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# Adding to the Inventory: Contemplating Anti-perfect Marking in French Antillean Creoles

## Adding to the Inventory: Contemplating Anti-Perfect Marking in French Antillean Creoles

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### 1 Introduction

When considering the state of tense-mood-aspect (hereafter TMA) research and its dissemination within the field of creole linguistics, Bickerton's (1975) typical system is the privileged foil to which all others, to a greater or lesser extent, are compared.<sup>1</sup> It is also the case that in the years following the initial publication of Bickerton's so-called 'universalist' claims, intensive studies of specific creole languages have shown the limits and oversights to such an all-encompassing theory. An example of this type of study, the one that the present paper takes as its impetus, was recently undertaken by Spears in two related articles (1990a, 1993) regarding the preverbal marking system in Haitian Creole (hereafter HC) and the expression of TMA through the absence or presence of such markers.<sup>2</sup> As Sankoff (1990) has demonstrated, Bickerton has construed this opposition clearly as a privative one; much of Spears' argument moves to redefine this orientation.

One of three preverbal markers comprising his bioprogrammatic system is what Bickerton has called an anterior, rather than a past marker; this differentiation is linked to a stative/nonstative verb distinction, and he asserts that a marker of anteriority "indicates past-before-past for action [nonstate] verbs and simple past for state verbs" (1980:5). Spears has demonstrated certain inconsistencies in ascribing such compartmentalizations as this to the HC anterior marker *té*, particularly because "pasts and pluperfects are generally not marked, regardless of the stativity of the predicate" in HC (1993:263).<sup>3</sup>

Further, following closely the conclusions reached by Givon (1982), Spears has proposed the 'anti-perfect hypothesis' which argues that marking with preverbal *té* serves "to clarify or specify temporal relationships. By anti-perfect is meant that *té* functions not merely to mark a situation as past with respect to some reference time, but has the more important function of negating that situation's connection to the present (or some posterior reference time)" (1993:264). Considering this, my aim in the present paper is to place Spears' anti-perfect conceptualization in its historical-theoretical lineage, commencing with the work of Bickerton and subsequently followed up by Givon. It is

<sup>1</sup> For a comprehensive portrait of Bickerton's historical placement in the context of creole studies, with particular reference to TMA research, see Singler's "Introduction: Pidgins and Creoles and Tense-Mood-Aspect."

<sup>2</sup> His findings are of special interest insofar as HC is one of the creoles that Bickerton has based his own theories on.

<sup>3</sup> Spears concludes that "the stative-active contrast in HC is relevant only for the marking of nonpunctual aspect (in non-future contexts). Only active verbs can be so marked, with one important exception: stative predicates marked by the nonpunctual *ap* (again, in non-future contexts) express a state which is in the process of being realized" (1993:263).

Givon's research that will be highlighted herein due to the fact that much of what Spears advances has a direct antecedent in his work. Only then will the novelty (or lack thereof) of Spears' anti-perfect hypothesis be made clear.<sup>4</sup> This will be accomplished by first reviewing the current analyses proposed for *té*, and then by a consideration of the necessity or heuristic advantages of Spears' anti-perfect classification for filling in where preceding has scholarship left off. Thus, this paper will serve both as a contribution to the historiographic exegesis focusing on creole TMA categories, as well as a theoretical questioning of a proposed addition to this set of conceptual items.

### 2 An intellectual history of research on preverbal marker *té*

Preverbal *té* is present in all of the French-based creoles of the Indian and the Atlantic oceans, being "the most widespread of the French-based creole proposed tense and aspect particles" (Goodman 1964:80). This marker is used throughout the various French-based creoles with either a past or past perfect meaning, depending on the dialect. Goodman, as one of the first creolists to undertake a comprehensive study of the French-based creoles, explains the frequent past perfect meaning of *té* as being derived "in part from the past perfect use of *était*" (1964:81). This conclusion has a certain validity insofar as the source of the form *té* is clearly some inflected form of *être*, such as *été*, *était*, etc., with the loss of the initial vowel, as is so common in Caribbean creoles (1964:79). Valdman agrees with Goodman's conclusions as to the origin of Lesser Antillean Creole *té*, but notes that the verbal system of French-based creoles "is markedly different from that of Standard French: it gives priority to aspectual rather than tense distinctions" (1977:176). Carrington argues this same notion for St. Lucian Creole (hereafter SLC) and notes that "the greater importance of aspect over tense in St. Lucian Creole has notable repercussions in the interpretation of the use of the non-completive aspect particle *ka*" (1984:117). This problem will be explored in some detail shortly.

