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Guest Column

Broadening creole studies: From Grammar towards Discourse\*

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## 1. Introduction

The goal of this series of columns is to shine a light on some topics that deserve more attention in research on creoles and related languages. The overarching aim is to focus on the synchronic status of creoles and their functions as communicative resources for their speakers. All too often we engage with them primarily from a structural and historical perspective. This focus is, of course, representative of a large part of the research interest in linguistics and in the case of creoles, it is vital for removing the social stigma typically associated with them. However, these topics have come to dominate research to such an extent that we have possibly lost sight of the fact that most of them are important or the only means of communication for their speakers. By privileging descriptions of their structure, the circumstances of their formation and quantification of variation between creole and lexifier options, we are also (contributing to) casting them as largely referential historical codes in need of defining rather than as languages in their own right. Greater attention to their communicative power and meaning making potential (Rickford 2019) that is the array of interpersonal meanings would help to adjust this image. Relevant questions include, but are not limited to: what is the makeup of their stylistic repertoire (Hymes 1974), how do their speakers exploit their linguistic properties and stylistic repertoire in different settings and events and how do their speakers negotiate stances, social categories, identities etc. Creoles are also not linguistically and socially static. As they are being integrated into new social domains such as e-media, education, interethnic communication in the case of some (Surinamese Maroons, Migge & Léglise 2013) and the home and family domain in other contexts (Solomon Islands, Jourdan & Johanne 2014), they are changing in various ways. These changes provide a host of insights into language change that historical data will mostly stay silent on. Last, but not least, as creole speakers' lives are changing, so does their engagement with these languages. Working in partnership with interested non-linguist speakers (rather than as 'native informants' for linguistic projects) and third parties (e.g. governmental and non-governmental agencies and organizations) offers the possibility to discover new research themes, issues and insights apart from further enhancing the local relevance of our research.

My columns will discuss the above-mentioned themes. This first column focuses on the area of socio-pragmatics, exploring local conditions of language use and how interactional meanings related to face-management are expressed. Following on from the papers in Mühleisen & Migge (eds., 2005), this column takes a closer look at discourse elements in creole discourses.

Although there is a long tradition of research on discourse elements such as *like*, *well*, *you know*, *I mean* (e.g. Schiffrin 1987; Brinton 1996; Aijemer 2002, 2012; D'Arcey 2007) and a budding research network ([www.dipvac.org](http://www.dipvac.org)), there is little discussion of the topic in the

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literature on creole languages. For example, Furukawa (2010) investigates the use of the Japanese-derived discourse marker *daswai* in Hawai'i Creole, McWhorter (2009) discusses, among other things, the origins of *nɔ* in Saamaka and Winkler (2008) examines the relative frequency distribution of four classes of native Limonese and Spanish-derived discourse elements – affirmations, pause fillers and hedges, tag questions and emphatic markers – and their broad functions in the speech of male and female speakers of Limon Creole. She shows that their use is strongly gendered and linked to education levels. Women use more of these elements overall and more Spanish-derived forms than men. They are also linked to specific activities for women, i.e. “to encourage the participation of others, to hedge an assertion and to signal a shared belief.” (p. 69). Men employ them mostly in interactions with women and for affective reasons. Though few in number, these studies show that discourse elements, and pragmatic markers in particular, can be studied from a variety of perspectives despite their peripheral linguistic status. They impact the interpretation or contribute to the interpersonal functions of utterances in important ways and provide important insights into communicative norms and social categories in the community. The aim of this column is to discuss discourse elements, focusing on those that have come to be called pragmatic markers, in the Eastern Maroon Creoles (EMC). I will present an overview of such items, discuss the functions of some of them and look at how they function in some discourses.

