized as (the most) vernacular, natural, and authentic speech forms (of a community). The aim of this paper is to challenge these ideas.

Because of this predominantly one-sided approach, a significant amount of research remains to be done on (1) the range of discourse practices in creole-speaking communities, (2) the social and linguistic characteristics of such practices, (3) their social meanings and pragmatic functions, and (4) their role in the construction of social identities. A thorough understanding of the issues listed above is, however, essential to a comprehensive analysis of the linguistic makeup of Creole societies, the norms governing interactions, the nature of social identities, and the social (political and legal) organization of these communities.

The goal of this paper is to investigate one important formal speech event in the Eastern Maroon (EM) communities of Suriname and French Guiana (Guyane), the *kuutu* 'political meeting' or 'council'. More specifically, I will focus on the linguistic practices that characterize this type of event and on their related social meanings and functions.

My observations indicate that the *kuutu* linguistic practices differ considerably from informal speech events in the EM community. Furthermore, they appear to be an exclusive feature of the maroon societies of Suriname. Other Creole communities in this region model their formal practices according to the norms of the local standard European language (Abrahams 1983: 90).

The social and linguistic practices characteristic of *kuutu* events are subject to considerable structuring. Their function is to save the participants' face, and to impart an aura of social respectability and responsibility to its users. *Kuutu* events also highlight the social significance of the issues being discussed.

The paper is organized as follows: Section 2 briefly presents the EM communities, their linguistic background, and the speech data and the method of data collection. Section 3 investigates the *kuutu* setting, using Hymes' (1972) "ethnography of speaking" framework. Section 4 focuses on the linguistic practices and norms that apply in a *kuutu*. The final section (§5) summarizes my findings and discusses their implications.

2. The Eastern Maroon community

The EM community is made up of three autonomous groups, the Aluku or Boni, the Ndjuka or Okanisi, and the Pamaka. These settlements were founded between 1710 and 1760 by slaves who had fled the plantations of Suriname (Hoogbergen 1990). Maroon villages are located in the interior of the tropical rain forest of Suriname and Guyane along the Marowijne river (in the case of the Aluku, Ndjuka and Pamaka), and its tributaries, the Lawa river (Aluku) and the Tapanahoni river (Ndjuka). Since the civil war in Suriname and the country's economic decline in the late 1980s and 1990s, a significant number of EMs have moved to the urban zones of Guyane, particularly to the town of St. Laurent du Maroni. This city presently has the largest urban EM settlement in the region.

The mother tongue and primary community language of the EM communities is the Eastern Maroon Creole (EMC). It is classified as an English-lexified creole, since roughly 77% of its basic vocabulary is derived from English. Significantly smaller numbers of lexical items come from Portuguese, Dutch, local Amerindian languages, and African languages (Huttar 1985, Smith 1987). EMC is said to be a conservative or radical creole because its structural system has been subjected to limited influence from its superstrate English, or other European languages spoken in the region, such as Dutch and French.

There are three major EMC varieties that coincide with the three existing EM groups (Aluku, Ndjuka or Okanisi, and Pamaka). These originally developed on the plantations of Suriname between 1680 and 1720 (Migge 2002). The three varieties are mutually intelligible, but differ slightly on the phonological as well as lexical level. For example, Ndjuka uses long vowels in some contexts, whereas the other two varieties use short vowels (cp. *bataa* vs. *bata* 'bottle'). On the lexical level, the ability marker is *poi* in Ndjuka and *man* in Aluku and Pamaka.[1]

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[1] See Bilby (2002) for a discussion of the differences between Aluku and Ndjuka. Goury & Migge (to appear) discusses the differences between Aluku, Ndjuka and Pamaka.

Two relevant publications provide linguistic and socio-cultural information on the Ndjuka community. One is a comprehensive grammatical description of Ndjuka (Huttar & Huttar 1994), and the other is a basic dictionary (Shanks 2000).

2.1. *Data collection*

This study is based primarily on observations and recordings of various *kuutu* that took place in the Pamaka community between 1995 and 2001. Most of the meetings took place in the village of the *gaaman* 'paramount chief' of the Pamaka, Langa Tabiki. Some *kuutu* events were held in the Pamaka villages of Boni Doo, Nason, Lokaloka, and Badaa Tabiki, and in the French town of St. Laurent du Maroni.[2] Topics debated in the *kuutu* events included mainly local matters, such as intra-familial conflicts and disputes in the local gold-mining areas, or the organization and initiation of important ceremonies such as *puu baaka* 'end of mourning rituals'. However, external issues, such as the status of relations between the Pamaka and the national government of Suriname, also figured in the *kuutu* debates. Most of the data provided in the present study are taken from a *kuutu* that was held in March 2001 in the village of Langa Tabiki. This meeting dealt with a long-standing problem between the *kabiten* 'lineage head' of Badaa Tabiki, and the members of the *Mma Sanna bee* 'extended family founded by a woman called Mma Sanna'. Essentially, they were accusing their *kabiten* of disregarding his obligations, i.e. looking after his people and their territory, and of making undue use of his social powers. According to them, he was attempting to bring a gold-mining concession opened up by a family member under his sole control. In so doing he intended to force family members who worked there off the concession in order to install Brazilian and Surinamese-Chinese small-scale mining enterprises that would then have to channel a percentage of their exploits into his own pockets.

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[2] Of the roughly fifteen *kuutu* events I observed, eight were tape recorded.

The recordings were either made by myself, or by a native field worker. They were subsequently transcribed by the field worker or by another native speaker of the EMC. Some of the information on which this study is based was obtained in the course of informal discussions with the fieldworker and various members of the EM community.

**query: I wonder if a simple map might not be helpful here to show where Langa Tabiki is located. If you would like, you can send me a map (via attachment, fax or whatever) on which you can indicate the village by hand. I'll then make the map and send it to you for your approval.

