Language lives. And just like other living things, languages come into being, develop over time, and eventually die. Often these developments are motivated by interaction with other languages, known as language contact. This dissertation contains a bundle of articles that report on the various ways that languages effect each other and the factors that condition the linguistic results in the Surinamese context.

Following a chapter summarizing socio-historical developments of Suriname from its beginnings as a plantation colony to a modern multiethnic, multilingual country, the reader will find a case study detailing the various formative processes of language mixture, intertwining, and obfuscation that led to the creation of Kumanti, a ritual language spoken among the Ndyuka.

The three subsequent chapters contain case studies of contact-induced language change among Suriname’s languages. The first explores convergence in the semantics of kinship terms in a sample of Surinamese languages. A similar language sample is employed in an investigation of contact induced developments among the languages’ tense, mood, and aspect systems. The following chapter argues that the syntactic structures associated with Dutch particle verbs has been transferred to Suriname’s creole languages.

The last case study addresses questions of language death and linguistic variation among a small group of Maroons, the Coppename Kwinti.

These case studies allow for a number of generalizations to be made about the mechanisms and processes of language contact in Suriname which can hopefully be useful in our further understanding of other complex contact settings and language contact in general.