Concerning the Antillean creoles that serve as the empirical focus of this paper, the aforementioned description of the semantics of *té* varies little. In SLC, Carrington describes it as marking past tense, completive aspect (1984:119). This corresponds with what Valdman and Carrington have concluded in that "the particle *té* is the past tense marker of St. Lucian Creole. When it precedes the verb it indicates that the action or state is past and has no continuity with the present moment" (1969:58):

- (1) I *té* ale.  
He had gone.  
He went.

Elsewhere in this same work, they state *té* has a past perfective meaning and indicates a past, completed action (1969: xxvii). Dalphinis argues roughly the same thing for SLC

<sup>4</sup> As a disclaimer, it must be remembered that Givon is a dominant, but by no means the sole, influence on the work of Spears.

when he states that "té seems to qualify most of all as a verbal marker of completion. Té seems to be basically an aspect rather than a tense marker" (1985:118):

- (2) Ye zot té kase ze poul-la.  
Yesterday you (pl.) broke/had broken the chicken's eggs.

In an interesting footnote to the above example, Dalphinis states that "it could be argued that there is no clear basis for deciding whether té is an aspect or tense marker; in the above sentence, for example, the action can be described as past and therefore, complete or complete therefore past, but whether the former or the latter description is the first premise for any conclusion about té is possibly arguable" (1985:130). This point speaks directly to the explanation of the interface of perfect and perfective tense-aspects which frames one the objectives of the present paper.

Concerning Guadeloupean Creole (hereafter GC), Pouillet and Telchid write that té is utilized "pour exprimer le temps qui s'est écoulé avant l'acte de communication" (1990:112). Valdman describes the function of té in the Creoles of the Lesser Antilles in a similar manner when he states that "le marqueur passé té ne s'emploie que lorsqu'aucune indication textuelle n'est présente ou pour souligner l'antériorité d'un état ou d'un procès" (1978:220):

- (3) Konbe zanfan ou té tini? Mouen té tini sis, mon ni kat vivan, de mo.  
Combien d'enfants aviez-vous? J'ai eu six enfants, j'en ai quatre vivants et deux morts.  
How many children have you (pl.) had? I have had six children, I [now] have four living ones and two dead ones.

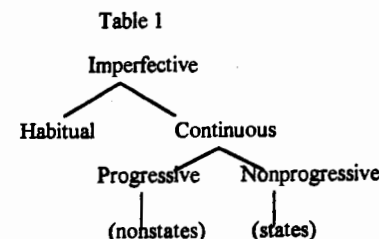
Additionally, Pouillet and Telchid say that "la particule té traduit l'imparfait pour les verbes sans ka et le plus-que-parfait pour les verbes avec ka" (1990:29). Remembering Bickerton's original characterization, this differentiation has everything to do with the stative/nonstative verbal distinction. The rule may be rephrased as follows: in past tense contexts the particle té translates as the imperfect for stative verbs and as the pluperfect for nonstative verbs.<sup>5</sup> I mentioned earlier that ka is a continuous marker, yet ka is equally describable as being progressive in that "progressiveness is the same as continuousness, since continuousness is itself imperfectivity not determined by habituality" (Comrie 1976:34). Due to the fact that stative verbs cannot appear in progressive forms, a stative verb (save one exception) will never be marked with the progressive marker ka in GC. Comrie explains that

<sup>5</sup> Imperfect for nonstative verbs in GC is expressed by conjoining té with ka so that:

- (4) Nou té ka pati  
Nous partions  
We were leaving

we find that verbs tend to divide into two disjoint (nonoverlapping) classes, those that can appear in the progressive forms, and those that cannot. Moreover, this distinction corresponds to that between stative and nonstative verbs. Thus we can give the general definition of progressiveness as the combination of progressive meaning and nonstative meaning. Naturally, then, stative verbs do not have progressive forms, since this would involve an internal contradiction between the stativity of the verb and the nonstativity essential to the progressive. (1976:35)

Spears draws directly from what Comrie has said and applies the problem of the non-cooccurrence of stative verbs with progressivity to HC. It should be noted that the current discussion of this phenomenon in GC takes his as an exemplar. "Stated differently, progressivity does not co-occur with stativity; stative predicates in a language with progressive forms cannot occur in the progressive in the normal case" (Spears 1990a:135). Table 1 shows the relationship among several of the aspectual notions I have discussed:<sup>6</sup>



The exception to this rule pertains to the expression of the habitual aspect. "On peut noter cependant que certains verbes comme 'enme' (aimer), 'ni' (avoir), 'vle' (vouloir), 'sav' (savoir), 'konnet' (connaître), 'hay' (hair), 'pisimye' (préferer), et 'pe' (pouvoir) ne prennent pas la particule ka au présent. Mais si on veut exprimer une habitude, on utilise ka" (Pouillet et al. 1984:16):

- (5) I enme-mwen.  
Il m'aime.  
He likes me.
- (6) I ka enme kontre-mwen anvil.  
Il aime me rencontrer en ville (habitude).  
He likes to meet me out.

<sup>6</sup> This table is a replica of Spears' Table 4 (1990a:136) which is derived from Comrie's Table I (1976:25).

- (7) An konnet-zot!  
Je vous connais!  
I know you!
- (8) Le ou eve zanmi a-w, ou pa ka konnet-mwen.  
Quand tu es avec tes amis, tu ne me connais pas (habitude).  
When you're with your friends, you don't know me.

Valdman has advanced similar claims for Lesser Antillean Creole (hereafter LAC), but not for HC. "In fact there is one significant difference in semantic range between the progressive particle of HC and that of LAC. In the latter, *ka* may also express habitual and iterative, whereas these categories are realized in HC by the zero form rather than by *ap*" (1977:176). Spears confirms this phenomenon in HC, in which the continuous marker *ap*, the analog to Lesser Antillean *ka*, "must be classified as progressive; it does not occur with statives" (1990a:136). Further, in contradistinction to Valdman, he concludes that "*ap* may also express habituality. To this, one may add that *ap* is pragmatically durative or iterative. To reiterate, *ap* expresses both habituality and progressive aspect" (1990a:137). Spears also notes that "*t ap* is used for anterior nonpunctuals (i.e. anterior progressives and habituals)" (1990a:138). In GC, *ka* may be similarly conjoined with *té*, thereby expressing habitual aspect in the past. "Les verbes non exprime, etc., ne gardent toujours pas la particule *ka* mais conservent le *té* de *té ka*. Mais, comme au présent, si on veut exprimer une idée d'habitude, on utilisera la particule complète *té ka* (Poullet et al. 1984:17):

- (9) I *té ka* enme kontre-mwen anvil.  
Il aimait me rencontrer en ville (habitude).  
He liked to meet me out.

I have considered the exceptions to the rule prohibiting stative verbs from appearing in the progressive form, and in doing so, have opened up a can of worms regarding the relation among the nonpunctual (imperfective), progressive, and habitual. In Bickerton's formulation, the aspect portion of creole tense-mood-aspect delineates an imperfective-perfective opposition, with the imperfect subsuming progressive and habitual meanings. Comrie writes, "in attested instances of historical change in aspect semantics known to me, it is always the case that an original progressive extends its semantic range to encompass imperfective, rather than an original imperfective restricting its semantic range to become a progressive - which might suggest that the 'original' creole system, if such exists, is with progressive aspect" (1993:392). In this regard, Comrie positions himself in agreement with Bickerton's claims, and subsequently contra Spears. He maintains that