The data mostly come from two (Pamaka and Ndyuka) of the three mutually intelligible EMC varieties – Aluku, Ndyuka and Pamaka – as spoken in Suriname and in French Guiana. These languages and the communities they are linked to initially developed in relative isolation from and opposition to colonial societies (van Stripriaan 2015). Traditionally, they functioned as self-contained societies. They are hierarchically structured based on gender and age and have an inheritance-based leadership structure. The EMC varieties were traditionally the main community language and other languages, such as the related creole Sranan Tongo or European languages (Dutch and French) had a peripheral status at best. As discussed in Migge (2007) and Migge & Léglise (2011, 2013) different subgroups within the community are ideologically associated with distinctive linguistic styles such as elders with respect speech (*lesipeki taki*), young men with traveller's language (*wakaman taki*) and women with everyday talk, based on their lifestyles. Styles are, of course also linked to settings and types of social contexts. They are differentiated pragmatically in relation to notions such as (negative and positive) linguistic politeness (deferential vs assertive or rude) and reputation and respect (Abrahams 1983) which are also related to the notion of social distance (hierarchical vs solidarity). While the Maroon societies, their languages and patterns of language use have undergone diversification especially since the 1980s, these broad notions still play an important role and speakers also orient to them in their interactions. One of the aims of this paper is to explore how pragmatic markers play a vital role in constituting these social notions in interactions.

The data for the study comes from recorded interactions that I have made among members of the Pamaka and Ndyuka communities since 1994. As discussed in Migge (1998) the recordings are situated natural interactions. They were recorded in the traditional villages and urban contexts, involving interlocutors from different age ranges, genders, educational and residence backgrounds, who thus project different types of identities. Some of the data also come from informal discussions and elicitation-type work as part of an on-going dictionary project and from e-media discussions. The findings of the study reveal that the EMC has a number of pragmatic marking elements derived from different lexical categories. They encode a number of related meanings and play an important role in contexts involving face-threat where they contribute to both initiating, intensifying and mitigating face-threat.

The next section presents a discussion of what discourse elements are and how their meaning emerges. Section 3 presents an overview of such elements in the EMC, while

section 4 explores the meanings of some of them in more detail and section 5 examines their usage in situated discourse.

## 2. Discourse elements

Research on discourse elements probably started with Robin Lakoff's (1973) work on sentence initial *why* and *well*. Since that time, research has found that they belong to or derive from different lexical classes such as nouns, verbs, adverbs, phrasal units and may be subject to phonological reduction. They occupy a peripheral place in the sentence, being usually found at the beginning or end of a sentence or clause, and are not obligatory or essential from a purely structural perspective. They are also multifunctional and frequent. Moreover, they generally have little or no propositional meaning and their removal from an utterance does not render it syntactically ill-formed; in those respects and the fact that they are more typical of oral discourses and perform discourse based meanings, they share similarities with interjections (Norrick 2009). According to Schiffrin (1987), they function as contextualizing cues, guiding the interpretation of an utterance.

Although the literature has used various terms interchangeably to refer to them – pragmatic marker (Brinton 1996), pragmatic particle (Foolen 1996), discourse marker (Schiffrin 1987), discourse particles (Aijmer 2002, 2013) – there is consensus that two broad types can be distinguished: discourse markers and pragmatic markers. Discourse markers have a procedural meaning providing insights about how an utterance relates to the textual sequence or communicative context and establish linkages between utterances or discourse segments. In one of its uses *now*, for instance, does not mark current time but a pivotal shift in the participation framework or footing of an utterance (1). It changes the mode in which the speaker relates to the information of the utterances (Schiffrin 1987: 240) and signals a (momentary) change in conversational activity (Clancy & Vaughan 2012: 228), marking a shift from a declarative utterance to an enquiry about reception and understanding by the hearer.

1. *They are using socialism t'fight capitalism. Now can you understand that?* (Schiffrin 1987:240)

Apart from *now*, elements such as *but*, *well*, *anyway* in English may also function as discourse markers.

Pragmatic markers operate on the interpersonal level. They encode interlocutors' stances which can be defined as how interlocutors relate to their talk such as "how certain they are about their assertions" and "a person's expression of their relationship to their interlocutors" (Kiesling 2009: 172), for example whether they take a friendly, protective or domineering approach to them. Pragmatic markers thus encode notions of linguistic politeness and power. In Brown & Levinson (1987) framework, linguistic politeness is defined as a set of strategies for realizing interactional goals whose application depends on interlocutors' face wants, that is interlocutors' needs relating to the public self-image that they want to project. Positive face wants refer to the need for approval of a consistent self-image and positive politeness strategies (e.g. claiming common ground, directness) are applied if interlocutors want to project a non-hierarchical, solidarity-like relationship. Negative face wants refer to the need for freedom of action and from imposition; negative politeness strategies (e.g. status markers, apologies, explanations) are essentially deference strategies that acknowledge existing hierarchies and status differences.

