

# The ‘*had VERB*’ Construction in Hawai‘i Creole English

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## 1. Introduction

The construction *had VERB*, which does not occur frequently in my database and is predominantly found on the island of Kaua‘i, has previously been analysed as a regional alternative for the anterior or the simple past tenses. In this article I will show that rather than carrying any inherent temporal connotations, it grammatically encodes the perspective taken on an event, making it an aspectual marker and not a tense marker. In fact, it can readily combine with and occur alongside the simple past tense, which is an inflected form, or the base form, which is a relative tense that may also refer to the (relative) past, in which case it functions as an anterior. However, the fact that the form may combine with the past tense does not necessarily mean that it denotes it.

The article is structured as follows: in the remainder of this section I will first give a short socio-historical background to Hawai‘i Creole English (HCE), then provide a short note on the conventions used for the examples in this article. In order to show how the construction *had VERB* relates to the other tense and aspect categories in the grammar, I will give a snapshot of the HCE tense (section 2) and aspect systems (section 3) before I discuss the construction *had VERB* itself (section 4). Because I use a specialised framework for the description of the *had VERB* construction, I will give a short introduction to this framework in section (4.1) before moving on to discuss the *had VERB* construction in detail (4.2). The last section of the paper (5) will offer a summary and conclusion.

### 1.1 Hawai‘i Creole English

HCE is spoken by about 600,000 speakers on the Hawaiian Islands, located in the North Pacific Ocean. This constitutes roughly half the population of the islands. In addition, about 100,000 are found on the US mainland, in particular along the West Coast, in Las Vegas (Nevada), as well as in Orlando (Florida).

The Hawaiian Islands were ‘discovered’ by Captain Cook in 1778. They became a convenient middle stop for the Pacific fur trade, later also sandalwood trade, between the north-western American coast and the big ports of China (the ‘Alaska-Hawaii-Canton run’ as Carr 1972 terms it). Initially, ships, for the most part American, kept returning to the same few places, primarily Kealakekua Bay (on the

island of Hawai'i) and Waimea (Kaua'i). Almost immediately, as the need for a *lingua franca* arose, Pidgin Hawaiian emerged, meaning that the first known contact language in Hawai'i had Hawaiian, an Austronesian Oceanic language currently with about 1000 L1 speakers, as its lexifier (see, for example, Roberts 1995 and 2012).

With the arrival of Christian missionaries from New England in 1820, a drive for spreading religion as well as literacy and general education was initiated. English schools were at first restricted to the royal family. Despite the fact that education in public schools was dispensed in Hawaiian, English had gained so much in prestige and was used to such an extent throughout the islands by about 1850 that schools teaching in English were set up (Kuykendall 1968). The arrival of the missionaries coincided with the start of the whaling period (1820-1860), which added to the influx of foreign people and languages, as the Hawaiian Islands continued to be a favoured middle stop for the Pacific trade. Also, many Hawaiians enrolled on these ships, spending large amounts of time in intense language contact. As the naval traffic to and from Hawai'i increased, so did the demand for supplies, leading to the emergence of ever larger enterprises, which in turn both offered jobs and demanded more labour.

With the introduction of plantations, mainly sugar plantations, the need for labour increased further. Initially Hawaiians formed the major part of the labour force, but due to overwork and the various diseases introduced by the newcomers, the Hawaiian population declined drastically. By 1854 it 'had been reduced by at least 75 percent' (Linnekin 1991: 95). By 1875 labour had to be imported, with the predominant migration waves coming from the Atlantic islands of Portugal (Madeira and the Azores) and from southern China. This led to the emergence of Hawai'i Pidgin English, out of which HCE developed. By 1930, HCE was a fully established language (Roberts 2000).

### 1.2 A note on conventions

In order to acquaint the reader with the relevant sociolinguistic data pertaining to my informants while preserving their anonymity, I have coded the examples according to gender, ethnicity (Hawaiian, Chinese, Portuguese, Japanese, Filipino or Korean), age at the time of recording (YY) and which island the speaker is from (Hawai'i, Kaua'i, Mau'i, Moloka'i or O'ahu), in that order. A code like MH29Ma thus indicates that the speaker is a male 29-year old Hawaiian from Mau'i. Most of my informants are of mixed heritage, as is extremely common among the speakers of HCE. I have therefore coded ethnicity according to whatever the informant states as his or her ethnicity, taking a number of factors into account, such as the heritage of the parents, but also the dominant ethnicity of the environment where the informant grew up, and so on.

In my spoken language examples, I have made every effort to capture and retain the naturalistic speech of the informant. I have therefore kept such things as rapid speech assimilations, which means that, for instance, 'you' will sometimes appear as *ju* in the example and sometimes as *ji*. A vertical line ( | ) indicates a pause in the speech-flow.

With the written data examples, I have provided my own free translations of the text. I stress that these are free translations that are only meant to make the

examples more immediately accessible to those readers not familiar with HCE. The artistic value of the written examples is thus more or less completely lost in the translation.