given the potential for different interpretations of such data, it is important to consider the contribution of the individual items to the overall interpretation, and not simply to be satisfied with finding an example (or several examples) where the putative progressive is assigned a habitual interpretation. Spears touches on the problem in considering...that Haitian Creole *ap* may cover habitual as well as progressive aspect. But crucially, this compatibility is only possible under a very restricted interpretation: the progressive contributes its meaning to the interpretation of each individual occurrence, and habituality is superimposed hierarchically to indicate extended repetition of each such occurrence. The English progressive does not mark itself habitually, and there is no reason to suppose that the Haitian Creole form does either. Thus, finding examples where a putative imperfective, rather than progressive, marker occurs with a habitual interpretation is not sufficient to show that the marker is indeed a habitual. I hope that investigators of tense-mood-aspect (and other phenomena) in pidgin and creole languages will take to heart the moral of such examples: while great progress has been made by consideration of examples in natural data, such examples still require careful interpretation and analysis, and still harbor the dangers of misinterpretation and misanalysis. (1993:392)

A similar kind of critique can be brought against Spears for his drawing on only one of the many criteria used in defining the perfect aspect or, from a different perspective entirely, against Poullet and Telchid (1990) and Poullet et al. (1984) for positing an isomorphism, in *té* environments, between *ka* deletion with stative verbs and a reading of imperfect tense (imperfective aspect).<sup>8</sup> The latter phenomenon remotely ascribes to Bickerton's notion of markedness in that, as Sankoff has explained, "the way these categories are expressed is as a system of binary oppositions that include a marked [+*té ka*] and an unmarked [-*té*] member. This formulation imports into creole linguistics - to my mind, inappropriately - the underlying assumption of traditional structuralist linguistic descriptive practice, according to which every difference in form is assigned a unique value in meaning or function" (1990:296). In what follows, the drawbacks of such an presumption will be indicated.

From all that has been said about GC (according to Poullet and Telchid and Poullet et al.), an hypothesis arguing that in GC the expression of the pluperfect is limited to nonstative verbs could be inferred; the pluperfect does not occur with stative verbs because, in order to form this construction, *té* alone would have to precede the stative verb.<sup>9</sup> As has been demonstrated, when stative verbs are preceded by preverbal *té*, it is assumed that the *ka* has been deleted and that the imperfective is being expressed. There is no mention in either source of *té* occurring alone with stative verbs; this is

<sup>8</sup> In a more sophisticated treatment of the GC TMA system, Poullet et al. (1990) reanalyze 'imperfect tense' as 'imperfective aspect.' This is a natural analytical progression similar to the one that Comrie (1976) has undertaken regarding the traditional terminology (imperfect tense) of Romance linguistics and his own rethinking of such as an aspectual rather than a temporal categorization. Following suit, I will use 'imperfective aspect' as opposed to 'imperfect tense' in the remainder of this paper, a point that speaks to my concern herein with the historiography of linguistic terminology.

<sup>9</sup> It should be noted that in theory there is no semantic restriction prohibiting the pluperfect from occurring with stative verbs (Comrie 1976:62).

<sup>7</sup> Following Comrie (1993:391), I use the term 'imperfective.'

concurrent with the neglect the pluperfect receives with respect to stative verbs. Thus, an imposed, but unrealistic, isomorphism between the presence of solitary *té* (and *ka*'s obligatory absence) with stative verbs, and its semantic value as imperfect tense, has been put forth in this literature. When a stative verb is identified and is marked with the anterior marker *té*, the trace of preverbal *ka* is present as well, and a reading of imperfect tense follows. Pouillet and Telchid write, "la particule *té* + *ka* traduit l'imparfait, sauf pour les verbes qui ne prennent pas *ka* pour lesquels l'imparfait se traduit par *té* seulement" (1990:25). For this to hold true, stative verbs could never appear in *té* environments without a deleted *ka*. The following instance in GC clearly demonstrates just the opposite of this: a stative verb marked solely by *té* and thus obtaining a pluperfect meaning (Pouillet and Telchid 1990:29):

- (10) Vole-la *té* ni tan fannkann adan pyes poyo-la i te owa kaz-la.  
 Le voleur avait eu le temps de s'enfuir a travers la bananeraie qui se trouvait  
 pres de la maison.  
 The thief had had the time to escape across the banana field, located near the  
 house.