3. The social characteristics of a *kuutu*

3.1. *Location, physical makeup, and participants*

The word *kuutu* is probably derived from Kikongo *kútu* 'ear' (cp. the related Kikongo *kúta* 'to be assembled, to assemble, to form a reunion, etc.' (Laman 1964: 342-343).[3] In the EMC *kuutu* is used to mean both 'to complain', and 'to debate, to argue', as in:

(1) *Hii dei, a e kuutu den swagi f' en.*
whole day he PROG complain the-pl in-laws for-him
'He is always complaining about his in-laws.'

(2) *Den kuutu a toli fu a goutu busi.*
they debate the-Sg story for the-Sg gold forest
'They debated the problems in the gold-mining areas.'

[3] I thank Armin Schwegler for suggesting this etymological origin of *kuutu*. Bakongo men and women (speakers of Kikongo) were almost certainly among the early and later contingents of Suriname slaves (Arends 1995). In other parts of the Americas, Kikongo *kútu* has also been preserved. Thus, in Cuba *kutu* (or plural *makutu*) is used in the Palo Monte ritual code to this day, and with a variety of meanings, including 'ear(s)'. For an introduction to the Palo Monte ritual language, see Fuentes Guerra (1996, 2002), Schwegler (2002), and Valdés Acosta (2002).

It is to the latter sense, 'debate', that EMs trace the meaning of the noun *kuutu* 'a meeting in which disputes are discussed and arbitrated'. It is one of the most important formal speech events in the community.

There are two broad types of *kuutu*:

(i) *Kuutu fu konde sani* 'village council or meeting' whose function is to organize up-coming community-wide events (e.g. burials, end of mourning period etc.). This type of *kuutu* addresses matters such as the date and location of events, people's contributions in kind, money and labor, rules of behavior, and the initiation or legalization of particular ceremonies.

(ii) *Kuutu fu seeka sani* 'meeting for arbitrating problems, court of justice', whose function is to preserve or re-establish social harmony whenever the need arises. This type of *kuutu* is organized to arbitrate serious disputes between relatives, or to investigate a crime. It thus provides a forum for the opposing parties to present and defend their contradictory views, and to try to resolve them in an impartial environment. The present research deals primarily with this kind of *kuutu*.

Kuutu are held in a local *kuutu osu* 'debating house', which is a rectangular open-roof structure. *Kuutu osu* built by the Surinamese government are made of stone, and are closed off on one of the short sides. Their use is generally restricted to *kuutu* that involve representatives of the national government. *Kuutu* events are also frequently held in other public or semi-public locations of the village, such as the ground floor of the house on stilts of a titled person, or in the area in which the *faaka tiki* 'shrine of the ancestors', and the *kii osu* 'mortuary' are located. The speaker participants and the audience bring their own seating, either regular chairs (*sutuu*), or local stools (*bangi*).

No strict rules of clothing apply in a *kuutu*: People wear their regular clothes. Titled persons bring a token of their official uniform, such as their hats, in the case of a *kabiten* '(sub)lineage head'.

There are two broad groups of participants in a *kuutu*, speaker participants and audience. Speaker participants are titled persons and elders.[4] Titled persons are the official members of an EM government (*lanti*), including the *gaaman* 'paramount chief', the *ede kabiten* 'the most powerful lineage heads', the (*kowonu*) *kabiten* 'regular (sub)lineage heads', and the *basia* 'assistant to the *gaaman* and *kabiten*'. The beneficiaries of these positions are selected from among the sisters' (male) children (*sisa pikin*) of their predecessor, i.e., through matrilineal inheritance. They are generally older people, but in recent years, the number of *kabiten* who are in their thirties and forties has increased considerably because the Surinamese government refuses to recognize elderly *kabiten*.

Titled persons can be male or female, but they are assigned different tasks. Female *basia*, in accordance with prevailing gender norms, are primarily responsible for organizing the up-keep of the public area of the village and the preparation of food during official events. A male *basia* serves as a ritual interlocutor (*pikiman*) in meetings, disseminates messages (*bali basia*), and assists the *kabiten* in all his activities.

Due to pressure from the government of Suriname, most (sub)lineages recently created *umanpikin kabiten* —'female (sub)lineage head' positions — in order to increase women's participation in the political decision-making process. Because of the novelty of this office, women's positions are subordinate to the positions held by men. From the maroon perspective, the positions with the longest tradition (e.g., those from the *lowe tin* 'time of flight') have the greatest social prestige, and provide the greatest sociopolitical power. *Umanpikin kabiten* deal with women's issues, and substitute for their male counterparts in their absence. For example, they may arbitrate small-scale problems, and receive members of the national government.

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[4] For information on the makeup of the Pamaka community, see also Lenoir (1973: 18-50).

Most elders are responsible (male) persons above 40 or 45 years of age. Individuals over 60, however, have the greatest social power. Female elders generally do not play an active role in public sociopolitical events.

Titled persons and elders jointly manage the social, judicial and political affairs of the community. They give advice in times of crisis, arbitrate disputes (*taki*, *kuutu*), marry people (*akisi uman* 'ask woman'), and organize ritual ceremonies such as burials (*beli*, *olo*), end of mourning rituals (*puu baaka* 'remove mourning'), and spirit appeasement rituals (*kunu pee* 'avenging spirit ritual'). They also represent the community or its matrilineal (sub)lineages (*bee*). In a *kuutu*, they carry out the discussion for the disputing parties. If titled persons or elders are involved in a dispute, they may represent themselves. However, their arguments are more persuasive if other titled members or elders accompany them. If they are on their own, they are less likely to be taken seriously since they failed to mobilize supporters.