Through processes of indexicality (Ochs 1992; Silverstein 2003) stances including linguistic politeness mediate and are vital for constituting and negotiating local social categories such as gender, class etc, interlocutors' relative status and the power relationships

at play in interactions. To do this, people systematically exploit variation in language such as for instance variation between pragmatic markers or absence or presence thereof to convey referentially identical but socially differentiated meanings. Ochs (1992), following Silverstein (2003) argues that the association between linguistic elements and social categories such as ‘the lad’ is mediated and “constituted through a web of socially organized pragmatic meanings.” (488). It “entails tacit understanding of (1) how particular linguistic forms can be used to perform particular pragmatic work (such as conveying stance and social action) and (2) norms, preferences, and expectations regarding the distribution of this work *vis-à-vis* particular social identities of speakers, referents, and addressees.” (488). When particular linguistic forms are regularly employed to index certain meanings, stances, activities etc. which in turn are associated with specific social categories, identities etc., these language-meaning-category/identity relationships may become iconized (Irvine & Gal 2000) or enregistered (Agha 2005), that is conventionalized. In example (2), for instance, clause final *now* does not have a referential meaning, e.g. current time, but functions as a marker of affect management, hedging the threat to Speaker 2’s positive face want by Speaker 3 when they negatively comment on their proposed action. By doing so, they create a stance of friendly assertiveness.

2. <Speaker 1> No I'd never do that.  
 <Speaker 2> I'll go.  
 <Speaker 1> Sarah I wouldn't do it.  
 <Speaker 2> I always wanted to do that.  
 <Speaker 3> It’s lunacy now.  
 <Speaker 1> I wouldn't do it. (Clancy & Vaughan 2012: 229)

The remainder of the discussion will focus on pragmatic markers in the Eastern Maroon Creoles.

### 3. Pragmatic markers in the Eastern Maroon Creoles: an overview

Given their overlap with lexical items and other related categories, such as interjections, one of the challenges of this investigation is to identify pragmatic markers in the EMC. Based on a first analysis of recordings and some discussions with speakers, the four clause-final items in Table 1 closely correspond to definitions of pragmatic markers in the literature although they are not typically described as such. For instance, the SIL dictionary described *baa* rather generically as a “clause-final tag” with a usage of “polite marker at end of request or response” and *ye* as a “clitic for “okay?”, although their meanings are, in fact, broader.<sup>1</sup> They are discussed in more detail in Section 4.

Table 1: Pragmatic markers derived from emphatic elements

Marker	Function	Example
<i>baa</i>	mitigation (+ neg. polite)	<i>Mi an sabi en baa.</i> 'Sorry, I do not know her.'
<i>oo</i>	challenge (- neg. polite)	<i>Mi á lobi i libi oo.</i> 'Listen, I don't like your carry on.'
<i>ye</i>	assertion (+pos. polite)	<i>I mu kon ye.</i> 'You should come!'

<sup>1</sup> SIL Aukan-English-Aukan dictionary: <http://www.suriname-languages.sil.org/Aukan/English/AukanEngDictIndex.html>

<i>no</i>	request for action, confirmation etc. (- polite)	<i>Kon no, u mu gwe.</i> 'Come on now, we must leave.'
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The items in Table 2 are similar in function to the ones in Table 1 and are found in the same discourses. However, they differ from them in that they can also stand alone as one-word utterances or exclamations, and are clearly not part of the same intonation phrase as the main utterance; the range of meanings of these items derived from nouns and other lexical categories is also more restricted than those of the items in Table 1. Norrick (2009) following Ameka (1992) suggests that such items, like *boy*, *shit*, *gosh*, *anyways*, *yep*, *told ya so*, *fuck*, *goddammit* in English, are secondary interjections as they “instantiate a (peripheral) type of speech act or utterance type.” which “signal[s] both surprise and either positive or negative emotional involvement.” (Norrick 2009: 867). According to Ameka (1992) they may give insights into speaker’s mental state from an emotive or cognitive level, “focus on the interaction and require some response from the interlocutor” or perform a phatic function (Norrick 2009: 869). Their pragmatic or discursive meanings are intimately linked to their turn or utterance-initial position which plays a pivotal role in linking turns in interactions (Norrick 2009: 870). The only item in Table 2 that does not entirely fit the bill is *pay* which typically appears utterance-finally while the others mostly, but not exclusively, appear utterance-initially. Further investigation is needed.

