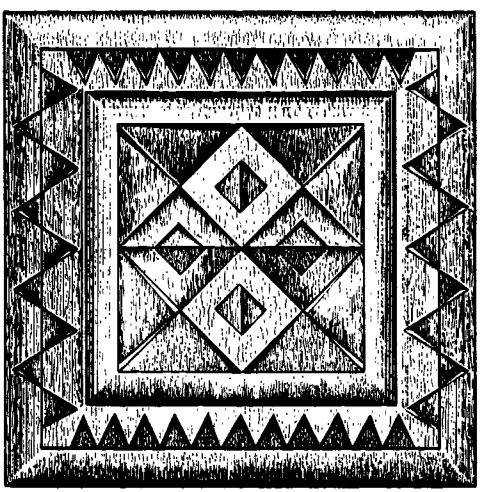
LANGUAGES OF THE GUIANAS



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PREFACE

Team research is well established in science. A coordinated effort is often the best way to do the job where there is much ground to be covered, since nowhere in the world are there ever enough trained people to cover it.

In the Summer Institute of Linguistics we have worked out a pattern for field investigation of little known languages that makes use of the team concept. Usually two people are given the primary responsibility for field work in a language. They learn to speak it by living in a community where it is the main language spoken. They interact with members of the society that speaks that language in everyday life and function as mediators of information from the outside. Along with using the language they are trained to organize information on its phonology, grammar, and semantics for linguistic analysis.

The work of the field investigators is, however, supplemented by that of linguistic consultants who periodically go over the conclusions arrived at in the field with the people who made them. They criticize the work that has been done and help the field worker lay out lines of investigation to follow from that point. They also give assistance in the mundane matters of organization of field notes and presentation of conclusions. Sometimes a consultant works at a field location with the investigators for a period of time. In recent years, since there is usually only one senior consultant available for about every ten field projects of the Institute, it has become common for several investigators and their informants to meet for two to three months in a place that is removed from the ordinary interruptions of life in the bush. In such a field seminar or workshop it is possible to accomplish much.

Most of the papers in this volume came out of such a joint effort. The field work of the Summer Institute of Linguistics in Surinam got under way in the latter part of 1968, under an agreement between the Institute and the Government of Surinam. In February and March of 1969, about the time people had their feet thoroughly wet in their field work, the director of the Institute in Surinam, Joel D. Warkentin, arranged for the editor to conduct a workshop. George and Mary Huttar, Edward and Joyce Peasgood, Naomi Glock, and Catherine Rountree, all members of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, took part. Frances Tracy of the Unevangelized Fields Mission, who had begun the study of Wapishana in Guyana at about the same time

as the Surinam group began their work, was able to participate as well. Hubert and Joanne Traugh of the Pilgrim Holiness Mission in Guyana, working on Guyanese Carib, participated for the first few weeks. Morgan Jones, Ivan Schoen, and others of the Surinam Interior Fellowship of the West Indies Mission, who have made studies of the Cariban languages of the interior of Surinam, were present for a week. The papers by Jones and by Schoen's colleague Jackson were already near final form before the workshop began and were simply gone over for details during the brief time available (which even included some editorial checking by radio after Jones had to return to the Tapanahonij). All the other papers, though based mainly on observations and hypotheses made in the field before the workshop, took their present form during the workshop and include material that was elicited from informants during that period.

Special recognition for excellent handling of the logistic details of having so many people working intensively in one place goes to John and Shirley Larson of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, who took care of everything from visas to baby sitting and thereby made it possible for the participants to devote full time to the seminar. I am also indebted to George Huttar for sharing the consultation with me.