## 2. A snapshot of the Hawai'i Creole English tense system

My own database consists of about 270,000 (269,320 to be precise) words of HCE data, with all non-HCE data filtered out, such as utterances made by me during interviews and Standard English scene setting narration in the written material. Roughly two thirds (181265 words, or 67%) is written material, such as novels, poems and plays composed by native speakers of HCE. The rest (87,642 words, or 33%) comprises about 8 hours of spoken material. For an exact equation of how I have calculated the figures of my database, see Velupillai (2003: 28). My informants are all working or lower middle class; 13 are female and 14 are male, ranging from the ages 22 to 95 at the time of the interviews. The recordings are more or less evenly distributed over the islands, except for O'ahu (due to initial fieldwork complications), though the island of Hawai'i dominates: Hawai'i 31%, Kaua'i, 19%, Mau'i, 19%, Moloka'i 24% and O'ahu 5%.

HCE has both absolute and relative tenses. With the absolute tense, the event is placed on a location on the timeline relative to the moment of speech (i.e. before, after or simultaneous to the moment of speech). Relative tense is expressed by the base form and simply relates the event to a given reference point (not necessarily the moment of speech). This means that the bare form can indicate present tense or, once the context has been established, past tense, as in example (1)

- (1) A: ʃi was gudlu:kin |  
she COP good.looking
- B jɛ | æn ʃi kæn siŋ  
yeah and she can sing

'A: She was good looking.

B: Yeah, and she could sing.' (A=MF61Mo; B=FH58Mo)

In example (1) the speakers are talking about a person who had passed away more than a year previously to the conversation. The copula is obligatorily inflected for the past, but *can* (*kæn*) is in the base form, even though it clearly refers to something in the past. The bare form may also be used for reported speech.

The most common way of expressing the present tense is the base form. However, the present tense may occasionally be marked by inflection (-s) in the third person singular, as in example (2).

- (2) ma fræn G noz da lɛdʒɛn  
my friend G knows the legend

'My friend G knows the legend.' (MH24Mo)

In example (2) the verb *know* is inflected for the third person singular (*noz* 'knows'). It might be that this inflected form specifically denotes absolute present tense (Velupillai 2003: 139).

The absolute past tense (i.e. where the event is located before the moment of speech) is expressed by inflection, as in example (3).

- (3) wɛn aɪ fɜːs **stared** tu wɜːk  
 when I first started to work

'When I first started to work.' (FH61H)

In example (3) the verb is inflected for the simple past, an absolute tense that places the event before the moment of speech. See also *kem* 'came' in example (12). The copula is also inflected for the absolute past, as shown by *was* in example (18) below.

The absolute future tense (where the event is located after the moment of speech) is expressed by the overt marker *go(i)ŋ/gonna*, as in example (4).

- (4) a tɪŋ buʃ no **gon bi** gud hi **gon falo** ra  
 I think Bush NEG FUT be good he FUT follow the

fada ɹid lips bad hi no **gon du** natin  
 father read lips but he NEG FUT do nothing

'I don't think Bush is going to be good, he's just going to follow the father, just read lips, but he won't do anything.' (MP85K)

In example (4) the speaker is talking about the elections (in 2000) that are to be held some months later and what he expects of the various candidates. Here the event is clearly located after the moment of speech, making it an absolute future tense.

An alternative way of referring to the future is via the use of *bumbye*. It is possible that *bumbye* is developing into a remote future tense marker, although it is quite rare in my database and in my spoken data occurs mainly on Kaua'i and the island of Hawai'i (Velupillai 2003: 62ff). For instance, in all elicitation sessions, informants without hesitation accepted combinations with *bumbye* and such expressions as 'next year,' but unanimously (and independently of each other) rejected combinations with *bumbye* and 'in a minute' and 'tomorrow.' It could possibly be argued be that this is an archaism, since it is mainly found on Kaua'i and the island of Hawai'i, which are the islands that were first frequented by outsiders. However, that would presuppose a higher occurrence rate among older speakers, which in my database is not the case. It is not interchangeable with *go(i)ŋ/gonna*. In example (5) both forms are used:

- (5) evri tam ju smok dis sigarɛ? **goin kil** ju  
 every time you smoke that cigarette FUT kill you
- kam ober hea **bambar** der stik pok ju der  
 come over here REM.FUT they sticks poke you they
- stik kil ju  
 sticks kill you

'Every time you smoke these cigarettes (they) will kill you. Come here!  
 Eventually those sticks will ruin you, those sticks will kill you.' (FH58Mo)

In example (5) the speaker is using the regular future marker *goin* when she is merely indicating that she is expecting the event to take place after the moment of speech. When she is specifically indicating that something will happen in the remote future, she uses *bumbye* (*bambar* in the example).

### 3. A snapshot of the HCE aspect system

Apart from the *had VERB* construction, which will be discussed below, there are four aspect markers, *wen*, *pau*, *ste(i) (-ing)* and *justu*. The past perfective aspect is marked with the invariant portmanteau *wen*. In example (6) the speaker is describing his experiences with spirits. He starts out by giving the background, for which he uses the simple past, recounting how he was sensing the presence of someone or something he couldn't see. The narrative then moves forward by the fact that someone or something calls his name, for which he uses the past perfective marker.

