

Kofi Yakpo

# Out of India: Language contact and change in Sarnami (Caribbean Hindustani)

## 1 Introduction

Sarnami, spoken in Suriname, is the only variety of Caribbean Hindustani that still has a sizeable speaker community. Sarnami is the result of the koineization of several northern Indian languages during Dutch colonial rule. A comparison of Sarnami with its closest Indian relatives suggests that contact with Sranan and Dutch has led to syntactic change, with an inherited head-final order giving way to head-initial order. SVO is far more frequent in Sarnami than in the Indian control group. In relative constructions and with certain types of modal and aspectual auxiliary constructions, the transition has been made to NRel (post-posed relative clauses) and AuxV (auxiliary-verb order). However, diachronically more stable constituent orders like noun vs. adjective, noun vs. adposition and noun vs. genitive have not been affected by change. Constituent order change in Sarnami is an example of the kind of convergence that characterizes Suriname as a linguistic area, where the two dominant languages Sranan and Dutch simultaneously exert pressure toward typological change.<sup>1</sup> Contact-induced change in constituent order has been reported for Sarnami (Damsteegt 1988) and other Indian diaspora languages like Fiji Hindustani (Siegel 1985, 1987) and South African Bhojpuri (Mesthrie 1991), but this is the first study to corroborate claims with statistical evidence from a primary corpus.

In this chapter, I will look at basic word order, relative constructions and auxiliary constructions and show that Sarnami has undergone substantial change away from head-final order, typical of Indo-Aryan, towards head-initial order. The speaker community of Sarnami is characterized by extensive trilingualism in Sarnami, Sranantongo and Dutch, and I will claim that contact with Dutch and Sranantongo (henceforth Sranan) is responsible for these changes.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to Lila Gobardhan-Rambocus, without whose support and advice the research on which this study relies could not have been carried out. I am equally grateful to Motilal Marhé for his transcription of the Sarnami, Bhojpuri, Maithili and Magahi corpus. The linguistic annotation of the corpus was done by me with the SIL software Toolbox. I also wish to thank Jeff Siegel for his valuable comments on a first draft of this chapter.

<sup>2</sup> In the 2004 national census about 27% of the total Surinamese population of half a million self-identifies as “Hindoestaans” (Indian-descended) (SIC 213-2005/02).

Sarnami is actively used by all generations within the Indo-Surinamese community in a pattern of trilingualism including Sranan and Dutch. Sarnami is the only Indian diaspora language of the Caribbean with roots in the colonial period that is still vital. The two other languages Guyanese Bhojpuri (Gambhir 1981) and Trinidad Bhojpuri (Mohan 1978; 1984; 1990; Mohan and Zador 1986) are on the verge of extinction, with only few active speakers left in both countries. The socio-history and many linguistic aspects of the evolution of Sarnami and the other Caribbean Hindustani varieties also parallel that of three other Indian diaspora languages outside the Caribbean, namely South African Bhojpuri (Mesthrie 1991), Mauritian Bhojpuri (Baker and Rahnah 1985; 1988) and Fiji Hindustani (Siegel 1985, 1987). Barz and Siegel (1988) contains the first and to date only comprehensive and comparative overview of the Indian diaspora languages.

Sarnami, Guyanese Bhojpuri and Trinidad Bhojpuri are collectively referred to as Caribbean Hindustani in Ethnologue (Lewis et al. 2016). Although Sarnami owes very little of its linguistic system to Hindustani (i.e. the Hindi-Urdu continuum), the language is indeed referred to by the majority of its speakers by the Dutch term “Hindoestaans”. Sarnami, literally “Surinamese”, a term coined by Surinamese intellectuals in the 1960s to reflect the local rootedness of the language, has gained a wider currency in recent decades and is the common designation in academic works and creative literature.

I provide a brief background to the koineization of Sarnami in section 2. In section 3, I describe the data sources. In section 4, the main part of this chapter, I look at contact-induced variation and change in Sarnami constituent order, first turning to basic word order in 4.1, then to relative constructions in 4.2 and to auxiliary constructions in 4.3. Section 4.4 summarizes the findings and section 5 places them within the broader typological context of contact-induced change in constituent order.

## 2 Sarnami as a koiné

Sarnami is the result of the koineization in Suriname of several closely related languages spoken in the present-day Indian federal states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand (Marhé 1985: 8–13; Damsteegt 2002). In this section, I show how koineization manifests itself in the verbal system. Damsteegt (1988) provides an overview of other linguistic features of koineization in Sarnami.

The languages that were to merge and become Sarnami were transplanted to Suriname during the indentured labor trade of the nineteenth century,

during which hundreds of thousands of people were shipped from India to the Caribbean by the European colonial powers in order to substitute for the labor of enslaved Africans after the official end of slavery. It is unlikely that the koineization process through which Sarnami emerged involved substantial influence from Sranan and Dutch from the very outset. The widespread acquisition of Sranan by Indian-descended Surinamese probably only began in the course of socio-economic transformations in the first half of the twentieth century (Yakpo 2015; for the socio-economic background, see Dusseldorp 1963; Hassankhan, Ligeon and Scheepers 1995; Boer 1998; Hira 1998). The large-scale acquisition of Dutch began even later, accelerating in particular from the mid-20th century onwards through the expansion of the educational system and circular migration between Suriname and the Netherlands (cf. de Kleine 2007: 33). I therefore assume that the changes described in this chapter began to take hold when Sarnami had already consolidated itself as a fairly stable system. In this section, I focus on aspects of koineization that Sarnami underwent before the changes induced by contact with Sranan and Dutch began. The latter are covered in the subsequent sections.

