

# Early Sranan

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## 1. Introduction

From the 1650s onwards the number of languages spoken in Suriname increased to almost twenty different languages in the 20th century due to various migrations from the Amazon, India, China, Java, Africa, and Europe.

Early Sranan is the cover term used here to refer to those eighteenth-century creole varieties that emerged on the Surinamese plantations and in the city of Paramaribo from the late 17th century onwards. Over the years multiple historical documents in and on the languages of the enslaved people of African descent in Suriname have been uncovered, resulting in a substantial and digitized corpus of eighteenth-century texts. These texts, stored in the Suriname Creole Archive,<sup>1</sup> provide a unique window on the Sranan language as it was spoken in the eighteenth century, that is, in earlier stages of its development. The texts include (a) religious texts such as Bible translations and hymns (Schumann 1781; Anonymous c. 1800); (b) judicial documents such as transcripts of interrogations and witness reports (Court Records); (c) official documents such as a peace treaty; (d) travel reports; and (e) documents that were created for the purpose of language instruction, such as dictionaries and language manuals by a Moravian missionary (C. L. Schumann) as well as secular persons (J. D. Herlein, P. van Dyk, J. Nepveu, and G. C. Weygandt). Because of this variety of text types, variation within and among the texts may correspond to different dimensions, ranging from diachronic to social, stylistic as well as geographical. Furthermore, variation within and among the texts may further stem from the types of speech events that are represented in the texts, ranging from recorded, recalled to imagined and invented speech events. While recorded speech events such as transcripts of interrogations are the most reliable (van den Berg & Arends 2004), texts belonging to other text types need to be assessed carefully in terms of representativeness and validity. Detailed assessments can be found in the works of Smith (1987), Arends (1989), Bruyn (1995), and van den Berg (2007), among others.

## 2. Sociohistorical background

The sociohistorical background of Early Sranan is presented here in a relatively sketchy manner, summarizing findings from

<sup>1</sup> SUCA, [www.suca.ruhosting.nl](http://www.suca.ruhosting.nl)

### Early Sranan

Autoglossonym:	<i>Ningri tongo</i> (18th c.)
Other names:	<i>Bastert Engels</i> , <i>Neeger Engels</i> (18th c. Dutch; obsolete, pejorative)
Number of speakers:	c. 55,000 in 1783 (L1 as well as L2)
Major lexifier:	English
Other contributing languages:	European (Dutch, Portuguese, etc.); West African (Kwa, Kikongo, etc.); Amerindian (Arawakan; Cariban)
Location:	Suriname
Official language of 18th-c. Suriname:	Dutch



Map 1.

Arends (1995, 2002), Dragtenstein (2002), Migge (2003) and van den Berg (2000, 2007) among others, which in our view contributed significantly to our understanding of the emergence and subsequent development of the creole languages of Suriname.

First, one should mention the settlement by a hundred English settlers, sent from Barbados by Francis Willoughby, along

the Suriname River in 1651; the foundation of Willoughbyland is generally assumed to mark the onset of the Surinamese creole languages, even though earlier attempts at settlement are remembered in the oral history of the Saramaccan Maroons (Arends 2002). Since these English settlers and those who arrived afterwards in 1651 and 1652 already had some experience in sugar cultivation and processing (they came from Barbados and other Caribbean islands), it is generally assumed that the Surinamese colonial society quickly passed through the homestead phase (*société d'habitation*) and developed into a prototypical plantation society (*société de plantation*) relatively soon. The number of homesteads increased from some 50 units in the early 1650s to 175 small plantations in 1663, with some 500 European families and approximately 1,500 to 2,000 slaves of African and Amerindian background living on the plantations and in Thorarica (Sandpoint), the main city of Willoughbyland.

In February 1667, Abraham Crijnsen seized control of the colony on behalf of Zealand, one of the Dutch provinces. The province of Zealand had jurisdiction from 1667 until 1683, a period that is characterized by a decline in the population of European descent due to a variety of causes, including mass departure of the English and Irish planters, their indentured servants and (some of) their slaves. In addition, another war with both France and England and increasing conflicts with Caribs and Maroons, slave revolts, and disease brought the colony close to its demise. Few Europeans arrived in Suriname in this period and a limited number of slave ship arrivals are reported in the literature: 11 arrivals with 3,404 slaves on board between 1668 and 1674, while not a single slave ship arrived in the colony during the period 1678–1681 (Postma 1990: 178–9).

The 1680s may be the most turbulent period in the history of the colony in terms of sociodemographic developments. In 1683 the *Sociëteit van Suriname* (Society of Suriname) succeeded the province of Zealand in the seat of power. After the appointment of Cornelis van Aerssen van Sommelsdijck as governor, new settlers from all over Europe, among others Portuguese Jews, French Huguenots, and Dutch Protestants, came to Suriname. Slaves were imported on a regular basis from what was then known as the Slave Coast (southern Togo and Benin) as well as the Loango Coast (coastal Gabon, Congo, DR Congo, and Cabinda Angola), resulting in a much greater number of labourers per plantation than before. By the end of the 1680s, "the black population had more than quintupled because of new arrivals from Africa" (Arends 2002: 121). Thus, every pre-1680 arrival was surrounded by five or six new arrivals. At the same time societal structure became more complex, differentiating between categories of persons not only on the basis of ethnicity (European vs. African) and status (enslaved, indentured, manumissioned, free), but also on the basis of place of birth (locally-born vs. foreign-born), place of residence (city vs. plantation; older plantations vs. more recently founded plan-

tations), length of residence (recently arrived vs. longer ago), etc. Social distance between these groups increased, and certain variants of speech became associated with the different groups, giving rise to different regional varieties, diverse social registers, and distinctive styles of Sranan.