Table 2: Pragmatic markers derived from nominal elements

Marker	Approximate Function	Example
<i>baya</i> < ‘friend’	solidarity (+ neg. polite)	<i>Baya, i denki a sipowtu sani?</i> 'Agreed, did you think it’s a joking matter?'
<i>boy</i> < ‘boy’	challenge (- polite)	<i>Boy, kaba anga den libi de.</i> 'I warn you, stop with this.'
<i>pay</i> < ‘(male) in law’	warning (- neg. polite)	<i>Mi an si en, pay.</i> 'I haven’t seen that, mark my words.'
<i>man</i> < ‘man’	request for action (- polite)	<i>Man, komoto ya, i e muliki sama.</i> 'For god’s sake, leave, you are getting on people’s nerves.'

Four of the phrasal elements in Table 3 are referentially agreement markers similar to English *you know*. However, they encode different interpersonal relationships. While the first two suggest equal status among interlocutors and do not refer to mental capacities, the third one is indicative of a hierarchical relationship whereby the speaker may be seen to question the mental ability of the interlocutor which is taken to be offensive especially in + status type interactions. The fourth phrasal marker is more typical of non-status-oriented interactions; the latter two phrasal markers are locally also strongly linked to Sranan Tongo. *Fa (mi/u) de ya* is similar to *ye* in Table 1 but appears to be less overtly assertive or bold while *mi á/an mu koli i/u* resembles *oo*. Space does not permit a closer investigation of these forms here.

Table 3: Phrasal pragmatic markers

Marker	Approximate Function	Example
<i>i/u yee (en)?</i> 'you/we hear (i)?'	request for agreement (+ neg. polite)	<i>Ma na a boto di e waka, i yee?</i> 'But it’s the boat that was fast, you see.'
<i>i/u si (en)?</i> 'you/we see (it)?'	request for agreement (+ neg. polite)	<i>Efu mi gi wan man, mi mu gi wan man, i si?</i>

		‘If I give one person, I have to give everyone, you see.’
<i>i/u fus(u)tan?</i> ‘you/we understand’	request for agreement (- neg. polite)	[...] <i>u du wan sani kaba, i fustan?</i> ‘We did something already, you understand?’
<i>i (á/an) sabi (tok)</i> ‘you know (right)’	request for agreement (+ pos. polite)	<i>U an miti mofu fu en, I sabi tok.</i> ‘We did not agree it, you know.’
<i>fa (mi/u) de ya</i> ‘speaking for me/us’ lit: how I/we are here	assertion of certainty (+ neg. polite)	<i>We mi, fa mi de ya, mi án boli mun deesi diingi wanten.</i> ‘Well, I confirm, I did not cook and drink medicine [to have children].’
<i>mi á/an mu koli i/u</i> ‘I should not lie to you.’	warning (- neg. polite)	<i>A mu doo ya baka libilibi, mi á mu koli i.</i> ‘Listen, he has to come back alive (before you’re off the hook).’

Finally, Table 4 lists miscellaneous markers that also perform pragmatic meanings. *Fosi* has a variety of lexical meanings such as ‘first’ pre-nominally or functions as a temporal complementizer, however in utterance-final position it appears to take on a hedging or mitigation function possibly derived from the notion of ‘for now’. *Tuu(tuu)* ‘true, truth’ in clause-final position expresses agreement with the proposition emphasising a negatively polite relationship with the interlocutor, similar to some meanings of *baa*. *We*, similar to claus-initial *well* in English, announces a contrast or confirms the existence of an issue. *Tok*, derived from the Dutch tag *toch*, elicits agreement. Though also used in EMC discourses, it is locally associated with Sranan Tongo and therefore carries associations of positive polite and direct behaviour most typically associated with non-status-oriented interactions. It shares meanings with *no*.

Table 4: Pragmatic markers derived adverbial forms

Marker	Approximate Function	Example
<i>fosi</i> < ‘first’	mitigation	<i>Mi o tapu ya fosi.</i> ‘I’ll stop, please.’
<i>tuu</i> < ‘true’	agreement (+ polite)	<i>A faawe tuu.</i> ‘It’s quite far, I agree.’
<i>we</i> < ‘well’	contrast	<i>We den e taki en na mofu, ma u á sabi senten efu a o kon moo.</i> ‘Well they say it, but we have not known since whether he’ll come after all.’
<i>tok</i> < tag <i>toch</i> (Dutch)	elicitation of agreement	<i>Da i mu kisi en puu tok.</i> ‘You should grap it and pull it out!’