Sarnami is the result of language contact processes in a situation of diaspora (Damsteegt 1988; 2002). These are koineization, influence from the colonial language Dutch, and influence from the Surinamese national vernacular Sranan. The combination of these three processes has yielded a unique new language. Structural and lexical features seem to indicate that Sarnami is the result of the mixing of various languages. The three languages considered to have had the largest input into Sarnami are Bhojpuri, Magahi and Maithili spoken in the present-day Indian federal states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal. These three languages are classified as languages in their own right of the Bihari group of Indo-Aryan (Tiwari 1960; Jeffers 1976; Masica 1993: 12–13). Grierson (1901) however classifies them as varieties of Hindi, the two positions reflecting the continuum character of north India as a linguistic area (Jha 1994; Abbi 1997). The grammar and lexicon of Sarnami also reflect the influence of varieties of Eastern Hindi, in particular Awadhi. Due to their mixed nature, I will henceforth collectively refer to the languages that emerged during the indentured labor trade as Overseas Indic (rather than overseas “Hindi”, cf. Bartz and Siegel 1988).

Sarnami shows the characteristic effects of koineization that have been documented in the literature, namely mixing, leveling, simplification and reallocation (Kerswill 2002). I will provide an example of the processes of mixing and leveling by looking at the formation of past tense in Sarnami.

Tab. 1 below features verbal suffixes that serve to express past tense in Sarnami, Bhojpuri, Awadhi, Maithili and Magahi (Yakpo and Muysken 2014).

I provide two varieties of Bhojpuri in order to exemplify the degree of intra-lectal variation in one of these languages (and the possibility of mutual borrowing by the contributing languages): The southern standard variety, described by Tiwari (1960) and Sadani Bhojpuri, spoken in southern Jharkhand (Jordan-Horstmann 1969). The table only contains non-honorific suffixes. Variants are separated by a comma, feminine gender forms are provided in parentheses where they exist:

**Tab. 1:** Past tense suffixes in Sarnami and North Indian languages. (Taken from Yakpo & Muysken 2014)

	Sarnami	Southern Bhojpuri	Sadani Bhojpuri	Maithili	Magahi	Lakhimpuri Awadhi
1SG	-li, -lin	-lī	-lō	-li	-li	-eū
1PL	-li, -lin	-lī	-lī	-li	-li	-en
2SG	-le	-lā, (-liu)	-lis	-le, -lē	-la	-ē, -isi
2PL	-le	-lā, (-liu)	-lā	-le, -lē	-la	-eu
3SG	-l, -is	-l, (-li)	-lak	-l, -lək	-l, -lak	-isi
3PL	-l, -is, -lē	-lē, (-lini)	-aī	-l, -lək	-l, -lak	-ini

(Sources: Saksena 1971 for Awadhi; Tiwari 1960 and Shukla 1981 for Bhojpuri; Jordan-Horstmann 1969 for Sadani Bhojpuri; Yadav 1996 for Maithili; Verma 1985 for Magahi)

Table 1 shows that the Sarnami past tense suffixes have multiple sources and are of mixed origin. Leveling has also taken place in Sarnami: Specific forms have been picked out while others have not survived the koineization process. The following observations can be made regarding Tab. 1:

- The 1SG/PL forms are found in all potential contributing languages except Sadani Bhojpuri and Awadhi (with minor adaptations in Sarnami, such as an optional final nasal instead of nasalization);
- The 2SG/PL forms are found in Maithili, while the /l/ consonant is found in all contributing languages except Awadhi;
- The /-l/ variant of 3SG is found in all contributing languages except Sadani Bhojpuri and Awadhi, while the /-is/ variant is unmistakably of Awadhi origin;
- The /-lē/ variant of 3PL is found in Sarnami and Southern Bhojpuri alone.

Southern Bhojpuri features gendered suffixes in the second and third persons and separate suffixes for plural number. Some varieties of Awadhi also show gendered verb suffixation in intransitive clauses (Saksena 1971: 249). However, the absence of a gender distinction in the verbal morphology of Sarnami may

not be the result of simplification. The use of feminine gender has been optional in Bhojpuri for a long period of time (Gambhir 1981: 249) and the distinction is not strict in Awadhi either (cf. Saksena 1971: 249, 139). The disappearance of feminine gender verbal suffixes in Sarnami might therefore simply reflect the end-point of a development foreshadowed in Bhojpuri and other languages to the east of the Hindi-Urdu heartlands.

As shown by Damsteegt (1988; 2002) koineization is also characteristic of other sub-systems of Sarnami. Language contact is therefore intrinsic to the linguistic system of Sarnami.

### 3 The data

The analyses of constituent order in the following sections are based on a Sarnami corpus of about 30,000 words of primary data collected in Suriname in 2011–14. A corpus of about 15,000 words of control data of Bhojpuri, Magahi and Maitihili was gathered in India in 2011. The analyses of basic word order frequencies (see Tab. 2) are based on recordings of the “Frog Story” (Mayer 1969). The comparison of frequencies of constituent order in relative and auxiliary constructions in section 4.2 (see Tab. 3) and section 4.3 (see Tab. 4) is based on data elicited via “staged events” (see Gippert, Himmelmann and Mosel 2006), i.e. short video clips depicting scenes that linguistic informants were invited to describe. Due to the nature of the narrative task, “Frog Stories” contained sufficient instances of basic word order, but insufficient instances of relative and auxiliary constructions, hence the different sources.

The texts represent an even spread of speakers in terms of age, gender, socio-economic background and geographic origin. The sub-corpus on basic word order for example (Tab. 2) represents the speech of eight Sarnami speakers in the age brackets of 15–20 (sar11rev-fe), 21–30 (sar11joe-fe sar11mal2-fe), 31–40 (sar11aar-fe), 41–50 (sar11mal-fe, sar11ram-fe, sar11moe-fe), 51+ (sar11hel-fe). The sample contains speakers from middle-school (sar11rev-fe), blue collar (sar11mal-fe, sar11joe-fe), non-university educated white collar (sar11mal2-fe, sar11moe-fe, sar11hel-fe), and university educated white collar (sar11aar-fe, sar11ram-fe) occupational backgrounds. The Sarnami sample’s geographical spread ranges from the Surinamese capital Paramaribo (sar11mal-fe, S2), the district of Wanica (sar11aar-fe, sar11ram-fe) and Commewijne (sar11moe-fe), to Nickerie (sar11mal2-fe, sar11rev-fe). The sample consists of three male (sar11mal2-fe, sar11ram-fe, sar11moe-fe) and five female speakers (sar11mal-fe, sar11mal2-fe, sar11aar-fe, sar11rev-fe, sar11hel-fe).