From the 1690s until the financial crisis of the 1770s, Suriname experienced economical expansion mainly due to large-scale sugar production. Despite the high death rate, the slave population of Suriname increased dramatically from some 4,000 in 1690 to some 60,000 in 1775 due to continuous importation of enslaved Africans. New arrivals from Africa outnumbered the existing population every three to five years during the first fifty years and almost every ten years during the next fifty years, resulting in "an ongoing stream of cultural and linguistic input from Africa which lasted until the last quarter of the eighteenth century" (Arends 1995: 269). In contrast, the European population increased from 379 in 1695 to some 2,000 in 1775 (Arends 1995). From the 1690s onwards the number of free blacks and people of mixed European–African background also increased, albeit at a lower rate. In 1762 the number of free blacks amounted to 330 out of the total population of 2,720 free men and women; free blacks counted 589 out of a total of 2,722 free persons in 1783 (Dragtenstein 2002). While Suriname was officially a Dutch colony, the population included various European nationalities in addition to the Dutch. In 1737, for example, half of the plantations were in the possession of non-Dutch owners including Portuguese, French, English, and Germans among others.

### 3. Sociolinguistic situation

Due to its migration history, Suriname was a multilingual state already in the eighteenth century. In addition to the Amerindian languages of the native population of Suriname, European languages such as Dutch, English, Scots, Irish, French, Portuguese, German, and Danish, and their dialects, as well as multiple African languages such as Kikongo, the Gbe languages, and the Akan languages were spoken by its inhabitants. Sranan emerged as an interethnic means of communication among (descendants of) enslaved Africans and European plantation personnel. Variation in Sranan was encountered along geographical, stylistic, as well as social dimensions already in the early stages of its development. In several historical sources the phonological, grammatical, semantic, and pragmatic differences between these varieties of the language are acknowledged, and some varieties appear to have been so different that they are known under distinct names. For example, in Schumann's Sranan–German dictionary of 1783, we find references to *Plantasi tongo* (plantation language), *Foto tongo* (city language), *Dju-tongo* (Jew language), *Ningre tongo* (negro language) as well as *English tongo* (English language):

- (1) *bringi*, gebären. *na Fotto dem no habi da mufè so menni; da Djutongo; ma nufè plantasi habi hem. Tog wan reti Fotto-kriolo ben takki: isredeh mi kau bringi wan mannpikin* 'bringi, deliver. In the city they do not use this word as much; it is Djutongo. But plenty plantations have it. However, a real city black said: yesterday my cow gave birth to a bulcalf.' (Schumann 1783: 22)
- (2) *brens*, das Gehirn, *tuntum va heddi* (Engl. brains) *da reti English tongo; "wi" no habi hem, kaba dem fotto Ningre no jeri hem kwetikmeti, na dem oure English plantasi dem habi hem; mi no takki tarrafasi, leki: tuntum va heddi.* 'brens, brains. *tuntum va heddi* (Engl. Brains). That's really English. We do not have it, and the city blacks do not really have it, but on the old English plantation they have it, we do not say it differently, like *tuntum va heddi*.' (Schumann 1783: 21)

#### 4. Phonology

In this section, we will restrict our attention to eighteenth-century sources. The data we have used are taken from Herlein (1718), J. Nepveu (1770), van Dyk (c.1765), all three in Arends & Perl (1995); van den Berg (2000) on court records up to 1767; Arends & van den Berg (2004) on the Sranan version of the 1762 peace treaty with the Saramaccan tribe; and Kramp (1983) on Schumann's (1783) manuscript dictionary.

##### 4.1. Introduction

The main obvious differences and problems concerning eighteenth-century Sranan are found in the consonantal system. Two related questions refer to the labial and alveolar fricatives. Are what are written with ⟨v⟩ and ⟨z⟩ to be interpreted as voiced fricatives? Our answer will be in the negative. We claim that written ⟨v⟩ and ⟨f⟩ both represent the phoneme /f/. Similarly, ⟨z⟩ and ⟨s⟩ both represent the phoneme /s/.

Another question concerns ⟨h⟩. This is written sometimes in a group of lexical items of European origin, not coterminous with the words in the source languages. In another group of words it never occurs. In this case we recognize a phoneme /h/, which, however, is not always realized.

Another, more complicated, problem concerns the liquids, written as ⟨l⟩ and ⟨r⟩. We will provide brief evidence that we should recognize two phonemes, /l/ and /r/. /l/ has generally two allophones in free variation, [l] and [r]. /r/ is always represented by [r].

A problem concerns a possible phoneme /ʃ/. It exists in present-day Sranan, and is also reflected in the eighteenth-century sources. Sometimes, however, it appears as /s/. The simplest interpretation of this fact would seem to be that eighteenth-century Sranan had variation of some kind.

The interpretation of the digraph ⟨ng⟩ is potentially unclear. In modern Sranan this represents a phoneme /ŋ/. In Saramaccan, however, this corresponds to biphonemic /ŋɡ/. As this is also the case in Ndyuka—derived from an eighteenth-century plantation variety of Sranan—we will assume that the same applies to eighteenth-century Sranan.

We will briefly mention a problem of interpretation concerning the vowel system, but will conclude that there is no solid evidence that eighteenth-century Sranan had other than a simple triangular vowel system with five vowels.

We will assume that the other segments of eighteenth-century and modern Sranan are the same although the shape of words may differ.

##### 4.2. The labial fricatives

Schumann (1783) has ⟨f⟩ in most cases. He spells certain words consistently with ⟨v⟩, such as ⟨vo, va⟩ 'of, for', but this tells us nothing as German orthography uses ⟨v, f⟩ indifferently for /f/. He is also undoubtedly the most reliable source we have for eighteenth-century Sranan, with his considerable experience as a linguistic fieldworker. He had previously worked on Saramaccan, and on Arawak in British Guiana.