This overview – most likely non-exhaustive due to the open-endedness of this class of items – suggests that the EMC has a fairly rich range of different pragmatic marking elements. Some of them are better classified as interjections and the utterance-final position seems preferred. Referentially, they express meanings intimately part of the management of interactions, such as agreement, warning, request. Pragmatically, they encode notions of linguistic politeness and social status. In Section 4 I examine the functions of the items in Table 1 in more detail and consider how they are used to index social relationships and social identities.

#### 4. The functions of pragmatic markers

The functions of items in Table 1 have scope over the utterance in which they appear. While *baa* adds face-saving overtones, the other three contribute different degrees of potentially face-threatening overtones. Using them, interlocutors create different local social personae or images and relationships.

##### 4. 1. *baa*

One of *baa*'s primary functions is to diminish or hedge a threat to the interlocutor's or speaker's negative face. For instance, in (3) the speaker is talking directly about a taboo topic (sex) in front of her elders. *Baa* functions to apologize for the likely offense and to indicate that no offense is intended. In (4) the person has to refuse a request which threatens the interlocutor's face – rejection – and their own – egoistical person – both of which require mitigation. In (5) *baa* mitigates the indignation about the assumption that they might eat dogs. Finally, in (6) the speaker reduces the certainty of the statement and apologizes for repeating hear-say and in (7) they mitigate a request.

3. *A teki en baa!*  
'**Sorry, but** she had relations with him!'
4. *Efu mi be abi, mi be o gi i baa.*  
'**I'm sorry, but** if I had it [money requested], I'd give it to you.'
5. *Mi ná e nyan dagu baa.*  
'**Sorry, but** I don't eat dogs.'
6. *Mi yee a o tya K go a Holland baa.*  
'**I seem** to have heard that she'll bring K to the Netherlands.'
7. *Tya en go wasi wanten baa, gaantangi.*  
'**Please** take it [pitcher] to wash when you go [to do the dishes], thank you.'

It can also be used in a cocky manner (8) such as when one co-wife asserts knowing something that she is not pleased about to another but does not want to cause open dispute (pc M. Moese).

8. *A o tyay i go a Faansi baa.*  
'**I see** he's [common husband] taking you to France.'

A second important function of *baa* is to enhance empathy. In (9) the speaker is looking at a child's body and commenting on the many insect bites, suggesting that they are sorry for them.

9. *Na sani e nyan i so baa, pikin.*  
'It's insects [lit. thing] that are biting you so badly, **poor you.**'

*Baa* also varies intonationally. To enhance empathy, apology etc., the vowel is lengthened. A short and somewhat rising intonation appears to have more assertive or even cheeky overtones (e.g. 3).

In sum, *baa* is pragmatically multifunctional and creates a deferential and respectful identity and stance.

#### 4. 2. *oo*

Unlike *baa*, *oo* has strong overtones of assertion. Asserting one's views or assessment (read as criticism) with urgency is not seen as (negatively) polite – freedom from imposition – because it imposes the speaker's views on their interlocutor. It creates a hierarchy whereby the speaker asserts greater knowledge or higher moral status in relation to the interlocutor which is only acceptable in some contexts, e.g. parent-child or age-mate contexts. Based on the recordings, the main function of *oo* is to draw attention to and alert someone to a problem. In (10) the speaker states that another person's assumptions about her are wrong as the matter is still live for her and warns that there will be continued action (against her) despite the current relative calm. In (11) *oo* alerts the interlocutor about possible actions from others. Of course, there is possibly also a claim here that this couple's lifestyle is out of the norm. Finally, in (12), a mother is calling her child. *oo* does not simply enhance the call, but also adds a complaint – M. should know to do that without a reminder, i.e. a reproach for negligence. In all these instances, the speaker claims higher status because they direct people (warn, criticize) and thus also claim greater knowledge or understanding of morals than the interlocutor.

10. *A e si enke a kaba oo.*

'She thinks it is over **mark my words!**

11. *Sama an lobi fa i anga en e libi oo.* 'People do not like how you two live together **watch out!**

12. *M. oo, kon wasi den beenki.* 'M. **for god's sake!** come and do the dishes!'