The informants in the Indian control group are socially more homogenous, being university students between 21 and 25 years. There is however, a good geographical spread encompassing speakers from rural and urban districts of the Indian federal states of Uttar Pradesh (bho11nee-fe), Bihar (bho11nej-fe, bho11vai-fe, mat11raj-fe, mat11dep-fe, mat11ata-fe), and Jharkhand (bho11suk-fe, mat11arv-fe). Five speakers are male (bho11nej-fe, bho11suk-fe, mat11raj-fe, mat11ata-fe, mat11raj-fe) and three female (bho11nee-fe, bho11vai-fe, mat11dep-fe). The abbreviations used in text names are as follows: sar11mal-fe = sar [language, i.e. Sarnami]; 11 [recorded in 2011]; mal [name of informant] -fe [frog story, elicited]. The final two letters ‘-ke’ indicate that the data is elicited by means of the ‘elicitation kit’ hence the collection of video clips already referred to.

## 4 Contact-induced variation and change in constituent order

The data suggests that contact with Sranan and Dutch has led to a reconfiguration of head-dependent order in some domains. Sarnami shows a far greater frequency of SVO basic word order than its closest relatives in India (cf. 4.1). Likewise, Sarnami shows a far greater tendency than the control group towards NRel (postposed relative clauses) (cf. 4.2) and AuxV (preposed auxiliaries) in auxiliary constructions (cf. 4.3). In the following sections, I look at the frequency distribution of constituent order in a sub-corpus of Sarnami and its Indian relatives Bhojpuri, Magahi, and Maithili. I first turn to basic (clausal) word order.

### 4.1 From SOV to SVO

Contact with Sranan and Dutch appears to be responsible for an ongoing change in Sarnami basic word order. The default SOV word order that Sarnami has inherited from its Indo-Aryan contributing languages is ceding to SVO word order in main clauses. At this point, SOV is still the dominant word order in pragmatically neutral main clauses. The data however indicates that SVO order has made significant inroads into the language.

Tab. 2 below presents the absolute frequencies (given as a number) and relative frequencies (expressed as a percentage over the total number of

transitive clauses featuring overt objects) of SVO in Sarnami and in the two Indian control group languages for which “Frog Stories” were recorded (Bhojpuri and Maithili). Total absolute and relative frequencies are provided in the final row. Tab. 2 only lists clauses that can be considered prototypically transitive. The table therefore neither includes clauses involving Goal objects of the verb *já* ‘go’, nor inherent complements of conjunct verbs, nor object interrogative pronouns. However, nominal and pronominal objects are both included in the count. I have also excluded clauses that appear to feature SVO order, but in which the transitive object is separated from the rest of the clause by a pause. Such occurrences of a surface SVO order constitute instances of afterthought topicalization of the object.

**Tab. 2:** Frequencies of SVO compared.

<b>Sarnami</b>	<b>SVO/Total</b>	<b>N words</b>	<b>Bhojpuri/ Maithili</b>	<b>SVO/Total</b>	<b>N words</b>
sar11mal-fe	4/9 (44%)	434	bho11nee-fe	1/13 (8%)	599
sar11joe-fe	7/16 (44%)	778	bho11nej-fe	1/37 (3%)	753
sar11mal2-fe	5/12 (42%)	544	bho11suk-fe	1/36 (3%)	983
sar11aar-fe	9/22 (41%)	569	bho11vai-fe	3/31 (10%)	621
sar11ram-fe	9/23 (39%)	601	mat11raj-fe	3/26 (12%)	790
sar11rev-fe	10/32 (31%)	820	mat11dep-fe	0/23 (0%)	503
sar11moe-fe	5/18 (28%)	563	mat11ata-fe	0/24 (0%)	432
sar11hel-fe	5/18 (28%)	686	mat11arv-fe	0/12 (0%)	377
<b>Total</b>	<b>54/150 (36%)</b>	<b>4995</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>9/202 (4%)</b>	<b>5058</b>

Two-tailed p-value (Fisher’s exact test):  $p < .0001$

The percentages in parentheses reveal significant differences in the frequencies of SVO between Sarnami on the one hand, and Bhojpuri and Maithili on the other. The lowest percentages of SVO in individual frog stories of the Sarnami corpus (cf. sar11moe-fe and sar11hel-fe) are still more than twice as high as the highest percentage in the Indian sample (mat11raj-fe), i.e. 28% vs. 12%. The total percentage of SVO in Sarnami (36%) is nine times higher than that of Bhojpuri and Maithili (4%). Further, there is no Sarnami text with no occurrence of SVO at all. In contrast, the Indian sub-corpus contains three texts with 0% occurrences of SVO. Fisher’s exact test renders a p-value well below a significance level of 0.05, hence showing a significant difference in the frequency of SVO between Sarnami and Bhojpuri/Maithili. In what follows, I interpret the findings in Tab. 2 in the light of the word order typology of Indo-Aryan, Dutch and Sranan.

Pragmatically unmarked word order of Sarnami basic clauses is generally Subject – Object – Verb (SOV) (cf. also Marhé 1985: 26), as in (1) (O is set in bold in the examples in this section).<sup>3</sup>

- (1) *ego manai ego dosu lá-il hai*  
 a person a box bring-PST.3 be.PRS  
 ‘A person has brought a box.’ (Sarnami)

Sarnami shares SOV basic word order with other Bihari languages and other branches of Indo-Aryan. Sarnami’s close relatives in India, Maithili, Magahi and Bhojpuri feature SOV word order, cf. (2), and so does Hindi, cf. (3).