J. Nepveu (1770), too, is very consistent—the only morpheme where he uses ⟨v⟩ being ⟨vijffie⟩ 'five'. Van Dyk (c.1765) apparently uses ⟨v⟩ and ⟨f⟩ indifferently, including in the same items: ⟨foele⟩ and ⟨voele⟩ 'full' (modern /furu/); ⟨vyfi⟩ and ⟨fyfi⟩ 'five' (modern /feifi/); ⟨foetten⟩ and ⟨voete⟩ 'foot, leg' (modern /futu/); and ⟨vredi⟩ and ⟨fredi⟩ 'to fear' (modern /frede/). So it appears that no phonemic distinction can be found in his work.

The court proceedings (van den Berg 2000) cover much of the century, and are very variable as between ⟨v⟩ and ⟨f⟩. No evidence for phonemic distinctiveness can be extracted from this material.

Our conclusion is that the English-derived (and Dutch-derived) lexical items with ⟨v⟩ and ⟨f⟩ all represent /f/. Note that all examples of English words with English /v/ except two display /b/ in the Sranan material, from Herlein's ⟨belle⟩ 'very' in 1718 onwards. The two exceptions are also from Herlein—⟨lievy⟩ 'to live' (modern /libi/), and ⟨love⟩ 'to love' (modern /lobi/). Herlein is not always a very reliable source, although not as unreliable as some authors make out.

It appears that eighteenth-century Sranan did have a marginal phoneme /v/, however. Schumann (1783) seems to employ ⟨w⟩ for both /w/ and /v/, due to the limitations imposed by German orthography. An example would be ⟨awò⟩ 'grandparent', from Portuguese *avó* 'grandfather', the plural of which is used in the more general meaning 'grandparents'. For Saramaccan, Schumann (1778) gives the somewhat more distinct ⟨awwò⟩. He employs only ⟨ww⟩ to mean /v/ in that language. In the modern languages we find Saramaccan /avó/ and Sranan /afò/. Sranan now has no /v/-phoneme.

#### 4.3. The alveolar fricatives

The situation with these is much clearer. Van Dyk (c.1765) is the only source to use ⟨z⟩ frequently, and even he is by no means consistent in his usage. Thus, we find ⟨somma⟩ and ⟨zomma⟩ 'person' (modern /suma/); and ⟨sosoe⟩ and ⟨zoe zoe⟩ 'shoe' (modern /susu/).

The reason for this may be that in the Dutch of at least some of the sources ⟨s⟩ is written where modern Dutch has ⟨z⟩.

We conclude that there is no clear evidence for the use of a phoneme /z/ in eighteenth-century Sranan.

#### 4.4. An /h/-phoneme?

In general, words corresponding to English words<sup>2</sup> with /h/ tend to exhibit forms in /h/ up to the very reliable Focke (1855). Modern Sranan seems not to have a distinct phoneme any longer. Some words have the /h/-phoneme in eighteenth-century Sranan that lack this in English, such as *eye*, *ask*, (*w*)*ood*, *answer*, and sometimes (*w*)*oman*. We are reminded here that in the substandard Cockney English of London [h] appears with great inconsistency, and these words may be a reflection of that type of London English. We assume that eighteenth-century Sranan had an /h/-phoneme.

#### 4.5. The liquids

A fascinating problem is that of the liquids. We find that in most contexts there is reason to distinguish two phonemes /l/ and /r/, although their realizations may overlap. Smith (1987) notes a gradual change from the earliest sources, where /l/ and /r/ may be hypothesized to have been basically distinct, up to the present situation of near-complementary distribution.

For the eighteenth century we can state the following majority realizations of English-derived words:

- (3) Initial (modern /l/)
  - /l/ [l]
  - /r/ [r~l]
- (4) Intervocalic (modern usually /r/)
  - /l/ [l~r]
  - /r/ [r]

From these two contexts we can see that the trend towards virtual neutralization of the liquids had already started more than two hundred years ago.

- (5) Final post-vocalic (usually /r/ (with final vowel), or no liquid in some r-words)
  - /l/ mid-18th c. [l], late 18th c. [l~r]
  - /r/ [r] (or no liquid in some words)

<sup>2</sup> We refer here to Early Modern English of the mid-17th century.

- (6) Initial cluster CL (modern usually Cr)
  - /l/ mid-18th c. [l], late 18th c. [l~r]
  - /r/ [r]
- (7) Final cluster LC (modern /r/ (or no liquid in some r-words))
  - /l/ only two words: *help*, and *self*. Inconsistent picture.
  - /r/ [r] (or no liquid in some words)
- (8) Final CəL (modern /r/ (or no liquid in some r-words))
  - /l/ [l~r]
  - /r/ [r] (or no liquid in some words)

#### 4.6. Possible palato-alveolar fricative

The palato-alveolar fricative /ʃ/ appears only in a part of the words exhibiting this sound in English. These are: *ship* (optional), *shilling*, *shake*, *shame*, *shore* (optional), *short*, and *shoot*. Of these, only *shame*, *short*, and *shore* still have this rare phoneme in modern Sranan. The full range occurs in Schumann (1783), which we assume is largely based on Paramaribo Sranan. Van Dyk (c.1765) has ⟨soeti⟩ 'shoot' (modern /sutu/) and ⟨zatte⟩ 'short' (modern /ʃatu/), which may illustrate Plantation Sranan.

It should be mentioned that the initial sequence /si/ in Modern Sranan may be pronounced [ʃi]. This is a slightly different case, which may also be relevant for Schumann's (1783) case of *ship*.

#### 4.7. The vowel system

Modern Sranan has a triangular five-vowel system /i, e, a, o, u/, as does Ndyuka, its early eighteenth-century offshoot. In contrast, Saramaccan has two extra mid vowels /ɛ, ɔ/. As these languages are clearly significantly related, we would like to be able to say that either Sranan has lost two mid vowels, or that Saramaccan has gained two. Unfortunately it is not clear which of these two shifts has taken place. This requires a thorough study. In the absence of such we will assume that the fact that Ndyuka also has a five-vowel system represents evidence that this was the situation in eighteenth-century Sranan.