*Oo* also emphasizes a proposition, but at the same time suggests that no further discussion is needed (13-14); it is usually part of an answer to a question where a positive reply is the preferred answer. This needs further investigation.

13. A: *I nyan wan switi fakansi?* 'Did you have a good break?'

B: *Eyee oo.* 'Yes, I did **indeed!**'

14. *A koosi ya moyn oo.* 'This piece of clothing is very nice **indeed!**'

Finally, there is also *oo*'s use in traditional/respectful greeting sequences (15). It probably fits with the warning interpretation, i.e. 'be thankful and use it wisely'.

15. A: *A booko u baka oo.* 'It [the day] has opened up again for us, **have you noticed.**'

B: *Iya, a booko u baka ye.* 'Yes, **I agree**, it has opened up for us again.'

A: *Iya.* 'Yes'

#### 4. 3. *ye*

*Ye* resembles *oo* in that it also marks assertion. However, unlike *oo*, *ye* does not have an overtone of warning or challenge. It more properly functions as a marker of emphatic agreement, expressing solidarity with interlocutors. For instance, (16) comes from a conversation between several women who had considered all the wrong-doings of another person. One of the women summarizes the conversation with (16). This agreement usage is

also found in traditional/respectful greeting sequences where *ye* is often also lengthened to enhance politeness (15).

16. *A mati ya, a du fulu ye.*  
'This person [lit. friend], she did a lot of [bad] things **agreed.**'

In some cases, the sense of certainty appears very relevant (17-19) where the speaker asserts the truthfulness of the statement. This latter usage typically appears among status equals who have a close relationship where bold on record assertive and directive talk are permissible. In status sensitive contexts it could otherwise be seen to create stance of superiority or authority.

17. *Efu en man an be de ape, a be o naki en ye.*  
'If her husband had not been there, she would have hit her **for sure.**'
18. *Mi an bii, nefi dati an de ye.*  
'I do not believe [it], that kind of knife does **definitely** not exist.'
19. *Mi e kon ye.*  
'I'll be (right) back!'

#### 4. 4. *no*

Most broadly, *no* encodes a sense of interrogation. However, it rarely, if ever, functions as a simple question marker as in Saamaka (McWhorter 2009). The closest example might be (20). However, even in (20) there is a sense that the person is not forthcoming and needs to be encouraged.

20. *Da i no? San i du tide?*  
'And as for yourself **now?** What did you do today?'

One of its functions is that of a tag question that requests confirmation or acknowledgement (21).

21. *A pikin di a be abi, na en anga disani, neen en be dede no?*  
'The child that he had, her and that guy, he died, **right?**'

In many other instances in the data it conveyed a sense of challenge. In (22) people discuss what kinds of birds a certain animal eats; when one person asks "do they eat chicken?", they receive the response in (22). This clearly challenges the interlocutor and the speaker projects a stance of assertiveness or superiority by claiming greater knowledge.

22. *Ooh, foo de di den ná e nyan? A ná foo no? Foo tan foo!*  
'Oh, are there birds that they do not eat? **Isn't it** [chicken] a bird !? Bird is bird.'

But *no* also functions as a direct request for action (23) which may have overtones of ordering and possibly an insinuation that negligence is involved (i.e. they should have done it without a reminder).

23. *Biya, gi den wan bangi de gi mi no.*  
'Young man, give them a chair [for me], **come on.**'

There are also instances where it appears to add a sense of unveiled request with an overtone of obligation (24).<sup>2</sup> In this case, the vowel is lengthened.

24. *Kon yeepi mi anga a osu no.*  
'Come one now, help me with [repairing] the house.'

A sense of impatience and ordering is present in a number of instances (25).

25. *Waka go no!*  
'Come on, let's move on!'

In sum, *no* is used to create a pushy or assertive and demanding persona.