- (6) ɾaid bilɔ aua steps wi gɛ? wan steas kam ap biha(i)n  
 right below our steps wi POSS a stair come up behind
- aɾ haus | sambari waz ɾaid dea | ba a(i)  
 our house somebody was right there but I
- kud | feo sambadi waz aɾaun | **wen** **jɛo** ma  
 could feel somebody was around PAST:PFIV yell my
- nem | dɛlar? **wen** **jɛo** | jɛo M so a  
 name daylight PAST:PFIV yell yell so I
- jɛo ho | so a wak aut a tod m wai ɛ  
 yell ho so I went out I said.to my wife eh

ju həd ɹaid dɛa ɔ jɛa so a wak autsar | a  
 you heard right there ah yeah so I go out I

no si nobari autsa rɛa | so a wz laik |  
 NEG see nobody out there so I was like

wa: | laik sambadi **wn—** so a **wn** **kal**  
 wow like somebody PAST:PFIV so I PAST:PFIV call

makazin ju waz daʊn ma (h)aus no nobadi waz daʊn da  
 mycousin you was down my house no nobody was down the

haus a tol ma warv ε ʒi(ɛ) sambadi **wɛn** **kal**  
 house I said.to my wife eh gee somebody PAST:PFIV call

fo as ova ɛa | so ji no wi (h)æ wan spri?  
 for us over there so you know we have a spirit

araʊn dɛa samplers  
 around there some.place

‘Right below our steps we have a stair(case) (that) comes up behind our house. Somebody was right there; I could feel (that) somebody was around. (It) yelled my name. (In broad) daylight (it) yelled. (It yelled) *M!* so I yelled *ho!* So I went out, I said to my wife, “eh, did you hear right there?” “ah yeah.” So I went out; I didn’t see anybody out there. So I thought “wow,” thought “somebody...” so I called my cousin “were you down by my house?” “no, nobody was down by the house.” I said to my wife, “eh, somebody called for us here.” So you know we have a spirit around here some place.’ (MH29Ma)

In example (6) the simple past is used when there is no special need to mark an event for aspect. When the narrative moves forward by some event, this is marked with the past perfective construction *wɛn* VB. The construction is not an inflection for ‘weak’ verbs (see, for example, Labov 1990 [1970]), where ‘weak’ would mean those verbs that take the *-ed* inflection in Standard English. In example (7), for instance, the construction is used with the verb *write*, which would be a strong verb in Standard English (*wrote*).

(7) ji **wɛn** **ɹai?** wan buk  
 she PAST:PFIV write a book

‘She wrote a book.’ (FH51H)

In example (7) the speaker uses the *wen VERB* construction with what would have been a strong verb in Standard English (*write*), showing that *wen VERB* is not simply a past tense inflection for what would have been weak verbs in Standard English.

The completive marker *pau* denotes the completion of an event, as shown in example (8):

- (8) da wahine ... da wan dæd dʒes **pau** **hanau**  
 the woman the one that just COMPL give.birth

'The woman that just finished giving birth' (FH50Ma)

In example (8) the act of giving birth (*hanau*) has just been completed, which is marked with the invariant *pau*.

The HCE *ste(i) (-ing)* denotes progressive aspects that are used in different contexts of foregrounding, as in examples (9) and (10).

- (9) maanʒko waz ɹaid ɔntɔp hiʒ bæʒ **swimin** wid diʒ ʃak  
 myuncle was right on.top his back swim.PROG with this shark

'My uncle was right on top of its back, swimming with this shark.' (MH29Ma)

- (10) ai **ste** tiŋkiŋ ɔv dæt wan  
 I PROG think.PROG of that one

'I'm thinking of that one.' (MJ50K)

The basic difference between the progressive in (9) and that in (10) is that the one in (10) expresses a much higher focus around the present moment, and can thus be seen as a foregrounding device (for an in depth discussion on the exact differences between *ste(i) VERB*, *VERB-ing* and *ste(i) VERB-ing*, see Velupillai 2003: 81ff). Note that the marker *ste -ing* in example (9) is a single discontinuous marker and not two separate markers.

The past habitual is most commonly marked with the invariant portmanteau *justu*, as in example (11):

- (11) wɛl a ɡɛd wan fri:n a **justu** wɔ:k wi?  
 well I POSS A friend I PAST:HAB work with

'Well, I have a friend I used to work with.' (MC79Mo)

In example (10) the construction *justu VERB* indicates that it was something that regularly happened in the past.

After this brief outline of the general aspect system, I will now turn to the remaining aspect category in HCE, marked by the *had VERB* construction.

#### 4. The *had VERB* construction

The *had VERB* construction has been analysed as an anterior marker (e.g. Bickerton 1977), which essentially would make it a relative past tense, where the event is located prior to some given reference point; as a past marker (Sakoda & Siegel 2003), which would essentially make it an absolute past tense, where the event is located prior to the speech moment; and as a marker of perfect (Velupillai 2012), which would place the event prior to some reference point, but where the event is still relevant at that reference point. I deliberately do not specify it as either a present or past perfect, because, as will be shown below, the construction is used in both contexts. In other words, given that the *had VERB* construction can be used for events on different locations on the timeline, I consider it to be a case of a pure aspect marker with no or minimal inherent temporal connotations. This is best captured with Johanson's (2000) framework of viewpoint operators, where the fundamental difference between aspect, i.e. the grammatical device for coding the perspective taken on an event, and tense, i.e. the grammatical device for locating an event on a timeline (relative to some reference point), have been teased apart. While tense and aspect may interact with each other, in the sense that some combinations are more likely and readily acceptable than others, it is essential to keep in mind that they are two separate categories. The following will first briefly sketch Johanson's (2000) framework before moving on to the discussion of the *had VERB* construction in particular.