#### 4.8. The phonological system of eighteenth-century Sranan

Our conclusion vis-à-vis the eighteenth-century segmental systems is given in Tables 1 and 2. Vowel-vowel sequences all end in ⟨i, y⟩ or ⟨u, w⟩. In such cases the second vocalic element will be regarded as a glide.

Table 1. Vowels (like modern Sranan)

	Front	Central	Back
Close	i		u
Mid	e		o
Open		a	



Table 2. Consonants

		Labial	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosive	voiceless	p	t		k	
	voiced	b	d		g	
Affricate	voiceless			tʃ		
	voiced			dʒ		
Nasal		m	n	ɲ		
Fricative	voiceless	f	s	ʃ		h <sup>a</sup>
	voiced	v <sup>a</sup>				
Lateral/rhotic			l, r			
Glide		w		j		

<sup>a</sup> Absent in modern Sranan.

The phonotactics of the consonantal phonemes appear to be slightly different. So final (coda) /m/ appears to be possible in words like /tem/ 'time'. In modern Sranan this word would be realized as [tɪ, tɪŋ, tɪŋ], all of these representing /tɪ/. In other words, eighteenth-century Sranan—or some speakers—had a contrast between what was written as final ⟨m⟩ and final ⟨n⟩. Other speakers may have had something similar to the present situation. This is maybe indicated by the occasional final writing of ⟨ng⟩. Confusion also occurs with final ⟨m⟩ appearing in words where ⟨n⟩ would be expected. So there is evidence of variation.

In connection with our conclusion above that the digraph ⟨ng⟩ probably represents biphonemic /ng/, we assume that this was pronounced [ŋg], as in Ndyuka and Saramaccan.

The modern allophony of [k] ~ [tʃ] and [g] ~ [dʒ] before front vowels is not widely represented in the eighteenth-century sources. However, ⟨tje⟩ and ⟨ke⟩ (derived from English *care*) occur as variants in Schumann (1783), so it would appear that this allophony already existed. Schumann's Saramaccan wordlist shows more evidence of this with, for example, ⟨tchimà~kjmà⟩ 'burn' <Portuguese *queimar*, and ⟨tchenni⟩ 'sugar-cane' (modern Sranan /ken/). Schumann also has ⟨djenti⟩ 'against the stream', where the first part is clearly derived from English *gain* 'opposite', although no compound *gain-tide* is recorded from English. The second part appears to represent Dutch *tij* 'tide', and the whole seems to be a partial calque on Dutch *tegen(-)tij* 'opposing tide'. Arends and van den Berg (2004) give ⟨Ingien⟩ 'Indian' from the 1762 treaty corresponding to ⟨Indjin, Indji⟩ in Schumann (1783).

It is clear from some eighteenth-century recordings that some later clusters had epenthetic vowels at that time. Compare forms like the following from the Saramaccan Peace Treaty of 1762 (Arends & van den Berg 2004):

⟨hakisi⟩	'ask'	<i>aksi</i>
⟨masara⟩	'master'	<i>masra</i>
⟨Saranam⟩	'Suriname River'	<i>Sranan</i>
⟨bacara⟩	'white man'	<i>bakra</i>

⟨korosie bay⟩	'close by'	<i>krosbay</i>
⟨couroctoe⟩	'court'	<i>krutu</i>
⟨dewengie⟩	'force'	<i>dwengi</i> (< Dutch <i>dwingen</i> )
⟨serefie⟩	'self'	<i>srefi</i>
⟨kibirie⟩	'hide'	<i>kibri</i>
⟨abara⟩	'over'	<i>abra</i>
⟨garan man⟩	'chief'	<i>granman</i>

In Schumann (1783) such forms do occur in a more restricted form, so ⟨sikisi⟩ is given as an alternant of ⟨siksi⟩ 'six', which we can interpret as an indication that these forms were syncopeing at that time.

In addition, Schumann gives examples of occasional forms with coda /l/ and /r/, e.g. ⟨furfurman⟩ varying with ⟨fufurman⟩ 'thief'. Compare ⟨voevoeroeman⟩ from the court records for 1763 (van den Berg 2000).

So, all in all, the sound system of eighteenth-century Sranan did not differ all that much from that pertaining 200 years later. A number of tendencies carried through in the present language were already nascent in the eighteenth century.

## 5. Noun phrase

Early Sranan nouns are generally not marked for plurality or natural gender, although compounding with *man*- 'male' or *uman*- 'female' can bring out gender distinctions on nouns that refer to animate beings (*mann-doksi* 'male-duck', *uman-doksi* 'female-duck', Schumann (1783: 33)). Indefinite nominal plurals appear always as unmodified bare nouns, but bare nouns are in principle neutral with respect to definiteness, specificity, referentiality, and number delimitation (Bruyn 2007).

- (9) [...] *foe bakara kann doe nanga hem so allequi dem*  
 for European can do with 3SG so like 2PL  
*sa membre à sa boen.*  
 FUT think 3SG FUT good  
 '[...] so that the whites can do with him like they will think it is good.' (Saramaccan Peace Treaty 1762: 181)

The use of bare nouns alternates with that of overt articles in Early Sranan, in the case of generics as well as singular definite nominals; see (10).

- (10) *Joe zoete da negere retti na ini Ø hede.*  
 2SG shoot DEF black right at in head  
 'You've shot the black right in the (his) head.'  
 (van Dyk c.1765: 81)

Definite nominals can be overtly marked by indefinite and definite articles as well as the proximal demonstrative: *wan* (indefinite, singular), *da* (definite, singular), *dem* (definite, plural), *di(si)* (proximal, singular and plural). *Da* and *dem* function as definite articles as well as (distal) demonstratives, having

a stronger deictic potential than their contemporary counterparts. While in contemporary Sranan the definite plural article *dem* occasionally follows the noun, and demonstratives always follow the noun, articles and demonstratives always occur in prenominal position in Early Sranan.