- (2) *kuttaa bhii beng ke khoje lag-lak.*  
 dog also frog ACC/DAT look.for begin-PST.3SG  
 ‘The dog also began to look for the frog.’ (Bhojpuri)

- (3) *pita jī āxbar pəɽʰ rəhe hē.*  
 father HON newspaper.M read PROG.M.PL PRS.PL  
 ‘Father is reading the newspaper.’ (Hindi)  
 (Kachru 2006: 251)

Word order in many Indo-Aryan languages nevertheless varies in accordance with syntactic and pragmatic factors. In Hindi, nominal constituents that immediately precede the finite verb are under new information focus (Kachru 2006: 251). Conversely, word orders that diverge from the SOV basic pattern are exploited for the expression of contrastive focus.

- (4) *Mohān ne de dī āpnī kitabē*  
 Mohan ERG ‘give’ give.PRF.F.PL self.F.PL book.F.PL  
*fyam ko.*  
 Shyam ACC/DAT  
 ‘Mohan has given **his books** to Shyam.’ (Hindi)  
 (Kachru 2006: 126)

In the Hindi example in (4), SVO word order is therefore employed for contrastive focus of the object (Kachru 2006: 159). In Sarnami, SVO word order, as in (5), enjoys a much higher frequency than in the Indian control group, i.e. 36%, versus 4% in India.

<sup>3</sup> Sarnami has a standard orthography with the following conventions: Retroflex consonants feature an underscore, hence r [ɽ], d [ɖ]. A nasalized vowel is rendered by a following n as in *men* [mẽ] ‘in’. Long vowels bear an acute accent, hence *á* [a:]. With Indian languages, I follow the established convention of capitalizing retroflex consonants (e.g. R, D), representing phonemic nasalization of vowels with a following capitalized N, and long vowels by vowel doubling (e.g. *aa* [a:].



- (5) *tab u dekh-il ego hol jamin men.*  
 then 3SG see-PST.3 one hole ground in  
 ‘Then he saw a hole in the ground.’ (Sarnami)

The high frequency of SVO in Sarnami is subject to little variation between speakers (see Tab. 2), and it is also higher than could be attributed to the pragmatic function of focus alone. SVO therefore seems to be competing with SOV as an unmarked basic word order. I conclude that the high incidence of SVO in Sarnami compared to Bhojpuri/Maithili is due to contact with Sranan and Dutch. In Sranan, SVO is the only possible word order in basic (and in complex) clauses, compare (5) above and (6) below.

- (6) *dan a boi si wan olo.*  
 then the boy see a hole  
 ‘Then the boy saw a hole.’ (Sranan)

Dutch (as spoken in Suriname and in The Netherlands), features SVO word order in basic clauses, cf. (7).

- (7) *het jongetje ziet een gat in een boom.*  
 the boy sees a hole in a tree  
 ‘The boy sees a hole in a tree.’ (Dutch)

However we also find head-final order in basic clauses featuring periphrastic tenses and moods in Dutch. Compare example (8), with its S-AUX-O-V word order, where the transitive object follows the inflected auxiliary verb (*heeft* ‘has’) but precedes the lexical verb (*gezien* ‘seen’, a participial form):

- (8) *het jongetje heeft een gat in een boom gezien.*  
 the boy has a hole in a tree seen  
 ‘The boy has seen a hole in a tree.’ (Dutch)

Constructions with an S-AUX-O-V order as in (8) can be seen as somewhat intermediate between SOV and SVO (cf. Gensler 1994). They are therefore not typical exponents of SOV. Nevertheless, many types of Dutch subordinate clauses are clearly characterized by SOV order, as exemplified by (9):

- (9) *ik hou deze vast tot ik die ball terug-krijg.*  
 I hold this tight until I that ball back-get  
 ‘I’ll hold on to this until I get back that ball.’ (Dutch)

The relatively few complex clauses in the corpus of Sarnami frog stories feature SOV order as well. It is possible that the existence of SOV order in Dutch subordinate clauses has contributed to the retention of SOV in Sarnami subordinate clauses. This assumption would have to be verified by further analyses.

The hypothesis that language contact is responsible for the change in Sarnami basic word order is supported by evidence from other Overseas Indic varieties. Mesthrie (1991: 183–184) reports that South African Bhojpuri is characterized by a higher-than-usual frequency of SVO clauses due to extensive contact with, and language shift to English, and Siegel says the same for Fiji Hindustani (Siegel 1987: 144), although these two sources do not provide statistical evidence. Main clauses are not the only type of structure affected by change in constituent order. In the following section, I show that Sarnami relative constructions show an even greater tendency to diverge from inherited patterns.

## 4.2 Relative constructions

In this section, I show that Sarnami has a preference for postposed relative clauses (NRel) rather than preposed correlative ones (RelN). Preposed correlative constructions are preferred by Sarnami's Indian relatives. I take this preference of Sarnami to be a manifestation of contact-induced change. Tab. 3 below compares the frequency of postposed relative clauses in Sarnami and its Indian relatives Bhojpuri, Maithili, and Magahi. The Sarnami corpus shows an overwhelming preference of 72% for postposed relative clauses. At the extreme ends we find texts with a low incidence of relative clauses (e.g. 100% for sar10sha-ke, with a single relative clause, and 50% for sar11paramuru, with a total of two relative clauses). However, texts with a higher incidence of relative clauses all show a dominance of postposed relative clauses (e.g. 67% for sar10mot-ke and 65% sar11sit\_sha-ye). One text with a relatively high incidence of relative clauses (sar11aar-ke) does not

