

Completive markers in Caribbean creoles. Handout Winford

## 1. Introduction

The use of completive markers has been documented for a wide variety of creoles of different lexical affiliation throughout the world.

In all cases, these markers derive from a verb meaning “finish”, for example, *done* in Caribbean English creoles (CECs); *kaba* (< Port *acabar* “finish”) in the Surinamese creoles, Papiamentu, etc.; and *fin(i)* (< Fr *finir*) in French-lexicon creoles.

- (1) SN a. Te mi mama komoto a gron kon, dan a nyan kaba. (34A: 5)  
when my mother come LOC ground come, then the food finish  
'By the time my mother came back from the garden, the food was finished'

It is generally accepted that the aspectual use of the verbs meaning “finish” emerged via processes of contact-induced grammaticalization in many cases, but in others primarily due to internal processes

Grammaticalization of *done* (Bickerton 1975)

b. 'S/he finished eating it'



'When a mother has children already, the children must eat.'

- c. Oh ma yu musu du wan sport yere want yu si fa yu fini fini kba (16A: 16)  
oh but you must do one sport hear because you see how you fine fine already  
'Oh, but you must practice a sport right, because you see how you're skinny  
already.'

### **The status of        and**

*Done* and *kaba* have both been described variously as markers of “completive” (Winford 1993, 2000), “terminative” (Mufwene 1984:209) “resultative perfect” (Stolz 1987) or a subtype of PERFECT (Winford 2000).

Most scholars seem to agree that the meaning conveyed by the markers is similar to that of English *already*.

### **versus the Perfect.**

The differing views of the meaning of *already* reflect the various positions taken on the meaning of *done* and *kaba*.

Given such disagreement, it is worth asking whether *done* and *kaba* are indeed the equivalent of *already*, or closer in meaning to the Perfect.

van der Klok & Matthewson (2015) pose precisely the same question for the Javanese marker *wis*, which has been described variously as a perfective or past tense marker, a perfect aspect marker, and a marker denoting *already*” (2015: 173).

As they note, “English

The following diagnostics seem to best establish that *done* and *kaba* differ from the English Perfect in the following respects, suggesting that they behave more like *already*:

1. The completive markers both involve duality.
2. They have an earliness implication in some contexts
3. They are compatible with adverbials referring to a past time interval.
4. They don't allow an Extended Now interpretation (They lack lifetime effects).
5. The other diagnostic (inchoative interpretation with stative predicates) also seems to apply to the Completive markers.

### **The semantics of**

The semantics and communicative functions of English *already* have been described in detail by L. Michaelis (1992, 1996).

She argues that the adverb “not only encodes the existence of a given state at the reference time [the Already State or AS – DW], but also presupposes that the inception of the state is anterior to an interval of a special type ..... the Reference Interval (RI)” (1996:485).

In addition, the RI includes a state of the same situation type as the AS, which she refers to as the AS!.

The RI itself “can assume different identities in different contexts” (p. 479), leading to different interpretations of *already* that are “derived from the interpretive instructions provided by the linguistic and extralinguistic context” (ibid.).

This approach allows Michaelis to distinguish various communicative functions of *already*.

#### **1. Priority to process** (p. 488)

(e.g. *Why would you need a permanent? You already have curly hair*)

(e.g. *He was already pretty chubby as a teenager, and now I'm afraid he's tending toward obesity*)

5. **A completive function**, indicating completion of one stage in a sequence of development. (Eg. *He's already gone for the day. Can I take a message?*)

6. **A function similar to that of** \_\_\_\_\_, marking completion of an event prior to the reference time.

(e.g. *Those muppets will live on in shows already taped by Henson*)

### **Communicative functions of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_**

Several of the communicative functions identified by Michaelis are also performed by *done* and *kaba*.

#### 1. Priority to process:

(15) TC She done so skinny, and she want to go on a diet.