##### 4.1 Lars Johanson's viewpoint operators

In his aspectual framework of viewpoint operators, Johanson (2000) postulates that an event has an internal course with a beginning and an end limit. Whether this course is of a long-drawn nature or not is a matter of actionality (AKTIONSART or lexical aspect), i.e. a matter of the internal semantic values of the verb phrase. Actionality should therefore not be confused with grammatical aspect, which uses grammatical meant to exclusively denote the perspective taken on the event. Thus, while actionality and aspect do interact with each other, it is important to keep in mind that they represent two fundamentally different concepts, that of the inherent semantic value of the lexical verb (actionality) and that of the grammatically coded perspective taken on the event (aspect). Furthermore, it should be kept in mind that while tense may interact with aspect, we are again dealing with two fundamentally different concepts, that of the location of the event on a timeline (tense) and that of the grammatically coded perspective taken on the event (aspect).

The perspective taken may be conceptualized as a deictic centre or an orientation point. This deictic centre or orientation point can be thought of as the angle from which the event is viewed; in a sense we may picture it as the angle or view of the grammatical eye. Johanson proposes three basic types of viewpoints: that where the course of the event overlaps with the orientation point, that is, the event is viewed during the course of the event, from *within* its limits, termed INTRATERMINAL for within (*intra*) the limits (*terminos*), as illustrated in figure 1.





Figure 1. The INTRATERMINAL viewpoint operator (aspect marker): the event is viewed from within, during its course.

In figure 1 the orientation point of the perspective, illustrated with an eye, is within the course of the event, within its beginning and end limits. Whether the event viewed from within is long drawn or not is a matter of actionality: both *He was tramping across the continent* and *He was dropping a coin in the machine* denote events viewed from within the event, despite the fact that they are of very different duration. Where the event is located on a timeline is essentially irrelevant for the perspective coded on the event: the view from within remains the same irrespective of whether the orientation point is before, after or simultaneous to the moment of speech (or any other temporal reference point). For instance in *He was tramping across the continent* or *He was dropping a coin in the machine*, the internal perspective taken on the event is the same as *He will be tramping across the continent* or *He will be dropping a coin in the machine* and *He is tramping across the continent* or *He is dropping a coin in the machine*, even though the three events are placed at different locations on a timeline (respectively before, after and simultaneous to the moment of speech).

If the deictic centre, or orientation point, is placed after and beyond the transgression of either the beginning or end point of the event, that is, if the perspective taken on the event is after and beyond either its beginning or end point has been reached, we have a POSTTERMINAL for after (*post*) the limit (*terminum*). Note that this may be either the beginning or the end point of the event, the crucial factor being simply that the orientation point, i.e. the grammatical eye, as it were, is placed after and beyond the transgression of one of the limits, as illustrated in figure 2.

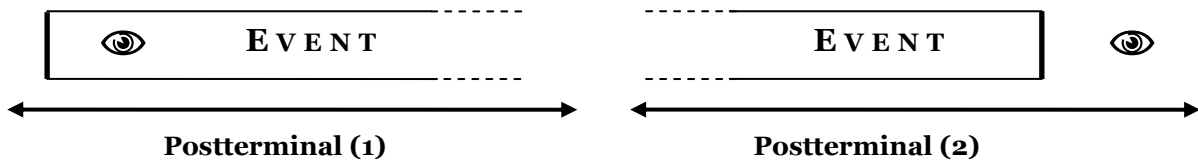


Figure 2. The POSTTERMINAL viewpoint operator (aspect marker): the event is viewed after the transgression of the relevant limit (either the beginning or end point) of the event. With postterminal (1) the orientation point is placed after the beginning point of the event while with postterminal (2) the orientation point is placed after the end point of the event.

In figure 2 the orientation point, illustrated with an eye, is placed after the transgression of the relevant limit. The principle is the same irrespective of whether the relevant limit is the beginning or end point of the event; what is crucial here is that the perspective taken on it is after and beyond one of the limits has been reached. Thus something like *He has started to sing*, where the perspective is on the fact that we are beyond the beginning point of the event, is a postterminal, despite the fact that nothing is being said about the end limit of the event. Likewise, something like *He has left the room* is also a postterminal, with the orientation point after the end point of the event (his leaving), even though it says nothing about the beginning of the event. While the orientation point (O) is after the relevant limit has been passed, the event 'is still relevant one way or another, i.e. extends right up to O, has effects relevant to O, or allows a conclusive judgement at O' (Johanson 2000: 103). For instance, with the event *He has started to sing*, the event is relevant at the orientation point (he is now singing), just as the effects of the event *He has left the room* are still relevant at the orientation point (he is gone). And again, while this may interact with various tense values, the perspective remains the same: *He had started to sing* or *He had left the room*, *He will have started to sing* or *He will have left the room* and *He has started to sing* or *He has left the room* are all postterminals, i.e. all have the same perspective on the event, even though they are located at different points on the timeline (respectively before, after and simultaneous to the moment of speech).