There are four layers of languages in the Guianas. First are the Cariban and Arawakan languages of the aboriginal peoples of the area, represented here by Carib, Trio, Wayana, and Wapishana. Second are the creole languages that came into prominence during that sad epoch when people from various parts of West Africa were forcibly uprooted and brought to the new world as slaves. These were the languages around which the societies of escaped slaves in the interior, represented here by Djuka and Saramaccan, crystallized; others like Sranan and the patois of French Guiana became the informal means of communication in the city-oriented societies of the coast. Third are the languages brought from Asia by contract laborers a century ago after the slaves were emancipated: Javanese, Chinese, and dialects related to Hindi and Urdu. None of this group is represented in this volume, though the changes in each since their transplanting certainly merit special study. Finally there are the languages of commerce and government, of education and wider communication: Dutch, French, English, and to a lesser extent Portuguese, Spanish, and Lebanese Arabic.

This collection is a step toward understanding that linguistic complexity. Further studies are already under way to complete the documentation of the languages on which work has just begun. The Summer Institute of Linguistics also plans to allocate teams of field workers to languages that are not yet being studied, thereby broadening the coverage.

Two of the papers in this volume cover the same area as work done on Saramaccan by Voorhoeve and on Carib by Hoff. Rather than being duplications, however, they build on the earlier studies in a significant way.

First, they give an independent corroboration of most of what the earlier authors said. Second, they call attention to parts of the earlier studies that really needed further work: the relationships among vocoids in the high to mid range, and certain restrictions on segment sequences, in Saramaccan, and the whole question of underlying versus surface phonological form in Carib. In this sense they constitute a healthy critique of the work that has gone before, confirming most of it. Other papers, like the Huttars' evidence on tone in Djuka and Glock's work on semantic relationships in Saramaccan, break new ground.

As a result of the workshop the team of field investigators have also developed a perspective on the pace of their work and on where they need to concentrate their efforts at different phases of it. This should increase the efficiency of their time in the field. Inasmuch as all of them have in mind applied linguistic projects, the teamwork approach they have worked out will help them toward those goals as well.

Joseph E. Grimes
Paramaribo, 30 March 1969

WRITING SYSTEMS FOR THE INTERIOR OF SURINAM

Joseph E. Grimes

The linguistic workshop held in Paramaribo in February and March of 1969 by the Summer Institute of Linguistics resulted in the formation of tentative writing systems for Coastal Carib, Aukan (Djoeka), and Saramaccan, among other things. At the same time the Surinam Interior Fellowship of the West Indies Mission proposed modified writing systems for Trio and Wayana. They are included in this summary by courtesy of the Fellowship.

Linguistic research on all five languages is far enough along that there is little question as to what needs to be represented in each language. It is the educational, political, and emotional overtones of the writing systems that remain to be determined. The matter that required the most attention was the representation of sounds in terms of the Dutch writing tradition, since Dutch is the official language of Surinam as well as the language of wider educational and cultural contact for the linguistic groups of the interior. The writing system of Sranan exercised a certain influence as well. Each writing system, however, had to meet the primary requirement of adequacy for its language; considerations of uniformity with other writing systems could be considered only in that light.

COASTAL CARIB

The closely related Carib dialects of the coast and the savannahs distinguish six vowels: **a**, **e**, **i**, **ï** (high back unrounded), **o**, **oe** (high back rounded). Some bilinguals have begun to write Carib using **ë** for the high back unrounded vowel; the acceptability of both symbols will need to be evaluated. There are seven diphthongs, written **aw**, **ow**, **aj**, **ej**, **ïj** (or **ëj**), **oj**, **uj** to distinguish them from vowel clusters in separate syllables, most of which are separated phonetically by an automatic glottal stop.

Consonants in syllable initial position are obstruents **p**, **t**, **k**, **b**, **d**, **g**, **s**, and resonants **m**, **n**, **r** (a reverse flap that often sounds almost like an [l]), **w**, **j**. Each has a palatalized variant when it follows **i**, **ih**, or a diphthong that ends in **j**. The palatalized variants of **r** and **j** differ noticeably from one dialect to another; but regardless of the local phonetic variant the palatalization process is automatic. It is therefore not symbolized.