## 5. The uses of pragmatic markers in action

In this section I examine selected interactions to get a better understanding of the usage and distribution of pragmatic markers. Unsurprisingly, their usage is common in exchanges involving face threat. They are involved in the opening of such exchanges (e.g. *no* in line 12 of Extract 1) and their resolution (e.g. *baa* and *tuu*, lines 13, 15, 19). Extract (1) comes from an informal but status sensitive interaction in a Ndyuka village in the late 1990s. F, a 30-year-old local who was at the time living in Paramaribo, is visiting U (*gi toli* 'chat'), a female elder. At one point, U brings up the topic of how difficult it is to make a living (*baafun angii*) to ask F in a roundabout manner to support her/give her something (line 1). In 2 F invites U to elaborate and acknowledge her statement with a slightly cocky overtone when using the tag *no* – it functions to make light of a dreaded issue. However, he quickly moves to offer an apology for not bringing anything for her from town by pointing to a constraint beyond his control (line 4). The apology is enhanced by *baa* which contributes a deferential overtone here. U politely acknowledges F's issue (line 5). F and U then re-balance their relationship by collaboratively elaborating on a 'common enemy', the inhuman western (*bakaa*) approach to life (line 6ff). However, U then moves to reproach F by praising someone else from town for supporting her despite these constraints and challenges F to acknowledge this with the tag *no* (line 12). F agrees apologetically by using *baa* (line 13) and U then continues the reproach in a relatively unveiled manner telling him that he should know to help elders (line 14) to which F replies with a formal agreement phrase (*na so*) and with negatively polite emphasis by using *tuu* to display deference (line 15). In lines (16 and 18) U enhances the reproach further by telling him to remember it for next time to which F agrees with more deferential agreement using *baa* (line 19). In summary, F strategically employs pragmatic markers to apologize for his wrong doing to U. By doing so, he constructs himself as having humility and respecting the social order and U: a proper Ndyuka man of his generation.

Extract (1)

- 1 U: *Eee goontapu. Pikin baala, da a sani di den e kay wan baafu angii.*  
'No, what has the world come to. My little brother, you know about suffering [meat hunger].'  
2 F: *Oh, a ogii no?*  
'Oh, it's difficult, isn't it?'  
3 U: (laughter)  
4 F: *Dati wani taki, fa mi kon ya, mi á kisi moni seefi, fu mi be bay wantu sani tyay baa.*

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<sup>2</sup> In contrast, when using *baa*, this would sound like deferential begging and a request for empathy.

- ‘That means before coming, I didn’t get paid so that I could bring a few things with me, **sorry.**’
- 5 U: *Eeye, i á kisi tuu.*  
‘Yes, you did not get [paid] **agreed/I understand.**’
- 6 F: *Nono, lanti á pay, a mun á be tapu bunbun etc.*  
‘No the state has not paid as the month is not yet fully over.’
- 7 U: *Dati wani taki, a bakaa anda, a te i go anda, da solanga a manti á tapu.*  
‘That means, with the authorities over there, as long as the month is not over.’
- 8 F: *A mun á tapu, i á poy fende a moni.*  
‘The month isn’t finished, you cannot find money.’
- [...]
- 9 F: *I e pinapina tokutoku.*  
‘You are making all kinds of efforts [to stretch the money].’
- 10 U: *Fu angii á kii yu.*  
‘So that you are not hungry.’
- 11 F: *Iya* ‘Yes’
- [...]
- 12 U: *Ne ede meke, a bigi gi mi, di a sama sende a sani gi u [...] Ne a bigi gi mi, a bigi no?*  
‘For that reason, I’m grateful when the person sent me the thing, I’m grateful, it’s a great deed, **right?**’
- 13 F: *Iya baa, mma.*  
‘Yes, **very kind**, elder.’
- 14 U: *A di na mi ná o go e waka, a i e taki en.*  
‘Since I won’t be moving around, you know it better.’
- 15 F: *Na so tuu.*  
‘That’s it, **agreed.**’
- 16 U: *Da a e de a i ati.*  
‘So you remember it.’
- 17 F: *Iya!* ‘Yes.’
- 18 U: *Bika goontapu á bun moo.*  
‘Because the world isn’t a good place anymore.’
- 19 F: *Na so tuu.*  
‘That’s it, **agreed.**’

Pragmatic markers also play a role in intensifying a topic or a description. In Extract (2) three women are criticising the behaviour of another woman Z. To start of the discussion, S reminds them about Z’s misdeeds, eliciting acknowledgement through use of *tok* (line 1). They then add details about the wider situation (lines 2-4) until A brings it back to Z (line 5) when S challenges her about not remembering the details using *no* (line 6). When they are confirmed (lines 7-8), A enhances her description of Z by presenting an exaggerated depiction further enhanced by a warning (*oo*) and parallelism (line 9) and boosts it further in line (11) by also adding *pay*. A projects an assertive and judgemental persona.