- (11) *Noefe zomma de zoo liki hem na disi kondere.*  
 enough person COP so like 3SG LOC this country  
 'There are plenty of people like him in this country.' (van Dyk c.1765: 98)

Features such as gender, animacy, and inclusive/exclusive are not expressed in the Early Sranan pronominal system. Personal pronouns (shown in Table 3) are invariant for grammatical function except for the third person singular pronoun: the dependent third-person-singular subject pronoun is *a*, while the form *hem* occurs in direct, indirect, and oblique object position. *Hem* in subject position indicates emphasis.

- (12) *Lukku da Missi, dissi de komm, hem ben bai da*  
 look that lady REL ASP come 3SG-EMPH PST buy that  
*Ningre uman nanga hem pikin, va a komm hem*  
 black woman and 3SG child to 3SG come 3SG  
*futuboi, va a workogi hem.*  
 servant to 3SG work for 3SG.OBJ  
 'Look, that lady, that is coming, she bought that black woman, with her, child, in order to make her, her, servant, so that she, will work for her.' (Schumann 1783: 65)

Pronouns in possessive constructions can simply precede the noun (13), or they occur in a postposed prepositional construction in which variants of *fu* function as a possessive marker linking the possessor pronoun to the possessee (14).

- (13) *Alla janjam na mi djari no repi jette.*  
 all food LOC 1SG garden NEG ripe yet  
 'All the edible fruits off/in my garden are not ripe yet.' (Schumann 1783: 71)
- (14) *Jou no meester vor mi.*  
 2SG NEG master of 1SG  
 'You are not my master.' (Court Records 1707)

These two strategies can be combined, as in (15).

- (15) *Dem sa moessoe callie neem foe alla den hedieman*  
 3PL FUT must call name of all the.PL head.man  
*foe dem condre.*  
 of 3PL country

'They will have to report the names of all the chiefs of their villages.' (Saramaccan Peace Treaty 1762: art.4)

Possessor and possessee can also be linked by an intervening pronominal possessor that is coreferential with the preposed possessor, as in (16).

- (16) *mie Pickien em Oema*  
 1SG child 3SG woman  
 'my son's wife, daughter in law' (Weygandt 1798: 15)

Adnominal possessives and pronominal possessives have the same form as personal pronouns, although they can alternatively co-occur with the intensifier *srefi* (<Dutch *zelf*(s) 'self, own, even').

- (17) *Kaba ibriman spelle habi tongo va hem srefi.*  
 but each species has language of 3SG self  
 'But each ethnic group has his own language.' (Schumann 1783: 74)

Numerals are generally derived from English, except for *nine*, which alternatively appears as *neni* (<English *nine*) or *ne(e)gi(e)n* (<Dutch *neegen* 'nine') in the sources. Cardinal numerals ranging from ten to twenty are derived by combining the form *ti(e)n(n)a* [ten.with] with one of the basic forms (*tiennaman* [ten.with.one] 'eleven'; *tiennatwe* [ten.with.two] 'twelve'; Weygandt (1798: 10). Numerals ranging from twenty to thirty are formed by (a) combining a numeral base with the suffix *-tentin*, or (b) by combining *twintig* 'twenty' (<Dutch *twintig*) or *twenti* (<English *twenty*) and a basic numerical form. The suffix *-tentin* derives numerals ranging from thirty to ninety when it is attached to a numeral base denoting a numeral between three and nine in most of the sources, although occasionally the suffix *-tien* is found instead of *-tentin*.

- (18) *fohondro nanga feiftentin na siksi*  
 four.hundred and fifty with six  
 'four hundred and fifty six' (Schumann 1783: 66)

## 6. Verb phrase

Not every verb is marked visibly for tense, mood, and aspect in Early Sranan. By default, stative verbs such as *lobbi* 'like, love' have no overt marker to express present time reference, and non-statives such as *pulu* 'remove' are not preceded by a marker expressing past time reference, as long as the point of reference is the speech time (as in contemporary Sranan; Winford 2000), but this is not categorical. Examples are presented below:

Table 3. Personal pronouns

	Ordinary pronouns	Reflexive pronouns
1SG	<i>mi</i>	<i>mi(srefi)</i>
2SG	<i>ju</i>	<i>ju(srefi)</i>
3SG	<i>hem, a</i>	<i>hem(srefi)</i>
1PL	<i>wi</i>	<i>wi(srefi)</i>
2PL	<i>unu</i>	<i>unu(srefi)</i>
3PL	<i>dem</i>	<i>dem(srefi)</i>

- (19) *A lobbi va trobbi somma.*  
3SG like to trouble person  
[‘Er plagt einen gar zu gern.’]  
‘He likes to give someone a hard time.’ (Schumann 1783: 160)
- (20) *Dem pulu hem na Gemeente.*  
3PL remove 3SG LOC congregation  
[‘Er ist aus der Gemeinde ausgethan, ausgeschlossen.’]  
‘They removed him from the congregation.’ (Schumann 1783: 142)

Furthermore, Early Sranan verbs may be unmarked for tense and aspect if a temporal adverb or a time adverb clause is present (van den Berg 2007). Imperfective aspect is not categorically marked in Early Sranan as it is in contemporary Sranan. Emphasis seems to play a role, a strategy that is also found in contemporary L2 varieties of Sranan and Ndyuka (Migge & van den Berg 2009).

The categories of Tense and Aspect can be overtly expressed by preverbal invariant free forms such as *ben* (relative past) and *de* (imperfective aspect); see Table 4. **Completive perfect** is expressed by *kaba* ‘finish, already’ in postverbal as well as in sentence-final position; it can be used interchangeably with *a(l)redi* ‘already’ (*bakratongo*).