Further, the following instance in SLC indicates a similar construction, and serves to reinforce the objection lodged against ascribing a unique interpretation to *té* marking (Dalphinis 1985:118).

- (11) Yo te enmen tifi-a.  
 They had liked the girl.

It should be remembered that none of the scholarly literature pertaining to SLC said anything about this unique interpretation of *té* with stative verbs, and there was nothing written to indicate that this phenomenon existed in this language as such. Pouillet and Telchid were perhaps too enthusiastic in trying to make a hard-and-fast rule for tense marking in GC.

Unlike the above discussion in which a supposed markedness rule was not able to be uniquely correlated with a single meaning, Spears' hypothesis of the preverbal marker *té* in HC has its inception in misrepresentation, or at the very least, oversimplification. Spears conceives of the perfect as serving "primarily to relate in various ways a situation to the present (or some posterior reference time)" (Spears 1993:262). This is an adequate definition, and yet there is stress placed on the 'current relevance' position. That is, while perfects suggest some relation of a past event to some reference time, Spears inappropriately infers notions of incompleteness into this relation. For Spears, the perfect is always attributed with denotations of imperfectivity. I argue that this characterization is invalid; the perfect may equally operate on a ground of perfectivity. In the words of Comrie:

the perfect looks at a situation in terms of its consequences, and while it is possible for an incomplete situation to have consequences, it is much more likely that consequences will be consequences of a situation that has been brought to completion, i.e., of a situation that is likely to be described by means of the perfective. (1976:64)

Similar to what Givon has called the 'lingering/current relevance' feature of the perfect, described as "mentioning an event/state, that had already terminated some time prior to the to time-axis, later on in the chain of discourse, when the time-axis has already moved to a subsequent event/state" (1984:280), Spears claims that the preverbal marker *té* in HC implies "non-present relevance in the sense that the state created by the event referred to is no longer in effect" (1993:264). Elsewhere in the paper, Spears describes *té*'s function as removing the predicate from the "sphere of the present" (1993:269) and providing clarification "by temporally structuring a communication" (1993:273). In these descriptions is found a strong correspondence to Givon's (1982) account of the sequencing of narrative clauses with past reference with respect to their actual occurrence in real time. That is, the semantic-pragmatic function of the anterior is to mark out of sequence clauses in the narrative, particularly those which look back and relate events that occurred earlier than the preceding clause in the narrative. In an unpublished paper written prior to his 1993 study, Spears defines look-backs as breaking "the chronological sequence sustained by the foregrounded material; they refer to a time before the in-sequence events" (1990b:10). Incidentally, one of the objectives of his paper "is to review Givon's claims concerning the narrative discourse functions and pragmatics of the various verb forms participating in the TMA system" (1990b:2).

I mention his 1990b paper (not cited by Spears in his 1993 references) because it is clearly the bedrock on which the 1993 paper is based. His use of Givon's work, in the 1990b paper, is no small affair; it forms a major crux of the argument. Actually, it seems that this 1990b paper is construed precisely to apply what Givon has said about the pragmatic function of preverbal markers to HC. However, Spears' definition of the anti-perfect is highly restricted and purposefully vague due to his own limited notions of the perfect. Spears' conceptualization of the anti-perfect reflects his conventional approach to the perfect for he draws on only one of the many criteria by which the perfect aspect is defined (by Givon).<sup>10</sup> Spears holds a tremendous debt to Givon who has referred to something like this anti-perfect phenomenon as the 'anterior/perfect' (1982:130) and later as the 'perfect/anterior' (1984:292). I am not implying here that Spears has co-opted Givon's theoretical claims without proper citation. He does indeed state that Givon is his "starting point" (1993:265), and yet I think much more of an intellectual debt is owed