If the deictic centre, or orientation point, is at the very attainment of one of the limits of the event, that is, if the orientation point is either right at the realization of the beginning or right at the realization of the end point of the event, the perspective taken is ADTERMINAL for at (*ad*) the limit (*terminum*), illustrated in figure 3.

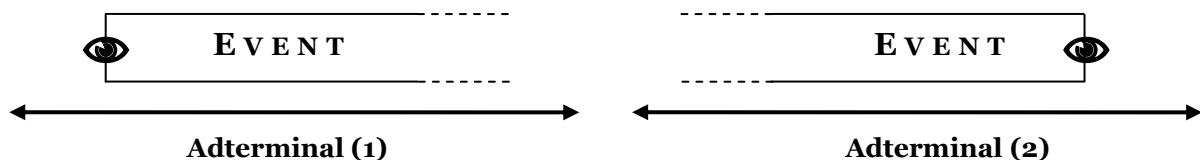


Figure 3. The ADTERMINAL viewpoint operator (aspect marker): the event is viewed as the relevant limit (either the beginning or end point) is attained. With adterminal (1) the orientation point is placed at the attainment of the beginning point of the event while with adterminal (2) the orientation point is placed at the attainment of the end point of the event.

In figure 3 the orientation point of the perspective, illustrated with an eye, is at the very attainment of the relevant limit of the event. The principle is the same irrespective of which limit the orientation point is on, the crucial matter being that the perspective is at the point where the relevant limit (either the beginning or end) is being reached. This is not easily captured in Standard English, but is prominent in, for example, Slavic languages (see also Velupillai 2003: 70ff for a discussion on *wen VERB* as a portmanteau marker for the past adterminal). Again the adterminal aspect may interact with, but should not to be confused with, actionality and tense.

#### 4.2 The construction *had VERB* as a postterminal aspectual marker

The construction *had VERB* is very rare in my database, with only 86 occurrences, and is predominantly found in spoken samples (Velupillai 2003). It is clearly a regional phenomenon, found more often on Kaua'i than on all the other islands taken together. This matches the findings of Siegel (2000) and Bickerton (1977), and confirms that the regional dimension has been in place for at least a generation, if not more, although it seems that the construction was more widespread earlier (Siegel 2000).<sup>1</sup>

As the following examples will show, the construction *had VERB* is an aspectual and not a temporal grammatical device, since the location on the timeline of the event which the construction is used for can vary while the perspective remains the same. That is, the construction specifies the perspective taken on the event, namely that the deictic centre, i.e. the orientation point of the perspective taken, is placed after the transgression of the relevant limit of the event (either the beginning or end point). This may readily combine with temporal devices, and especially the past tense, since the perspective is specifically on a limit that has already been attained. However, as mentioned above, compatibility with temporal devices is not synonymous with locating the event on a timeline. In fact, in a number of the examples in my corpus, the construction is used alongside the simple past, not as a replacement for it, thus possibly suggesting that the forms signify different things and are employed for different purposes.

In example (12) the speaker is describing an incident where little rocks hit and fell off the roof of his house.

- (12) daʊn aʊ pleis nomo a min ji geʔ | tʃris  
 down our place EXIST:NEG I mean you POSS trees
- arau as baʔ | mɛ(bi) bau[t] tɛn fi(?) awæ fɔm  
 around us but maybe about ten feet away from
- da ho— araun a haus jɛah | s laɪg hau  
 the ho— around the house yeah is like how
- kæn smaʊ raks hit a ruf FUM WRAAAH |  
 can small rocks hit the roof (mimics)
- sma[l] lido rak hiʔ PRAK rol dau da ruf|  
 small little rocks hit (mimics) roll down the roof
- s laɪg | wɛ da hɛo dæt ra[k] kɛm fɔm  
 is like where the hell that rock came from

<sup>1</sup> Siegel (2000) has demonstrated that the construction *had VERB* shows Portuguese substrate influence. Whether the predominance of *had VERB* on Kaua'i reflects a larger proportion of Portuguese settlers compared to the other islands would be a matter of interesting and welcome archival research.

red laig sambadi hæd tu hæd tʃɔ um antɔp da ruf  
right like somebody had to POST throw them on the roof

‘... down our place there aren’t– I mean, you do have trees around us, but, they’re maybe about ten feet away from the ho– around the house, yeah. So, it’s like, how can small rocks hit the roof – FUM WRAAH! – small little rocks hit – PRAK! – and roll down the roof. It’s like, where the hell did that rock come from, right? Like, somebody must have thrown them on the roof.’  
(MH29Ma)

Here the perspective on the last event, the act of throwing stones, is after and beyond the end point of the event, as indicated by *had throw*, and the effects of the event are still relevant at the orientation point of the perspective: the stones have been thrown (and remain thrown) and are now lying on the roof (having landed on it audibly) or are rolling down from it. It is worth noting that the simple past tense is not used in this particular instance, as opposed to *keim* ‘came’ earlier in the example,<sup>2</sup> showing that *had VERB* is used alongside the simple past and not as a replacement for it. In fact the tense is not relevant for the event of the throwing of the rocks, since first of all the previous (*keim*) has already established where on the timeline the whole narrative is taking place, namely in the past; secondly, the crucial matter about the event of the throwing of the stones is that because there are stones on the roof, some of which are rolling down, the speaker is concluding that these are effects of an event that has already taken place. Thus it is the perspective taken on the event and not its location on a timeline that is relevant here.