- (21) *Al doe langa hem caba.*  
1SG do with 3SG already  
‘I am done with him (already).’ (CR 1745)
- (22) *A lassi al-reddi.*  
3SG expire al-ready  
‘He expired already.’ (VD c.1765: 75)

The modal categories of Early Sranan are expressed by auxiliary verbs such as *mu(su)* ‘must’ (deontic and epistemic necessity, obligation), *kan* ‘can, be able’ (dynamic, deontic, and epistemic possibility, permissibility) and *man(ni)* ‘want’ (need, desire). They precede the main verb or a reduced sentential complement that is introduced by (variants of) the complementizer *fu*.

Table 4. Tense and aspect in Early Sranan

Form	Category	Meanings
<i>ben</i>	Relative past	Past events before speech time or another reference point in the past; background past
<i>de</i>	Imperfective aspect	Situation is unbounded and ongoing at reference time; habitual; continuous, progressive, ingressive; emphasis
<i>de go</i>	Predictive future	Later time reference; intention or prediction
<i>kaba</i>	Completive perfect	Perfect of result with non-statives; ‘already’ with statives

- (23) *Al no ha tiffi morro, mi no kann kau.*  
1SG NEG have teeth more 1SG NEG can chew  
‘I don’t have teeth anymore, I cannot chew.’  
(Schumann 1783: 81)
- (24) *Ju no kann vo du, “mi”sa du.*  
2SG NEG can to do 1SG FUT do  
‘When you cannot do it, I will do it.’ (Schumann 1783: 79)

While the auxiliary *man* ‘can’ expresses negative dynamic (root) possibility in contemporary Sranan, this was not yet the case in the eighteenth century. The form *man* (<English *man*/Dutch *man*) grammaticalized from a noun to a verb expressing (physical) ability in the course of the eighteenth century. By the end of the eighteenth century it appears with TMA markers and reduced sentential complements, but not yet bare lexical complements.

- (25) *Ju sa mann va tjarri datti?*  
2SG POT able to carry that  
‘Will you be able to lift that?’ (Schumann 1783: 107)

Other modal constructions include *sabi (fu)* ‘know’ (learned ability), *lobbi (fu)* ‘like, love’ (desire), *habi fan doe* [lit. have of do] ‘need’ (<Dutch *van doen hebben*), *habi mroko nanga* [lit. have work with] ‘need’, *habi fu* ‘have to’ (obligation), etc.

We have not yet addressed *sa* (<English *shall* or Dutch *zal*). In contemporary Sranan as well as Nengee (Ndyuka, Aluku, and Paamaka) *sa* conveys modal senses such as expected future and inferred certainty (Sranan) and physical ability, deontic possibility, and permission (Nengee), whereas later time reference is marked by *o* (<*go*), which further has strong overtones of prediction. Early Sranan *sa*, on the other hand, appears to have been primarily used to express expected future and inferred certainty in addition to later time reference, while Early Sranan *go* occurs most frequently as a main verb expressing movement. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, *go* appears in more complex constructions, that is, (a) in combination with other verbs or (b) preceded by *de* and followed by a main verb (*de go V*), where it expresses predictive or prospective future. At the same time the meanings of *sa*, too, seem to shift, so that *sa* and (*de*) *go* came to be used to express different degrees of commitment of the speaker to the likelihood of the occurrence of the event.

- (26) *Al go brokko hem heddi, bikasi dem oureman de*  
1SG FUT break 3SG head because 3PL old.one ASP  
*morro tschattu.*  
more small  
‘I will break its top off, because the old ones (trees) are smaller.’ (Schumann 1783: 135)
- (27) *Al sa brokko ju tranga heddi.*  
1SG FUT break 2SG strong head  
‘I will break your strong head.’ (Schumann 1783: 22)

Furthermore, groups of speakers of Early Sranan display differences in the uses of these markers: *sa* and (*de*) *go* seem less differentiated in their respective uses in the variety of Early Sranan spoken by the Europeans (*bakratongo*) than in the variety of Early Sranan of the enslaved Africans and their descendants (*ningretongo*). Africans seem to use *de go* in contexts where Europeans appear to use *sa*:

- (28) *Da gotro sa kalfé.*  
the trench FUT collapse  
'The trench is going to collapse.'  
(*bakratongo*, Schumann 1783: 78)

- (29) *Da gotro de go brokko.*  
the trench ASP FUT break  
'The trench is going to collapse.'  
(*ningretongo*, Schumann 1783: 78)

## 7. Simple sentences

Proper inclusion, equation, location, existence, and possession can be expressed by predicate nominals. In the early stages of the emerging language these constructions are copula-less, but from the mid-eighteenth century onwards the copulas *da* and *de* are increasingly (but not categorically) used in presentative constructions (*da no boesie neger* 'it's not a Maroon', CR 1757), predicate nominals (*mi da bossiman* 'I am a Maroon', CR 1761; *mi de porisomma* 'we are deprived people', Schumann 1783: 140) and predicate locatives/existentials (*hoe sambre dee* 'who is there?' CR 1745). From the late eighteenth century onwards *da* is used frequently, though not categorically, for the expression of equation and *de* for proper inclusion. The time-independent category of equation is expressed by the copula *da*, whereas the time-dependent category of proper inclusion is marked by the copula *de*; the former cannot be tensed, the latter can be (Arends 1989).

