

## Javanese in contact: the case of Surinamese Javanese

Abstract ISLOJ 5

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In this paper, I investigate the contact-induced changes found in Surinamese Javanese, the variety of Javanese spoken by contract labor immigrants in Suriname. Suriname, bordering British and French Guyana, shows high levels of societal and individual multilingualism caused by its complex history of colonialism, labor migration and multi-ethnicity. The official language at the present day is Dutch, with Sranan Tongo (an English-lexifier creole) used as a lingua franca. In total Suriname hosts around sixteen different mother tongues, including immigrant, indigenous and creole languages. One of the immigrant communities in Suriname are the Javanese, whose members are often trilingual in Dutch, Sranan Tongo and Javanese.

Mutual influence of these languages leads to contact-induced changes, which is the topic of the present paper. It will present some of the most prominent divergences between Surinamese Javanese and Indonesian Javanese, some of which may be explained by convergence towards Dutch and/or Sranan Tongo. This is done by building on previous investigations as well as adding new insights on the lexicon, phonology, code-switching, the marking of tense, modality and aspect and the use of serial verb constructions.

Surinamese Javanese is spoken within a community which covers around 16% of the total Surinamese population. Between 1890 and 1939, a total of 30,000 Javanese contract laborers were transported to Suriname, to fill the gap of workers on the plantations that was left after the abolishment of slavery (Charry, Koefoed & Muysken 1983). At the end of their contract, these laborers were encouraged to stay in Suriname, and many of them did. For a long time, the Javanese community remained relatively isolated and conservative, which is one of the reasons why it has been able to preserve much of its cultural traditions up until the present day, including the Javanese language.

However, this situation seems to be changing, and it appears that Surinamese Javanese is more and more diverging from the Javanese variety as spoken in Indonesia. Many Javanese in Suriname are nowadays using Dutch as their main home language, which has led to a rapid decline of competence in Javanese among the younger generations. Evidence of a possible shift can be seen in recorded materials showing many lexical insertions from, and code-switches to, Dutch as well as Sranan Tongo. In the speech of younger speakers, hesitation, self-repair and lexical retrieval difficulties are often observed (Yakpo 2015). Earlier research on Surinamese Javanese has already found noticeable differences with Indonesian Javanese at the lexical level (Vruggink 2001), in the form of incorporated loans from Dutch and Sranan Tongo, and at the pragmatic level (Wolfowitz 1991). The speech level system of Javanese has become less differentiated in Suriname than in Indonesia, and in everyday communication mostly only the most informal *ngoko* level remains.

One of the divergences found in the marking of tense, modality and aspect between Surinamese and Indonesian Javanese is the use of the Sranan Tongo marker of conative modality *proberi* 'to try', which has come to largely replace the native Javanese form *jajal*. I will argue that most of the syntactic and lexical differences found between Indonesian Javanese and Surinamese Javanese can be explained by convergence towards both Dutch and Sranan Tongo, while at the phonological level, it has adapted mostly towards Sranan Tongo.

## References

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