The construction *had to* (*hæd tu*) is a modal marker and not a tense or aspect marker, although the modal auxiliary is inflected for the past. This example also shows that *had* in the construction *had VERB* is an invariant marker and not an auxiliary which can be inflected in various forms: the modal *had to* (*hæd tu*) does not, for example, trigger an infinitive.<sup>3</sup>

In example (12) the closest Standard English translation is the present perfect. However, the Standard English present perfect not only denotes that the perspective on the event is after and beyond the relevant limit of the event, and that the effects of the event are still relevant at the orientation point, which ties it with the postterminal aspect, it also specifically indicates that the orientation point is at the moment of speech. That is, the Standard English present perfect actually does locate an event on the timeline: something happened previously, and the effects are still felt, or are somehow still relevant, the moment of speech. If, in Standard English, we want to describe an event that took place before some other point in time and that is still relevant at the particular point in time, we either have to choose the pluperfect (placing the whole event and its effects before the reference point, typically the

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<sup>2</sup> *we da heo dæt rak kem frɔm* ‘where the hell did that rock come from.’

<sup>3</sup> Such as *\*hæd tu hæv tʃɔ*. For the equivalent modality in the present we would get something like *sambari gara hæd tʃɔ* or *sambari mas hæd tʃɔ* and not *\*sambari gara hæv tʃɔ* or *\*sambari mas hæv tʃɔ*.

moment of speech) or the future perfect (placing the whole event and its effects after a reference point, typically the moment of speech).

Because the HCE *had VERB* construction does not code any tense values, this may lead to varied translations into Standard English. The superficial similarities between Standard English and HCE can be deceptive and it should therefore be kept in mind at all times that the translation is not to be confused with the analysis of the construction: the translation is merely the closest idiomatic equivalent to the construction in Standard English and not a gloss of the construction itself. For instance, the definite article in English is the invariant *the*, as in *the book* and *the table*. However, in order to get an idiomatic equivalence in French, we have to render *the* either as *le* (masculine), as in *le livre*, or *la* (feminine), as in *la table*. But this translation only reflects the requirements of the French grammar and says very little about the English definite article; the fact that one form in English translates into two separate forms in French does not justify us to analyse the English form as carrying any inherent semantic (zero marked) gender connotations. Thus *had VERB* can also translate into the Standard English past tense, as in example (13):

(13) hi kam fo ji no fo wək him æn hiz brara  
 he come for you know for work him and his brother

dei **həd kam** a rono wən wan namin |  
 they POST come I NEG.know when a nineteen

namin tweninam a tiŋ |  
 nineteen twenty.nine I think

'He came for, you know, for work, he and his brother. They came, I don't know when, they came sometime in nineteen... 1929 I think.' (MJ50K)

Here the informant tries to recall when his father and his Uncle, who were born in the Philippines, arrived in Hawai'i. Their presence in Hawai'i is a given fact: they are still there. The perspective on the event in question (the coming to Hawai'i) is the same as the perspective on the relevant event in example (12), namely after and beyond the end limit has been reached. Furthermore, just as the effects of the event of throwing rocks in example (12) were felt at the orientation point (i.e. after and beyond the end limit of the event has been transgressed), so the effects of the event in example (13) are still relevant: once the father and Uncle had come to Hawai'i, they were there. The temporal location is not coded on the verb phrase, what is relevant is only that the perspective is after the transgression of the end point of the event (the coming to Hawai'i). The fact that this translates into the Standard English past tense is not due to any inherent temporal connotations in the construction *had VERB*, but is due to the grammatical peculiarities of Standard English: something that occurred in the dated past (and the year 1929 belonged to the past at the time of the interview) has to be coded with the past tense in Standard English.

Likewise in example (14) the HCE *had VERB* construction has to be translated into the Standard English past tense:

(14) A: s laɪg ji pud um raɪd araon da nipo æn den  
is like you put it right around the nipple and then  
da mio kam—  
the milk come

B: so ra miok kam autsar  
so the milt come outside

A: jɛ jɛa  
ye yeah

B: dæts wad a **hæd rid** tu in ða buk—  
that.is what I POST read too in the book

A: jɛa | has in da buk  
yeah EXIST in thebook

'A: It's like, you put it around the nipple and then the milk comes—

B: So (that) the milk comes out.

A: Yeah, yeah.

B: that's what I read too in the book.

A: Yes, it's in the book.' (A=FH70Ma; B=FH50Ma)

Here two women are talking about traditional Hawaiian medicine, and in this case specifically what to do if a woman has trouble breastfeeding. The remedy that A mentions is something that B also has read about in a book both speakers are familiar with. The perspective taken is that B already has read the book, that is, the end limit of the event has already been transgressed. The orientation point of the perspective happens to overlap with the moment of speech, but does not in itself specifically denote that the location on the timeline has to be simultaneous to the moment of speech.