Untitled persons, and younger women and men, including the people involved in the dispute, do not generally take an active part in a *kuutu*. Their case is presented, discussed, and arbitrated on their behalf by the titled persons and elders of their *bee*. They are part of the audience but may be called upon to provide 'expert testimony'. They can only indirectly influence the decision-making process by petitioning the active participants prior to the meeting, or by clapping or shouting out the active participants during the event.

In a *kuutu*, the speaker participants usually sit apart from the audience and the most important titled members and elders (e.g., the *gaaman*, the *ede kabiten*, the most senior elders) sit separately from those of intermediate status (e.g. *kowonu kabiten*, other elders). All participants are arranged either in a full or in a half circle. The speaker participants sit closely together in the center of the half circle while all others sit behind them, or on the fringes. In the case of a full circle, the active participants cluster in one area, and the audience in another. Some passive participants may sit behind the people of the inner circle. In *kuutu fu konde sani* 'village council', the presiding members face the audience.

3. 2. *The overall structure of a* kuutu

A complex sequence of semi-formal negotiations called *taki* typically precedes a *kuutu*. The function of this preamble is to facilitate mediation between the disputing parties. The disputants, or their close kin, make a formal complaint to an elder, generally the *tii* 'maternal uncle' or *gaan tii* 'mother's maternal uncle'. The elders discuss the problem with the disputants, and attempt to bring the disputing parties together in an effort to resolve the problem locally and quickly. If it cannot be resolved at this level, the *kabiten* of the *bee* organize a *kuutu* in order to bring the issue in front of the *lanti* 'government, public'. If one or several local *kuutu* cannot resolve the problem, the matter is brought before the government of the entire group, e.g. the Pamaka.

A *kuutu* may be called from one day to the next if an urgent matter arises. However, people are generally informed a couple of days ahead of time by messengers, by radio (on the coast) and/or by word of mouth. The day of the *kuutu*, a male *basia* formally announces the time of the event. A *kuutu* can take place at any time but important community-wide ceremonies (e.g. *beli*, *puu baaka,* etc.) that last several days provide primary occasions for holding a *kuutu,* since most of the important people of a *bee* and from other *bee*s gather on such occasions. They use the time between events linked to the ceremony to work on pressing community issues.

Kuutu fu seeka sani have the following overall structure:

(i) *Pre-event 1*: People arrive at the venue, exchange (formal) greetings with the people already present (if they meet them for the first time that day), look for a suitable place to sit, and engage in small talk until the beginning of the *kuutu*.[5]

(ii) *Pre-event 2*: Once a sufficient number of the expected participants is present, important current issues, such as the

[5] For a list of respectful or formal greetings in the EMC, see Goury & Migge (to appear).

outcome of a previous *kuutu,* are briefly discussed. The situation determines whether or not pre-event 2 will take place, and if so, what will be its actual duration.

(iii) *Opening of the* kuutu: The highest-ranking members of the two disputing parties introduce the topic under discussion, and talk about the desired outcome of the *kuutu*. Each spokesperson presents his party's grievance. With each introduction the problem becomes more narrowly defined, and clearly stated. Initially, figures of speech are used to allude to the issues under discussion (see Section 4. 4), but as the meeting progresses, the motives for disputes are overtly acknowledged. In the case of issues that may lead to heated confrontations, participants are reminded of the rules of conduct that apply in a *kuutu.*

(iv) *Discussion*: This is the longest part. The representatives of the two disputing parties present their case, and regularly take turns to respond to the points of view and evidence provided by the other party. The highest-ranking members have the privilege to speak first. If the discussion threatens to become offensive, the presiding members or other participants remind the assembly of the rules of conduct.

(v) *Seclusion*: Once all the views have been presented and discussed, or if some previously unknown issue arises in the course of the discussion, the members of each party usually go into seclusion (*beni / go a se*) to discuss possible solutions, positions and strategies in private, before presenting them in public.

(vi) *End*: If the *kuutu* succeeds, the highest-ranking members make final resolutions. They rule on the outcome of the dispute, and make recommendations to prevent further problems. If the arbitration fails, a procedure for continuing the process is proposed.

3.3. *Rules of conduct*

The most important behavioral norm in a *kuutu* is that participants have to be sensitive to positive and negative face. Positive face refers to (positive) self-image and personality, and to recognition and appreciation by others. According to Brown & Levinson (1989: 62), based on Goffman (1967), negative face refers to the necessity to avoid imposition on a person's time, personal space, and freedom of action. In the context of the *kuutu*, face-saving protocols require that participants avoid undue direct confrontation, accusation, offence, criticism and demands involving fellow participants. Moreover, they are expected to properly present the issues at stake, and to work towards a solution that is acceptable to all parties concerned.

Another important rule of conduct involves the acceptance of existing social hierarchies. People of lower social status should submit to those having higher social status. The former should pay attention to the latter's point of view, heed their advice, and accept their decisions.

Finally, people in a *kuutu* are expected to act in a calm and reserved manner. They should abstain from open expressions of emotions such as anger, (un)happiness, and must behave *saka fasi* 'with humility'. They should not flaunt their knowledge, abilities and status, or abuse their social power.

4. Linguistic practices in a *kuutu*

The style of speaking used in a *kuutu* is generally referred to as *lesipeki taki* / *fasi* 'respectful speech'. It is employed in all kinds of socially important formal events (e.g., *kuutu*, *taki*, libations, appeasement ceremonies, when making formal demands, or when in the presence of elders and people of high social status such as titled persons and elders).

Lesipeki taki / *fasi* is distinct from *kowonu taki* and *wakaman taki* in terms of discursive practices (see below) and native categories. *Kowonu taki*/*fasi* 'everyday speech' is employed in typical everyday in-group settings among people of equal social status, or when talking to people of lower social status. Such settings include speech accompanying work activities, and informal chatting.

