

Done in Vincentian creole: between pragmatic and prosodic phenomena

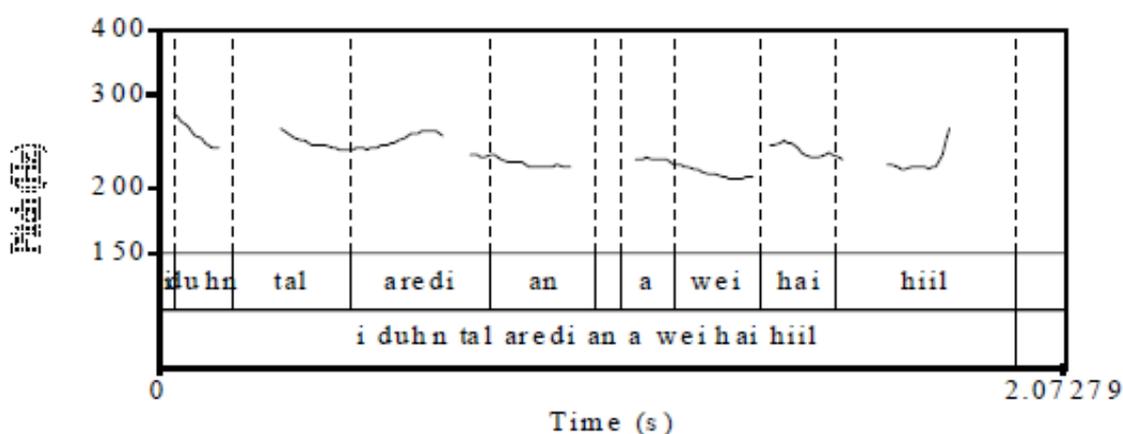
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English-based creoles and pidgins incorporate lexical items that stem from varieties of British English, albeit in new environments. This paper focuses on the incorporation of the English participle *done* in Vincentian creole. From a pragmatic point of view, creole *done* is generally accounted for as a completive (Winford 1993: 48) or terminative aspect marker (Mufwene 1984: 209), labels that entail past time reference and emphasize only one part of a dynamic event or process, *i.e.* its termination (Comrie 1976: 12). Accounting for *done* solely in terms of aspectual closure prevents us from grasping the pragmatic message intended with description predicates, *i.e.* state verbs and adjectival predicates as in example (1), where *done* indicates “a complete change of state, specifically inception rather than cessation” (Chung & Timberlake 1985: 218). Furthermore, *done* may signal, ingression, *i.e.* entry into a state.

(1) *I duhn tal aredi an a wei hai hiil.*

'She is already so tall, and yet she is wearing high heels.'

We show that the pragmatic message intended by *done* utterances is highly conditioned by the prosodic features associated with its articulation. These prosodic features are in turn closely related to the types of predicate that are modified by *done*. Our measurements of acoustic features: pitch, intensity and length reveal significant differences with respect to F_0 and pitch contours depending on whether *done* modifies non stative predicates or whether it is associated with description predicates. The pitch movement observed during the articulation of *done* with adjectival predicates is pervasively complex, *i.e.* displaying any marked combination of rising/falling contours.



The rising/falling combination does not signal any information about the completion of the situation conveyed by the predicate. A contrario, both simplex and complex pitch contours tend to accompany the articulation of *done* with non stative verbs. However, if the pitch contour is simplex, *i.e.* not exhibiting any significant change in pitch levels during the articulation of the morpheme, a bona fide completive aspect reading is in order. Thus, with non stative predicates, the complex pitch pattern is typically associated with some attitudinal or pragmatic meaning to be communicated by the overall message.

References:

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