In examples (12) to (14) it could possibly be argued that the events are both located in such a way on a timeline that the orientation point of the event overlaps with the moment of speech, thus in essence making it into a present perfect. However, the same *had VERB* construction can also be used for an event located in the past on the timeline, that is, where the orientation point is located before the moment of speech. Recall that the crucial properties of the postterminal is that the point of the perspective taken, the orientation point, is after and beyond the relevant limit of the event (either the beginning or the end point) has been reached, and that the effects of the event are somehow still relevant at the orientation point. This whole equation should be seen as something separate from tense: the equation can either be placed such that the orientation point overlaps with the moment of speech (which is the case with the Standard English perfect) or it can be placed at some other location on the timeline, for instance such that the orientation point is before the

moment of speech. In either case the equation of the perspective taken on the event remains the same. In other words, while for example Standard English demands two separate forms for a postterminal where the orientation point overlaps with the moment of speech (present perfect) and where the orientation point is located prior to the moment of speech (pluperfect), the HCE form is invariant for both these temporal locations. In example (15), for instance, the orientation point is placed before the moment of speech:

- (15) ai neva gɛd laisens antil ma brara | da  
 I NEG:PAST POSS license until my brother the  
  
 sɛkɛn brara **hæd grɛdʒuɛt** ɛh  
 second brother POST graduate eh

'I didn't have any license until my brother, the second brother, had graduated, eh.' (MJ50K)

In example (15) the speaker, who is the youngest of the brothers in the family, is explaining how long he had to wait until he could get his driving license. He is 50 years old at the time of the interview and has had his license for many years. The event is thus placed before the moment of speech. The perspective indicated is that the event of his brother's graduating had to happen first, before he could get his license. The construction indicates that once the end point of the event had been reached (the brother had graduated), the informant was able to get his license. The whole equation is placed before the moment of speech – hence the Standard English translation into pluperfect. Notice that *neva gɛd* means 'didn't have' and not \*'never got.' *Neva* indicates negative past and *gɛd* indicates possession. In order to express something like 'I didn't get (i.e. receive) my license' the verb *get* would have been in the past tense while the negator would have been unmarked for tense, something like:

- ai no ga? maɪ laisens.

In the same way, the orientation point is located prior to the moment of speech in example (16), where the speaker talks about what he did after he graduated, an occurrence which is clearly located in the past since the informant is 50 years old, as mentioned above.

- (16) wɛn ai **hæd kam** aʊd a skul | æh a wɛn  
 when I POST come out of school eh I PAST:PFIV  
  
 join da næshonelgad  
 join the national.guard

'When I finished school I joined the national guard.' (MJ50K)

In example (16) the form is used to indicate that the event of finishing school (*hæd kam*) had been transgressed before the speaker joined the national guard. An indication that this is a case of aspect and not of tense is the fact that the same form is used both when the orientation point overlaps with the moment of speech and when the orientation point is prior to the moment of speech. The precise location of the event on a timeline is not what is being coded so much as the perspective taken on the event. I repeat that while aspect may readily interact with tense, it is not synonymous with it. This comes to light in the HCE *had VERB* construction, where it the perspective taken on the event that is of immediate importance and not its location on the timeline.

A similar instance of the orientation point being located prior to the speech moment on the timeline can be found in example (17), which is not part of my own database, uttered by a 45 year old man on Kaua'i. In order to make the example more generally accessible, I have converted it to IPA from the Odo transcription (see, for example Bickerton & Odo 1976) used in the source. This by necessity means that the IPA rendering is an approximation.

- (17) æn æs da fəs tam da kidz dei steɪ so hæpɪ  
 and that's the first time the kids they COP so happy
- bikaz læs jɪa dei **hæd plɛɪ** wiɔt no mo  
 because last year they POST play without NEG more
- kotʃ dei ɟas **hæd go plɛɪ** æn dei on  
 coach they just POST ACT play on their own

'And that's the first time the kids were so happy because last year – they played – without any coach – they had just played on their own.' (Bickerton 1977: 340; interlinear glossing inserted by me)

In (17) the speaker is recounting how he became the coach of the basketball team and how that had made the children happy because before that they had played on their own, without any coach. The orientation point of perspective here is after and beyond the end point of the event of the children's playing. The whole equation is placed prior to the moment of speech, as indicated by the expression *læs jɪa* 'last year.' The temporal location of the event, however, is irrelevant to the construction *had VERB*, which merely indicates that what the grammatical perspective (i.e. the aspect) is on the event (the children's basketball playing), namely after the transgression of the event. Notice that the two *had VERB* constructions in the example, while both denoting the same perspective of the event, are translated into the Standard English past and pluperfect respectively. I repeat that the translation should not be seen as an analysis of the data, but merely as the closest idiomatic equivalent in Standard English of what the original data expresses, just as the gender sensitive French translations of the Standard English articles cannot be assumed to constitute an analysis of the data and indicate that the Standard English articles somehow carry inherent gender connotations. In other words, this example again shows that what is



captured by one single form in HCE, the *had VERB* construction, needs several forms in Standard English.