Various types of code mixing, particularly when involving the coastal creole Sranan Tongo, is often referred to by such terms as *wakaman taki / fasi* 'traveler's speech', or *yunkuman taki* 'young man's speech'. This speech style is closely associated with young men and (vulgar) street life.

Unlike these two speech styles, *lesipeki taki* / *fasi* conforms to the rules of conduct discussed in Section 3.3, as it exhibits the four properties of formal language use identified by Irvine (1979: 776-779):

(i) *Increased code-structuring* "concerns the addition of extra rules or conventions to the codes that organize behavior in a social setting" (Irvine 1979: 776). With respect to language, this may involve employing intonational (e.g. meter, or pitch contours), phonetic, lexical, morphosyntactic, and/or discursive features that set this variety apart from other ways of speaking.

(ii) *(Increased) code consistency*. "At many different levels of linguistic organization […] speakers select from among alternatives that have contrasting social significance" (Irvine 1979: 777). There are local rules of co-occurrence that stipulate the extent to which the choices have to be consistent. In formal

settings "consistency of choices (in terms of their social significance) seems to be greater than in ordinary conversations, where speakers may be able to recombine variants to achieve special effects" (Irvine 1979: 777).

(iii) *Invoking of positional identities*. "Formal occasions invoke positional and public, rather than personal, identities […]. Public, positional identities are part of a structured set likely to be labeled and widely recognized in society […]. Personal identities, on the other hand, are individualized and depend more on the particular history of an individual's interactions" (Irvine 1979: 778).

(iv) *Emergence of a central focus*. "[…] a main focus of attention – a dominant mutual engagement that encompasses all persons present (see Goffman 1963: 164) – is differentiated from side involvements" (Irvine 1979: 779).

There are four features that saliently distinguish language use in a *kuutu* from everyday verbal interactions: (1) The nature of turns and turn-taking, (2) vocabulary and language choices, (3) address forms and (4) the use of figures of speech.[6] These features are discussed below.

4.1. *Turns and turn-taking in a* kuutu

The nature of turns and turn-taking in a *kuutu* is subject to considerable structuring. A speaker (*takiman*, TM) is supposed to select a new turn, either by asking the *pikiman* 'ritual responder' (PM) for permission to speak (3a), or by calling the attention of the *pikiman* (3b). However, people of high social rank, such as the *gaaman* or high-ranking *kabiten,* also claim turns without previously securing the *pikiman*'s permission (3c).

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[6] See also Huttar & Huttar (1988) for a discussion of a staged formal event as language play.

(3)	a.	TM:	*We, mi wani begi piimisi.*	'Well, I want to ask for permission to speak.'
		PM:	*Ya, dda.*	'Yes, elder.'
		TM:	*Mi wani taki wan sani.*	'I'd like to say something.'
		PM:	*Ya, dda.*	'Yes, elder.'
		TM:	*Mi sa taki?*	'May I speak?'
		PM:	*Dda, kula kon.*	'Elder, present your matter.'
	b.	TM:	*We, basia.*	'Well, assistant'
		PM:	*Abii, kabiten.*	'Yes, *kabiten*.'
		TM:	*Da a de so.*	'Then it is like that.'
		PM:	*A so a de, kabiten.*	'That's right, *kabiten*.'
	c.	Lanti:	*Iya, u yee, baa.*	'Yes, we heard.' [end of turn]
		TM:	*A moi so.*	'It's nice like that.'
		PM:	*Eeya, dda.*	'Yes, elder.'
		TM:	*A moi so yee!*	'It's nice like that!'
		PM:	*Ya, dda.*	'Yes, elder.'

The end of a turn is formally announced by the *takiman* using one of the phrases in (4).

(4)	a.	(*Iya*,) *u boo de*, (*papa*).	'(Yes), we breathe there (elder).'
	b.	*Kwolon*/*gbolon!*	'It's finished.' [idiophone]
	c.	(*Gbolon*/*kwolon*), *da u tapu de* (*fosi*).	'It's finished, so we stop here (for now).'

The *pikiman* 'ritual responder' then confirms the end of the turn by asking the other participants if they have heard and understood (*yee*) the speech. The latter generally respond affirmatively. The *pikiman* usually addresses all the participants. In addition, he may also single out the people who were addressed by the *takiman*'s speech (5). Only after the turn has been officially ended as described above is it permissible to begin a new turn (3).

(5)	TM:	*Kwolon*!	'It's finished!'
	PM:	*Lanti, u án yee, papa?*	'Public, didn't you hear and understand, elders?'
	Lanti:	*Ya, u yee, aiyoo!*	'Yes, we heard and understood!'
	PM:	*Baala S., u yee?*	'Mr. S., did you hear and understand?'
	Baa S.:	*Papa, u yee*	'Elder, I heard and understood.'
	PM:	*Baala B., i yee.*	'Mr. B., did you hear and understand?'
	Baa B.:	*U yee, papa.*	'I heard and understood, elder.'

Once a *takiman* has obtained the right to speak, he generally comments on the form and content of the previous speaker's turn, particularly if the previous speaker has a high social rank. His comments are generally positive (6), in order to respect the previous speaker's face wants.

(6)	a.	*A moi so yee!*	'It's nice like that!'
	b.	*A taki moi fu toko.*	'The speech is/was very nice.'
	c.	*I taki moi.*	'You spoke well.'
	d.	*Eee, u gi gaaman gaantangi fu a taki.*	'We thank the *gaaman* for his speech.'

In some cases, especially if the current speaker has a high social rank and disagrees with the previous speaker, he directly responds to the turn (3c). However, he usually prefaces his speech with a hedge, i.e., he apologizes in advance for the possible offence that his speech may cause.