**Tab. 3:** Frequencies of NRel (postposed relative clauses) compared.

Sarnami	NRel/ Total	N words	Bhojpuri/ Maithili/Magahi	NRel/ Total	N words
sar10sha-ke	1/1 (100%)	1756	bho11nee-ke	5/12 (42%)	1035
sar10kau-ke	4/5 (80%)	2358	bho11nej-ke	2/9 (22%)	753
sar11mal2-ke	1/1 (100%)	1667	bho11suk-ke	1/1 (100%)	983
sar11aar-ke	6/6 (100%)	1848	bho11vai-ke	0/2 (0%)	621
sar11bra-ke	2/3 (67%)	643	mat11raj-ke	2/5 (40%)	1324
sar10mot-ke	6/9 (67%)	2853	mat11dep-ke	3/9 (33%)	790
sar11paramuru	1/2 (50%)	1786	mat11arv-ke	6/16 (38%)	4897
sar11sit_sha-ye	5/18 (65%)	1309	mag11gag-ke	2/7 (29%)	2324
Total	15/23 (72%)	14220	Total	21/61 (34%)	12727

Two-tailed p-value (Fisher's exact test):  $p = .0001$

contain a single instance of a preposed relative clause. On the Indian side, we find a clear preference for structures involving preposed (cor-)relatives. Leaving aside the extreme cases (100% of postposed relative clauses for bho11suk-ke and 0% for bho11vai-ke), we see that texts with a reasonably high incidence of relative clauses all contain somewhere between a quarter and a third of post-posed relative clauses.

The findings in Tab. 3 show a significant shift of Sarnami away from its Indo-Aryan relatives. The typological and contact-related context of this development is the following: in Sarnami's next-of-kin in India correlative constructions are the default structures. In these constructions, the relative clause is introduced by a relativizer, while the main clause is introduced by a correlativizer. The correlativizer is either a specialized function word, or a deictic/referential element, such as a demonstrative adjective or pronoun or a resumptive pronoun co-referential with the head noun. Typically, correlative structures feature preposed relative clauses, i.e. the relative clause precedes the main clause. The following example from Maithili shows such a correlative construction. It features a left-adjoined relative clause introduced by the morphologically invariant relativizer *je*, and a following main clause introduced by the equally invariant correlativizer *se*.

- (10) *[je kailh rait nac-əl] se u nətua*  
 REL yesterday night dance-PFV COREL DIST dancer  
*ekhən utəl əich.*  
 now asleep be.PRS  
 'The dancer who danced yesterday night is now asleep.'  
 (Maithili; Yadav 1996: 356)

The simultaneous use of a relativizer and a correlativizer and the resulting explicit marking of the subordinate and main clauses provides flexibility in the ordering of the two clauses in the Indo-Aryan languages (cf. Kachru 2006: 4). Apart from preposed relative clauses, we therefore also encounter postposed relative clauses, among other possibilities. Compare (11) from Maithili.

- (11) *u nətua [je rait nac-əl] se*  
 DIST dancer REL night dance-PFV COREL  
*ekhən utəl əich.*  
 now asleep be.PRS  
 'The dancer who danced last night is now asleep.'  
 (Maithili; Yadav 1996: 352)

The Sarnami corpus also features pre- and postposed relative clauses. The Sarnami sentence in (12) below involves a correlative structure, in which the object is relativized. The relative clause is preposed and introduced by the same form as in Maithili above, namely the morphologically invariant relativizer *je*.

The following main clause contains the resumptive pronoun *oke*, which functions as a correlativizer, and is made up of the distal/3SG pronoun *o* and the ACC/DAT marker *ke*:

- (12) [*je zondig kar-is hai*] *bhagvaan o-ke*  
 REL sinful ‘do’-PST.3 be.PRS god 3SG-ACC/DAT  
*vergeven kare hai.*  
 forgive ‘do’ be.PRS  
 ‘God forgives him/her who has sinned.’ (Sarnami)  
*Lit.* ‘Who has sinned, God forgives him/her.’

The following example shows another way of forming a correlative construction in Sarnami. Once again the relative clause is preposed. But this time the relative clause is introduced by the (morphologically invariant) relativizer *jaun*:

- (13) *aur [jaun balwá nicwán rahá] ohu lei-ke*  
 and REL ball below be.PST EMP.DIST take-ACC/DAT  
*o-hi kisi-yá men bíg de-is.*  
 EMP.PROX box-DEF in throw ‘give’-PST.3  
 ‘And he took the ball that was underneath and threw it in the box.’  
*Lit.* ‘And the ball that was underneath, that very one he took and  
 this very one he threw into the box.’ (Sarnami)

In example (13) above, the head noun is contained in the relative clause and picked up by correlative/resumptive elements in the main clause – the emphatic distal and proximate pronouns *ohu* and *ohi* respectively. This type of relative construction, in which the head noun is overtly expressed in the subordinate relative clause, and reiterated through a resumptive element in the main clause is also common in other Indo-Aryan languages (cf. Hindi, Kachru 2006: 220–221). The alternative way of relative clause formation is shown in (10) above, where the head noun remains unexpressed in the relative clause, and is instead realized in the main clause. For the sake of brevity, I will not spell out the often intricate arguments presented with respect to headedness of structures like (10)–(13) (see e.g. the discussion and references in Cinque 2009). Therefore, I will continue using the term “preposed” when referring to structures in which the relative clause precedes the main clause and “postposed” when the main clause precedes the relative clause. Preposed relative clauses are, of course, a typological correlate of SOV basic word order, while postposed ones are a typological characteristic of SVO languages (see e.g. Dryer 2013).

Going back to the Sarnami corpus, the most common type of relative construction encountered involves postposed relative clauses. Contrary to the correlative

structures covered above, such structures are also clearly head-initial: The head noun is contained in the main clause, and both the head noun and the main clause precede the relative clause. The relative clause is introduced by the invariant relativizer *jaun* and there is no correlativizer. Compare (14), involving a relativized prepositional phrase.