<sup>10</sup> This is not to say that Spears' definition of the perfect must conform with Givon's. Each may endorse a different understanding of the same phenomenon, but if Spears is going to be utilizing Givon's work it behooves him to become familiar with all that has been written on the perfect by Givon, and to clearly state if and where he diverges from it. Spears does neither, and expects the reader to jump right into his own argument, considering only his sanctioned pieces of Givon's work as standard. In other words, my reading of Givon and Spears' reading of Givon differ considerably. The problem arises, however, when Spears attempts to represent the work of Givon without proper explanation on his part.

than is overtly mentioned.<sup>11</sup> To demonstrate Spears' misappropriation of Givon's findings, it is necessary to familiarize ourselves with Givon's work.

Givon, in supplementing Bickerton's anterior marker with its discourse-pragmatic function, has concluded that preverbal markers like *té* mark "out-of-sequence clauses in the narrative, specifically those which 'look-back' and relate events that occurred earlier than the preceding clause in the narrative" (1982:121). Givon's finding that the marking of out-of-sequence clauses in narrative discourse which in real time had actually occurred in sequence is predicated on a function-based elucidation of markedness in creole TMA systems. Givon, by choosing to focus on discursive and narrative contexts of use, was able to define the anterior marker according to a more facultative system "sensitive to pragmatic and semantically motivated concerns" (Sankoff 1990:310), as opposed to Bickerton's bioprogrammatic cognitive system, "genetically wired into the neurological structure of the human organism" (Givon 1984:289). In this way, Givon posits a system which gives priority to those experiential facts that "humans are most likely to consider noteworthy, informative, salient, memorable or outstanding in the coding and communication of experience" (1984:289). A major component of his pragmatic evaluation of TMA marking systems in creoles and non-creoles involves a meticulous explication of the perfect aspect. Throughout what follows, keep in mind Spears' comparatively scant conception of the perfect: to relate in various ways a situation to the present (or some posterior reference time).

Givon conceives of the perfect as by far the most complex of all tense-aspect categories in human language (1984:278). In discussing the perfect of non-creoles, he has divided it into four major sub-components to facilitate understanding. They are: (1) perfectivity and accomplishment, which involves the presence of a terminal boundary of an event/state at some time/axis, in other words, the completion of the event at some time prior to that time/axis, (2) lingering/current relevance, described above, which has an interesting connection with the out-of-sequence feature whereby "if some event is mentioned within the discourse out-of-sequence (rather than at the earlier sequential time-point when it occurred), the reason must be because it is somehow relevant at that later point" (1984:281), (3) anteriority, defined as precedence vis-à-vis some time-axis, and finally (4) counter-sequentiality, which states that when an event in the clause-chain occurs earlier in actual time, but is reported later in the clause-chain of discourse - later than another event that actually followed in real time, then that out-of-sequence event is coded by the perfect ('anterior'). Several pragmatic inferences utilizing the intersection of these four factors are listed by Givon (1984:284):

- (a) Perfectivity > Anteriority: If an event is terminated before some time-axis, that event must have preceded that time-axis.
- (b) Anteriority > Counter-sequentiality: If an event preceded another event in real time, but follows it in narrative report, that first event must then be out-of-sequence.

<sup>11</sup> For example, notice the similarity in the theoretical jargon of Spears' 'anti-perfect' to that of Givon's 'anterior/perfect' (ante-perfect?).

- (c) Counter-sequentiality > Current relevance: If an event occurs counter-sequentially in narrative report, it must then be relevant to a later point in time - later than its original time-point in the natural sequence.
- (d) Perfectivity > Current Relevance: If an event is construed as having a terminal boundary relative to some time-axis, then that event must surely be relevant to that time-axis.

Givon maintains that the above are only suggested connections, and yet these axioms are very informative in giving some idea of the complexity of the non-creole perfect tense-aspect.