(7)	TM:	*Mi e gi piimisi.*	'Excuse (my rude words).'
	PM:	*Leti so, dda.*	'Right, elder.'
	TM:	*A mi anga baala B. ná abi taki ete!*	'Me and Mr. B. do not have anything to discuss as of yet!'
	PM:	*A so a de.*	'It's like that.'
	TM:	*A no baala B. kali mi a ini a kuutu.*	'It wasn't Mr. B. who called me for the meeting.'
	PM:	*Nono, dda!*	'No, elder!'
	TM:	*Dda A., a án mu holi a taki a baka.*	'Elder A., he should not distract from the topic.'

During a turn, only the ritual responder, *pikiman*, responds at regular intervals (*piki taki*) to the *takiman*. The *pikiman* is selected among the *basia,* or male elders, at the beginning of a *kuutu,* and generally holds this function throughout the *kuutu*. His responses (*piki*) come from a conventionalized set of short phrases that essentially signal agreement with the *takiman* (8). The same phrases are reapplied many times, but it is considered bad *piki* if he does not regularly alternate between the available options. Repetition is said to create monotony and to distract from the *takiman*'s speech.

(8)	a.	(*N*)*a so a de* (*dda*/*papa*); *na so*; *a de so* (*dda*/*ppa*).	'It's like that.'
	b.	*Ya, dda*/*papa*; *iya, dda*/*papa.*	'Yes, elder.'
	c.	*Leti so* (*dda*/*papa*); *a leti so* (*dda*/*papa*).	'Right.'
	d.	*Aiyoo* (*dda*/*papa*); *eeya/eiya ai, baa* (*dda*/*papa*).	(dda/papa); 'Yes.'
	e.	*Kwetikweti* (*dda*/*papa*); *nono* (*baa dda*/*papa*).	'No/not at all.'

If the *takiman* asks a (rhetorical) question, the *pikiman* has to either answer it (9a) if the answer is obvious, or he simply repeats the question (9b).

(9)	a.	TM:	[…] *I e si en boo fu ati?*	Do you see his heart?
			A sani ya, i e si en?	This thing, do you see it?
		PM:	*No, no.*	'No, no.'
	b.	TM:	*I sabi san pasa?*	'Do you know what happened?'
		PM:	*San pasa?*	What happened?'

The *piki*-style requires a skilled interplay between the *takiman* and *pikiman*. In this dialogue, the *takiman* typically leaves short pauses or intervals after what he considers to be semantically significant units. The work of the *pikiman* then is to anticipate these pauses and to insert the *piki* so that it highlights or underscores the vital parts of the message (10). If the *takiman* talks too quickly and does not provide intervals, or if the *pikiman* does not properly follow the *takiman*'s speech, the *piki*-style cannot be realized.

(10)	TM:	*Da i si a sonu, ...*	'So you see the sin, ...'
	PM:	*Na so.*	'Right.'
	TM:	*anga a kunu.*	'and the avenging spirit.'
	PM:	*Na tuu.*	'It's true.'
	TM:	*Da te a kon gaandi ...,*	'Then when it becomes old, ...'
	PM:	*Na leti so.*	'Right'
	TM	*a án man moo.*	'it gets tired.'
	PM:	*Na tuu.*	'It's true.'
	TM:	*Da a obo ana kon a mindi.*	'Then it raises its hand and comes back among the family,'
	PM:	*Na tuu.*	'It's true.'
	TM:	*kon suku wan peesi.*	'to look for a place (to rest).'

The *pikiman* has two main functions. First, he guides or encourages the *takiman*'s speech by providing him with input that supports his positive face. Second, by being the only permissible interlocutor during the *takiman*'s speech, he shields the *takiman* from distracting or disruptive comments from the other participants, i.e., he protects his negative face. He also highlights the role of the *takiman*, whose speech thus becomes the sole focus of attention.

It is generally not permissible for the other participants to overlap or interrupt the current speaker. However, there are two situations in which interruptions are tolerated: First, if the content or form of the speech becomes disrespectful or offensive (11), and second, when a higher-ranking person considers it necessary to speak immediately at the beginning of the turn. These interruptions are generally prefaced with apologies to protect the current speaker's face, and to avoid being accused of breaking the rules, i.e. to project a respectful self-image.

(11)	TM1:	[Talking about all the bad things the *ede kabiten* did]	
		Efu a so a be taagi mi taki u anga en,a ná, be a wan mi no be o go de.	'If he had told me that we (the *bee*) and he (the *kabiten*) are not the same, I would not have inaugurated him.'
	PM:	*A so a de.*	'Right'
	TM1:	*Da a kabiten ...*	'Then the *kabiten*…'
	TM2:	*Eee, a ná enke mi e koti.*	'It's not like I'm interrupting.'

TM3 (to TM2):	*No, no, no.*	'No, no, no.' (= Don't interrupt)
TM2:	*A, a pisi fu a taki de,*	'That part of the speech,
	ma a u mu taki en ma…	we have to discuss it,
		but (in that way?).'

Although the above-described format clearly prevails during a *kuutu*, two participants may engage in direct exchanges (12). These exchanges are usually of a combative nature, and constitute a violation of the norm that stipulates that participants should behave in a reserved manner and abstain from direct confrontation. They are quickly discouraged (TM3).

(12) [The *basia* (TM1) had just openly accused the *kabiten* (TM2) of forcing his people off the *bee*'s gold-mining concession in order to install outsiders from whom he can collect a percentage of their exploits. TM1 now tells TM2 that his actions will have consequences. TM2 interprets this to mean that TM1 is threatening to use physical violence against him.]