The basic constituent order of a declarative clause, or any type of clause, in Early Sranan is Subject-Verb(-Object). The negative particle *no* is usually positioned between the subject and the verb, preceding tense, mood, and aspect markers and auxiliaries (clausal negation) (as in example 13). In addition, the negator can precede a particular constituent (constituent negation):

- (30) *Jou no meester vor mi.*  
2SG NEG master for 1SG  
'You are not my master.' (CR 1707)

Due to negative focus *no* can occur in clause-initial position:

- (31) *No hem mi haksi.*  
NEG 3SG 1SG ask  
'I have not asked HER.' (Schumann 1783: 124)

- (32) *No mi haksi hem.*  
NEG 1SG ask 3SG  
'It wasn't me who asked him.' (Schumann 1783: 124)

Clausal negation can co-occur with constituent negation as well as with negative quantifiers:

- (33) *Effi innirvan nengre kom na dem, dem no sa holli*  
if anyone black come LOC 3PL 3PL NEG FUT hold  
*no man nimbre.*  
NEG one never  
'If any black comes to them, they will never keep any of them.' (SPT 1762)

Early Sranan interrogative clauses include yes-no questions as well as question-word questions, which differ from other types of clause in that they have a final rising intonation (Schumann 1783: 57). A request for confirmation can be made explicitly by adding a tag such as *no* or (*a*) *no tru* to the yes-no question:

- (34) *Ju lau no?*  
2SG mad TAG  
'You're mad, right?' (Schumann 1783: 124)

Almost all Early Sranan question words are analytic; they consist of (variants of) the question particle *hu* (<English *which*) and a questioned semantic unit (Smith 1987; Muysken & Smith 1990; Arends 1995; Bruyn 1995). The only exceptions are *somma* 'who, person' and *san(ni)* 'what, thing', which can function as question words without the question particle *hu* (Bruyn 1995).

Basic imperatives and prohibitives are generally subjectless; the second-person-singular or plural pronoun can be included for extra emphasis on the addressee(s) or as a politeness marker. Other types of imperative are *go*-imperatives, *kom*-imperatives and *meki*-imperatives. *Go*-imperatives and *kom*-imperatives are directional. A *go*-imperative expresses an action directed away from the speaker, while the *kom*-imperative expresses an action directed towards the speaker.

- (35) *Goo selle joe voule!*  
go sell 2SG poultry  
'Go sell your chickens!' (CR 1763)

- (36) *Kom bossie mie wantem!*  
come kiss 1SG once  
'Come kiss me!' (Herlein 1718: 122)

*Meki*-imperatives, used to express 3rd person imperatives, are marked by the causative verb *meki* 'make, cause to happen, let' in clause-initial position, before the subject.

- (37) *Mekka tan booy!*  
make.3SG stay boy  
'Let him stay, boy!' (CR 1747)



Table 5. Coordination in Early Sranan and contemporary Ndyuka and Sranan

Early Sranan form	Type of coordination	Ndyuka	Sranan
<i>en</i> 'and'	Conjunctive	<i>ne, neen</i>	<i>en</i>
<i>dan</i> 'then'	Conjunctive	<i>da</i>	<i>dan</i>
<i>so srefi</i> 'in the same way, also'	Conjunctive	<i>soseefi</i>	<i>sosrefi</i>
<i>(da) so</i> 'in this way, thus'	Conjunctive	—	<i>(na) so</i>
<i>nanga/landa</i> 'and'	Conjunctive	<i>anga (fu)</i>	—
<i>kaba</i> 'and (then), but'	Conjunctive, adversative	—	<i>kaba</i>
<i>ma(ra)</i> 'but'	Adversative (contrast, counterexpectation)	<i>ma</i>	<i>ma</i>
<i>noso</i> 'but'	Adversative (contrast)	—	<i>noso</i>
<i>tog/toku</i> 'still, yet'	Adversative (counterexpectation)	<i>toku</i>	<i>toku</i>
<i>efu, ofu, efi</i> 'or'	Disjunctive	<i>efu, ofu, efi</i>	<i>efi, efu</i>

## 8. Complex sentences

Complex sentences may consist of coordinate clauses that express conjunction, disjunction, or adversative coordination. In Early Sranan, such clauses can be linked by a coordinator or they may be juxtaposed (parataxis). All coordinators are prepositional and precede the second coordinand. An overview of coordinators in Early Sranan and contemporary Ndyuka and Sranan is presented in Table 5.

Subordinate clauses can be introduced by a complementizer such as *dati* 'that' in the case of sentential complements

(not obligatory), or variants of *fu* in the case of reduced complement clauses. The use of *taki* (<*taki* 'say' < English *talk*) as a complementizer is restricted to utterance, thought, and perception predicates in the eighteenth-century sources.

The relative pronoun *disi* can occur with headed (38) as well as with free relative clauses (39):

- (38) *Joe ben zi hem na da man disi zire boeki.*  
 2SG PST see 3SG LOC the man REL sell book  
 'You have seen him at the booksellers.' (VD c.1765: 31)
- (39) *Mi man trom bakke fo tikki disi libi abere.*  
 1SG want turn back to take REL leave over  
 'I wanted to go back to get the ones that were left over.'  
 (VD c.1765: 89)

Besides the relative pronoun *disi*, a relative clause or phrase can be marked by *da-pe* ([that-place] 'where') in the case of a locative relative, or by *da-tem* ([that-time] 'when') in the case of a temporal relative (Bruyn 1995).

Adverbial clauses can be introduced by a clause-initial conjunction, although this is not obligatory. Table 6 presents an overview of the various conjunctions and types of adverbial clause in Early Sranan and their equivalents in contemporary Ndyuka and Sranan.

Table 7 summarizes the various types of serial verb construction (SVC) found in the sources, including motion/change of location SVCs and thematic-role-introducing SVCs.

Three types of comparative construction are encountered in Early Sranan, see Table 8.