By comparison, I argue that Spears endorses a much more conservative view of the perfect. Spears has divorced perfectivity from the sphere of the perfect, and to reincorporate it he must delineate a tense-aspect marker (i.e., anti-perfect) that stands in opposition to the perfect. This misconstrued analysis stems from his highly restricted view of the perfect. However, the underlying cause of this is seen when Spears' general approach to the perfect is compared to Givon's. Givon exhibits what may be referred to as a 'developmentalist' orientation on the perfect, whereas Spears exhibits something akin to a 'reductionist' orientation. While Givon's approach posits a building up, an evolving from the prototypic creole system to what has become the classic, non-creole system, Spears does a disservice to the classic system in trying to describe creole phenomenon with it, and in doing so, is forced to reduce the classic to make it more like the creole. In this manner, Spears is looking for a calque in the classic that can be fixed onto the creole system. If it doesn't exactly fit, a dichotomy results (i.e., anti-perfect) rather than successive additions to a base conception as in Givon's model.<sup>12</sup>

Givon's conceptualization of a creole and a non-creole perfect is the result of considering the creole on its own terms, rather than in terms of possessing certain classic traits, the avenue that Spears walks. Although the creole perfect, referred to as the 'anterior/perfect' by Givon,

takes under its scope the classical perfect and pluperfect it does not directly correspond to them, since (a) the [creole] system is purely aspectual and does not involve the notion central to tense systems, that of time of speech; and (b) a great number of instances in which the anterior/perfect is used in this system may not all be covered by either the perfective or pluperfect in classical tense-oriented systems. (1977:199)

Givon's caveat, then, is that the creole anterior/perfect marker has not undergone the same grammatico-semantic, developmental process than the non-creole perfect has, in effect, not incorporating all of the trappings of its counterpart's perfect. As has been

<sup>12</sup> A possible reason for the difference in orientation between the two scholars may be that each has had prior experience with very different languages. Givon, the senior linguist, has worked with Early Biblical Hebrew, Ute, and Bemba, to name just a few. Spears, however, has most of his experience with English (his 1977 UCSD dissertation was on the semantics of English complementation), and is therefore more dependent on the classic system of TMA conceptualizations in comparative work.



explained, one of the factors of the non-creole perfect is the inherent notion of perfectivity. "The main semantic/pragmatic feature involved [in the non-creole perfect] seems to be termination of a process at the time-axis, i.e., at the point of relevance. The anteriority and out-of-sequence features derive as an inference" (1982:149). For Givon, the creole perfect may or may not manifest perfectivity through the anterior. For Spears, though, the creole perfect definitely does not have any relation to perfectivity. This is due to Spears' restricted version of the classic perfect, the perfect that he imports into his analysis of HC, and subsequently finds unacceptable.

In claiming for the anti-perfect the marking of an event/state as being no longer in effect (1993:263), and negating that situation's connection with the present (1993:262), Spears sees the classic perfect and the perfective at loggerheads to each other. The creole perfect, then, can incorporate the notion of perfectivity only after it has become anti-perfect. To be considered as encompassing perfectivity, Spears' creole perfect must become anti-perfect where the 'anti' refers to a situation's non-present relevance. For Spears, the creole perfect does not mark perfectivity, and he invents a creole perfect marker that will mark the perfective, namely, the creole anti-perfect. Givon's statement above, attesting to the non-isomorphism of the creole anterior/perfect with the perfective, provides a small reconciliation for Spears whose claim for the anti-perfect basically stems from his own view of the mutual exclusion of classic perfect with the perfective. In defining the anti-perfect, though, he deals only with the relationship between a perfected event/state and its current relevance later in time. Givon, on the other hand, not only has completed a much fuller exegesis of the pragmatics of the creole and non-creole perfect tense-aspect, he has contributed much to Spears' conception of anti-perfect (not all, I argue, with proper citation).

In passing, it ought to be pointed out that Spears is not unique in his particular misinterpretation of the classic perfect and the perfective. This terminological rift between the classic perfect and the perfective is nothing new, and the confusion between the two has been significant in past research. "In many recent works by English-speaking linguists, there has been an unfortunate tendency to use the term 'perfective' for what is here termed 'perfect'; this tendency is particularly unfortunate when it leads to conceptual confusion" (Comrie 1976:12). Similarly, Mufwene contends that "the delimitations...as perfect, have sometimes been misidentified as complete or perfective, owing in part to the fact that the term perfect also forms its adjective in -ive" (1990:100).