TM1:	*U án be poti en de*	'We did not make him *kabiten*
	fu toon fetiman.	so he becomes a trouble maker.'
PM:	*Leti so.*	'Right.'
TM1:	*A taanga fu feti,*	'He's hard to fight,
	ma koni de tu.	but there's help.'[7]
PM:	*Leti so, dda.*	'Right, elder.'
TM1:	*I yee mi?*	'Do you hear and understand me?'
TM2:	*Koni de!*	'There is help!'
		[lit.= knowledge exists]
TM1:	*Koni de!*	'There is help!'
TM2:	*Fi i feti anga mi!*	'For you to fight with me!'
TM1:	*Koni de fu feti.*	'There is help to fight.'
TM3:	*Yee, yee!*	'Listen, listen' …
TM3:	*Efu i naki a sama, ...*	'If you hit someone, …
TM3:	*I sa go wasi baka, ...*	'You may go and wash it off, ...'
PM:	*Eeya.*	'Yes.'

[7] *A taanga fu feti* refers to the fact that it is extremely difficult to remove a *kabiten* from his position since it is believed that the person replacing him would be killed by his predecessor's avenging spirit. *Koni de* means that there are also other ways of dealing with the situation, such as to remove him and to leave the position vacant until his death.

TM3:	*Ma efi i taagi a sama wan taki di án bun, da a palaki fika de.*	'But if you tell a person something that isn't good, then it gets stuck there.'

4. 2. *Language and word choices in a* kuutu

Besides respecting well-defined turn-taking rules, participants in a *kuutu* are expected to select appropriate lexical items (*abi lesipeki/kiyo* 'code-consistency'). It is essential to avoid taboo and common or vulgar terms, such as those related to sex and witchcraft (*wisi*), and to use instead a specific set of terms denoting respect.[8] Table 1 presents a non-exhaustive list of such respectful terms and their common counterparts.

[8] Note that the words such as *uman*, *frou* 'woman' have sexual connotations while *boliman* (lit. 'cook') and *tia sama* (lit. 'aunt person') do not. In a similar vein, terms such as *koo sama* 'lit. cold/quiet person' and *sama fu sileti konde* 'person of the supernatural world' suggest that deceased persons have simply moved on to another physical state but are still (active) members of the community — they give advice to its living members. In contrast, *dede sama* 'dead person' denotes a person that has been lost to the community.

Table 1.
Respectful expressions in the Eastern Maroon Creole

Respectful expression	Common expression	English gloss
tia sama, boliman	*uman, folou, frou*	'wife, woman'
dda sama, goniman	*man, masra*	'husband, man'
koo sama,sama fu sileti konde	*dede sama*	'ancestors'
waka anga wan uman, mankeli/piimisi anga wan uman	*soki*	'have sex'
de anga sikin, de tu fasi, a lasi mun	*de anga bee*	'be pregnant'
de ne en futu, kii dia, go a se	*go a doo*	'menstruate'
man peesi, taku pisi	*pipi*	'penis'
uman peesi	*popoi*	'vagina'
gadu yeepi a uman	*meki*	'give birth'
saanti	*kosi, gaan mofu*	'curse'
poti wan sani gi wan sama, de anga faya a baka	*koloi, wisi*	'bewitch'
abi wan sidon, sidon makandi	*kuutu*	'meeting'

People also tend to avoid direct reference to topics that may threaten participants' face, such as direct criticisms, and accusations or restriction of their personal freedom. They generally allude to them using figures of speech (see Section 4.4). However, if it becomes necessary to openly discuss such matters, they are typically prefaced with abundant apologies (13) to mitigate the offensive force of the words. In example (13) only the *takiman*'s words are provided; the responses of the *pikiman* are omitted for reasons of space.

(13) — *Mi begi piimisi dii toon, papa J.!* 'I ask for forgiveness three times, elder J.!'
— *So! Mi begi piimisi.* 'Okay! I ask for forgiveness.'
— *Na omen toon.* 'So many times.'
— *Den sama di sidon ya na mi tata sidon ya ye.* 'The people who are here, it's my elder who sits here.'
— *Da mi begi piimisi fu a gaaman bika mi tata.* 'I ask forgiveness of the gaaman since he is my father.
— *Fu mi mofu án mu misi gaanenge.* 'So that I am not going to say rude things.'
— *A fu gaanenge, mi e begi* 'It's for rudeness I ask for

	a piimisi.	forgiveness.'
—	*Mi begi a piimisi fu lespeki ...*	'I ask for forgiveness out of respect ...'
—	*Ma mi taki kabiten A., ...*	'But I say *kabiten* A., ...'
—	*Baala A.* [*kabiten* A.] *gi mi bigi sen.*	'Mr. A.[*kabiten* A] he greatly embarrassed me.'

Respectful speech also excludes vulgar language use, which in the EM community is generally considered to derive from the coastal creole Sranan Tongo, the language associated with street life and "cultural deprivation". Participants in a *kuutu* thus tend to refrain from using Sranan Tongo-related terms, which evoke non prestigious identities and values considered inappropriate and offensive in formal settings.

Expressions from Dutch or French — the official languages of Suriname and Guyane, respectively —, or another maroon creole such as Saamaka , do not carry such negative connotations. While the two European languages are associated with external social power and learning, maroon languages like Saamaka are associated with maroon power and traditions. However, code-switching involving any of these languages or other varieties of the EMC is minimal since undue use of varieties other than the local EMC variety is perceived as an attempt to disassociate oneself from the local community.

1.1. 4. 3. *Address forms*

In a *kuutu*, people's positional identities such as their social status, standing and function within the community play a very important role. They determine a person's speaking rights and overall power. In order to show the utmost respect and overtly acknowledge status differences, and social positions, participants in a *kuutu* always use official titles when addressing or referring to others. These titles mark official rather than personal identities, and thus carry high social prestige. In the EMC, there are two types of titles: titles of courtesy and function titles. Titles of courtesy codify differences in gender, social status, and age. Traditional function

titles are not gender differentiated, whereas terms referring to modern professional titles are often gender-sensitive, as in the source languages (Dutch and French). Table 2 provides a non-exhaustive list of EM function titles and titles of courtesy.