- (14) *u ego dosu lá-il hai [jaun pe*  
 3SG a box bring-PST.3 be.PRS REL on  
*thará hoi sake]*  
 upright become can  
 ‘He has brought a box that he can stand on.’ (Sarnami)

Postposed relative clauses are much less frequent in Sarnami’s Indian relatives than preposed ones. In addition, postposed relative clauses are generally seen to be extraposed, i.e. under focus in many Indo-Aryan languages (e.g. Hindi, cf. Kachru 2006: 221). The Sarnami data does not, however, suggest that these postposed relative clauses are pragmatically marked in any particular way. Relative constructions involving a single relativizer or relative pronoun, a head noun in the main clause and a postposed relative clause also represent the most neutral type of structure in Sranan and Dutch; compare (15) and (16) respectively.

- (15) *kande na a lespeki [san a barba*  
 perhaps FOC DEF.SG respect REL DEF.SG beard  
*e tyari kon].*  
 IPFV bring come  
 ‘Perhaps it’s the respect that the beard brings along.’ (Sranan)

- (16) *een vrouw gooit een bijl op de bord [die dan*  
 a woman throws an axe on the plate REL then  
*vervolgens in stukken breekt].*  
 afterwards in pieces breaks  
 ‘A woman throws an axe on the plate, which then breaks  
 into pieces.’ (Dutch)

I conclude that head-initial order in Dutch and Sranan relative constructions has influenced constituent order in Sarnami relative constructions. The Indian relatives of Sarnami nonetheless still show a far higher variability in the position of relative clauses than in the position of verbal objects, indicating that there is already much flexibility in the positioning of relative clauses in the Indian languages. In the domain of auxiliary constructions, which I now turn to, the divergence between Sarnami and its Indian kin is yet greater.

### 4.3 Auxiliary constructions

Sarnami shows an overwhelming tendency towards head-initial order (AuxV) in auxiliary constructions. Again, Sarnami stands out from among its Indian sister languages, which show a clear preference for dependent-head order in like constructions. In the following, I employ the term “auxiliary” in a broad sense to include non-bound elements with differing degrees of grammaticalization that fulfill modal, aspectual and tense-related functions (cf. Heine 1993). Tab. 4 shows the frequencies of head-initial (AuxV) order in auxiliary constructions in Sarnami on the one hand, and in Bhojpuri, Maithili, and Magahi on the other.

The results of the frequency count in Tab. 4 in the two (groups of) languages provides strong evidence for a difference in constituent order in Sarnami vis-à-vis its Indian relatives. Nearly 80% of Sarnami auxiliary constructions involve head-initial (AuxV) order. In contrast, 95% of auxiliary constructions in Bhojpuri, Maithili, and Magahi show head-final (VAux) order. Even in the Sarnami text with the lowest incidence (sar11poo\_kam-ke) only two-thirds of auxiliary constructions show VAux order. On the Indian side, the text with the highest number of auxiliary constructions (mat11arv-ke) only shows a comparatively low percentage of AuxV occurrences (13%). The text with the second highest number of auxiliary constructions (mag11gag-ke) features no construction with AuxV order at all. All other texts, save one (bho11nej-ke), feature no construction with AuxV order either. The divergence between the Sarnami and the Indian samples is therefore particularly strong in this domain, both with respect to the individual texts, as well as to the total. The statistics confirm Damsteegt’s (1988: 166) claim

**Tab. 4:** Frequencies of AuxV order compared.

Sarnami	AuxV/ Total	N words	Bhojpuri/ Maithili/Magahi	AuxV/ Total	N words
sar10sha-ke	9/9 (100%)	1756	bho11nee-ke	0/3 (0%)	1035
sar10kau-ke	11/15 (73%)	2358	bho11nej-ke	1/5 (20%)	753
sar11mal2-ke	10/10 (100%)	1667	bho11suk-ke	0/4 (0%)	983
sar11aar-ke	17/19 (89%)	1848	bho11vai-ke	0/5 (0%)	621
sar11bra-ke	3/3 (100%)	643	mat11raj-ke	0/5 (0%)	1324
sar10mot-ke	15/25 (60%)	2853	mat11dep-ke	0/6 (0%)	790
sar11paramuru	11/12 (92%)	1786	mat11arv-ke	4/32 (13%)	4897
sar11poo_kam-ke	12/19 (63%)	1698	mag11gag-ke	0/25 (0%)	2324
Total	88/112 (79%)	15326	Total	5/102 (5%)	12727

Two-tailed p-value (Fisher’s exact test):  $p < .0001$

(not substantiated by figures) of a change in constituent order in auxiliary constructions, and Damsteegt also gives references to it in Fiji Hindustani, Guyanese Bhojpuri and Trinidad Bhojpuri.

I continue with some more details on constituent order in auxiliary constructions in Sarnami and its Indian sister languages. The constituent order inherited from Indo-Aryan is exemplified in the two examples below, from Sarnami and Bhojpuri. Typical for head-final order (VAux), the auxiliary verb *kos(h)is(h) kare* ‘try’ in the following Sarnami (19) and Bhojpuri (18) sentences, follows the lexical verb (*pakare* ‘get hold of’ and *nikale* ‘come out’ respectively). “Compound verbs” like *kos(h)is(h) kare*, lit. ‘effort do’, have been covered in great detail in the literature on Indo-Aryan, including Sarnami (e.g. Kishna 1979; Appel and Muysken 1987: 126–127; Muysken 2000: 197–202, 208–211):

(17) *tab kapar-wá pakar-e ke kosis kar-is.*  
 then clothing-DEF get-INF ACC/DAT effort do-3.PST  
 ‘Then he tried to get hold of the piece of clothing.’ (Sarnami)

(18) *aur donoN aage paani meN se nikale-ke*  
 and both front water in ABL come.out-INF  
*koshish kare lag-lan.*  
 effort do attach-3PL  
 ‘And they both begin to try to come out of the water.’ (Bhojpuri)

As shown above in Tab. 4, both Sarnami and the Indian control group feature head-initial order as well, only with inverse frequencies. Structures like (19) (nearly identical to (17) above) are the norm in Sarnami (79% of occurrences), but exceedingly rare (5%) in the Indian languages:

(19) *ab kosis kare haigá kapar-wá pakar-e ke.*  
 now effort do be.PRS clothing-DEF get-INF ACC/DAT  
 ‘Now he’s trying to get hold of the piece of clothing.’ (Sarnami)

The following two examples from Magahi (20) and Bhojpuri (21) respectively show AuxV in the Indian control group. Both examples from different speakers describe the same scene:

(20) *ge-l-aii kuch laa-we.*  
 go-PST-3NHON something bring-INF  
 ‘He went to get something.’ (Magahi)

(21) *to laik-waa phir ga-il baa kuch lei ke.*  
 EMP boy-DEF again go-PST.3 be.PRS something get ACC/DAT  
 ‘That boy went again to get something.’ (Bhojpuri)

In the Indian languages, head-initial (AuxV) constructions like in the two sentences above are often limited to heavier structures involving an object NP, which would otherwise be preposed to the auxiliary together with the main verb as in (22) (object in bold). Such departures from canonical constituent order can also be stylistically and pragmatically marked as is the case with clausal word order (see e.g. Masica 1993: 332–336):

- (22) *aur o-kar baad **kapaR-waa** ke gir-aaw-e*  
 and 3SG-POSS after clothing-DEF ACC/DAT fall-CAUS-INF  
*ke koshish kar-at baa.*  
 ACC/DAT effort do-IPFV be.PRS.3  
 ‘Then after that he is trying to make the (piece of) clothing  
 fall down.’ (Bhojpuri)

The observations in this section are limited to constructions involving auxiliary verbs that (1) retain uses as lexical verbs next to their grammatical functions as modal and aspectual auxiliaries, and that (2) are not in an advanced stage of grammaticalization, i.e. whose lexical meanings and grammatical functions are relatively close to each other. The observations are further limited to the four most frequent concepts found in the corpus, contained in Tab. 5 (in descending order of textual frequency, with the top-most verb *já* ‘go (do sth.)’ being the most frequent one).

**Tab. 5:** Directional and modal auxiliaries.

Function	Sarnami	Bhojpuri	Maithili	Magahi	Gloss
Itive	<i>já-</i>	<i>jaa-</i>	<i>ja-</i>	<i>ja-</i>	‘go (do sth)’
Desiderative	<i>máng-, cáh-</i>	<i>caah-</i>	<i>cah-</i>	<i>cah-</i>	‘want’
Abilitative	<i>sak-</i>	<i>sak-</i>	<i>sək-, pa-</i>	<i>sak-, paa(w)-</i>	‘can’
Conative	<i>pruberi</i> <i>/kosis/</i> <i>kausis kar-</i>	<i>kosis/</i> <i>koshish kar-</i>	<i>kosis/</i> <i>koshish kar-</i>	<i>koshish kar-</i>	‘try’

Sarnami and the Indian languages nevertheless show canonical head-final (VAux) order in constructions involving so-called vector verbs as well as copular auxiliary verbs (e.g. *hai* in (1)) Vector verbs express diverse and often subtle aspectual nuances, and may themselves be marked for tense, mood, and aspect by suffixation (e.g. past {-*il(e)*} in (23) and (24) below). However, the verb root carries little or no lexical content, even when there is an etymological relation with a lexical verb, compare the roots and meanings of *gá-* in (23) below and (21) above.



The vector verb *gáil(e)* (23–24) has verb focusing and passivizing functions while *paRle* (24) expresses a suddenness of action:

- (23) *manai-yá bicc-e meṅ gir gá-il.*  
 person-DEF middle-LOC in fall EMP-PST.3  
 ‘The person fell in(to) the middle.’ (Sarnami)
- (24) *tastarii gir paR-le au phuT ga-ile.*  
 plate fall SUDDEN-PST.3 and break EMP-PST.3  
 ‘A plate suddenly fell and got broken.’ (Maithili)

Vector verbs are highly grammaticalized and therefore functionally similar to aspectual suffixes. They are characterized by a high textual frequency, fulfill core roles in the TMA system of Sarnami and express abstract grammatical functions in Sarnami and its Indian siblings. Many of these “verbs” are also subjected to a larger-than-usual degree of phonological erosion and fusion (e.g. the verb focusing/passivizing vector verb *ga-il* ‘go -PST.3’ is routinely pronounced [gɛ]). On a side note, the collocation *phuT gaile* in (24) is strikingly similar in form and meaning to expressions in the distantly related West Germanic languages German and Dutch, i.e. *kaputt gegangen* ‘got broken’ (German) and *kapotgegaan* (Dutch).

I hypothesize that language contact is responsible once more for the present dominance of head-initial AuxV order in the Sarnami auxiliary constructions covered in this section. We are dealing with a case of structural borrowing from Sranan and Dutch. Auxiliary constructions in Sranan exclusively involve head-initial (AuxV) order, as shown in the following two examples, featuring the verbs *go* ‘go (do sth.)’ and *wani* ‘want’:

- (25) *a go teki wan moro langa udu.*  
 3SG.SBJ go take one more long wood  
 ‘He went to take a longer (piece of) wood.’ (Sranan)
- (26) *den man wani puru a trui ini*  
 DEF.PL man want remove DEF.SG pullover in  
*a bon.*  
 DEF.SG tree  
 ‘The men want to remove the pullover from the tree.’ (Sranan)

Dutch also has AuxV order in main clause auxiliary constructions, compare the following example:

- (27) *ik kan morgen komen, als je wilt.*  
 I can tomorrow come if you want  
 ‘I can come tomorrow, if you like.’ (Dutch)

Head-final order (VAux) is also possible in Dutch auxiliary constructions. However, it is restricted to subordinate clauses and unusual in spoken and written Dutch (cf. Donaldson 2008: 219). Hence, alternative (a) (AuxV) below is more common than (VAux):

- (28) a. *ik weet dat je kan komen.*  
 I know that you can come  
 ‘I know that you can come.’ (Dutch)
- b. *ik weet dat je komen kan.*  
 I know that you come can  
 ‘I know that you can come.’ (Dutch)

Once again, Sranan and Dutch pull into the same direction and it is very likely that constituent order in auxiliary constructions in both languages provides the pattern onto which Sarnami constructions like (19) above are grafted.