#### Extract (2)

- 1 S: *A be teki di sani man tok. U be yee taki a teki M man, B. A teki B te anga M ná e go.*  
‘She had relations with that woman’s husband, **remember**. We heard that she had relations with M’s husband B. She had relations with B making B and M split up.’
- 2 D: *Ya, i anga, i anga S, i anga en libi bun moo Mk?*  
‘Yes, you and S, you [S] and her had a better relationship than [she and] Mk.’
- 3 S: *Noyti, M taki, noyti en futu e kisi en osu. Fa a e dongo ya, fa a be e Mk, Mk, Mk! A*

- 4 *taki NOYTI en futu e kisi en osu moo.*  
 ‘Never, M said, she won’t be coming to her house. As she was going downriver, she was constantly talking about Mk. She [M] said, she won’t let her come to her house anymore.’
- 5 A: *Anga B be de ete?*  
 ‘She was still with B?’
- 6 S: *He? Weeno, a ne en osu no!*  
 ‘What? Of course, it took place in her house, **don’t you remember!**’
- 7 A: *Ho! ‘What!’*
- 8 S: *Ne en osu a teki B.*  
 ‘In her [M] house she had relations with B.’
- 9 A: *Mi takii, a ná a soo ya wawan oo. Ala liba, ala goontapu. Ala a goontapu nownow ya.*  
 ‘I said, **to be sure** it did not just happen in this village [lit. River bank]. [Along] the whole river, the whole world, [it happens] all over the world now.’
- 10 D: (unclear)
- 11 A: *Ala konde pay.*  
 ‘In all places, **mark my words.**’
- 12 D: *Noyti!*  
 ‘That cannot be! [lit.: Never]’
- 13 S: *A teki fa den kali en man tu.*  
 ‘She had relations with how do they call her husband too.’

Extract (3) is similar to Extract (2) in that it deals with the intensification of an issue. However, (3) is a context of policing where people are attempting to induce a behavioural change in someone through threatening. Extract (3) comes from an afternoon chat between several women (S, D). As dusk sets in, they follow the activities of the children who had been instructed to do housekeeping tasks. D draws attention to A’s, a young girl, negligence by asking her to explain why she left the pestle in the wrong place (line 1). When A does not reply, D calls on her again (line 3) and S reiterates the question and states the issue directly with an emphatic warning using *oo*, namely that A did not do as told (line 4). D then chimes in restating what S had said again with an emphatic warning employing *oo* too and her older sister C also follows it up with an emphatic warning (*oo*) about punishment for negligence. D, S and C project themselves as being in charge by using directive language and threats or warnings.

Extract (3)

- 1 D: *A, na te ya i poti a apodon tiki?*  
 ‘A all the way here you put the acai pestle?’
- 2 S: *hm?*
- 3 D: *A!*
- 4 S: *A, sama go teki en? I an tya en go oo.*  
 ‘A, who went to get it? **Listen**, you did not bring it [for washing].’
- 5 D: *Luku pe te a poti en, a an wasi en oo.*  
 ‘Look where she poti it! **See** she did not wash it.’
- 6 C: *A mama o fon i oo.*  
 ‘Mother will beat you up, **you’ll see.**’

## 6. Conclusion

This column investigated the system of pragmatic marking elements and their pragmatic or interactional meanings. It showed that the EMC, like all languages, has a number of such elements and that they are used to encode related meanings relevant to face management. Since the possibility of face threat is inherent in all interactions, its mitigation or aggravation is a central aspect of all types of interactions. The functions of pragmatic markers are multiple and not always easy to define or translate as they interact with those of the proposition, the context of the interaction, including the interactional norms, goals and relationships between interlocutors among other things, and their intonational properties. Pragmatic markers in the EMC are differentiated based on local status categories in that by virtue of their functions, they are linked to particular discourses, participants and activities. However, they are not just mere markers of interactional types because they are, of course, also used outside of them and contribute different illocutionary forces which may alter their functions in various ways, as is the case with all contextualization cues. In fact, although they consist of items from different lexical categories, they appear to constitute a set of oppositions or a force field of options which interlocutors can draw on to skillfully (or less so) manage their interactions. Further investigation of their use within one creole language or across different ones opens up a wealth of insights into communicative strategies and the nature of social categories in creole societies. They also constitute an interesting set of elements for historical investigation.

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