Table 2.

Common titles of address in the EMC

[For details see Migge (2001)]

Female		Gloss	Male	Gloss
		Titles of courtesy		
Sa +	Name	'Ms for woman of lower social status/age'	*Ba* + Name *Baala* (+ Name)	'Mr. (low social status/age)'
Tia	(+Name)	'Ms for women of intermediate status/age'	*Tii/Tiu* (+Name)	'Mr. (intermediate status/age)'
Mma	(+Name)	'Ms for women of high social status/age'	*Dda*, *p*(*a*)*pa* (+Name)	'Mr. (high social status/age)'
		Function titles		
			Gaaman	'head of EM community'
Kabiten	(+Name)	'(sub)lineage head'	same	
Basia	(+Name)	'assistant to *kabiten* or *gaaman*'	same	
Yefrow	(+Name)	'female teacher'	*Mesta* (+Name)	'male teacher'
Met(*r*)*es*	(+Name)		*Met* (+Name)	
Siste	(+Name)	'female nurse'	*Opasi* (+Name)	'male nurse'
Data	(+Name)	'medical personnel'	Same	

These official titles are combined with the person's public or official EM name rather than their European first name or their last name. The official EM name is most closely associated with the bearer's self and carries the greatest respect.[9] When participants in a *kuutu* refer to themselves, they tend to use 'diminutive' terms (14) since it is considered rude to openly display one's status or power.

[9] See also Price & Price (1972) for a discussion of naming practices among the Saamaka.

(14) a. *Mi na wan pikin fesiman fu a bee.* 'I am a little leader of the lineage.'
b. *Mi a pikin man.* 'I am only an unimportant person.'
c. *Mi a pikinnenge.* 'I am but a child.'

4.4. *Figures of speech*

Another linguistic property that is characteristic of language use in a *kuutu* is the use of figures of speech, locally known as *nongo.* These are deemed "a central repository of moral wisdom and values" (Price & Price 1999: 241). Figures of speech permit the expression of confrontational and offensive issues, as well as criticism, accusation, and so forth, but they do so in a veiled and relatively non-offensive manner. Maroon cultures have a rich set of such figures of speech, which are obligatorily employed to save *kuutu* participants' face. Code-structuring and code-consistency provide strategies to avoid face threatening speech acts. The same code conventions also project the image of a good *takiman* 'speaker (in a formal event)'. This mechanism "represents the ultimate achievement in the verbal arts" (Price & Price 1999: 241). Without appropriate use of *nongos*, a speaker cannot be recognized as a dignified and important person.

Nongo is essentially a cover term for different categories of rhetorical figures of speech.[10] Some *nongo*s are proverbs, that is, shorter or longer sayings that embody general truths.[11] For reasons of space, I omit the responses of the *pikiman* in the longer examples.

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[10] Price & Price (1999: 240-241) mentions that rather than fully presenting the figures of speech (proverbs, folktales), skilled speakers prefer to make cryptic allusions to them. They expect their interlocutors/audience to complete them mentally for themselves. While I have often encountered such allusions, the data used for this study did not, to my knowledge, include any such ellipsis.

[11] Koanting & Velanti (2000) provides 350 short proverbs.

(15) a. *Ala pii tifi a ná lafu.* 'Things aren't always as they seem.' [lit. = all bearing of teeth isn't laughter.]

b. [Introducing the topic of a *kuutu* that deals with the nature of the leadership of the gold mining area, i.e. whether one or two persons should be in charge]

— *Fa a de, wan boto ná abi tu (si)tiiman.*	'The way it is, a boat does not have two leaders.'
— *A wan boto, a ná a fa a bigi.*	'A boat, it's not about its size.'
— *Luku fa a masini e daai de.*	'Look how the motor turns/runs.'
— *A wan kodo man e tii en.*	'It's only one person who steers.
— *Ma a omen man e de na a boto ede.*	'But many people are in the front part of the boat.'
— *Anga kodeli,*	'in an ordered fashion,'
— *Ma i si pe a man de a lasi de?*	'But you see where the man is in the back there?'
— *Ne en tii en.*	'It's he who steers it.'

Some *nongo*s resemble metaphors. They compare people and their actions or situations to objects or plants (16).

(16) [Talking about the continuation of a controversial arbitration process that was temporarily suspended by one of the disputing parties involved]

— *Mi no man taki mi no o de. a ini.*	'I cannot say I won't take part (in the *kuutu*).'
— *Bika mi na napi.*	'Because I am a *napi* (a type of ground vegetable).'
— *Pe den e paandi mi, mi ná e beli de, mi e gwe te so go beli.*	'I don't root where they plant me, I go over there to root.'
— *Da kande te den o kaba fu kon a gaaman.*	'Maybe when they are ready to come to the *gaaman*.'
— *Da mi a napi, di mi án beli, de da ná mi sa du.*	'Since I do not root there, then I may not participate.'
— *Bika na a bun pisi doti mi án feni de.*	'Because I did not find the good planting ground there.'
— *Mi a wakaman.*	'I am a traveler.'

Some *nongo* are fables or folktales locally called *mato*.