Spears' misinterpretation stems directly from his viewing the classic perfect and the perfective as not being commensurate with each other; he must invent a new TMA marker (i.e., anti-perfect) which conjoins these two. Yet, in positing this anti-perfect, Spears reveals the TMA concept that he wishes to highlight in the classic system. That is, even though he sees the classic perfect and the perfective as not being associated with each other, he privileges the notion of perfectivity in his creole model. He wants the classic perfect to encompass perfectivity as it does in Givon's model, but instead of going that route, he posits another distinctive TMA marker to do the job in the creole context. He then campaigns for its inclusion in the classic system, once again mixing apples with oranges. Spears, in this way, is ideologically bolstering the notion of perfectivity as the

defining element in his anti-perfect; he is ideologically inclined towards perfectivity. This attitude is most apparent in the conclusion to his article when he states that

it is essential to make fully explicit that the notion anti-perfect captures what *té* is about semantically better than either the notion of pastness or that of anteriority. In other words, there is only a problem because the notion of anti-perfectness is not part of the inventory of tense and terms that we talk about. The issue, then, is not one of whether *té* should be labeled a past or an anterior, but of whether the term anti-perfect...should be added to that inventory of tense notions from which we draw in analyzing the world's languages. That this notion best captures the facts of HC *té*, better than either past or anterior, is sufficient reason for answering that it should. (1993:274)

Spears, as Bickerton was before him, is interested in making a decidedly hegemonic move in calling for the inclusion of the anti-perfect in the creolist's inventory after having compared the classic system to that of the creole, and found the classic's inventory lacking. The comparison itself must be seen as erroneous. I hope that I have shown that this is only one of the possible avenues Spears could have taken. An alternative could have been closer to Givon's approach, in which (1) the notion of perfectivity doesn't necessarily need to be separated from the wider scope of the classic perfect, and (2) the classic perfect should not be calqued onto the creole perfect, but depicted as a developmental offspring (i.e., the creole anterior/perfect evolving into the classic perfect). However, no matter how it is introduced into the TMA literature, the notion of anterior/perfect (Givon 1977:203) or anti-perfect (Spears 1993) is a useful tool for describing *té* marking in French Antillean creoles, if not many of the world's creole languages.

### 3 Conclusion

This paper has endeavored to demonstrate the historical lineage of Spears' anti-perfect claim for preverbal *té*, and the relevance of endorsing such a notion. Important in considering *té* is the fact that Spears' anti-perfect hypothesis purports to place emphasis not on anteriority or past tense meaning as had been advocated previously by Bickerton, but rather on a context-dependent, temporally and sequentially-oriented approach. Anti-perfectness, with its implication of non-present relevance, posits a functionally-derived attitude to tense marking whereby pragmatic variables of communication are favored instead of purely semantic differentiations. In this respect, Spears can be seen as intellectual descendant to Givon, who was himself the first scholar to redefine Bickerton's universal system in accordance with certain discursive and narratological principles. In this way, Spears adds not only to the inventory of tense-aspect notions, but is himself added to that collection of creolists constantly searching for a better means by which to describe creole TMA systems. Spears has certainly accomplished this in his demarcation of the anti-perfect.



On a more general level, this paper has contributed to the historiographic inquiry into linguistic terminology and conceptualization. This domain of research, although not as immediately pressing as the descriptive identification of grammatico-semantic types in diverse languages such as the French Antillean creoles considered herein, is a required supplement to any appraisal of TMA codings because it is to these definitional captionings that analysts of language defer in attempting to articulate a proper fit between presupposed and entailed observation. I stress this final point of expected versus received data for it is at this interactional nexus that such a historiographic reckoning may provide the synthesizing paradigm. As was demonstrated through this contemplation of the anti-perfect, retracing the textual sources in any linguistic concept's evolution often reveals, quite vividly, the novelty or lack therein, of the concept itself.

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