Table 6. Adverbial clauses in Early Sranan and contemporary Ndyuka and Sranan

Early Sranan form	Type of adverbial clause	Ndyuka	Sranan
<i>datem</i> 'when'	Time	—	<i>otem</i> 'when'
<i>te</i> 'when; until'	Time	<i>te</i> 'when'	<i>te</i> 'when'
<i>di(si)</i> 'when, while, because'	Time, cause	<i>di</i> 'when; while, because'	<i>di</i> 'when, while, because'
<i>befo(sie)</i> 'before'	Time	<i>fosi</i> 'before'	<i>bifo; fosi</i> 'before'
<i>(na) baka (disi)</i> 'after'	Time	<i>(na) baka (di)</i>	<i>baka di</i> 'after'
<i>sensi</i> 'since'	Time	<i>sensi</i> 'since'	<i>sensi</i> 'after'
<i>dapeh/daplessie</i> 'where'	Locative	<i>pe</i> 'where'	<i>pe</i> 'where'
<i>(hu)fa</i> 'how'	Manner	<i>enkefa</i> 'how'	<i>fa</i> 'how'
<i>(so)leki</i> 'like'	Manner, degree (equative)	<i>enke</i> 'like'	<i>leki</i> 'like'
<i>fu</i> 'for'	Purpose	<i>fu, fi</i> 'for'	<i>fu</i> 'for'
<i>bika(si)</i> 'because'	Cause	<i>bika</i> 'because'	<i>bika</i> 'because'
<i>fu di(si)</i> 'because'	Cause	<i>fu di</i> 'because, since'	<i>fu di</i> 'because'
<i>efilefu/ofu</i> 'if'	Conditional	<i>(e)fu/(o)fulfi</i> 'if'	<i>efilefu</i> 'if'
<i>alwasi</i> 'even if/though'	Concessive	<i>(a)winsi/(a)wansi</i>	<i>awansi/awinsi</i>
<i>te</i> 'when, until'	Circumstance	<i>te</i> 'when, until'	<i>te</i> 'when, until'
<i>sondro (fu)</i> 'without'	Circumstance	<i>sondee fu</i> 'without'	<i>sondro</i> 'without'

Table 7. Serial verb constructions in Early Sranan and contemporary Ndyuka and Sranan

Early Sranan V2	Type of SVC	Ndyuka V2 <sup>a</sup>	Sranan V2
<i>go</i> 'go'	Motion/change of loc.	<i>go</i>	<i>go</i>
<i>kom</i> 'kom'	Motion/change of loc.	<i>kom</i>	<i>kom</i>
<i>romboto</i> 'go around'	Motion/change of loc.	<i>lontu</i>	<i>romboto; lomboto; lontu</i>
<i>komopo/komoto</i> 'come out'	Motion/change of loc.	<i>komoto</i>	<i>komopo</i>
<i>doro</i> 'go through, arrive'	Motion/change of loc.	<i>do</i>	<i>doro</i>
—	Motion/change of loc.	<i>pasa</i> 'pass'	<i>psa</i> 'pass'
—	Motion/change of loc.	<i>puti</i> 'put'	?
<i>taki</i> 'say'	Them. role: THEME	<i>taki</i> 'say'	<i>taki</i>
<i>moro</i> 'to outdo'	Them. role: COMPARATIVE	<i>moo</i>	<i>moro</i>
<i>gi</i> 'give'	Them. role: BENEFICIENT	<i>gi</i>	<i>gi</i>
—	Them. role: CAUSE	<i>teki</i> 'take'	<i>teki</i>
—	Them. role: COMITATIVE	<i>tja</i> 'carry'	?

<sup>a</sup> Source: Migge (1998), Huttar & Huttar (1994)

Table 8. Comparative constructions in Early Sranan

Type of construction	Description	Example
Allative comparative	X big TO/FOR Y	<i>A grandi va mi.</i> 3SG old to/for 1SG 'He is older than me.' (Schumann 1783: 53)
Exceed-1 comparative	X big EXCEED Y	<i>A biggi morro mi.</i> 3SG big outdo 1SG 'He is fatter than me.' (Schumann 1783: 17)
Particle comparative (particle <i>leki</i> or <i>na</i> )	X big <i>leki/na</i> Y	<i>Ju de morro langa leki mi.</i> 1SG COP more long like 1SG 'You are taller than me.' (Schumann 1783: 98)

## Glossed text

The following lines, taken from the play in van Dyk's (c.1765) language manual, present a detailed account of a plantation funeral that is generally considered to be true to life (van Trier-Guicherit 1991).

*Zwarte Officier* ('Black Overseer');

*Tappe kissi myki mi go mastra negere*  
close coffin make 1PL go master black  
'Close the coffin, let's go. Gentlemen,

*oenno zikkessi zomma ope da homen*  
2PL six person lift DET.SG woman  
you six persons, lift up the woman.

*hoe ply den homan lange negere alle*  
Q place DET.PL woman with black all  
Where is the woman with all the blacks?

*oenno makke na hippikry man moe*  
2PL walk LOC heap wail man must  
You must walk as a group, the wailers must

*makke na fessi oenno na vergiti man*  
walk LOC face 2PL NEG forget one  
walk at the front. Don't forget a

*zanti kongo-kongo.*  
thing come-go  
thing! Come, come!

*Zangers* ('Singers');

*Da zo mi jarri didde zomma go mi jan do.*  
that so 1PL carry dead person go 1SG play  
'That's how we carry the dead away. I celebrate.

*mi zarri fo joe alle da joe go lassi zo, na*  
1PL regret for 2PL all that 2SG go expire so LOC  
We are very sorry for you. It is you who died like this.

*tra moen mi za troy watere moffe gi*  
other moon 1PL FUT throw water mouth give  
Next month we will offer up water, so your mouth

*joe no dry joe trokke man lassi o! mi jan do*  
2SG NEG dry 2SG precentor expire o 1SG play  
will not be dry. The precentor dies, o! I will celebrate

*za alle tem.*  
so all time  
like this always.'

*Zwarte Officier* (Black Overseer):

*Potti na gron gimi klossi doe*

put LOC ground give.1SG cloth do

'Place (the coffin) on the ground. Give me some cloth to

*aber kissi kotti da klossi lange*

across coffin cut DET.SG cloth with

cover the coffin, cut the cloth with a

*neffi krassi abere potti na ini*  
knife scratch across put LOC inside  
knife across. Lower the coffin in

*gron potti dotti bon na tappe kaba*  
ground put dirt good LOC top finish  
the ground, cover it good with dirt on top.

*kaba a bon zo.*

finish 3SG good so

Done, done, it's good like this.'

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