In syllable final position there is a distinction between three nasals: m, n (which is palatal before pause regardless of whether i or j precedes it or not), and ng. Before consonants the nasal appropriate to the point of articulation of the consonant occurs: mb, nd, ngg.

There is also a consonantal h at the end of some nonfinal syllables. Since its relation to normal preglottalization of p, t, k and preaspiration of s is somewhat complicated, the details are given here. First, h before p, t, k is phonetically a reduction or elimination of voicing of the vowel that precedes the h. At times, in free variation with this, h is a voiceless fricative [p̥, θ, x] of the point of articulation of the stop that follows. h does not occur before b, d, g. Before the resonants m, n, r, w, j, the h is a glottal constriction. Thus hp represents [hp] or [p̥p], and hm represents [ʔm]. The picture is complicated, however, by the fact that under some conditions of accent p, t, and k are automatically preglottalized, and s is preaspirated. This means that in some positions [hp] or [p̥p] represent the sequence hp, while a [ʔp] represents merely p without h. The glottal constriction in such a case does not have the status of a separate consonant, though it resembles phonetically the glottal constriction before a resonant that has the status of h.

There is a pitch accent on most words that is recognized as a marked jump upwards in pitch between two syllables. It is symbolized by an acute accent on the vowel of the syllable after the jump, or by a circumflex accent in place of the dieresis if the vowel is ï: matapí 'cassava squeezer', parî 'grandchild'. Stress fluctuates from one repetition of a word to the next and is fairly uniform over a word. It is not distinctive and does not need to be symbolized apart from the pitch accent. Long syllables in the rhythmic pattern include those that end in h, those that precede p, t, k, and s under certain conditions of accent and consonant sequence that also determine preglottalization of the stops and preaspiration of s, those that end in nasals, those that contain diphthongs, and a couple of other automatic cases. (If length turns out not to be completely automatic in some dialects, it can be written with a colon following the vowel letter of each long syllable.)

Punctuation includes spaces written at the borders of grammatical words, which correspond closely enough to rhythmic feet that the elements that shift rhythmically from the foot that contains the stem they are attached to into another foot do not need special symbolization in a writing system. Where a fall in pitch with pause is an appropriate reading for the end of a sentence, a period is used; other sentence final punctution marks may be needed. Comma is reserved for sentence medial points where pause with sustained pitch is appropriate.

TRIO AND WAYANA

Though these Cariban languages are not quite mutually intelligible with each other or with Coastal Carib, their sound systems are similar enough that a common orthographic base with specific additions for each has been suggested.

The vowel systems require seven vowels to be distinguished: a, e, i, ï, o, u as in Coastal Carib, plus the mid central vowel ë. For these languages it is not practical, however, to adopt the Dutch oe for the high back rounded vowel as in Coastal Carib, because of the presence of vowel clusters like oe; that is, o followed by e, together with clusters of three vowels in Trio that further complicate the picture if written in the Dutch fashion.

The apparent disadvantage of the use of u for readers who will also be learning Dutch is not as great as might be expected if the program for teaching Dutch is constructed in such a way as to take advantage of another discrepancy in the writing systems. The vowel of Dutch deur is phonetically different from all the Cariban vowels, and therefore requires special teaching to nonnative speakers. Its standard Dutch spelling conflicts with another Trio-Wayana vowel sequence, eu, that is, e followed by u, so that the new Dutch sound must be associated with the Dutch use of that spelling combination, just as has to be done for speakers of Spanish or English who learn Dutch as a second language. At the same time, then, other specifically Dutch spelling conventions such as oe and ie can also be intoduced.

Syllable initial consonants are p, t, k, s (pronounced without friction as h by the Wayana of the Tapanahonij River but not by those of the Lawa River), m, n, l (phonetically similar to the reverse flap [ɾ̥] of Coastal Carib, but more frequently with lateral opening), w, j, h. The stops p, t, k are voiced before w, j, l. They change automatically to nasals when followed by a morpheme that begins with a nasal.