The action marker *go* in example (17) should not be confused with the future tense marker *go(i)η/gonna*: as I have shown in Velupillai (2003), the construction *go VERB* does not contain any inherent temporal specifications and can combine with any kind of tense or aspect marker. For instance, it regularly appears in contexts that are clearly past, and where a future tense reading would not be possible, as in examples (18) and (19):

- (18) bifo      wɛn    aɪ    wɪz    kɪd    wɪ      **wɛn**      **gɔ**      **ɔ̃grɑv**    L  
 before    when I    was    kid    we      PAST:PIFV ACT    drive    L

'Before, when I was a kid and we drove to L.' (MJ50K)

- (19) maɪ    fadədɛm      **justu**      **gɔ**    am    |    **seʔ**    am    |    tədɔnɛʔ  
 my    father.ASS    PAST:HAB    ACT    ahm    set    ahm    turtle.net

'My father and them used to, ahm, set, ahm, turtle nets.' (FH50Ma)

In example (18) the speaker combines *go* with *wɛn*, the portmanteau marker for the past perfective aspect (see section 3 above). He is 50 years old at the time of the interview and is recounting things that happened when he was a child, which renders a future tense reading implausible. In example (19) the speaker combines *go* with *justu*, the portmanteau marker for the past habitual aspect (see section 3 above). She is a woman of 50 talking about how her father and some other people used to set turtle nets when she was a child. As this again refers to regular real world occurrences in the past, a future tense reading is implausible.

The combination of *go* with the postterminal *had VERB* construction in example (17) is thus nothing out of the ordinary and does not affect the perspective taken on the event; it simply announces that the event in question involved some kind of voluntary action.

While *had VERB* is very rare in the written data of my database, there are a few occurrences. In example (20) the aspectual nature of the construction is again evident:

- (20) Then he take out the Vienna sausage and orange.  
 His wife **had slice up** the orange  
 I had in my bag for us eat.

'Then he took out the Vienna sausage and the orange // His wife had sliced up the orange // I had in my bag for us to eat' (Yamanaka 1993: 95)

The temporal location of the event on a timeline is of secondary importance, as indicated by the bare form of the verb *take*. What is relevant here is that the orientation point of the perspective taken on the event in question (the slicing of the orange) is after the relevant limit of the event has been transgressed, in this case the

end point of the act of slicing the orange. The effects of the event are also still relevant at the orientation point: the orange is sliced.

In (21), from a text that I do not have in my own database, the author uses the simple past alongside the construction *had VERB*:

- (21) won gyol she **hedgo** waianae hai ... she tal me  
'One girl, she had gone to Waianae High ... she told me' (bradajo [sic] 1998)

In example (21) the simple past is used for the verb *tal* 'told.' This, however, does not affect the perspective of the other event referred to, namely that the girl had gone to Waianae High School. Here *had go* (*hedgo*) simply indicates that it was the state of affairs that she had attended that school; the end point of her going to that school has been attained, and the effects of that event are still relevant (she is an alumna of that school).

The above has shown that the construction *had VERB* marks grammatical aspect, consistently denoting one and the same kind of perspective on the event, namely after the relevant limit has been transgressed. While it may be used alongside the past tense, it is not a replacement for it. The meaning of *had VERB* is thus best captured with the postterminal category in Johanson's (2000) framework of viewpoint operators, where the perspective taken on an event is the relevant parameter of the construction and where other parameters, such as temporality or lexical aspect, have been filtered out. There are no inherent temporal specifications *per se* in the construction; the location of the event on a time line is achieved by other means than *had VERB* the construction.

## 5. Conclusion

The *had VERB* construction in Hawai'i Creole English occurs comparatively rarely in my data and is predominantly found on the island of Kaua'i, although it is also used elsewhere. The construction is made up of the invariant form *had* plus the bare form of the lexical verb. It has previously been analysed as a regional alternative for either the anterior (a relative tense) or the simple past (an absolute tense). However, while it may appear alongside such tense forms as the simple past, this article has shown that *had VERB* does not carry any inherent temporal connotations in itself and is therefore not an alternative tense form. That is, the construction is not used to locate an event on a timeline but rather to specify a particular perspective taken on an event, making it a case of grammatical aspect and not tense. Specifically, it denotes the postterminal aspect, where the orientation point of the perspective taken on an event is placed after the transgression of either the beginning or end point of an event. Because this cannot fully be captured by Standard English, the construction must variously be translated with a simple past, a perfect or a pluperfect, adding to the confusion of what the construction actually denotes. But this is merely a translational compromise reflecting the grammatical peculiarities of Standard English and not what the construction in Hawai'i Creole English actually means. The construction can easily be combined with and occur alongside with the simple past, which is given in the inflected form, or the base form, which may denote a relative past (i.e. anterior). However, the fact that it is compatible with and may interact with

tense marking does not signify that it is the same as that tense marking. This is especially evident when speakers use both forms in different ways alongside each other in the same utterance. Given that the *had VERB* construction consistently reflects the same perspective taken on an event irrespective of where that event is located on a timeline, it seems more straightforward to analyse it as an aspect marker than as anything else.

### *Abbreviations*

ACT	action marker	H	Hawaiian/Hawai'i	O	O'ahu/orientation
ASS	associative	HAB	habitual	point	
C	Chinese	J	Japanese	P	Portuguese
COMPL	completive	K	Korean/Kaua'i	PFIV	perfective
COP	copula	M	male	POSS	possessive
EXIST	existential	Ma	Mau'i	POST	postterminal
F	female	Mo	Moloka'i	PROG	progressive
F	Filipino	NEG	negative	REM	remote
FUT	future				

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