#### 4.4 Summary

The preceding three sections have shown that Sarnami and its immediate relatives in India go separate ways in constituent order. I have suggested that the divergence of Sarnami from the Indian control group languages is the consequence of contact with Dutch and Sranan. Tab. 6 below summarizes the findings.

The Indian languages Bhojpuri, Maithili, and Magahi feature the dominant head-final order characteristic for Indo-Aryan. This manifests itself as object-verb basic word order (SOV), preposed correlative clauses (RelN), and verb-auxiliary (VAux) order. By contrast, Sarnami departs markedly from its genetic heritage. More than a third of Sarnami main clauses show an SVO order, against only 4% in the Bihari control group. Sarnami has nine times as many clauses with SVO order as the Indian languages. With auxiliary constructions, the divergence from inherited patterns is even more pronounced. Head initial (AuxV) auxiliary

**Tab. 6:** Frequencies of head-initial order compared.

Head-initial order	Sarnami	Bhojpuri, Maithili, Magahi (India)	Sarnami: India ratio
SVO	36%	4%	9:1
NRel	72%	34%	2:1
AuxV	79%	5%	16:1

constructions are sixteen times more frequent in Sarnami than in the Indian languages. In this domain the changes have therefore been the most profound.

Nevertheless, I have also shown that head-initial order is not uncommon in the Indian languages. SVO word order is recruited to focus the object, for example, and postposed relative clauses are pragmatically marked in a similar way. In Sarnami, SVO and postposed relative clause (NRel) orders are however competing with SOV and preposed correlative clauses (RelN) for unmarked status. Even with respect to relative constructions, where the variability of constituent order is the greatest in the Indian languages, postposed relative clauses still occur twice as much in Sarnami as in the Indian languages.

On a whole, the statistics show that head-initial order has made inroads into the syntax of Sarnami and is competing with or displacing inherited head-final patterns. I attribute this development to contact with Sranan and Dutch.

## 5 Conclusion

The changes in constituent order described in the preceding sections are substantial enough to set Sarnami apart from its Indian next-of-kin Bhojpuri, Magahi, and Maitihili. I have suggested that the cause of these morphosyntactic changes is contact with Sranan and Dutch. I have shown that there is a statistically significant tendency away from head-final to head-initial structures in basic word order, relative constructions and auxiliary constructions. In all three domains, Sarnami, like its Indian relatives, already employs head-initial structures. But the frequency of head-initial structures is considerably higher in Sarnami than in the Indian control group.

There is also a considerably higher frequency in the Indian languages of head-final relative constructions compared to head-final clausal word order and auxiliary-verb order. The position of relative clauses therefore appears to be very variable in the Indo-Aryan relatives of Sarnami from the outset. It is therefore possible that the order of relative clauses is generally more prone to change during language contact than other constituents (see e.g. Collins 2012: 95), because it is a relatively unstable order in the first place. The order of auxiliaries vs. lexical verbs in Sarnami diverges most from its Indian relatives in statistical terms, even if my observations only hold for modal and aspectual auxiliaries that are close in their meanings to their lexical verb counterparts. More grammaticalized auxiliaries (copular verbs and vector verbs) whose meanings are more opaquely connected to their lexical counterparts, and which fulfill more abstract grammatical functions have retained their post-verbal position. Many of these vector verbs also have a much higher textual frequency than the auxiliaries covered in section 4.3.

To sum up, Sarnami still features a dominant head-final order (SOV) in basic clauses. In relative constructions and with certain types of modal and aspectual auxiliary constructions head-initial order is predominant. A crucial facilitating factor for these changes in Sarnami is that head-initial orders already exist in Sarnami's Indian relatives, even if pragmatically specialized. Further research is needed to assess whether the tendency towards head-initial structures can also be observed with other syntactic units, e.g. the preferred order of verbs vs. adjuncts, and verbs vs. indirect objects. Constituent orders that have been shown to be diachronically more stable seem not to have been affected by change in Sarnami, e.g. noun vs. adjective, noun vs. adposition and noun vs. genitive order (see e.g. Greenberg 1969; Greenberg 1980; Collins 2012). Sranan and Dutch are not always consistent either in the way their basic word order (SVO) correlates with other constituent orders. However, Sranan, which once made extensive use of postpositions, has all but completed a typological shift to prepositional structures (Yakpo, this volume), which correlates with its dominant SVO order (see Greenberg 1969; Dryer 1989; Dryer 1992). It therefore remains to be seen how much typological pressure unfolds on Sarnami to reconfigure its head-final constituent order in adpositional phrases as well, and borrow or develop prepositions next to its existing set of postpositions.

The development in Sarnami is a good example of the kind of convergence that typifies Suriname as a linguistic area, when the two dominant languages Sranan and Dutch exert pressure for change in the same direction because they share typological features.

## Abbreviations

ABL	ablative marker
ACC/DAT	accusative-dative marker
CAUS	causativizing infix
COMP	complementizer
COREL	correlative
DEF	definite article
DIST	distal demonstrative
EMP	emphatic form
ERG	ergative case
F	feminine gender
HHON	high honorific pronoun
HON	honorific pronoun

INDF	indefinite article
INF	infinitive
IPFV	imperfective aspect
LOC	locative preposition
M	masculine gender
MHON	mid-honorific pronoun
NEG	negator
NHON	non-honorific pronoun
OBJ	object
PART	participle
PFV	perfective aspect
PL	plural
POSS	possessive
PRF	perfect tense/aspect
PROG	progressive aspect
PROX	proximate demonstrative
PRS	present tense
PST	past tense
QUOT	quotative marker
REFL	reflexive pronoun
REL	relative pronoun
SBJ	subject
SG	singular