(17) [The leaders of the Maroon and Amerindian governments had unanimously decided not to sell part of their rainforest to Asian wood logging companies. The *gaaman* of the Pamaka is now telling his *lanti* that he told the other *gaaman* to be honest and determined][12]

— *Soo! Da tu biya be de,*	'Okay! There were two young men,
den be abi mma.	they had a mother.'
— *Ma den mma gaandi.*	'But their mother was old.'
— *Neen den taki, biya!*	'Then they said: well, friend,
I sa san u o du?	you know what we'll do?'
— *U mma e muliki,*	'Our mother is a strain,
u ná e man waka fa u wani,	we cannot do what we want to,
eeye, a mma gaandi, ala ten	yes, mother is old, all the time
u mu e solugu u mma	we have to take care of our mother,
namo, i sa san u o du?	you know what we'll do?'
— *Kon u tja a mma go kii.*	'Come, let's go and kill mother.'
— *U o tja en go na a gaan sabana*	'We'll bring her to the big savanna
ini anda, da u gi en faya boon.	and burn her there.'
— *Den taki, ai! I taki bun, biya,*	'They say: You spoke well friend,
ma i sa san u o du?	but you know what we'll do?'
— *U o luku wan dei moo.*	'We'll wait another day.'
— *Neen di a dei doo,*	'Then when the day came,'
— *Da wan fu den, a komoto,*	'Then one of them, he went to the
a go na a sabana pe den	savanna where they wanted to burn
o poti na a sabana, pe den o	the mother.'
poti den mma fu boon.	
— *Neen a diki wan olo,* [...]	'Then he dug a hole,'
— *Neen di a kaba diki a olo, ...*	'Then when he had finished
	digging the hole, ...'
— *Mooi, neen a taa wan kon.*	'Nicely! Then the other one came.
A taki, we baya, we,	He said, well my friend, well,
u taki wan sani	we talk about it,
ma i ná e piki!,	but you don't reply.
Neen a taki, we,	Then he said, well,
a yuu doo, a dei di i wani,	the time is now, the day you want
da i meki u go. Neen a taki,	let's go. Then he said,
a bun, da u o go!	okay, then let's go.'
— *Den poti dei, te a kaba,*	'They set the day and lift

[12] An anonymous reviewer notes that it is a very well known Anansi story. It is often told in other contexts such as wakes and related death rites.

	den diki den mma poti a baka.	their mother on their back.'
—	*Neen den diki poti,neen den go, moi silli, neen den poti den mma, neen den gi a sabana faya.*	'They lift her on their back and went nicely, they set down their mother and set the savanna on fire.'
—	*Da a wan fu den di diki a olo, a taagi en taki: "Mma, luku wan olo ya. Te a faya e waka e kon u, o gwe a wan se."*	'Then the one who dug the hole told her: "Mother, look there is a hole. When the fire comes towards you, go to one side."
—	*Neen den gi a sabana faya.*	'Then they set the savanna on fire.'
—	*Di den boon te a kaba moii(n), den djombo go piisii. Oh!! Biya, a mma, luku ya a dede, a dede.*	'When they had finished burning, they jumped happily, went to see. My friend, look, at the mother, she is dead.'
—	*Den de, den de te, dei e pasa. Wan fu den taki, oh biya, mi e si wan sama a ini i osu ini de, sama de ape?*	'After some time, one of them said: Oh, my friend, I see someone in your house, who is there?'
—	*A go luku, a taki, biya, na i mma de ape? A taki, eeye!*	'He went to look, he said, friend, is that your mother? He affirmed.
—	*A taki, aah! We, u be taki, u o kii u mma?*	He said: Didn't we say we'll kill her?'
—	*Ma mi án be fii fu kii en. Da na so a waka.*	'But I did not feel like killing her, that's all.'
—	*Neen a taki, iya. Neen mi taki, da na Anainsi anga Sensen, a den tu man de.*	'He affirmed. I said, it's like Anainsi and Sensen, these two men are like them.'
—	*Anansi anga Sensen.*	'Anainsi and Sensen.'
—	*Ma Anainsi koni, ma Sensen puu en mma.*	'Anainsi is intelligent, but Sensen helped his mother.'
—	*Neen mi taagi den taki, u án mu pee Anainsi anga Sensen.*	'I told them [the other *gaaman*] we should not play Anainsi and Sensen.'
—	*Te u taki u o du wan sani,*	'When we say we'll do something,'
—	*U e du fu leti, u e du fu leti.*	'We aim to do it right.'
—	*Ma a án mu kon fu Anainsi anga Sensen.*	'It should not turn into Anainsi and Sensen.'

2. 5. Conclusion

In this paper I discussed in some detail the social and linguistic properties of *kuutu* events among the Eastern Maroons of Suriname and Guyane. My discussion suggests that the *kuutu* is a well-structured social event.

Relatively fixed procedures determine the organization of a *kuutu,* and participation in this kind of event is based on social rank. Active participation is restricted to people who hold high social status, and high ranking dignitaries are granted speaking rights prior to low(er) ranking elders and titled persons.

Linguistic form is highly regulated as well. There is a relatively fixed procedure for requesting and granting turns, a fixed internal structure of turns, and a special lexicon (words, expressions, names/titles) associated with respectful speech. This structuring of social and linguistic practices in the conduct of a *kuutu* serves to save face, and to highlight the dignity and importance of the participants, and of the topics they discuss.

Social and linguistic practices also play an important role in the construction of local social identities (Irvine 2001). Participation privileges in a *kuutu* construct two broad, hierarchically ordered social groups that are indexed with different social attributes. One group consists of male titled members and elders. Since they regularly engage in formal events and in the social and linguistic practices that characterize them, these practices and their social meanings are mapped onto this group of people. In the EM ideology, titled persons and elders are consequently said to be powerful, dignified, respectful and verbally skilled.

The other group includes all the untitled young women and men who are generally not allowed to participate actively in prestigious and formal community events. Because of their non-participation untitled members are assumed to be sociopolitically inexperienced, undignified, disrespectful, and lacking in vital social and verbal skills.

This discussion suggests that a speech genre analysis that focuses on situated social events, i.e., events that are part of the community repertoire, is essential to a full understanding of the

sociolinguistic makeup of creole-speaking communities. A discourse-based analysis provides a better insight into the nature of the linguistic repertoire of creole speakers.

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