At the end of syllables nasal consonants may occur. In Trio there is only one, which is velar before pause; otherwise it has the point of articulation of the next consonant. It is written with n except before labials, where it is written with m. In Wayana there are three syllable final nasals: m, n, ng. Syllables may also end in an h in Wayana and some dialects of Trio. It is a voiceless vocoid or fricative like the h before stops of Coastal Carib. It has the same phonetic quality, however, before all consonants; there is no variant that involves glottal constriction. In other dialects of Trio words that elsewhere are pronounced with h are pronounced with a long vowel. All dialects of Trio have a distinction of long vowels (which fit the pattern of vowel clusters) and short vowels (which fit the same pattern as single vowels). For those dialects of Trio in which Vh is not distinct from VV, then, the use of h overdifferentiates in a way that causes no difficulty for

readers but may be expected to confuse writers. In the other dialects, however, the distinction has to be made.

Patterns of accentuation and punctuation remain to be worked out.

SARAMACCAN

A seven vowel system plus the need to indicate tone on each vowel, with one or two vowels per syllable, narrow the possibilities for a writing system to two major types. One, modeled after French, was recommended by J. Voorhoeve: a, e, è, i, o, ò, u, with grave accents distinguishing the bright mid vowels from the muffled ones. (The bright-muffled distinction, common in the languages of West Africa, involves primarily the resonances of different shapes of the pharyngeal cavity and only secondarily the height of the tongue.) This approach requires using one accent to distinguish vowel qualities and another, the acute, to distinguish tones; for bright vowels with high tone composite accents ě, ǒ or ê, ô must be used. The pedagogical problems involved in this dual use of accents may be serious for large scale education, though the system is manifestly adequate from the purely linguistic point of view.

The other kind of writing system is patterned after those used for a number of West African languages that have systems of seven or nine vowels: a, e, ɛ, i, o, ɔ, u, or ẹ, ọ for the extra vowels. This approach eliminates the difficulty with tone marking and is pedagogically much less likely to cause confusion. On the other hand, the symbols ɛ and ɔ present typographic problems. They would require special symbols to be added to typewriters and printer's fonts, including capital letter forms and forms with acute accent for high tone in both upper and lower case. The dotted forms ẹ and ọ present a similar typographic problem; but they are more easily handled in offset printing than ɛ, o. The Africanist vowel writing with ẹ and ọ will be given priority in testing in the immediate future.

Syllables begin with single consonants, some of which are written with two or three letters. They include nasals m, n, nj (palatal), prenasalized stops mb, nd, ndj, ng, voiceless or strong stops p, t, tj, k, kp (a double stop in free variation phonetically with a labialized velar stop), voiced or weak stops b, d, dj, g, gb, voiceless fricatives f, s, voiced fricatives v, z, lateral l, and semivowels w, j, h.

A nasal at the end of a syllable is manifested as nasalization of the vowel or vowels of the syllable, or as a nasal consonant (velar before pause unless the initial consonant of that syllable is labial, in which case the articulation is alveolar; if a consonant follows, the nasal takes its point of articulation), or both. The syllable final nasal is written with m before labials and with n elsewhere. The nasal letter in the representation of prenasalized stops, however, belongs in the following syllable as part of the spelling of its onset consonant and is not part of the preceding syllable.

Where two vowels occur in a syllable the second is either i, u (never after front vowels), or a repetition of the first vowel. Each vowel carries either high tone, written with an acute accent, or low tone, symbolized by the absence of an acute accent. All combinations of two tones in a two-vowel syllable are possible. Sequences of three vowels constitute three syllables: **baáa** 'brother', **séèi** 'self'. Stress is predictable from length, tone, and the position of rhythmic boundaries and so is not symbolized in the writing system.