Dan a pisi ten dati mi go teki a sani na a man a man leni wan man a sani.  
Then the piece time that I go take the thing at the man the man lend one man the thing.  
“Then when I went to take my stuff at the man, it turns out he lent it to someone.”

Mi taki, "Mi gi yu a sani esde dan tide yu leni wan man **kaba**.  
I say, "I give you the thing yesterday then today you lend one man already.  
“I said, “I gave you the thing yesterday, and you already lend it to someone?”

The argumentative force of the assertion is to emphasize the speaker's state of exasperation at his forgetfulness.

**Primary functions of            and            . Completion with dynamic predicates.**

In Sranan, the most typical uses of *kaba* that I have so far found in my data involve functions 5 and 6, as identified by Michaelis:

**5. A completive function**, indicating completion of one stage in a sequence of development. (Eg. *He's already gone for the day. Can I take a message?*)

IN THIS CASE, THE SPEAKER WANTS TO DEPICT STAGES IN HER PROGRESS TOWARD SALVATION. (TAPE 1B. PAGE 12)

(21) Yu e si, mi no taki mi e de **kaba** ma mi de *bezig* mi e meki muyti.  
You (e) see, I no say that I be already but I be busy I (e) make effort



As Michaelis (1996:500) points out, “certain functions of *already* can be used in the service of particular argumentative goals.”

The same applies to *done* and *kaba*. The following is a preliminary account of some of their pragmatic functions.

(25) TALKING ABOUT YUGOSLAV GANGS IN HOLLAND. (TAPE 8A, 442-3)

Mi yere den man e kon na Holland nanga den Yugoslaven. Mi yere san den  
I hear those man (e) come tio Holland with the Yugoslavians. I hear what those  
I’ve heard they come to Holland with the Yugoslavians. I’ve heard that what those

man dati e du. Mi yere pikin pikin moni den man trowe yu **kaba**.  
man that (e) do. I hear little little money those man throw you already.  
guys are doing? I’ve heard for a small amount of money they are ready to do away with  
you.

EMPHATIC *KABA* = ‘WITHOUT FURTHER ADO’? OR “BEFORE YOU EXPECT IT”.  
EMPHASIZING HOW QUICKLY THEY DISPATCH YOU FOR VERY LITTLE REASON.  
THIS SEEMS TO BE RELATED TO EARLY EVENTUATION.

(26) CONTEXT: THE SPEAKER HAS BEEN TRYING TO MAIL GOODS TO A  
CUSTOMER BUT HIS AGENTS HAVE PROCRASTINATED (TAPE 8A. LINE 179).

Den suma no abi deki ati tog, noso den sani disi ben *post* o langa **kaba**.  
The people no have courage, right. otherwise the thing these (ben) mail how long already.  
‘They don’t have courage, otherwise these items would have been mailed long ago.’

HERE, *KABA* SEEMS TO EXPRESS EXASPERATION OR FRUSTRATION.

(27) CONTEXT: THE SPEAKER HAS AN ENCOUNTER WITH AN INDIAN  
POLICEMAN WHO WAS OPENLY DRUNK ON THE JOB. (TAPE , PAGE 9)

Mi taki, no yungu, brada. Mi taki, luku yu drungu **kaba**. *Dus*  
I say, no man, brother. I say, look you drunk already. So  
‘I said, no man. I said, look you’re already drunk so

*eigenlijk* yu, yu yu, a *lot* fu yu pasa **kaba**.  
infact, your, your, your, the fate of you already pass.  
‘in fact fate (?) has already passed.’

*KABA* SEEMS TO EMPHASIZE THE ADVERSE CONSEQUENCES OF BEING DRUNK.

(28) CONTEXT: SAME AS ABOVE. CONVERSATION CONTINUES

- A: Den man no abi bisi, na so den man gwentu **kaba**.  
Those man no have care, be so those man accustom already  
They don't care, that's how they are.
- C: Yu no kan *waarschuw* so wan man.