Voorhoeve suggests that the base tones of words be written rather than the derived tones that result from tone interactions. This continues to seem best for the reasons he gives.

Punctuation includes comma at points where a pause with tone sustained at the level of the last high tone is a plausible reading, and period at points where a sentence can end with a drop in pitch from the last high tone. There seems to be a need for a question mark to indicate where a sentence can end with pitch rising from the last high tone.

AUKAN (DJOEKA)

The five vowel system of Aukan makes it possible to write the vowels without recourse to either the French based or the Africanist writing needed for Saramaccan. Because of the requirement that a tone be associated with each vowel, however, and because of the occurrence of up to three vowels in a syllable (subject to restrictions that differ but slightly from those of Saramaccan), Dutch spelling conventions like **oe** and **ie** appear to be unwieldy in this context. Preference initially will be given to **a, e, i, o, u,** with phonetic values approximately as in Spanish.

Syllable initial consonants are **p, t, k, b, d, g, f, s, m, n, l, w, j, h.** All but the last three of these may be followed by **w** or **j** before the first vowel of the syllable. The combinations **kw** and **gw** have as free variants the phonetic double stops [kp, gb] or the labialized stops [kw, gw].

The syllable final nasal functions as in Saramaccan. At the beginning of a word, however, the same nasal occurs before a consonant as a separate syllable as far as the rhythm of the word is concerned. It does not, however, carry contrastive tone. A word initial **s** before a voiceless stop in a stressed syllable also occurs in alternation with **s** followed by an unstressed vowel of predictable quality.

Tone and punctuation are written as in Saramaccan.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writing systems summarized here are all based on recent field research on the linguistic phenomena involved. They also take into account (though not all in the same way because they are all different languages) factors like the influence of the national language spelling system and the problems involved in teaching both in the vernacular and in the national language.

The field work on Carib was done by Edward and Joyce Peasgood, that on Saramaccan by Catherine Rountree and Naomi Glock, and that on Aukan by George and Mary Huttar, all of the Summer Institute of Linguistics. The information on the Trio and Wayana alphabets was provided by Morgan Jones and Ivan Schoen of the Surinam Interior Fellowship.

The writing systems given here differ from those used in the standard references on the languages: Hoff, Ahlbrinck, and De Goeje on Carib, De Goeje on Wayana, and Voorhoeve on Saramaccan. Many of the differences are due to the lack of a preoccupation with problems of education and communication on the part of most of those authors, who were primarily interested in research. Other differences can be traced to the way in which nearly all tend to limit themselves to the cataloguing of linguistic phenomena rather than to showing what patterns lie behind them.

Following are samples of text written in some of the proposed orthographies.

COASTAL CARIB

Pena:ró iruhpá pó:re uwa:potósan tomandón. Asekáro iwejrîkon itopótïrïkon wota:ró tï:torîkon ja:kó.

'Long ago the old time people lived very well. They all walked into the country when they went hunting.'

SARAMACCAN

Hẹn de lái bóto tẹ́ fá de kabá. Hẹn de gó a Saamaáka ku motẹ́. Dí de nán gó tẹ́ẹ́ de dóu a wan kọ́ndẹ de kái Guyába. Hẹn de duumí a Guyába tẹ́ fu wan mámantẹ́ẹ́.

'Then they loaded the boat until they finished. Then they went to Saramacca by outboard motor. As they went on they came to a village called Guyaba. Then they slept in Guyaba until next morning.'

AUKAN (Djoeka)

En so den ben ábaa na a líba, dísi wi káai Kawína Líba. Di den ábaa de, de ábaa téke gwe na ópu fu Kawína. En so den ben wáka lánga lánga gwe téee na Mamá Ndjúka éde, pe wi káai Mamá Ndjúka.

'And so they crossed the river we call Kawina (Commewijne). Having crossed it, they went way upstream along the Commewijne. Thus they walked a long, long way, clear to the upper Tapanahonij, the place we call Mama Ndjuka.'